

Summer 09

Windsock



The Quarterly Magazine of the Southern Hang Gliding Club



Go East, young Paul! Photo: Carlo Borsattino

Getting Away With It

A blow by blow guide to getting away from Southern Sites

Plus: Safety News + Site News + Your Letters + Your Pictures
+ Some Adverts + Well, Loads More Really, so Get Stuck In

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- 5 We are off to Laragne in September on our famous cross country course. First week is full, but some spaces from 11th September 2009. Superb accommodation and food.
- 6 Go lightweight! We stock the Chairbag harness and the Icaro Energy Light, and many other harnesses. We will do px deals. We stock the superlightweight reserve from Apco. See www.apcoaviation.com
- 7 Pop in for tea! Have a chat with our team, Tim, Julia, Adam NG, Tim D, Johnny the Fox, Anne, Richard, Liz, Claire, Adam L, and Jessica! And Johnny B and Oz on the dark side.
- 8 We have our own, private, soarable sites for each wind direction. We offer refresher courses.
- 9 We love flying.
- 10 If you would like our monthly special offers newsletter sign up at www.flysussex.com



Morocco or India this autumn anyone? A Morocco sunset. Photo: Paul Forrester

Summer 2009

A nearly complete guide to what's inside

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Hello!

And welcome to the first of four issues I'll be editing. I hope you enjoy them. Thanks everyone who's sent in stuff for this issue – keep it coming. Thanks especially to Charlie Merrett who's helped with the big article and the advertising, and Carlo Borsattino for all the pics. There'll probably be loads of mistakes and formatting problems with this issue as my time is limited and my pea sized brain's struggled with learning a new layout programme. So if you want to help proof read please do drop me a line.

So why am I doing this? Well, I published and edited Cross Country for 10 years and having sold the business last year it felt a bit strange not to have a magazine to tinker about with, so here I am, having a tinker. I also thought it'd be good to do something for the club, having

enjoyed the southern sites since I first flew the Dyke back in 1995 (still remember it, chasing Jonny Carr crosswind against a strong northerly to land at Hastings).

On the good days I'm still as desperate as a crack addict in Brixton for my next flying fix. So please don't be offended if I don't stop to chat about Windsock when it's 10 mph WNW. Oh God what have I just said - I can almost hear Chris Bere's voice booming across the hill asking me about the magazine already...

Cheers
Hugh

*Articles, sob stories, photos, bent uprights and advertising to windsock@shgc.org.uk.
Next issue deadline is, oooh, let's say 5 August*



Contributors

From	Subject	Date Received	
Alan Jones	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Today	14:36
Charlie Merrett	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Today	13:38
Neil Charles	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Today	12:09
Nancy Elliott	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Today	00:24
PETER CAMPBELL	Re: BCC bit for windsock	Yesterday	23:27
Dan Hamblin	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	21:23
Chris	RE: Windsock Article	Yesterday	18:32
JAMES LYNCH	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	18:07
Stuart Troop	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	17:56
af	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	17:27
Carlo Borsattino, ...	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	17:25
Steve U	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	16:30
Kitty Mason	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	14:40
Kerry Robinson	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	14:16
Carlo Borsattino, ...	Windsock :: Carlo Bors...	Yesterday	14:07
Dan Hamblin	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	13:53
miles hockliffe	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	13:26
Kerry Robinson	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	12:22
Laurie Summers	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	12:04
S BERE	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	12:01
Carlo Borsattino, ...	RE: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	11:13
steelhs@aol.com	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	11:12
Richard Jefferies	Re: Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	10:57
Hugh Miller	Windsock AND YOU	Yesterday	10:50
Charlie Merrett	Re: Windsock Ads	Yesterday	10:40
Claire Furminger	Re: Something for win...	15 May 2009	18:54
PETER CAMPBELL	Re: Windsock Total Co...	12 May 2009	21:29
Charles Merrett	Windsock	7 May 2009	09:51
JAMES LYNCH	Re: Windsock Article	7 May 2009	09:01
irek urbanski	RE: Windsock Article	6 May 2009	19:56
annie thompson	RE: Windsock Article - ...	5 May 2009	22:14
Ian Farr	Re: Windsock Article	5 May 2009	06:46
Hugh Miller	Windsock	29 Apr 2009	08:33

Chairman's Welcome



Welcome to Summer! I hope I'm not about to jinx the rest of the season but if the last couple of months are any indication of what's to come then we should be in for some excellent flying. The season kicked off with a bang on the 6th of March at the Dyke – gaggles of paragliders climbing out and disappearing off into the distance. I thought I'd done alright for the beginning of March landing after 25km only to watch Carlo and Tefal cruise over my head half an hour later under a beautiful sky that took Carlo over 90km....

It's days like that that remind me why I love this sport so much – the independence and freedom that a few strings and a bit of cloth unpacked from a rucksack can provide. But that freedom shouldn't be taken for granted. From the pioneers of our sport that risked life and limb to push the boundaries to those that give up their free time to represent the interests of our minority sport – it takes a lot of effort behind the scenes to allow us to enjoy the relative simplicity of free flight.

Hence we have a club. The club provides us sites to fly from, a safe environment for pilots to learn and develop their skills and hopefully opportunities to socialise so that they can share the experience with fellow pilots. That all takes quite a lot of work and we're very fortunate that we have club members that are willing to give up their free time to become coaches, give talks and sit on the committee to make sure our club can provide all this.

We also need some rules. None of us particularly like having to have rules but they are there for two main reasons – to allow us to keep on flying from our sites and to do so in a safe environment.

Before you go flying please make sure you know what they are. Fortunately there aren't many and they are all in the site guide. Some may seem a bit petty and unnecessary but they are all there for a reason, either for our safety or to make sure we don't lose the site. And if you see anybody that looks like that they don't know what the latest rules are, please either have a word with them or point them out to a club coach or committee member.

Keeping the club running also requires a fair bit of money, most of which goes to the land owners that allow us to fly from their land. Those site fees have been going up steadily over the last couple of years hence we had to put up the subs last year. I don't think that less than a pound a week is much to ask for but there are a few pilots out there that obviously do. If you know or see anyone on the hill that clearly is not a member or a foreign visitor then please tell someone about it. We don't expect everyone to be comfortable going up to a stranger asking to see a membership sticker but if you tell a coach

or a committee member then at least you'll have passed the problem on to someone else!

Right, rant over – back to some more positive issues! I'd like to welcome Hugh Miller to the committee as our new Windsock editor. We're really fortunate to have someone so experienced take on the role and I'm really looking forward to seeing the results. I'm expecting that Windsock will be coming out on a regular quarterly basis and alongside the excellent articles that Neil provided there will also be a lot of info directly relevant to the club to keep you informed of important issues as not everyone has access to the website or forum. That's also the reason we've decided to stick to a paper version of Windsock and we hope to offset the cost of production by allowing members to advertise their business etc for a small charge. An electronic version will be available on the website as well to allow members to opt out of receiving a paper copy if they wish.

All this flyable weather has meant that the friendly inter-club competition, the Airwave British Club Challenge (or BCC) has got off to a great start with 21 teams having competed in over a dozen rounds already. We finally managed to get a paragliding team together for some of them and the Southern Slackers are currently in 4th place after winning two of the rounds so well done to all those that have taken part. The final will take place in August with the top 6 teams competing against each other. If you fancy joining in email the committee and we'll add you to the list.

Here's looking forward to a lot more flyable weather – fly safe and see you over the back.

Charlie Merrett, Chairman

Your Letters Unedited!

Well here is my what i have to say. I was happy to join as a new member, but after flying a Devils Dike a few weekend was amazed about the members attitude to air law, also just as amazed after joining and paying for the year finding out 8 weeks later my membership need to be renewed, so from now on you can stick your membership and i shall just pay a visiting fee.... Great Club! :(

Sean McGoldrick

Not sure I can contribute a full article windsock yet but I have some questions that could be popped in the "letters" page to stimulate discussion.

1) The SHGC sites guide is ... average, especially if like me you don't know the surrounding area

well, would be great to have a little more info on what works where, house thermals etc? the maps are pretty grim too, the monthly meeting talks on XC routes would go in there great... 2) I've just renewed my mebership and saw an option for a site purchase fund. is that for the club or BHPA? with this in mind where have all the SHGC westerly sites gone, I'm convinced there's an XC only take off round the corner of Beddinhams (above the tip/quarry & what about the "old sail plane take off" east of Bo Peep, is there movement to try and get a W site?

Miles Hockcliffe

Editor's note: all letters welcome. Send to windsock@shgc.org.uk.

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Top left, clockwise: Ian G at Firlé (Charlie Merrett), Morocco gang (Paul Forrester), Caburn lounging and flying (Alan Jones), Lanzarote with Johnny (Aggy Finn), Ghandi boats another Sussex-wide circle (Charlie Merrett), it's Hammerton time (Carlo Borsattino). Inset: Daughter of Owen, Mark and Annie spooning (Tefal)

Clubbing News Well, club news actually!

SHGC AGM MINUTES Club Sec Anne Stenning summarises the 2009 club minutes

1. Officers' reports
SAFETY – 13 incidents since April 2008, no fatalities but some were quite serious with 5 broken limbs. There was a mid air between HG and PG but, fortunately, no significant injury. There is now an incident reporting system on the website for all to use.

MEMBERSHIP – due for renewal at the end of April. Please display your membership sticker on your helmet.

COACHING – coaches will all be wearing a white ribbon on their harnesses. There are 25 club coaches and photos of most are on the website.

SITES
Devils Dyke – PGs are reminded not to ground handle in or relaunch from the paddock while there are HGs in the air or trying to launch. A large red windsock will be available to be flown by the HGs when any of them are flying.

Caburn – the gate on the parking field must be locked as we come and go so that non-flyers

cannot use it.

Beachy Head – always put out the public warning flags.

The fences on a couple of sites have been damaged. This generally results in a call from the farmer or the landowner who is at best unhappy. Please avoid damaging fences by climbing over them and ask others to walk round as well.

SCHOOLS LIAISON – the role will be changing slightly to be more focussed on getting out to the schools to meet and brief newly qualified pilots before they start using our sites.

AEROTOW – all members of the aerotow syndicate must be members of the SHGC. Higher rates are charged for tows for those users who are not members of the syndicate or the SHGC.

TREASURER – we had an overall negative net income of £945 in the year to 28/02/09. Adjusting for non-recurring transactions gives us a budget net income for 2009/10 of £2.5k. Any year end balances are transferred to (or from if negative) the site fund.

2. Election of Officers

Post	Current	New
President	Johnny Carr	Johnny Carr
Chairman	Charlie Merrett	Charlie Merrett
Secretary	Anne Stenning	Anne Stenning

Sites	David Webb	David Webb
Windsock	Neil Brennan-Wright	Hugh Miller
Coaching	John Lancaster	John Lancaster
Safety	Steve Purdie	Steve Purdie
Treasurer	Pete Campbell	Pete Campbell
Aerotow	Will Greenwood	Will Greenwood
Schools Lia	Dave Nickels	Neil Brennan-Wright
Membership	Des Huth	Des Huth
Social Sec	Vacant	No volunteers

3. Future Communications

We should be able to continue to produce paper copies of Windsock without having to increase membership fees. Club members will be able to buy advertising space for non-flying related business. There is an option on the website to opt out of receiving paper communications should any members wish to receive electronic communications in the future. AGM and membership renewal notices will continue to be sent in hardcopy to all members.

4. Membership Fees for 2009/10

Membership fees will not change – £50 for standard membership, £40 for family / student membership and £30 for over 60 / Instructor / TI membership.

5. AOB

There was a member proposal to change the club name to incorporate PG as well. There was general agreement with the proposal for a name change to Southern HG and PG Club.

Safety Stuff By Steve Purdie, Safety Officer

The sea breezes are now well and truly upon us. If the meteorographic wind is offshore, keep an eye out to seaward and if you observe the curtain cloud of a sea breeze convergence close behind you, then it is safest to land and seek out a site facing into the sea breeze, rather than experience the often very turbulent approach of the sea air. If you don't know what a sea breeze front looks like, ask one of the coaches on the hill to point it out to you.

The sites which face the sea are a little more difficult for the beginner to decode. The sea breeze often manifests a simple increase in the wind strength and concurrent increase in turbulence. Mount Caburn is notoriously turbulent during the afternoons at this time of year, with cool stable sea air and strong insolation unimpeded by any cloud. Here you need to observe the amount of wind on the river to the south of the railway Bridge to gauge what is coming. Watch the more experienced pilots. As always, if the only people flying are displaying red ribbons, it is probably too rough or windy! Thermalling and ridge etiquette- There are three things to consider here, in order of priority:

Airlaw:

It shall remain the duty of the commander of an aircraft to take all possible measures to ensure that his aircraft does not collide with any other aircraft.

An aircraft shall not be flown in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a danger of collision. When two aircraft are converging in the air at approximately the same altitude, the aircraft which has the other on its right shall give way.

When two aircraft are approaching head-on, or approximately so, in the air and there is a danger of collision, each shall alter its course to the right. An aircraft which is being overtaken in the air shall have the right-of-way and the overtaking aircraft, whether climbing, descending or in horizontal flight, shall keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering course to the right. However a glider overtaking another glider in the United Kingdom may alter its course to the right or to the left. (i.e., when near a ridge, shall only overtake between the other glider and the ridge)

International Convention:

- Join a thermal in the same direction as the glider(s) already in it.
- The highest glider in a thermal when one or more are merging sets the direction for the lower gliders. This is actually a pain, because the lower pilots may not be aware that there is a glider above them, but look!
- Give way to the glider thermalling inside you.
- Give way to the glider thermalling below you.

Local rules:

The local rule here means thermal to the right at all times when under 1500', so that *when* conditions are crowded every pilot knows which way others *should* be turning. You should only thermal to the left if any of the conditions mentioned above require you to do so.

Loads of pilots disregard this rule. Often their justification being that to thermal to the left was, in that particular situation, safer. I have to say, that if I were thermalling alongside another pilot I would prefer to be going in the opposite direction to them, that way there are no head-to-head moments. Given that thermals here are often comprised of multiple small cores this is a common scenario, but really we should all endeavour to thermal about the same centre, not that that is ever going to happen.

It is also commonly more efficient to thermal to the left, and many of the local hot-shot pilots will insist on doing so. This is in open contravention of the club rule, but providing they are not impacting any other nearby pilots I wouldn't have a problem with this. It is only when they come into proximity with others that they really should bow to the rule and alter the direction of rotation to the right.

The reasons that the thermal to the right rule was adopted were that it makes the sky safer for all of us and that it effectively gives right of way to the thermalling craft. Lets all try to make the most of the advantages.

Sites News

Caburn Field Gate: Please do not park at west end of Ranscombe Lane for Caburn. Local residents have asked me to remind members that they should use the SHGC car park adjacent to the landing field, keeping all of Ranscombe Lane clear of parked cars. Members do not have a right of way through Airworks training field to get to the top of Mount Caburn. OUR CABURN PARKING FACILITY IS NOW VERY MUCH UNDER THREAT. We have been asked to ensure that the gate is LOCKED SHUT at all times of the day. PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOU DO THIS. The gate has apparently been left open recently, by club members, when there was livestock in the field! The open/unlocked gate also allows walkers/ramblers to park in the field. We are working on a redesign of the locking arrangement in consultation with Glynde Estates. We have fitted a new sign on the gate which advises others that the field is 'Private' with no public right of way.

Devil's Dyke: The paddock area, from the earthworks to the fence immediately west of the Pub, is essentially for the use of hang gliders. It is to be kept clear of paraglider traffic, as much as is reasonably possible. If hang gliders are present, HG pilots will fix the large RED WINDSOCK on the paddock fence. This will help facilitate safe hang glider take off and

allow for over-shoot. Should you land your paraglider in this area when the RED WINDSOCK is flying DO NOT KITE-UP OR RE-LAUNCH FROM THE PADDOCK. You must mushroom the glider and walk back to the main take-off via the stiles/gate.

Newhaven Site Rules: You must be PILOT RATED to fly past 'the point' on to the SSW face. If you have not flown at Newhaven Cliffs before, you must be briefed by a Club Coach or other suitably experienced pilot. Be aware of the Tide Times - even at low water there are limited outlanding options. Landing in water is likely to be fatal. Always carry a bridle knife. Use of a buoyancy aid is recommended. Do not fly over the 'Park Homes' site to the west of launch.

Please read and understand the SHGC Sites Guide (updated May 2009)
- David Webb

The BCC

The British Club Challenge is a friendly inter-club competition held every year, open to all BHPA clubs. Its ethos is to promote the improvement of XC piloting skills and encourage the visiting of new and differing sites, while flying in a team environment. A club may enter any no. of teams with a maximum of six pilots per team. Tasks are, for the norm., open dis-

tance~ just climbout and head off downwind! Even a deathglide from 3000ft should score over the min. distance of 3km; a second climb and you're doing well. This year our club has entered one team~ the "Southern Slackers". The pilots in the team can be different every round! The fair weather in March and April saw a good start to the 2009 BCC, with 13 rounds completed over 5 weekends; another 23 rounds were cancelled. May has not proved so good. The Southern Slackers have fielded a full team for 6 of those rounds, and is currently holding 4th place; but that can easily change as the points between 3rd and 9th are relatively close. Avon, as usual, head the table.

- Pete Campbell

Meet the Coaches!

With this month's coaching meeting we'll be doing something a little different, hell we don't even know where the venue is! The event will be held on Saturday 27th June 2009. Weather permitting, we'll be laying on a BBQ so don't forget the Food and Drink (we're not that generous!) and don't worry about the calories, you can burn them off in our "Spot Landing Comp & Ground Handling Workshop". Venue Location will be notified on the SHGC website and via Airworks on 01273 858108 from 5.00pm. So Make a Date

- Rob Beresford

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Slipping On Cow Dung, etc

One of the many interesting things (OK, actually the only interesting thing) I learnt at my first committee meeting was that 1 in 4 southern club members are new pilots. Yep, brand new! And there's over 100 of them! This is the new blood that'll be keeping our sport going into the next, err, decade. So what's it learning to fly like these days? How scary is it turning up on a hill full of geezers wearing boiler suits? I thought I'd shoot a couple of new members some questions and they very kindly responded. In fact Ian Farr wrote a whole bleedin' article so if you have any decency at all you'll damn well sit the hell down and get reading. Alrighty?

IAN FARR

"I had my introduction to flying on a fantastic taster day in June a few years ago now. The weather was really hot with a light breeze. We went to the training field at Caburn all excited. Seeing other people flying from the top of this huge hill they looked like Gods just cruising around as and where they wanted to go, some close to the hill others seemed just to disappear up into the blue haze. I couldn't wait till it was me up with them to, maybe it would be this afternoon!

The reality sunk in several hours later shattered and looking more like a sweaty Mr spongebob rather than the sky gods above me. At the end of the afternoon we were asked if we would care to climb over the barbwire fence and a little way up the slope. This we did and laid our gliders out, yet again and told to run towards the barbwire fence we had just clambered past. Without thinking about how daft or dangerous it seemed and totally exhausted I did as I was told and in a few seconds I was up, over that fence and into the sky. You could see for miles every thing shrank to a beautiful toy town I was higher than trees you could hear the sheep below and the train heading for Glynde. A bird actually flew below me. I was then guided down to earth over the radio. I was hooked.

Last year I decided to take the time and take the full course with Airworks, one of my better decisions. I had a great time through last winter with great tuition from all the instructors. One of the best moments was during the cold snap back in January this year when Steve decided we needed to be at Bo Peep. It was to be my first time flying with others! I was really nervous and not really looking forward to the task. It's amazing what a little bit of red ribbon tied to your back makes. It was like the parting of the Red Sea. I was given the space I needed, I followed the rules of the air and then realised so was everyone else. Realising it wasn't so scary I settled down and had the best few minutes in the air I'd had. Just to top it off I did my first controlled top landing. Oh not having to walk up a hill

again (I thought). I was sent off straight away down to the bottom of the hill to make sure my good friend Ian was ok, he had landed at the bottom in a thicket. It took an age to get his glider out of the bushes, they just didn't want to let it go. Then reality kicked in once again... the customary walk back to the top of the hill. I passed my CP a month ago and must thank Steve and all the guys for making the journey both challenging, great fun and highly addictive. They would always feed you with the information needed to keep you safe at every stage of learning and at a pace that didn't make you feel silly.

One of the best parts of the sport is the people, not just the instructors, the guys and Sky Gods on the hill, all seem to have the time to help both with the encouragement needed when you first pass and useful information on the sight, weather etc. Even if they tell you about it, as they cruise by just over you.

My goals for this year are to take a little more time out to enjoy the great scenery we have in the south east, walk up and down fewer hills and hopefully enjoy the glorious weather this year!"

JAMES LYNCH

What's your favourite site so far and why?
High and Over is a wonderful view which is a consolation if conditions are not right.

What have been your best moments in flying so far?
My first long flight from Caburn to the car park.

And any funny moments while training or after training?
Slipping on cow dung while ground handling was amusing until I realised it was an occupational hazard.

Any close shaves?
Seven weeks ago on Devil's Dyke I was practicing landing when the wind died, then I found

myself over the trees - which killed the wind even more. I was aiming to land above the tree line, but found myself going towards the top tree. Remembering my training, I was in two minds whether to crash the top of the tree or flare and end up right in the middle of it. In the end I hardly touched the tree so it didn't slow me, then I hit the ground as my wing got caught in the tree. Luckily I got away with just a very bad ankle sprain.

Do you go out flying with any buddies?
It's not like playing football, is it? You literally have to go where the wind takes you - I always tend to get chatting with someone, but it's very unlikely that you will see that person the next time you go flying. I have also been doing a lot of ground handling on Telscombe Tye which is next to where I live, so I have been socialising with lots of dog walkers.

Has anyone in the club been particularly helpful?
Logical-Rob Beresford was very helpful on my first day on my own at Devils Dyke.

What's your experience of joining the club been like so far?
I have found everyone very helpful and supportive - I think with paragliding the issue is more with the sport than the social aspect, particularly where there is that anxiety factor. The more you fly and the more you learn, the more risks you know about. At every stage you have to make sure your skill and knowledge are in balance with the extra risks as you progress.

What are your goals this year?
I feel comfortable with ground handling and controlling my wing to take off safely. I need to practice landing till I am comfortable in a variety of wind conditions. Then I need to practice and get comfortable with top landing. After that I will be happy if all my flying is ridge soaring - if I catch a thermal by mistake, so be it, but I am happy to leave it till next year to XC.

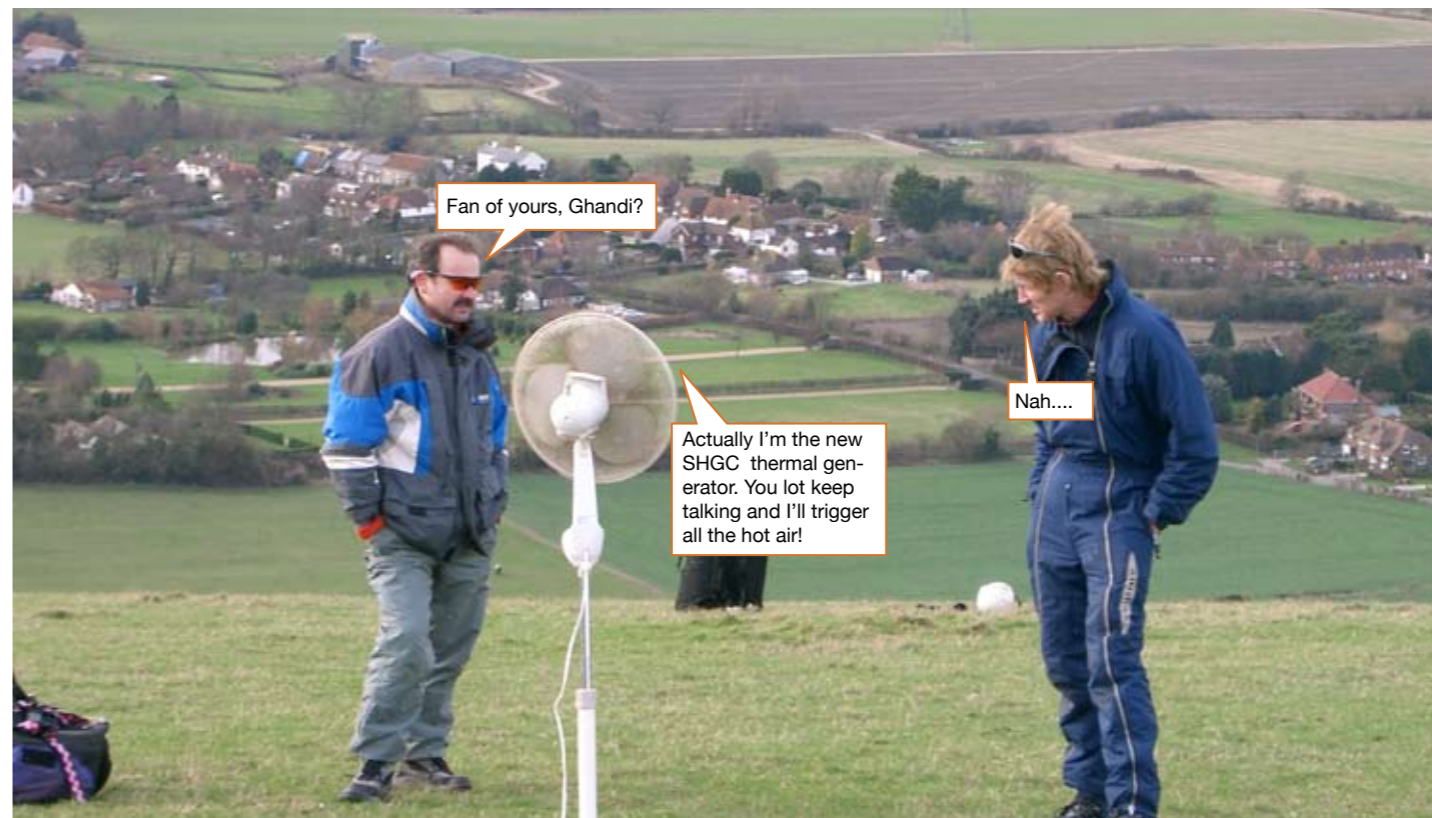


Photo: Simon Steel

What's the best bit of advice you've ever heard?

"Always land into wind!"
-Kitty Mason

"Best bit of advice I had was last July in Piedrahita... I was having difficulty going XC with a new wing and ended up bombing out before everyone else after going off on mad glides for the next thermal. On the eve of the last day, one guy in the group told me... "just concentrate on staying in the air, then the distance will come. The next day I tried it and did my best XC to date. Not only that, I was the last one to land after all else had bombed out (except for Steve Ham that is of course). Rather ironically, the last one in the air with me that day just before I watched him bomb was the guy who gave me the advice"
-Stuart Troop

"If you're not in the zone, don't fly"
- Martin

"Best (and simplest) tip ever? I was doing the novice thing while waiting to launch - pulling loads of brake to keep the wing on the ground, and the wind bouncing it up and down and moving me gradually towards the back of Caburn. Not cool. Somebody shouted over to just pull the C's and it would sit down. What a revelation!"
-Cheers, Neil Charles

"The top bit of advice I go by is "if in doubt, stay on the ground". I would like to be paragliding for the next 40 years or so and don't think there is any point in pushing things too much. I always err on the side of caution. I see so many people with dangerous attitudes! Over confidence etc... I'm not saying people shouldn't challenge themselves and sometimes set targets outside their own comfort zone. I'm just saying people should know their limits. Also, twenty minutes after CP in 2006, Tim King showed me the crossed arm reverse launch. I loved it ever since!"
-Laurie Summers

"Look where you want to go! I'm applying it from motorcycling but it also seems to work for paragliding. I think that there may be a tendency for low airtime pilots to just pull the strings and expect to turn. Also it does wonders for keeping a look out! Oh and the best piece of advice I've had from my father was never to cook fried eggs in a nudist camp. Now you know!"
- Cheers, Richard Jeffries

"The best bit pf advice I have been given was that I should give up as I am shit."
- Many Thanks, Chis Bere

XC LEAGUE TABLE

- 1) SALLY SEAGULL 8969 km
- 2) KARL BIGSANTANOS 93.2 km
- 3) MARKUS WATTAGE 93 km
- 4) HARRY HANGSLIDER 58 M
- 5) RED RIBBON RON 84.76 km

DOUBLE SCOOP ICE CREAM AWARD:
CRAGGY SATWELL

B+Q AWARD:
PAULINE TEFALIO

LEFT DYKE TOO EARLY AWARD:
RUFUS GETALIFUS

REPORT

As you can see Markus and Karl have been knocking out flights into Kent but Sally Seagull, what with feeding her young and shitting all over cars from here to East Anglia, is maintaining a huge lead.

Spring Stories

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

SPRING AT THE DYKE

Dude, despite the amount I read, I can't “see” words. Forgive my syntax and spelling...

Spring at Devil's Dyke 2009. A time of hope and revitalisation. A time for bluebells and fluffy spring rabbits. And a time for new parking restrictions and a ridiculous roundabout.

“Alright fatty” says Chris Beer, sitting down next to Mad farmer. The Mad farmer rips open a milk carton, spilling some just to the left of his crotch area.

“Alright Chris, coffee?” he asks.

“I think I will. Have you washed your hands?” Chris replies, looking at the milk stain with trepidation. “I was in fact thinking of selling chocolates from your van.”

Dave: “eh?”

Chris: “For the national front's Easter egg hunt. Why do you think there are so many punter cars in the car park?”

Dave: “Selling chocolate?”

Chris: “Yeah, to the kids that want save on the bother of looking for their own eggs”.

Dave: “You are a genius. Anyway, It's been one of the best XC season starts since 96 hasn't it? we've had 10 XC days, thousands of ks flown and Carlo's did that century. How often does than happen by mid April? Not since 1996?”

“96? I wouldn't know Dave, I'm not that old,” Chris replies.

Chris: “No I remember it was the year before Nova released the Xyon wasn't it.”

Dave: “I remember Luchesi and Cookie, in the league one year, doing work “deals”.

“Work?”. Kevy-wevy turns up and sits down and looks upset by the word.

Dave: “Yeah, there was so many epic XC days, one after another, that they ended up both agreeing which Epic days to sacrifice to work, just so they could pay some bills.”

Chris: “Did it work?”

Dave: “Na, cookie cheated and turned up anyway to win the league.”

They all laugh.

Chris: “So based on the amazing start to the year we have had, is 2009 going to be the same do you think?”

Dave: “no, in 96 the position of the Jet stream was blocking the shit weather from hitting us and we had artic air for a month. It's now below England. Actually it is all over the f**king shop. More likely we will be getting extremes in 2009. Either it will be too stable (barbecue weather) or too wet (free beer from Harvey's). Anyway what do you care, your only entered in the dinner league.”

Kevy-wevy ear's prick up.

Dave explains: “It's Chris's special league, it's for those that see the goal of XC flying as proximity to food and creature comforts rather

than XC Ks flown! So land at your home when your partner has cooked the food and you get maximum points. Do a 100K XC but land in the boonies with a five hour retrieve and you may as well not have flown it”.

Chris: “Yes I'm am head of the league at the moment”

Dave: “you're a fat bastard”.

Chris: “no I'm a highly tuned vision of dinner league competitor”

Dave: “you're a fat bastard”

Dave and Chris turn and look at Kevy-wevy: “yer but not as fat as Kevy wevy”.

A thoughtful creative original work by Tefal. (FFB)

HITTING THE HAY

Hi Hugh,

I've got about 30 minutes, so no promises of an aspiring writer here, but they were good questions and thought I'd respond for the good of Windssock!

Easter weekend, 4 days holiday (very rare!), heading to SE Wales and the forecast looks flyable!

On Saturday 11th April, after a lot of weather analysis, Carlo and I decide to head for Hay Bluff; we are the first to arrive and start to wonder if we are at the wrong hill.

It's chilly, quite chilly in fact, so I start to put on all the layers whilst trying to work out the site: landing options, wind direction, the walk up, the weather, then back to wind direction. Are we at the right site? Why is there no-one else here? There is a BCC happening in SE Wales this weekend and so we know that somewhere out there are a large number of pilots all trying to do what we are - go XC! So where are they?

Fortunately at this point a few people did turn up including a local school. The owner Steve Milson was friendly and I ended up walking up part of the hill with him. I find myself often being overtaken on the walk-ups; I'm slow but with a fairly consistent pace! (Although clearly spending far too much time sitting in my car, driving wildly about the south-east of England, and not enough flying or instructing!)

At the top of the hill the wind is light, and the view wonderful; Steve's students are getting ready and by now there are a couple of other paraglider pilots looking for an adventure.

The top surface of Hay Bluff has quite a lot of gorse and this means finding some sort of clearing to lay out my wing and check everything.

One pilot is already launching and then attempts to soar, a few beats and he top lands, very persistent as he seemed to do this a few times whilst I was still getting ready. I am

fortunate enough to get some fabulous hand-me-downs and my latest toy is a Flytec 6020 (had no idea how to use it at the time) but was busy fixing everything into place on my deck. Radio on, headset on helmet, GPS plus 6020 in position, wing all checked, harness ready to go - where is the wind? Thinking to myself that I know it's lazy but I need more wind if I am going to have a chance in finding that lucky thermal, that walk up surely can only be done once in a day!?

I was ready, clipped in, and waiting on the hill, ground handling a little, waiting for some sort of inclining that if I took off I wouldn't be walking back up from the bottom. I watched another pilot trying and then slope landing, and then again. He started to find some small weak areas of lift, but they still weren't enough to entice me off that hill. Simon Steel arrived about 11:30, he had just driven straight from Sussex that morning! I think he was concerned that he had missed it by now and he would be seeing Carlo flying off into the distance. Although Carlo at this point had not taken off either; there is always something that needs sorting!

Conditions still weren't looking tempting enough by around midday; I thought if and when I do fly I'm going to need food inside me, so I mushroomed-up my wing, unclipped and found my sandwich. Of course this is always a

good time for conditions to pick up - not ready, not clipped in - but at this point it was just me and my sandwich!

Now all fed up (in the nice way) I started to clip back in as Carlo took off... Aaaggh!! What has he spotted? Why was that a good moment? Is he going to stay up?

A few seconds later I was ready to fly, and reassessing the conditions; there were now 2 or 3 pilots staying up above the hill and it was looking much better. I launched my lovely Advance Epsilon 5 up above my head and waited till it felt just right, nerves building, excitement growing and then blissful relief as I fly out away from my launch.

After a couple of scratchy beats, I thought here comes my slope landing, but, patience, I could feel some lift, I started to 'S' up and down, gaining little by little, until I had enough height above the hill to start 360ing and now the best bit, all I have to do is stay in this climb. I got high and comfortable and then radioed to Carlo to find out where he was, thinking he had already gone out of sight. Carlo came back on the radio to say that he had sunk out and practically landed at the bottom and was walking up the very steepest part of the slope; oh dear, I thought...

Well what about me I'm thinking to myself; I'm all the way up here with nobody to play

with and, more importantly, no plan of where to go! I take a moment to realise that I am flying over the black mountains, the views and the terrain beneath me is all quite different and breathtaking! Simon has launched and is working a climb out front. Shortly after Carlo joins him and the good news is it looks like I am going to have some friends!

As Carlo and Simon eventually come underneath me we drift back further over Hay Bluff and some sort of direction comes into action. We track over towards a long running spur and start to go on glide. At this point, quite clearly we sort the men from the women and I now start to try and keep up with two sky gods. I was also having slight technical hitch in that my speed bar line had popped off (must practice my bowlines!) and was trying to apply speed bar evenly after reattaching it all a bit wonky in the air!

I found another lovely climb, this one at times averaging around 3ms, taking me back up to 'base, which was just great! I could now continue my chase...

I was just about keeping up with the boys and the plan now was to fly out towards Hereford and skirt between 2 danger areas. We were on glide, I was already lower and we were looking for that next thermal, it eventually came seemingly triggered by a couple of tractors



Nancy over the back of the Bluff. This, and that photo on the left: Carlo Borsattino

working some fields but it was small, weak and difficult. I really must work on those scratchy zero thermal skills because I eventually gave in to all the lovely large fields that were beneath me, there wasn't going to be a problem finding a spot to land.

I landed in a lovely field, next to a church, with my retrieve (as it turned out) waiting for me. They were a very nice family visiting from Milton Keynes, sorting out their family tree by looking at grave stones, who took pity on me and drove me all the way back to my car at Hay Bluff. Wonderful!

So after downloading all the info I was very pleased that I had flown 16km. I hope 2009 can allow me a few more flights like that!

Attached a couple of photos of me over Hay Bluff, taken by Carlo - as a camera is the one thing I don't seem to fly with!

Well that was rather more than 30 minutes... Oh well I'll probably be a bit grouchy in the morning then! :-/

Hope to fly with you sometime this year.

Best wishes, Nancy

TENERIFE MEMORIES

I haven't flown this spring :(I qualified as a CP last summer, had a few short flights (and long walks) in the Autumn from Beachy head and Mount Caburn, but living and working in London means that I rely on the perfect alignment of work, traffic, social calendar and, of course a

wind speed and direction that falls bang in the centre of the narrow band that I feel comfortable flying in as a beginner!

A trip to Tenerife with Tim Cox provided just such an alignment in November last year. To go from 2 minute top to the bottoms in the smooth rolling hills of the country's newest country park, to a 2000m hill (I usually refer to it as a mountain when telling the story to non-fliers!) was a huge awakening. Where I was used to wide-open take-off areas, I now stared at a rocky, pebble-strewn clearing. The acres of plush green grass, perfectly mowed by the indigenous sheep of the south downs were replaced by small clearings, and in one case a cactus plantation that was strangely described as 'landing field B'.

The heart was pumping, but the training worked... a smooth forward launch, a few light steps and suddenly I was flying the highest I'd ever been, for the longest I'd ever flown, to a landing field that required binoculars to see clearly. And that was just the start. The next day I flew for an hour for the first time. The day after that I reached cloudbase (oddly not as clear a distinction between cloud and no-cloud as it looks like from the ground). On the last day we flew from the summit of the volcano at 4000m. I took pictures that time.

The whole thing was quite strange. I had expected to take time to admire the view and to take in the exhilaration of flight, but the reality was different. It a bit like I imagine an out of body experience to be. I was flying. Wasn't I? There was so much to take in. So much to focus

on that my mind didn't seem to have the spare capacity for self awareness. Was it me, or was it the memory of some crazy video I found on youtube?

The memories have settled a bit now. I've looked at the pictures. I've talked it over. I've told the stories. But I haven't flown since. I still feel I need as a beginner. I've stood watching others struggling to launch in high-winds at bo-peep, but I didn't launch myself. I worry that I've lost my confidence. Left it too long. But I don't think it's that. I received some advice early in my training that I often remind myself of: if you have to ask yourself the question of whether it's safe, or whether you'll make the landing site - you've already answered it. It's not and you won't. That advice worked for me in Tenerife when I was flying towards those electricity pylons (it wasn't and I didn't :-)

So that's this Spring's (non) flying, but I'm sure that alignment isn't too far away, it won't be long 'til I'm flying again. Building up the hours, widening the window within which I don't have to ask the question.

*Happy flying,
Kerry Robinson*

Flying the Flatties

By Dan Hamblin

2009 started off well, with some lovely wintery flying at the Devil's Dyke but since then, those illusive north westerly winds were turning into a distant memory. What I needed was an alternative venue that I could use when our local sites were not working.

Over two years ago I had completed a hang glider tow conversion (static winching) with Lejair, but after gaining my endorsement I hadn't used it. One day I stumbled across the Suffolk Coastal Floaters Hang Gliding Club. They are predominately a winch club with their main winch site located at Mendlesham Airfield, around 20 miles north of Ipswich.

Mendlesham Airfield is a former World War II airfield with only the east/west runway remaining. After the war, local farmers purchased the airfield, broke up the runway and sold the hardcore for the post war rebuild. This left the grass strip that is used today by both a local micro-light club and the Suffolk Coast Floaters Hang Gliding Club.

In early March with another non-flying weekend looming for the SHGC sites, I headed to Suffolk to give this winching a go again! On arrival I was made to feel very welcome and was fully briefed. I'd told them that it had been over 2 years since I last winched and they were very supportive and keen to get me going again! Before I knew it I was positioned at the end of the runway and attached to the winch cable. The wind was a light westerly and blowing directly down the runway, perfect! I'd been told to expect to run a bit before I'd get airborne - not much different from hill launching then! After instructing "All out" (that's put your foot on the gas for the winch operator), the cable tensioned hauling me forwards. My legs quickly accelerated until I simply lifted from the ground. That was a weird sensation as I'm used to the ground dropping away!

The Suffolk Club uses a chest release system for winching. A bridle, made up of a short and long threader, connects the pilot to the towline. During tow, the short threader is released shortly after takeoff and towing continues on the long threader until final release. For the pilot, levers on the chest release are used to hold each threader. The 'top' lever releases the short threader and the other releases BOTH (a safety feature!).

During towing, shortly after launch and at a safe height, the winch operator backs off line tension to allow for a smooth first release. This tension back off is a clear message for the pilot to release, and that's exactly what I did. Unfortunately, I pulled the wrong lever! I watched with disappointment as the winch cable completely separated from me and started parachuting to the ground. Damn, not



Photo: Dan Hamblin

a good start! I didn't have too long to worry about it as it was time to flare and land - at least I got that bit right!

Shortly afterwards I was back at launch and with the support of everyone there I was bumped to the front of the launch queue; apparently double-releases don't count! I rewarded them with a successful launch and first release! Wow, this was fun! On a good day, tows to 1000ft QFE or more are achievable but not today, due to light winds I maxed at around 600ft and after looking directly down at the winch I thought it prudent to get off the cable!

After releasing, the battle against gravity commenced; never before had I concentrated so much on my vario and the feel of my glider! It's also incredibly liberating being away from the crowds of our local sites and strangely, away from any significant geography. At times I missed my ridge lift, but the winching experience has certainly improved my skills!

In subsequent visits, I've experienced 2 different winching sites, a variety of conditions, a weak link break, a cable break, a booming thermal, a helmet queue, a close encounter with Mendlesham's 1000ft radio mast, the things people do to land on the spot, the local pubs, camping on the runway and

the immense support and friendship of the Suffolk Club members - a big thanks to them! Winching has turned out to be a great way to compliment my flying.

Looking forward, I can't wait for some northerly winds so I can see if I've made any progress with my flying! Look out for me at our local sites; I'm the pilot still happily flying his Aeros Target - the one that normally, but hopefully not much longer, bottom lands! See you on the hill!

Fancy Winching?

There are a number of methods of getting a winch endorsement. A number of schools offer this (I did so with Lejair), however, if you are already CP Hill rated and current (10 hours or more), the Suffolk Club can convert you. Chest release systems are a bit pricey new - mine was sourced from Simon Murphy (www.turfhouse.com), but there's always a chance of getting one second-hand! Oh, you'll also need a harness with tabs for connecting the release system; most harnesses have these (it was a revelation when I realised what mine were for!)

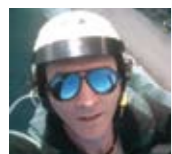
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Rio Rocks

By Chris Stevens



It's 7 pm, Friday 13th March 2009 and I'm sitting on the tarmac at Heathrow texting one of my mates: 'I'm on a plane going to Rio... ROCK ON!'

I am lucky enough to have another mate (Mike) who, not only has a flat on Copacabana beach, but is also friends with Iron Maiden's manager and they are just about to start the Brazilian leg of their south American tour... guess what we are doing tomorrow night?!

We arrive in a hot and humid Rio and my 2 'non flying' friends (who only have hand luggage) are already complaining that my 23kg bag (containing a 'small 9 year old boy*') will be taking up too much room in the taxi. Note most cars there don't have much space in the boot because they have gas conversions... I explain to my mates that I am also 'eco friendly' because I fly without an engine!

The taxi drops us off at the flat (I give the 9 year old boy some food and water!) and my mates troll off to see the premiere of the new Maiden film. Not having a pass I get some much needed ZZZ'ds on the beach. That evening we hook up with some of Mike's Brazilian mates and get a taxi to the stadium. The venue is where the Rio Carnival is held, and we are guest of Rod Smallwood (Maiden's manager, who incidentally lives in Brighton.) It's free drinks back stage and I meet Nico their drummer who is an awfully nice chap. We watch the band with 20,000 Brazilian fans and a rockin' time was had by all. Brazil loves rock and metal!

The next day we jump on a plane to Sao Palo to see the band at the F1 race track. We thought last night was good.....when we arrive it's like Friday night on the M25. We ditch the taxi

and follow the 4km queue of chanting fans and pick up our passes. The gig has been delayed for an hour and Rod says that there are 80,000 in already with a further 20,000 still outside... "We will have to open the gates and let them in for free because there will be a riot if we start the show now!" he says. If you haven't been to a Maiden gig you should go for the experience, you would be surprised at how many songs you would know.

On our return to Rio we spend the next 2 days on the beach and in the bars. On Wednesday I elected to stay in Rio and check out the paragliding while my 2 mates jet off again to Brasilia and Bello Horizonte. Being totally jammy and doing their best 'ligger' impersonation they get to go on the Iron Maiden plane with Bruce Dickenson (the voice of Maiden) at the helm. They are even whisked off the plane and into the Iron Maiden motorcade complete with police escort and thousands of fans lining the streets. As I said, Brazil Rocks!

Meanwhile me and the nine year old boy head off to Peppipino/ Sao Conrado beach which is about 25 minutes by cab and R\$25/£8 for some flying. On the way there I'm sitting in the back of the cab and there is a really loud bang. The driver and I see a coach coming towards us with one of it's tyres flailing directly towards us in huge cloud of dust. We both instinctively duck as it looks as if it is going to take the roof of the cab....I carry on down the road trying to do a John Pendry impersonation...you know: "have a memory like a gold fish!" (Yes, I have used that one in a previous Windsock article!).....anyway..... you get to the 1600ft take off free by grabbing a lift with some



Bruce, loose, about this hoose!
Photos: Chris Stevens

locals or by paying the local tandem hanggliders anything between £3 and £7. DON'T TAKE A TAXI! 1. They probably won't get up the hill and 2. it will be expensive! (Note, everyone from taxi drivers to beach sellers want to rip off the tourists so be on your guard!)

I phoned up Chico Santos, who does tandem hanglider flights and has flown Thames Valley sites here, he was most helpful with site briefing and even gave me a free lift up. Look him up at www.chicosantos.com (21) 3322 3165 and book an HG flight for the Misses! There are loads of YouTube videos of the site to wet your appetite. You will need to buy a licence/pass before you go up the hill, which is £7 for a day or £14 for 2 weeks. IMPORTANT: You need to have your BHPA licence with you. Your ticket also allows you to use the loo for FREE!

The site is in the National Park. The history is, that it used to be a coffee plantation but the coffee plants were wrecking the eco system. The water courses were drying up so they 'employed' 8 slaves back in the 1800's to authentically replant the rain forest which took some 30 years to complete! So spare a thought and check out the beauty of the place when you are skimming the tree tops!

MAKE SURE YOUR ALPINE LAUNCHES ARE GOOD! The launch site is for one glider only and there are guys to lay out your kit (they are paid but a tip every now and again goes down well.) Also, DON'T LAUNCH UNTIL YOU ARE GIVEN THE 'ALL CLEAR' as there is a hanglider launch immediately above you!

I spent 5 days flying, 2 were rather tragic top to bottoms (2 very stable days) but the other



3 were awesome. I thermalized with raptory/vulchery looking birds of prey that were happy to share their thermals/air space with me. I flew in and out of clouds, nearly flew into a rock face while playing with my camera (DUH!) and managed to land on the bull's eye in the landing field which is just off the beach at the end of the high rise hotels. One thing I really wanted to do was fly to the Statue of Christ and then land on Copacabana beach risking arrest by the old bill (cool huh?!) but it is not possible without a high cloud base. If you are lucky enough to have a go be aware that there are no landing options on the way except for the Race Course/Jockey Club and they charge you R\$50/£16 to get out: BARGAN! There is however a small conical hill half way that is surrounded by ghettos and rain forest which is a house thermal 'that ALWAYS works'..... 'well do ya feel lucky punk....WELL DO YA!' (Put your Clint Eastwood accent on for that one!)

Question: how are your spot landings? Carlo B. at Fly Bubble told me that once his mate landed in a netball court amongst the sky scrapers.....splat, up against the fence! Imagine the Wylie E Coyote moment as he picks himself up and then spots the 100 or so locals who are just about to lynch him!!

If you are going to Brazil and you can't get back stage passes for the next Maiden tour (gloat !) then there are loads of paragliding opportunities in Brazil, ask the locals and

definitely talk to Carlo. In the short space of time I was there I meet some great guys, thanks to those who gave me lifts back to Copacabana including Brazilian Louis who reminded me of 'Leo' from Leathal Weapon (!) and Felix who said: "say Hi to Irwyn when you go to Anncy!" Small world!

A word of warning, Rio is a hot bed of crime. I never saw any crime while I was there. There are groups of police on every other street corner (but they never gave us any trouble!) One evening we were going out to dinner 'down the road' but our Brazilian mate Marcos said that we couldn't go 'down there' because there was a gun battle going on. He wasn't joking. The next day's news paper had a picture of ten hand cuffed guys with their entire armoury in front of them: pistols, semi automatic rifles, etc.

Rules: Don't dress up when you go out, don't wear a watch and only take out the money you need for that evening. Don't sit in a bar counting cash. If some holds you up, give them everything! If you are busting for a piss at night then don't go down to the sea to do it (that goes for you guys as well!) Day time, don't take valuables to the beach and 'camp out' near one of the many police tents on the beach. And if you are on the beach and the prawn seller offers you 'one stick' for R\$5, tell him to sod off because it's 2 sticks for R\$4!!!

*Err, you what? - Ed

Get Away!

Getting away from Southern Sites, by Charlie Merrett

Welcome to most useful article you'll ever read! In this and following issues of Windssock we will feature one of our XC sites and let you in on some of the secrets that will allow you to break that cord that has kept you tied to the hill up until now...

This issue we have a look at Devil's Dyke and ask a few of our local legends (and a couple of wannabe skygods) for answers to those burning questions like....

What's the ideal forecast for a good day at Devils Dyke?

Carlo Borsattino
"Err... NW wind, not too strong, not too light? Otherwise pretty much the same 'good day' forecast as for any other SHGC site: Good air mass; good thermal forecasts (i.e. good lapse rate); high cloud base; 3-5/8s Cu; prefer no high or medium cloud etc. And then we keep our fingers crossed that the sea breeze doesn't rush in and mess it all up - which it almost invariably does!

Charlie Merrett
"I think the Dyke works better with a bit of wind, say 10-12mph from the North West hopefully going more West during the day. It helps the thermals up the slope and allows a sea breeze front to form. Ideally cold overnight which indicates a nice

dry airmass with lots of sunshine and high temperatures forecast for the day."

Craig Atwell
"The wind starting off North West going to a strong Westerly."

Dave Massie
"Post cold frontal - plus a bit of wind to keep the sea breeze away for long enough."

Mark Watts
"Post cold frontal and the wind West to North West about 10-12mph - that keeps the sea breeze away and then if it goes South West later, perfect!"

What's the trick with getting away from the Dyke?

Carlo Borsattino
Now that would be telling! And this would most probably require a gargantuan thesis which would be far too long to write now (I may write it one day!). A very important thing, I think, especially on SHGC sites, is that we should all work together on the hill to find thermals, and therefore ever pilot should take their turn to glide out from the hill in search of thermals, rather than always letting others do it for them - even less experienced pilots!

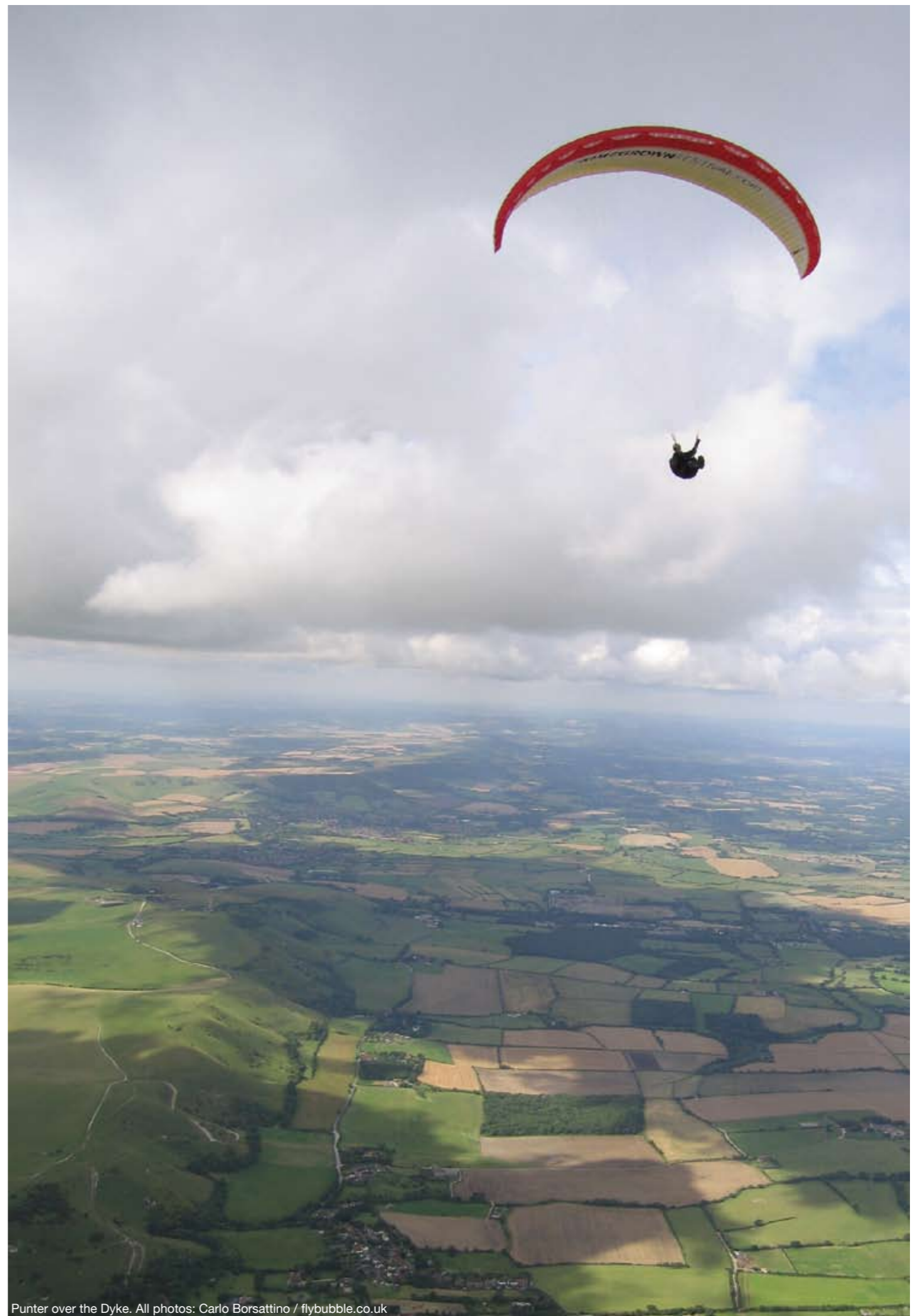
Charlie Merrett
"Get high - Stay high! I think it's important to get up to base on the climb out from the Dyke. If the thermal you're in dies on you or you lose it, head back to the hill for another go or to where other pilots are climbing.

On your way to base look to see where the closest downwind cloud is but don't be tempted to head straight off on a glide. If you can hang around at base in a zero while a gaggle forms it'll make finding the next climb a lot easier! I generally try and push crosswind on the back of the downs as they're sloping into sun and sheltered from the wind. The A27 seems to kick off thermals quite well too. Avoid going too far south."

Craig Atwell
"Never let the Dyke know you are leaving. Leave very quietly with a few friends via the back door..."

Dave Massie
"Having money in your pocket, and staying in the thermal, ignoring the hordes pushing forwards for the better thermal that might not come."

Mark Watts
"Getting through the crowds! Get high before leaving the Dyke, stick with the lift as you drift towards Lewes or Brighton then go on a glide halfway between the A27 and the Ditchling



Punter over the Dyke. All photos: Carlo Borsattino / flybubble.co.uk



ridge. If I have a choice then going for the up-wind cloud I find is generally the better option.”

Where are the common trigger points?

Carlo Borsattino

“As with all SHGC sites, there aren’t really any (apart from the obvious, general ‘textbook’ kind of trigger points). They vary from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute - so I don’t think you can really call them ‘common trigger points’.”

Charlie Merrett

“Anywhere there are gliders or birds going up! I try and keep a very close eye on everything on the ridge but find that the bowl to the left and the tree line to the right of launch work well.”

Craig Atwell

“They vary, in SBF conditions the hedge to the west of the landing field has worked a few times for me. In a North West there are many triggers.”

Dave Massie

“The modeller’s bowl is best, but there is no special trigger on the NW face.” (Ed – please don’t fly over the modeller’s bowl below 250’agl). In a northerly, the spur beyond the bowl or above the power lines or in front of the Truleigh masts.”

Mark Watts

“The spur before modeller’s bowl sometimes

works well and the lump below the earthworks along the ridge or it’s more Northerly then the spur above Fulking.”

What’s the best flight you’ve done from it?

Carlo Borsattino

“Lots of nice flights over the past 16 years; can’t really say which was my ‘best’. Many of the flights I’ve enjoyed the most were not my longest (distance or airtime). I find that it’s usually the flights that come as more of a surprise, rather than planned, that are the most wonderful.”

Charlie Merrett

“A couple of 85km flights to Ashford.”

Craig Atwell

“Got to Rye – about 70kms.”

Dave Massie

“72.6km to Camber Sands, on my old Vertex - time I did better than that!”

Mark Watts

“120km to Deal” (Ed – Mark currently holds the site record and has flown about ten 100km flights from the Dyke.)

How do you deal with airspace worries?

Carlo Borsattino

Lots of forward planning, a CAA UK VFR air

chart (ideally the right one, folded correctly!) and a decent GPS with proper airspace in it. I do everything I possibly can to try and avoid flying into airspace - before and during the flight. I don’t want us to lose the relative freedom we currently enjoy as paraglider pilots just because of my own selfish enjoyment, and accept that it is my responsibility as a pilot to do all that I can to avoid flying into restricted airspace. I regularly end up landing because of leaving lift, or taking a long detour, to avoid flying into airspace; it is not easy avoiding airspace whilst flying XC on a paraglider - you have to work hard and do everything you can (planning, pre-flight, during flight, post flight analysis) to ensure that you don’t infringe restricted airspace.

Charlie Merrett

“If you’re not used to navigating from the air and have a GPS, mark 10, 20, 30km etc arcs downwind from take off on your map then you can instantly see roughly where you are on the map using the distance from take off on your GPS.

From the Dyke stay below 3500’ amsl until the University and then as long as you don’t go north of Lewes and the Heathfield mast you can go up to 5500’amsl.”

Craig Atwell

“I fly with a Garmin 76C with airspace loaded onto it.”

Dave Massie

“Memorise it (there’s not too much of it to learn) and then use a GPS with freebie airspace on it to confirm where I am.”

Mark Watts

“Stay below 3500’ amsl before Lewes and then 5500’ amsl after that -Tefal has hooked up my GPS to a PDA which is great in theory but hasn’t actually been put into practice yet! If in doubt use an airspace map...”

How about defined tasks?

Carlo Borsattino

“I took part in paragliding competitions full-time for nearly 8 years - I really like the freedom of ‘undefined flying’ - i.e. to just go with the flow, adapting the flight as conditions develop. Having said this, on some days it can be quite fun and challenging to set yourself a ‘defined task’ (although I personally would always be ready to scrap it at any time during the flight). To help you achieve ‘defined tasks’ from Devils Dyke then, as will all SHGC sites, it often pays to make use of the small ridge-runs we have and then try to ‘extend out’ in different directions to create some challenging out-and-returns (Dyke-Lewes) and/or triangles (FAI or flat).

Top tip: Start small, then get gradually more ambitious! I’ve done dozens (and dozens!) of failed out-and-returns and triangles from SHGC sites (being too ambitious / over-optimistic). The frustrating thing is when you don’t quite complete an out-and-return or triangle

flight you end up with a very small distance for a lot of hard work.”

Charlie Merrett

“You can use the ridge to help you fly a declared FAI triangle of 15kms without straying too far from the Dyke – I tried it once on a light wind day but ended up missing it by 400 meters which was very frustrating and has put me off declared flights! I think the Firlle ridge is a better bet for that kind of flying.”

Craig Atwell

“I have flown a few triangles and a 20km out & return to the west, but flying shapes is not my thing (déjà vu from my comp days).”

Mark Watts

“It’s difficult on a paraglider but if its Northerly then sometimes you can get a cloudstreet forming towards Keymer and it’s possible to push along it early in the day on the initial ‘pulse’ of thermals before they get too strong and then when it all settles down and the thermals are more regular and stronger push Eastwards towards the level crossing at Cooksbridge and then back using the thermals coming off the Ditchling ridge.”

Mark also gave us a few tips on doing a big flight from the Dyke - although he stresses that these are generalizations and that there will always be exceptions to the rule!

“The sea breeze pushes in up the river from

Newhaven at Lewes and so it works well around the Caburn area but the key is after about 50-60km when you get to Rye. In the old days we used to try and push inland too early towards Heathfield – all a bit head banging... you can make it a lot easier on yourself by sticking to the coast towards Hastings and Rye – it’s less risky and won’t put you down early.

The trick then is to hang around and be patient and watch for the SBF to form if it hasn’t already. When you see it you can then connect with it and up the pace a bit and use it to push up towards Deal.

If it’s a very thermic day then the SB may have pushed in too far already – big flights from the Dyke are easier early and late in the season, before June and towards the end of July onwards.”

Next issue - Mt Caburn



My Favourite Kit

01: Mark Watts, interrogated by Annabel Thompson



Harness

My UP Fast for the feedback it gave, probably too much for a lot of people. Now it's my Advance Impress for the comfort and build quality.

Glider

My first ever glider, a Firebird Ninja. The first glider I flew over 100km with, my UP Kendo. Then my Nova Xpert which I got very confident flying – I was looping it like a lunatic!. Now it's the Axis Mercury - just a nice compromise between performance and handling. But if you really want to talk about awesome flying machines then it has to be the Atos VR - it looks like hot sex on rollerskates and the performance blows your mind!

Jacket or Flying Suit

I have owned a few dodgy flying suits in the past but now fly in jeans and a jacket and a canoe harness.

Sunglasses

Adidas sport glasses, they may look ridiculous but they do the job well...

Snack

Yes please lots of them, preferably flapjacks (if they're homemade even better still).

Drink

just water and some means of getting rid of it when it's no longer required! (Asoc Ed – Mark flies with an external catheter attached. It's great he says, while everyone's dehydrated on launch looking like prunes he's knocking back litres of water and then has at least 5 wee's per flight!)

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Morocco Autumn 2009

SHGC members only

Wednesday was here... We are going to Morocco again... come and join me and our gang for some great flying, large safe hills, easy low thermals and huge safe landings. All this added to some hot food, comfortable accommodation, good drink and evening culture.

This trip is specially designed for low and easily qualified glider pilots. We do simple good writing and there's a designated course driver, so when you land, get ready to get back up to the top! Also the others who have qualified there so far, invited to join their thermal club and have advanced their 500' flights.

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'Hem Chand and family - a fantastic welcome in India.' Photo: Neil Charles

It wasn't a pretty landing.

The crew of ten pilots making up last year's Airworks trip to India had decided to try to fly to Mandi, a 45km run South East from Bir. 10km short of goal I'd run out of thermals, or talent, or possibly both and was going to have to land.

Looking around for a likely spot, I didn't have a lot of options. There's a flat roof with a couple of very excited kids on top, jumping up and down and waving. Definitely not. There's a valley full of trees, a village, a winding road, more trees and power lines. Not there either. Or there's a small farm terrace cut into the hillside, short and narrow – in the UK you wouldn't even bother to crop it, but it's going to have to do.

Just as I thought I'd bullseyed the near end, I realised I was a couple of feet too low and was going to clip the front of it. The front of it is made of rocks. This is probably going to hurt...

Half the village ran up the hill and were greeted with the sight of a pilot trying to undo his harness, roll out of a bush and check if he'd done himself any serious injuries at the same time. As a crowd gathered, I was bruised and winded but otherwise fine - some battered

stitching testifying to the sense of investing in a decent pair of boots.

The best part of landing out in India is being instantly surrounded by polite, inquisitive locals. We established I was from England and then the kids, who at least could say 'hello, how are you?' (and did, over and over) stepped in to try and translate. Ringing our drivers, and handing over my phone to a helpful chap for an excitable conversation that I didn't understand a word of, we established I was in the tiny village of Kulander and that the cars would be along later as they picked up the rest our group, who'd distributed themselves at different points all along the ridge. Our walk down to the road was a noisy parade, my glider bag carried proudly high above his head by a local man who wouldn't hear of me taking it and kids running in and out underfoot.

When the car arrived an hour or so later,

I was sitting on the front porch of the local English teacher's house drinking chai from his family's best china and discussing the UK, India, paragliding and whether British kids are as badly behaved as Indian ones (I said yes, but with fewer fireworks.)

Given the complete lack of sensible landing options, I wasn't surprised to find I was the first pilot who'd paid them a visit, but left with promises to send back photos and a demand from the children to land there again. Maybe just a wave from the air next time and then finish that last 10km, but I'll remember the flight, that landing and an English teacher's hospitality for a very long time. India really is a fabulous place, and I haven't even mentioned the flying!

Neil Charles

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