

Autumn 2009



# Windsock

The Quarterly Magazine of the Southern Hang Gliding Club



## Essex Or Bust

Southern Pilots blast across the Thames!

Plus: Getting Away from Caburn + Club News + Rogue's Gallery  
+ Forecasting Guide + Guru Dave + Muck Raker

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Dave Newns. Photo: Mike Stiff. Front cover: climbing out from the Dyke. Photo: Carlo Borsattino

**Awight!**

Well that's what they say in Essex, my birthplace, and the county no paraglider pilot has ever managed to fly to from these fabled parts of Sussex, innit? All that changed in July when Mark Watts and Craig Atwell blasted north in a strong south-south-westerly from Mt Caburn, flying over Kent, cracking on over the Thames and through southern Essex. They would have kept going had the cu's not gone slightly mental and spreading out a blanket of sun-stopping stratus.



My legs, somewhere over Hants

Good effort guys. Craig Atwell has written up his story for this issue. Mark Watts also broke his Dyke site record this summer, flying a stonker to north Foreland. So - has this been the best summer ever? I certainly think so, though I've been away or working for much of it. Still, I finally had a good three day blast around southern England flying Combe, Westbury and then High and Over. Honestly, I prefer flying in the UK to anywhere else in the world when it's good. But autumn can be good too. Last autumn was amazing. I still remember leaning against Gandi's van as he told me all about how flyable it'd been through September and October (I'd managed to get out only once that autumn). Low airtimers particularly enjoy the seabreeze-free mellower thermals, and you

can often get 2000 ft up over the Dyke, Firl and Caburn. Just don't go to Ditchling, OK? It's a complete haven from the crowds and NO-ONE KNOWS ABOUT IT or seems to want to fly it. So I'll keep that hill all to myself, OK?

This issue also sees the return of Muckracker - and no, I am not responsible! It came to me from a random hotmail account with no signature, so I have not got a clue who's behind it all. If the SHGC can afford it, perhaps we should hire a lie detector and force everyone to take a test next time everyone's out on the hill. That could be fun.

Right enough prattling on. Enjoy the rest of the year. Oh, before I go, I've got two issues left to edit, so the search begins for a new editor for this esteemed publication. I think Charlie Merrett should take over - don't you? Anyhow if you do, or don't, or want to throw your hat in the ring, email me at the usual address below.

Cheers,  
 Hugh

PS - not much spell checking went on this issue. Ran out of time! Also, how about some more adverts, people? Send to [windsock@shgc.org.uk](mailto:windsock@shgc.org.uk)

Autumn 2009  
 A nearly complete guide to what's inside

Chairman's Welcome	4
Letters	4
Club News + Muck Raker	5
Members Gallery	6
Summer Stories	8
Club Life	9
Saving Petrol	11
Tefal's Flying Dictionary	12
Crossing the Thames	13
Get Away: Mt Caburn	14
Guru Dave	18



Contributors

From	Subject	Date Received
Carlo Borsattino, F...	New Flybubble Paragliding advert	24 August 2009
Eternity Press	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	20 August 2009
Ian-G	Part four	20 August 2009
Lester	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	18 August 2009
Lester	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	18 August 2009
rickypaq	Photo for windsock	18 August 2009
rickypaq	Photo for windsock	18 August 2009
alan eades	FW: Windsock picces	18 August 2009
alan eades	FW: Emailing: Morocco (3) Nov 08 050	18 August 2009
alan eades	FW: Emailing: Morocco (2) Nov 08 ...	18 August 2009
alan eades	FW: Emailing: Morocco (2) Nov 08 ...	18 August 2009
paul andon	3 pictures + captions for Windsock	17 August 2009
S BERE	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	17 August 2009
tony murrell	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	17 August 2009
David Massie	Re: WINDSOCK - YOUR COLUMN	17 August 2009
Nell Charles	Re: WINDSOCK NOW NOW NOW	17 August 2009
David Massie	Re: WINDSOCK - YOUR COLUMN	17 August 2009
David Massie	Re: WINDSOCK - YOUR COLUMN	17 August 2009
info@skylarkparag...	Re: WINDSOCK SUMMER!	11 August 2009
Ian Clark	WINDSOCK SUMMER Photos!	10 August 2009
Andrew Parsons	Article for you to consider	7 August 2009
rickypaq	Hugh can you add this to my last post	5 August 2009
rickypaq	A vote of thanks...	5 August 2009
MICHAEL NEWTON	Re: WINDSOCK SUMMER!	5 August 2009
mike.stiff	another caburn pic	4 August 2009
mike.stiff	Oh...and 1 more - caburn	27 July 2009
mike.stiff	Mike Stiff photos/exhibition1-3	23 July 2009
Michael Stiff	Mike Stiff photos/exhibition2-3	23 July 2009
Michael Stiff	Mike Stiff photos/exhibition3-3	23 July 2009
pforrester@triscall...	Re: Get Writing!	12 July 2009
Stenning, Anne	Windsock	1 July 2009
Jenni Fleming	Proof reading	21 June 2009

# Chairman's Welcome



I'm still not quite sure what to make of this Summer... it all started so well in Spring but never really seemed to deliver - not that I seemed to be out on the hill much this year. Saying that, when

the weather's been good there's certainly been some impressive flights - Wagga Watts reclaiming his Caburn Paragliding Site Record in style by crossing the Thames with Craig Atwell and making sure his Dyke record was safe by flying around Manston ATZ and landing in North Foreland. Carlo has certainly been making an effort this year as well with an impressive 17 XC flights entered and it's also nice to see some new names in the league too.

The newly branded Airwave BCC took advantage of the good weather early on in the year and flew 20 rounds before the final - this year we managed to pull our finger out and even got to the final at the Long Mynd in August finishing up in 5th place out of 25 teams that entered the competition so congratulations to all those who took part and thanks for making the effort to attend.

Membership numbers are close to the 500 mark which is pretty good for this time of year and will help towards our rising costs due to recent increases in site fees. I'd like to thank David Webb for all his work dealing with our landlords and in keeping these increases to the minimum - not an easy task in the current climate.

We've just had our Summer BBQ which was

attended by over 80 people and a big thank you to all those who helped make it happen especially Robbie for his laser show which kept the kids entertained and Jazz for providing all the music (not nearly enough dodgy dancing this year though...) This was followed the day after by a very successful Reserve Zip Wire and Repack day at Knockhatch Park largely thanks to Bernard Tagliavini, Charles Bonny and Mike Millwood from the Loft Workshop. We're very fortunate to now have use of this facility and hopefully we can make it a regular event for members. Having recently thrown my own reserve in anger I'd highly recommend it!

On the down side it hasn't been a great year for safety with a double fatality following a mid-air at the Long Mynd and a few serious accidents on our sites.

Following a few threads on the forum, it seems that some of our members expect to be informed about aspects of flying and safety that really should be self-evident to anyone who is Club Pilot Rated. This has raised the question - where should the club draw the line when it comes to warning pilots of the dangers inherent in flying?

I think Steve U summed it up nicely in one of his many excellent posts to the forum discussing site guides "I am still adamant that it's more important to provide the tools for pilots to be able to sort it out for themselves than to just provide an answer that will be only be valid for one site."

I believe this all comes down to "Airmanship" - if you want to stay alive in free flying you have to want to become a better pilot.

How? Become Pilot rated for starters, the Club will be putting on lectures free of charge to guide you through the topics you need to

know for the exam. Come to the monthly Coaching lectures on the last Thursday of the month in Glynde. Talk to people on the hill - ask questions especially of the coaches who are more than willing to share their experience with you. I remember when I was learning to fly I tried to read everything I could about flying and the weather that I could get my hands on. There are some excellent books out there and the internet is full of useful (and some not so useful) information on blogs, forums etc.

The club provides the tools for you to improve yourself as a pilot, I'd encourage you to make use of them.

Fly safe and see you all on the hill.

*Charlie Merrett, Chairman*



Captain Charlie McMerrett. Photo: Tim Stiff

# Readers' Letters

On reading the 'Slipping on Cow Dung' article in the last magazine, it reminded me of my early days.

Arriving at the Dyke for the first time I decided to launch from the western bowl to avoid the gaze of the crowds. I managed to slip on the grass, and then get dragged through the cow dung. It has the advantage of acting as a lubricant, thus accelerating my progress towards the fence! A few days later I went to Bo Peep and yes off across the grass through loads of sheep poo. This has the advantage of being less smelly but not such a good lubricant. My next encounter with the dark stuff was in my first thermal, I got bird poo under my wing, only to show that bird poo thermals better than me. I then progressed onto the main launch at the Dyke-yes dogs. I learnt quickly not to kneel down whilst packing the wing, especially

with shorts on. Off to Morocco now, the camel dung, donkey and goat poo were easy to avoid as they are dry and don't stick to the wing. In Chamonix I had a close encounter with the human sort! While doing my own private SIV course in rotor with several collapses in rapid succession I smelt something awful and felt something warm in my jeans, but I don't think it got any further than my harness. I now get loads of the worst sort of excrement, loads of bullshit while sitting on the hill waiting to fly.

*P.S. My ground handling is still crap!  
Ian Vokes*

I am a low airtime pilot (5 hours) I brought a glider (target) and doodlebug power unit off Ebay last year all with less than 10 hours on them, and due to the lack of good gliding weather on the south downs in the summer I

want to fly with power, I have spoken to different people some have said go for it some have said i'll need 100 hours+ gliding first, another problem is finding a BHPA approved instructor there don't seem to be any southern england! I have no intention of killing myself and want to do things properly.

So are there any hang glider pilots in the southern club who fly with power on a regular basis? are there any sites were powered gliders can take off and land from? The southern club has an aerotow group how about a power flying group if there are enough interested flyers.

Any thoughts, advice, help.

*Nicolas Brown*

*All letters welcome. Actually, most things welcome. Just not your old bathroom suite.  
Send to windsock@shgc.org.uk*

# Club News

## SAFETY INFO

Hopefully there will be a few long evenings flying left. If so, do be careful not to fly into each other in the low sun conditions! Make sure your sun glasses are not too scratched and remember, you can always use your hand to shade the sun from your eyes while still holding the brakes.

Through September you must keep your eyes peeled for thunderstorms. Late summer is the favourite time of year for their development and they can reach out tens of mile to affect the air you are flying.

More probably, by the time you read this, summer will be nearly over, but there are still a few XC days left - My latest XC of the year was on the 21st of November a few years ago. So there is no reason to hang up your kit until next summer, just wait out the usual lousy October weather then get flying again.

The winter months still offer great flying conditions, with ice cream smooth dynamic lift and the gentlest of thermal practice. Keeping going through the dark days of winter will keep your

skills up so that come next spring you'll be ready to deal with the snotty little thermals. My earliest XC was on a Feb 21st so there really is not long when it is really not possible. There's a gauntlet for you all!

October is a great time for improving your mind - get some books out of the library and brush up on all the theory you can. You can always download our pilot notes off the members section of the Airworks' website.

For those of you thinking of changing kit now is the best time of year to do so. You maximise the time available in smooth conditions to get to know your new glider or harness before the mayhem of springtime.

*Safety Officer Steve Purdie*

## SHGC PARTY

5th December: the SHGC Christmas party will be held at the White Hart in Lewes.



Beanie over Beachie

## AWARDS 2009

Yes, I know it's a bit early to start thinking about Christmas but we need your votes for the following awards: Most Improved - HG and PG and Best Newcomer - HG and PG.

Please email your votes to [committee@shgc.org.uk](mailto:committee@shgc.org.uk). For those of you without access to email you can write them down and either give them to a club coach on the hill or drop them off at Sussex HGPG or Airworks.

*Anne Stenning*

# Muck Raker

He's back! But who is he? Or she?

Terry 'Dundee' Clark found himself, yet again, in a strange landing field in the depths of Brazil. As he passed overhead of the official field, conveniently next door to the guest house, he managed to land 2 km away in a crocodile infested stream. He was reported to be heard over the radio whilst removing his underpants, saying 'that's not a knife, this is'. At which point having seen too many James Bond movies, he elected to use the crocs as stepping stones to make his escape. Fortunately, Chris Bere was close on hand and the noise of his uncontrollable manic laughter scared off any close by wild life, including the local senioritas.

Meanwhile back in sunny old Isle of Wight, Crisps 'n Beer decided to take a sh\*\* just minutes before the comp window opened. In his haste, he slipped and put his elbow right in the brown stuff. Rather than clean himself up,

Crisps was seen using his mobile to call his wife to come to his assistance. It is now referred to as the Isle of Sh\*te.

Neil Brennan-Wrong has been seen ground-handling his Skywalk. We must point out that if Skywalk found out, this could well invalidate the warranty since he was not using Mike Kung's technique and Neil has been banned from such practices until further notice.

Windy John has been spotted doing his laundry by the Newhaven harbour wall even though his wing didn't look all that grubby, his pants however were somewhat soiled.

It is official - Kenny 'I love scratching in my balaclava' has been awarded this years Mark Watts best look alike on the hill award. He has yet to replicate this in the sky however.

*M.Raker@frugalmail.co.uk*



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# Club Life

Photo Gallery



Stuart Heath launches at Bo-Peep. Photo: Ian Clark



Portugal paradise. Photo: Greg Hammerton



Soaring Caburn. Photo: Greg Hammerton



Soaring the Newhaven cliffs. Photo: Ian Clark

# Summer Tales

“Tell us about your best experience so far this summer.” You replied:

## OZZIE AND CLIVE

It was an email from my son Leigh, who suggested we went on a weekend hang gliding and camping jaunt with Ozzie and Clive. Having not been camping for quite some considerable time it didn't sound very appealing, until I read the venue would be Wales and flying would most probably be long mynd. Having not flown there it was at the top of my must fly list, so I was hooked.

Leaving late on Friday we arrived at the campsite just after mid-night and I can say that trying to put up a tent in the dark quietly listening to the orchestral sounds of the prevailing wind being emitted from both ends of our slumbering residents was quite amusing... nuff said.

The morning arrived and the pilots were already clustering round ozzie 'n Clive. Once all introduced and the usual jovial banter about me being over on the dark side, it was of for breakfast, a real lorry drivers touch very substantial and very cheap a good set up for the day.

Then of it was to the bottom landing field should one need it. Once inside the gate Ozzie set about showing the best flight approach with much arm waving and zest as is his style and the errors made by some previous pilots.

On reaching the top of the Mynd I was in awe of the stunning landscape in all its glory. Ozzie made the first short flight and on landing gave us all a briefing with his usual energetic flair. Then each and every pilot was assisted out to take off where his ever-watchful eye assured a perfect launch. All pilots that day flew for several hours as did my son who tried to tease me of the slope and into the air by flying tight circles above while I sat strapped to my harness below. For me the wind was just a tad to strong and if you have not guessed yet I fly a paraglider, but things could have been so different “oh well Parawaiting yet again”

The evening was decided by the majority that we should try a little curry house not a 10-minute walk from our campsite. Small it was and the cosy atmosphere was reminiscent of a bunch of pilots sitting in one's front room exchanging stories. On the way back to camp the idea of sitting round the campfire was quickly disregarded in favour of a bottle of Brandy courtesy of my son Leigh brought on some previous trip earlier in the year. So our tent it was, being large enough to accommodate all.

To sum up I can't remember when I have laughed so much, listened to so many stories and Ozzie's true life flying dramas and scrapes. I also learnt so much talking to the other pilots. I will be back to fly the Mynd and Ozzie say's he would welcome any competent para pilot who would wish to go along on one of his jaunts ( fly outings) so you see its not always bad to cross over to the DARK SIDE there is much to be learnt from all pilots.

My thanks to Ozzie and Clive and all the other “hangies” I may well see you all again.  
*Denis Banton*

## PATIENCE!

Hello Hugh

In response to your email about my best flight this summer. One day at the Dyke, a busy day on the ridge, Mark, Ghandy and I saw some birds climbing at new timber and went on a glide connecting with lift.

Mark and Ghandy got there a couple of 100 ft higher than me.

Although I was climbing they were pulling away from me, which left me going over the back committed at approx 800 ft they were probably about a 1000 ft higher than me.

I lost the climb and went to search for another climb, getting low over the golf course and under the sea breeze convergence found my second climb which took me to cloudbase.

With the three of us at cloudbase things started to go white, then I decided to leave on half bar found another climb which i took again to cloudbase and they caught up with me and then I left again, and they didnt follow, obviously knew something I didn't.

I glided to the north of caburn, getting very low found my next climb. Climbing well half way to cloudbase, Mark and Ghandy decide to make their way over and join me.

By then the day had set up and was working better. We took another climb or two and nature called and i landed at Rye.

This is my personal best to date. Ghandy landed the otherside of Rye and Mark went to Dover.

On the retrieve Mark and Ghandy told me off for flying ahead solo and considered it to be a risky strategy. (pah - what do they know - Ed)

I'm no XC pilot and just realizing the need to be in the right place at the right time without being the way.

I'm in no place to give any advice, but if I can learn to be more patient and watch others with more experience than myself, maybe I can learn more.

*Paul Watts*

## STOLEN THERMALS

After Watts and Atwell knocked the stuffing out of the summer, there were only fairy farts left for the rest of us. I tried to get away from the Dyke the next weekend, but it seems she only likes the boys to be able to drag their feet through the bush.

I was sure there was some xc happening, somewhere, just out of reach, and there was a restless place in my head, like that worry you get when you think there might have just been a sexual innuendo thrown your way but you

hadn't caught it.

I moaned about my lack of performance to my friends, Carlo and Nancy. They nodded sagely; they understood. They knew just the thing for it. “Come to a show in the Lewes castle,” they said. “You'll love it.” Was this supposed to help my flying, I wondered?

At the show there was some wine. A man with red rooster strapped rather lower than his waist demanded that he was the Grande Gallo, the great lover.

After making a big fuss over him the heroine glanced down, saying “There seems to be a small chicken climbing up your leg.”

I had another glass. Aah. It was an allegory, I realised, it was all 'bout the summer in the UK: it was a cock-up. The thermals had already been stolen.

After I'd had some wine, I knew where to find them. I had to leave the land of the little chicken, and go to the land of the Big Chicken (peri-peri). It wash all suddenly show clear. The clues led south, towards the shun ...

Rapid scene change. Blue tile sign above stage: Land of Big Chicken.

Actors appear in strange clothes, with shiny round hats on, bright boots, and ... um ... harnesses.

See Greg dangling from the empty sky stage, right? See cumulus cloud, on a long long pole, high up. See the sun, the big bright shiny sun, left on the stage, again.

Aah! We are in Portugal. And there, centre-stage, is the thermal thief! See him grin wickedly. His name is Arnold Marx. He has a new flying lodge in the Serra de Estrela mountains.

You wouldn't think he was wicked, the way he welcomes you, the way he is always smiling, the way his wife Marie feeds you. But he has a stash in his shed.

There are thermals there in every colour you can imagine. Some are bigger than a house! And every day (after a leisurely breakfast) he sets them free to race around the sky.

True as Bob. He's got a whole warehouse full of them. Thermals firing off every day. They're going to waste, man! He doesn't even fly sometimes, he's too busy improving his lodge. It's criminal.

And now I'm back in the UK. What? There's like a few scenes missing there, yeah? Aah well, there are always the pictures, for those who struggle with imagination.

Like an actor who has forgotten his lines, or had too many of them, I try to make sense of where I am.

The scene of the crime. But I know where the thermals are! Don't let him get away with it. Demand your thermals back from arnoldmarx@gmail.com or go and collect them yourself.

More whine, anyone?

*Greg Hamerton*

# Photo Exhibition

Tim Stiff has travelled the world shooting for magazines and manufacturers. He's got a photographic exhibition on at Sussex HGPG featuring local, and worldwide flying action. Here's some of his work



Franco, Mark Watts and a day at Firle  
Photos: Tim Stiff



## Unsung Heroes

Beanie is the only responder to our August request for nominations for the club's unsung heroes

You asked for contributions regarding people who have been helpful and inspiring so I thought it was a good opportunity to say a big thankyou to people like 'The Mad Farmer' Dave Watts who has in the last couple of years helped me countless times. He has given of his time his effort his skill and knowledge not to mention endless cups of tea and biscuits and even the odd bacon sandwich.

I have said before that I know of no other sport where a relative novice as I was could get free advice and coaching from people like Dave and not forgetting countless others like Ghandi and Ian Grayland, Simon Steele, Mr King and Tefal who encouraged me

to be brave and go on my first cross country... And Carlo who is always encouraging and giving good advice... Emily for

all the fantastic cake, Franco 'The Professor' who has taught me to be patient and lastly but not forgetting self appointed ettiquite officer Mr Bere who helped me off Caburn when I first qualified 3 years ago. But for Mr Bere I might still be waiting to take off... any way thanks to them all for teaching me loads, keeping me safe and helping me out... and if you are new to this sport then make yourself known to them and others and don't be afraid to ask...You will learn so much more quickly... See you on the hill...



*Beanie*



The Mighty Massie. Photo: Tim Stiff  
Left: The Mad Farmer. Photo: Paul Andon

# WEBSITE NEWS

Ha! The age of paper and ink is not dead! Get this - we're delivering your news about your website through the magazine! Cool eh! (just get on with it - chairman).

## NOTAMs

I have now altered the NOTAM page on the web site so that you can see them on a Google Map, with clickable markers. You can now see NOTAMs for the whole of the UK, if you want. You can also specify if you want to see prohibited areas, navigation warnings and aerodrome information separately.

## XC Calculator

When entering a cross-country flight on the web page, there is now a calculator to convert the output from the GPSDUMP program to OS Map references with just one click. All you have to do is to copy the flight details to the clipboard in GPSDUMP, and then paste them into the calculator window. Your 5 map references will appear, in two forms; one for cutting and pasting into the local League, one for the National league.

## Old 'Windsock' Magazines

I have now put up no less than 112 copies of Windsock, from 1984 onwards. They are all indexed, and you can view them on-line. There are loads missing - do you have any of them? If you do, please contact me so that we can put those on-line too.

Dave Massie



Wing	Pilots	Flights	Total distance(km)
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Flex HG	0	0	0
Rigid wing	0	0	0

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- AR, Kent

# WINSOCK COMP

Yes that's right, in a genius take on this magazine's name, one lucky reader each issue will win a free sock! Win two competitions in a row and you'll take home the pair! That's great! Isn't it!

Just answer this simple question:

**Is the SHGC's new policy towards non-members...**

- A: Name and shame them on noticeboards on tea rooms across Sussex
- B: Roll them up in their gliders and tickle them
- C: Cattle-prod them all the way to the bottom landing field

First correct answer receives the prize! Terms and conditions apply. SHGC members, officials, committee members and their families may not apply. Send to us via email at [windsock@shgc.org.uk](mailto:windsock@shgc.org.uk)

# Saving The Dyke

Devil's Dyke is at risk, as the club's sites officer David Webb warns

We have been in delicate and difficult negotiations with the landowners. You will notice that there is now a new fence around the whole of the bottom landing field. This is primarily to keep 209 sheep in and 'undesirables' out.

Pilots who have to make use of the bottom landing facility are expected to land in the usual landing zone. However, because the current crop is only 'animal feed' and the sheep are eating it, it will not necessarily be a problem if you land elsewhere in the field. (You will just have further to walk)

ALL MEMBERS ARE UNDER STRICT INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO CLIMB OVER ANY FENCE. YOU MUST WALK TO THE NEAREST GATE OR STILE. A pilot who causes damage to a fence will be asked to pay for its repair. Please keep the main gate closed and do not drive into the field. Damage to crops and fences is the biggest issue we have to deal with here. Be aware that our use of this facility is very much under threat at the moment.



Photo: Carlo Borsattino

# Saving Petrol

By Neil Charles

I really should start with what this article isn't. It's not a meteorology lesson - I'm certainly not qualified to give one! A few new pilots have asked, on the hill and on the forum, how to judge if a day is going to be flyable or not. I'm a London based pilot and over the past couple of years have just about got the hang of not wasting the three hour round trip to Sussex, so this is a quick guide to what I look for during the week when daydreaming of flying instead of working.

Oh, one other thing before we start. Flyable definitely doesn't mean good! Good needs that meteorology lesson. We're going for feet off the ground here, not huge XCs.

There are loads of weather forecasts on the web. The Flybubble links page has a huge resource to play with (<http://flybubble.co.uk/links.asp>) but we're going to concentrate on just a few. A good plan seems to be to find a couple of detailed ones that you like and stick with them. That way you'll learn to read between the lines and the quirks of each forecast.

Wind speed's first and Weatheronline's isotachs are very good. ([http://expert.weatheronline.co.uk/is10\\_frame.htm](http://expert.weatheronline.co.uk/is10_frame.htm).) Isotachs are like isobars, but instead of linking equal pressure, they link equal windspeed. In summer, if there's a 20kph (or more) line lying across the Sussex flying sites, it's going to blow out. You can launch and fly in 20kph, but the forecast is for 10m off the ground. Unless you've got

a hang glider, you'll be at the top of a blown out hill, in a compression, with thermal gusts adding to the mix. In winter, without the thermals, 20kph could well be ok.

Looks like 15kph or less? It's a good start but while you're here, check the direction too. 'Wind 10m' in the top menu does direction, as well as showing wind speed again. We started with isotachs because the wind barbs on this page lie. They tease you into making a trip and then laugh about it later. If there's a 20kph isotach on top of Sussex and a 15kph wind barb, go with the isotach. If the barbs are all saying 5kph and pointing in different directions, then very, very light is a pretty good bet.

You can do precipitation from Weatheronline too and it's fine for a quick look, but the next site's better. Meteoblue does free accounts. Get one, they're brilliant (<http://my.meteoblue.com/my/>) then point the Meteograms / City Forecast page at Lewes. Or if you're feeling lazy, Airworks post up a three day Lewes forecast every day on their homepage (<http://www.airworks.co.uk/>).

The same rules apply as far as windspeed goes, but now you've got hour by hour changes - it's the orange line on the fifth chart down. Maybe it will only be blown out for a while? Meteoblue does its best to predict the sea breeze too and seems to be not bad at it. As a summer rule of thumb, 18kph is likely to be flyable, but top-end.

Rainfall on the third chart down is split into convective (summer showers) and total rain (proper rain), so you know if you can probably dodge the odd shower or would just be up a hill getting wet.

There are some strong clues on the solar radiation and cloud cover charts about how good the day will be, but that's one to start working out for yourself. And finally, if you want to really start trying to predict the good days, you have to give RASP a go (<http://rasp.inn.leedsmet.ac.uk/RASPTable.html>) for forecasts of how strong any thermals will be and how high they'll go.

Are the forecasts reliable? They're pretty good. Weatheronline and Meteoblue will often disagree with each other as to what's going to happen beyond about three days' time but they usually come together in the end. Usually. You don't really know for sure what it's going to do until about 24 hours before and even then you'll turn up occasionally expecting dead calm and have a brilliant day. A week out, if there's a block of a few good or bad days coming, then they usually will happen, but the arrival can often be 24 hours or so late, so don't totally give up on Saturday until around Thursday evening!

Hope that's helped a few new pilots (and not bored everyone else too badly.) See you in Caburn carpark next time it's blown out...

# Tefal's Very Helpful Flying Dictionary

I have been accused of not helping out much with sensible and useful flying advise. Hopefully the following will give you a deeper understanding of the sport. Every single comment, even the boring ones, are based on a true situation that I have personally experienced. By Paul Andon

So did you have a nice flight?	I went bloody miles, I'm just looking for an excuse to tell you about it.
Yes don't worry; we take every care to give you individual qualified paragliding tuition tailored to your personal needs.	Tracy, fire up the machine, we've had a delivery of sausage meat.
I never buy a paraglider until I have test-flown it. I always check for roll stability; pitch stability and general energy retention.	The glider has to be very cheap and the right colour and make me look like Mark.
Yes conditions are pretty good really	F*ck that was rough
I would say the conditions are a bit Sporty	I nearly shat myself
It's no good on the hill, there is not enough wind.	What's a thermal?
Conditions are a tad windy for teaching	It's not even a force 8 yet.
All our instructors are highly qualified	You'll be alright as long our instructors keep up their medication.
Ahh yes, 3 <sup>rd</sup> menu on the Garmin scroller, click four down, set your ASL MSL pressures and then make sure you have NMEA set on the coms port	Wish I could fly as well as I geek.
Tomorrow is forecast to be a good one.	Jesus another shit flying day, why do I waste my life with this sport.
I think it best to seek the advice of one of our highly qualified club coaches.	Your not worthy to stand near me, let alone seek my expert advice.
All our club coaches are there to help new pilots have access to friendly expert advise on how to fly our sites	Your life is in danger if you take any flying advise from any coach that has less than ten years experience. The club coaching scheme is merely a social point of contact for new pilots.
I like your flying suit	What a plonka, must be stuck in a time warp, hasn't he heard?
Canoe harnesses make a big difference to your glide	Who cares Mark and Carlo fly one.
Canoe harnesses make a big difference to your speed	Mate have you flown in winter?
Yes, spending One and a half grand on this XR20-3 flying navigator GPS will definitely improve your chances of going Cross Country?	Do we have to go through this every time, just give me the money and go.
I think harnesses that use the Ram air principle to inflate the air bag are a safety over-kill	Besides they make my bum look huge.
A slip streamed full faced helmet really helps reduce drag.	As a PG pilot I really enjoy looking like a knob
Acro is cool	I'm so desperately insecure. I just need for everyone to think that I'm amazing cool like that Raaaaarrrr-Wool geezer.
Yes those wing-over's weren't bad.	Can't even f*cking do a wibble-under! If he "rings the bell" like that again, he'll kill himself, mark my words.
Ha Ha, What a rush. I nearly lost it big-time	Incapable, as I am, in experience any of the subtleties of life, I find that nearly losing my life the only way to feel anything any more. Lately I've been thinking of trying base-jumping, that's cool.
I always follow Air-law what ever the situation, I always break right, regardless.	I would rather Die, and be "Right" because I'm ignorant and have misunderstood the 1 <sup>st</sup> air-law
Because of their different shape it's important to make sure that female passengers have their straps adjusted correctly.	What's the point of flying tandems, if you can't grope the punters, I mean there has to be some perks?
I've been thinking of taking up Paramotoring	I need something to go with my slip streamed full faced helmet that really helps to reduce drag.
Before launching, all students must have their straps adjusted correctly by a qualified instructors	Only if they are not mingers.
Most of the guys in the SJHC are cool good looking sporty outdoor types that have an eye on fashion and a nice car	Most of the guys in the SHGC are eligible for a free bus and instantly start dribbling if any woman of any age turns up on the hill
Na that XC day had a lot left in it. I could have gone a lot further.	Phew I was so lucky, I can't believe I managed to get there far.
The South Downs is one of the best areas in the country to Fly	Yer those 5grand bases at Combe are sooo scary
You punters left the hill too early.	F*ck, I missed the climb, thank god they bombed ☺

# Crossing The Thames

**Sitting in a field in Essex, eating a banana, talking to Gandhi on the mobile phone, I wondered why there was a paraglider flying towards me - had someone crossed the river after us and who was it?**

**Story and Photos by Craig Atwell**



I left Mt Caburn with Mark Watts in a good solid climb; the sky was much more to my liking now. With Mark setting a furious pace, five fast crosswind glides later found me counting squirrels in some tree tops west of Heathfield. I had failed to connect with a street and dived into a small valley. There was a garden fire here and I managed to grovel away over the trees and back into the game. The climb took me toward the 2500ft LTMA



so I had to leave it early and go on another crosswind glide. South of Mayfield Mark joined me in a climb right on the edge of the 2500ft airspace. It was time to try slow down the Watts freight train to at least a blur. The next bit past Bewl water had proved to be a tad tricky for me in the past and it would be good to have Mark's help.

We found a good climb near Rushers Cross, too good in fact, it was a scenario that was to play out on most of our climbs, Mark spiralling his proto (he can't pull ears) and me on ears and bar. The climbs would really kick in above three grand and it was a nightmare trying to avoid the 3500ft airspace. Mark found a good climb east of Lamberhurst ending in more escape havoc below controlled air space. We pushed on North east in various climbs toward Maidstone.

At Maidstone Mark took one of his famous

long over-optimistic glides toward Thurnham on the North Downs and was rewarded with the best climb of the day. It was hard to escape the upper clutches of this climb and more descending mayhem resumed. We went on a good glide over Gillingham and found an iffy climb above a large business park. This climb took us over the Thames estuary near Kingsnorth power station and we took a glide on to the head land

in front of the main river. I could see the Thames directly in front of us now and it looked wide, wider than after a few pints looking and dreaming on Google Earth. It's about three km wide at this point.

The town of High Halstow provided a good top up. Mark left first as he was above me and his glide looked horrible from where I was sitting. I did a few more turns and lost sight of him. At the edge of the river I came off bar as a departure here would have ended up in tears in the shipping lanes below. It was time to take some pics for Tefal, so he could move on to bigger and better things. The view up to London was awesome, there where ships below



and I could smell the water. I flew through some ratty lift wile I was over the water and ended up dropping the camera in my lap as I grabbed the toggles. I connected with land again at Canvey Island and caught sight of Mark climbing over South Woodham Ferrers. It was a decent SBF type climb which established me back in the epic looking Essex sky. Mark went more west at this point as he was concerned about the intrusion of sea air along the east coast.

At around a 100km from take off I had my last good climb, the sky had suddenly OD'd and seemed to be shutting the ground down

.Unbeknown to me Mark was low to my west and I passed him here. I managed to grovel on for another few kilometres and landed just short of 110km from take off. The Watts freight train came puffing over 15min or so later and got his last climb at Witham the town to my west. He landed at around 115km with a new Caburn

site record. I walked into the town of Witham and caught the train to London, the tube to Waterloo station and a train back home.

*Glossary. SBF: sea breeze front. OD: over-develop. Or overdose. Depends where you are, what you're doing. Obviously*

# Get Away!

Getting away from Southern Sites, by Charlie Merrett

I hope you found last issue's article on Devil's Dyke useful and managed to put a few of the tips from our local pilots into practice over the summer...

This issue we're going to have a look at Mount Caburn, our second best XC site – arguably the best now that Mark and Craig have raised the bar for paragliders by crossing the Thames! So how did they do it? Read on to find out...

## What's the ideal forecast for a good day at Caburn?

Carlo Borsattino  
"I look regularly at around 30 different weather forecasts, including synoptic charts, general weather, wind, aviation, and gliding. I also look at satellite images.  
You want the wind somewhere between SSE and WSW, good thermals and reasonable cloudbase before the sea breeze comes in and spoils things (as it almost always does at some point). Cloudbase doesn't need to be as high as it does to go XC from some other sites (e.g. Devils Dyke, Bo Peep) as you can go pretty much downwind from launch; depending on the wind direction / strength however, you may have to start pushing cross wind to avoid being pushed into / under rapidly lowering controlled airspace; plus with the ground level rising quickly down track you quickly have less and less height to play with."

Charlie Merrett  
"I keep an eye on the synoptic to get a feel for "the big picture" then use NOAA up to 3 days ahead to check the wind and RASP for the thermal strength and cloudbase. The night before I'll also watch the local BBC forecast at 6:30pm.  
Ideally I'd like WSW winds going SW to keep out of the airspace and fairly light in strength as the wind will pick up generally as the land mass heats up, rises and draws air in off the sea to replace it. As for the Dyke, a nice cold airmass with clear skies and not too low pressure that it gets too unstable as can often happen in a SW'ly airflow."

Craig Atwell  
"I get most of my met info from Tefal's Holy Grail, RASP. It seems reliable. I have flown XC from Mt Caburn in all sorts of wind directions, SW is my favourite though."

Dave Massie  
"I just use XC weather (is the wind OK?) and RASP - (are the thermals going to be strong enough).  
A SW wind and a good lapse rate - go early and be gone by 11 or 12 latest. OR A NW backing SW - ride the sea breeze as it arrives at Caburn. You can still go on a sea breezed day, but you have to concentrate like crazy to get any distance.  
If there are still cu clouds in front of take off as

you get there, you're not too late - indeed you should expect to get away."

Dave "Gandhi" News  
"I use RASP to look at the airmass, NOAA for wind direction and strength, Meteoblue for cloud cover, Lasham and Dunstable glider forecasts and local BBC for the feel of the day. They are good for seabreeze strengths and amount of cloud cover. Early in the season I look for north Atlantic airmasses, the same as you would get at the Dyke. As we get into August and the sea warms up then Caburn starts to work on most sunny days bar the most stable ones."

## What's the trick with getting away from Mt Caburn?

Carlo  
"First, the bits that are the same as for anywhere: Being as prepared as possible; flying all of the right equipment for your level and being 100% happy / comfortable with it in all conditions (flying within your limits); being observant; thermalling well; making good decisions about your flying; being opportunistic; a certain amount of luck (the best pilot in the world can't go XC if they don't get any lift; even a novice pilot can fly a long way if they happen to blunder into good lift a few times); putting everything in your favour; being in the right frame of mind; not being too concerned about



Climbing out from Caburn. All photos: Carlo Borsattino

where you will land (without being stupid) or how you will get back (this is the UK after all!). Now, the Caburn specifics: most of the time, OODLES of patience is required, especially for the getting up and away bit (it is unusual to takeoff into a booming thermal, scream up to a mega-high cloudbase and race off under an epic sky); whilst it is NOT recommended to drift low over the back in a thermal (especially if it is windy and gnarly) having gotten 1000ft+ ATO it often works to gently drift over the back in a very weak thermal / zeros; as you would expect, there seems to be a fairly consistent sink hole just downwind of the hill for a couple of/few kilometres, which often causes pilots to land before they make the next climb (much patience and commitment is often rewarded!); whilst you are drifting along in weak lift / zeros, you should be looking for your next climb, ready to GO FOR IT (indecisiveness will put you on the ground) when you either eventually either lose your climb or get to cloudbase (although you don't have to rush off then either)."

Charlie  
"Because Caburn faces south the thermals generally work early and the wind will generally increase so get there early and get up the hill! As soon as it's flyable get in the air. Slope landing is easy at Caburn so don't worry about bombing out. I find pushing into wind in the thermals at Caburn works well and I often find stronger lift on the upwind side so I try and make my turn nice and tight on the downwind side (be careful not to spin the glider) and then open up into wind and push forward before turning again. You can leave the hill relatively low at Caburn as long as you are in lift but be aware that because the grounds slopes downhill behind the hill it is often very sinky so be prepared to drift with any lift you have until you're clear of Glyndebourne and can glide well into the flats. Finding the second climb is key at Caburn I feel so it helps to leave in a gaggle but Ringmer seems to work well."

Craig  
"Caburn has been really easy to escape from this year. Establish yourself in a good climb and never let it go until you are high. I usually find I drop out the back of the climbs here so I constantly search into wind to find the core. On a strong wind day thermals drift a long way downwind from this site, it is very important to top out before you make your first transition."

Dave  
"Depends on the day. If it's a SW, and it's still early, get high, and then just leave in the first solid thermal you can find. On other days, if you get, say, a 1,000 feet over take off, and you're still in the thermal, just go. Don't worry about flopping over the back - I've done it many times, and it's starting to pay off - I now know here I'm going to find lift. Above all concentrate like crazy - the first thermal at Caburn usually peters off into a zero - maybe at 1,000 ATO - you just have to stay with it. Allow your self to drift along in the zero

- constantly adjusting your turns. Glyndebourne opera house usually has a thermal - I always seem to smell a fire coming from that direction. The gliding club usually has one usually to its SE, and NW. There's an industrial estate just past some large power lines (7-8-9k?) out that always works - but it's very rough. If you can get to the tree line for the big wood (forgotten where exactly) you can get the first decent climb after take off. After that, it gets much easier.

Gandhi  
"Trick? Be up the hill by 9am in May, June, July. Early in the year you have to leave early often by 10 or earlier as once a sea breeze establishes it kills off and breaks up thermal activity due to the coolness of the sea and the strength of the wind. There is often only a small window so it helps if you are already flying and not chatting up the new totty on the block. The skill is in reading the sky and leaving the hill when the seabreeze starts to surge through. To save thinking too much just follow Mr Watts or Carlo around and try to climb with them. Don't follow me as I often just play out the front. If you miss the ideal slot you will be left soaring in a stiff sea breeze but if you leave too early then you land and its dead but when you pack up you notice the wind pick up and a band of cumulus pass by, that's where you should of been. As we get into august and September then it is possible to do XC's in the afternoon. There is no hard and fast rule. Observation is all in flying and acting on what you see, feel, hear, smell etc.

#### Where are the common trigger points?

Carlo  
"Although I don't think you should get fixated / limit yourself to some vague notion of "common trigger points" (more important is to remain observant and be opportunistic) I guess the following points often seem to trigger thermals: The big spur running from the main launch down to Ranscombe Farm (the fact that the field down below slopes all the way down to a line of tall trees means that it is effectively 'sheltered' - i.e. in rotor - therefore this sheltered area often produces lee-side thermals); Ranscombe Farm; the main bowl to the W of launch, the small spur just before the small S facing bowl 400m W of T/O (there is a small 'hole' in the hill with small trees in which also acts as a trigger); the small tree-filled bowl 750m W of T/O (shaped like a reversed "?"); the small pond to the SSW of launch, just below the tree line; the ploughed fields approx 1km SW of T/O; in a S wind, the big S face

just to the S of T/O. I guess you don't want me to list all of the trigger points on the way to the Thames/Margate (not for this article anyway)?"

Charlie  
"As for all sites I keep a close eye on other gliders for signs of lifting air and the gulls out front of Caburn are particularly useful as they transit from the West to the landfill site near Beddingham. After launching from the main takeoff I generally push out along the spur and look for lift over treelines, the farm and in bowls on the ridge. Pushing into wind at Caburn works well and you can often push out along "micro-lines" of lift quite a long way - keep an eye on Gandhi..."

Craig  
"They change depending on wind direction. The most common ones for me are the tops of climbing tandems, they work really well. The tree line to the west of the bottom landing is a good trigger when the wind has some south in



it. The new train bridge has also given me a few climbs."

Dave Massie  
"The spur in front of take off, the farm in front (goes up the spur in the middle of the site). But especially, the trees in the wood to the far right - they trigger the best thermals."

Gandhi  
"The spurs. The river, the high tension power lines in the valley, The train track. I follow the clouds and birds more than I do the ground. Seagulls are smart lazy birds and are damn good at finding a good line. I find the lift tends to street in weird and wonderful ways. It is possible to go up these lines to the tip or Rodmell on some days. With practice you can let the glider

find the lift for you."

#### What's the best flight you've done from it?

Carlo  
"I don't have one 'best' flight (unless you only judge this only by distance flown, which I don't). My longest flights from Mount Caburn (I think?) so far are to the Isle of Sheppey (95km), the edge of Manston airspace (near Margate, 108km), and to the Thames (landing on the Isle of Grain, 88km). Although each of these flights was truly wonderful and amazing, my favourite flights from Mount Caburn (or anywhere) have generally involved flying with friends and just having a nice time. In particular, I've had some fantastic and very memorable XC flights from Mount Caburn with Tefal over the years, where we've tried to stick together (not easy on paragliders) and been hollering joyfully to each other at cloudbase before heading off on the next glide. One of the best flights I've had from Mount

Even though there was a reasonable breeze from the south I decided at this point to attempt a triangle, which eventually resulted in a successfully completed 26km FAI triangle."

Charlie  
"I flew my first 100km from Caburn and managed to hold the site record very briefly until Wagga claimed it back again in style by crossing the Thames. The longest flights always turn out to be the easiest but getting the second climb at Caburn is tricky and then you have to stay high as the ground rises towards Heathfield. After that if you can stay out of the airspace it is generally fairly straightforward flying - I concentrate on staying high and flying the sky rather than the ground, keeping a close eye on the clouds and looking out for gulls en-route. If the wind is southerly then staying out of airspace makes the first part of the flight hard but then opens up the possibility of crossing the Thames..."

Craig  
"The best flight was to Densol, inland of Folkstone and Dover with Mark on an overcast day. We both worked together on a really tricky day when each transition had felt like a death glide. The longest was 109km to Witham in Essex, I think I also dragged Mark along on that one. (Please insert smiley face so a certain tree surgeon doesn't remove my head.) Both flights this year, its amazing how good Caburn has been."

Dave Massie  
"58K last year. I left the Dyke as soon as I spotted that the wind had turned SW on the weather station (it was still NW on the hill, and everyone else stayed). Rushed off to Caburn, where I got a thermal

almost immediately, then another better one came along, and off I went. Nobody else made it in time. Struggled for ages to get the first 15K, then it got easier (as it always does) before Heathfield. After that, I should have got further, but landed out after Tenterden."

Gandhi  
"I have got to the northern most point of the Isle of Sheppey. It was not hard as it streeted very nicely, just bombed down the street."

#### How do you deal with landing out and getting back?

Carlo  
"This can be a right pain sometimes and can take a long time, if you're unlucky. Other times

I've been very lucky and got lifts from passers by or friendly pilots, so it's not been too much trouble. This is the UK (not a 3rd world country, military dictatorship or warzone) so it's really not such a big deal. Walking, hitching, buses, trains, taxis... whatever it takes to get back. Much easier (but also less fun) than the mad rides you often get on mopeds, donkeys, kids bikes, horse-carts, over laden open-backed trucks (with wheels that looks like they are about to fall off) and clapped-out old bangers absolutely rammed full of people in places like Africa, Asia and Latin America!"

Charlie  
"Landing out can be a little intimidating the first time but choose a field early from the air that is clear of livestock and keep a sharp eye out for powerlines/cables etc. If you are unsure of the wind direction leave enough height to make a few turns above the field to ascertain what it is. I find it useful to look out for nearby roads or a path while I'm in the air too. I generally rely on trains to get back to Brighton or Glynde - I quite enjoy the time to go over the flight in my head and try and figure out how I could've flown further... Occasionally some nice chap drives out and picks us up - thanks again to everyone who has!"

Craig  
"I'm really glad you have asked this question, everyone always wants to know where you landed but not how you got back. Landing is only half the flight, the rest is getting back. For instance this last Saturday 22/8 I landed in Maidstone, it took a bus ride to the station, a train to London, a train to Brighton, a train to Lewes, then a Gandhi van to Caburn (then one and a half hours drive home). Landing in Essex was train, Tube, train then Gill's car back the next day to Caburn. Having said all that, though, there have been some great fellow xc pilots who have driven out to pick me up, people like Maddy, Simon, Tefal, Franco, Alison, Neil, Glen, Kev-eywevie, Gandhi - there are many more unsung heroes. Thank you to everyone who has ever recovered me after an XC - please do it again so I can get to the Trevor for more beer. The first few rounds are on me."

Dave Massie  
"Landing out is easy! Getting back is a pain if you rely on hitching. It's a hitching desert. Buses are the cheapest option - walk to the nearest village, and you can usually get to Lewes via Heathfield or Uckfield if you haven't flown very far. (Alight by the Cuilfail tunnel) Then walk back to Caburn. Or let the train take the strain - but all routes seem to go to Hastings first, then to Lewes (via Glynde, hopefully). The further you get, the more the train appeals."

Gandhi  
"Train if a long way but will ring mates on hill if stuck in the wop wops. (Ed - the what??) As they will ring me when they are stuck."

*Next issue - Firlie*



'Hairy' Dave Lewis - he looks a bit different with that white beard, doesn't he?

Last issue we featured a story on India on the back page. Continuing the theme of combining fancy first paragraph text with eastern wisdom, Dave Lewis brings some para-philosophy from The Magic Carpet Ashram. Get yourselves to India for some more. Or just sit and drink some coffee somewhere till it all becomes dear

First lesson: "Life should be treated like a thermalling flight. Slow down and circle in the lifting bits and when high enough, fly fast and straight through the sinking bits to your next area of ascension."

Second teaching received after some weeks of practice and meditation: "You have found that after achieving your first successful highs you have been eager to go off in search of greater heights or distant lands, only to find yourself in a deeper depression than when your journey began. It is a long, but social journey back to your beginnings and one to be enjoyed. New friends will give you a lift along the way. From now on you must enjoy and stay with your highs, even if they give periods of frustration, until you see real signs that your future path will be successful. That is especially important at the start of your journey while time is still young."

Third teaching, after much practice, meditation, triumphs over self and damning frustra-

tions: "More practised disciples may find they dwell too long on their high periods and do not have time to reach their true goal before this life ends and another day dawns. You must now trust your judgement and leave what you have gained behind when you feel the time is right to speed toward greater heights."

By the fourth teaching, we had learned to distort time by clever interpretation of the often cryptic consultations with the oracle of the wind. It had become possible to achieve great and lengthy periods of fulfilment while still leading a normal life and being able to provide support for others.

At the fifth and most recent hill-temple retreat, visitors from related religions proposed a relatively simple, formulaic philosophy which could be understood by all with a basic grasp of mathematics. The gurus could not agree that all life could ever be reduced so simply and that only by years of dedicated meditation and prac-

tice could a seeker begin to perceive glimpses of all possible paths both on a large and a small scale, and thus hope to navigate and fly at the ideal speed along the True Path.

The more experienced Gurus drew breath and began to discuss the definition of enlightenment and whether man could ever conceive of the ultimate horizon. It seems that for even the most enlightened beings, as soon as they have reached today's goal, then a new path becomes visible, to be striven for in the next life, until one has reached true enlightenment and fully freed oneself from the bonds of earthly life. Enjoy the journey, wherever it takes you.

*Dave Lewis*

panchgani  
+ kamshet

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