

Spring 2010



Windsock

The Quarterly Magazine of the Southern Hang Gliding Club



Air Walkers

A Portfolio of Sussex flying by Frances Valdes

Plus: Getting Away from Bo Peep + Club News + Other Stuff
But no Muckraker! He's disappeared already, the slacker!



Spring 2010

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I'm still high after a great day at Firl. As I drove there from Lewes the hill looked like Annecy, with a confetti spread of over forty gliders floating over Firl. It just looked fantastic, all these people escaping Sunday duties and trips to B+Q to launch into the skies... a window of wildness and exhilaration in this cramped corner of the country. A perfect light, soarable wind, gave me a great couple of hours beating up and down the ridge from the beacon right down to the quarry.

If you've ever struggled to explain the joys of flying to your mates or family, then check out the portfolio by Frances Valdes, shot right here in Sussex. If you ever wanted any inspiration, here it is! Thanks to everyone who's contributed - whether your stuff's been published or has been stockpiled for the next issue.

Have a fantastic season.
Hugh Miller
(Windsock junkie-in-chief)

Chairman's Welcome



El Dyko. Photo: Wicus Willemse



I'm not a huge fan of flying in the cold and we've certainly had a few sub zero days out on the hill this winter. On the plus side it meant that even with a very low sun and the odd fire

to help out we've had a few thermals bubbling up and there's been some very pleasant flying to be had. As long as you could get to the hill through all the snow... The snow also allowed a few members to practice their parallel turns down the face of Caburn before heading off to the Alps and Steve Purdie even managed a bit of speed riding at Firl.

Winter is traditionally a pretty quiet time for the committee and this year hasn't been any different. We had our Christmas party at the beginning of December at the White Hart in Lewes which was well attended and congratulations to all those that went home with a trophy, especially Mark Watts who narrowly missed winning the National Paragliding League by a couple of km's.

On March the 20th we'll be holding the Annual General Meeting in Glynde. A few of the committee members are having to step down from their roles due to other commitments so

we'll be looking for some new volunteers to take up their positions.

All that is needed is a willingness to put something back into the sport and a few hours a month to attend a committee meeting and help out when needed (unless of course you're going to be the Sites Officer...) If you're curious to see what the club does with all that money every year or you think that something could be done better or you just want to help out, please come along to the AGM in March and volunteer your services.

And remember, the days are getting longer and spring thermals are just around the corner so now's the time to make sure all your gear is working, your air chart is up to date, batteries are charged and you're ready for that feisty little climb that gets you up to base off on your first XC of the season - can't wait!

Fly safe and see you over the back.
Charlie Merrett, Chairman

Readers' Letters

I was rather shocked that you only received one nomination for 'unsung hero'. Although, I must admit to being just as lazy as the rest of the club, in responding to your request. So I'm putting amends to that now. To my mind the biggest unsung hero of our club is David Webb. David quietly, and in an unassuming way, secures all of our flying futures in the S.H.G.C.

If anyone complains about our use of a site, it's David who has to pacify them. David is the one who comes out when people are flying when they shouldn't be (as I observed at the start of Beachdown last year). It's David that the National Trust complains to when they feel we've been abusive to one of their employees. David has to deal with the farmer at the bottom of the Dyke when someone leaves the gate open, potentially allowing his sheep to get on to the road.

In a sport where people seem to think they have a right to "free" fly, it's David who has to assure landowners that we're responsible. David very diplomatically has to investigate any problem that a landowner believe us to have caused. David has the un-enviable task of either persuading the landowner they are mistaken, or persuading us to behave better. Like it or not, we cannot fly without a landowners permission, and it's David who is the face of the club in negotiating that permission.

David's work for the club is all the more admirable because David is busy with his own business. He quite simply doesn't need the hassle. There is no financial gain to him in his position as sites officer. He doesn't sell paragliders or teach paragliding. He simply does this out of the goodness of his heart. So when you see David on the hill, please thank him.

Frances Valdes

Hi Hugh,
thanks for mentioning the exhibition in windsock re : photography!

But who the fuck is Tim Stiff !!!!!

Mike Stiff

All letters welcome. Actually, most things welcome. Just not your old bathroom suite.

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Club News

NOTICE OF SOUTHERN HANG GLIDING CLUB AGM

The Southern Hang Gliding Club (SHGC) Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Saturday the 20th March 2010 at Glynde and Beddingham Working Men's Club, Glynde, Lewes, BN8 6SS. The meeting will start at 8pm prompt, with doors opening at 7.30pm.

In order to keep costs down we do not intend to send out paper copies of the agenda. It will be published on the SHGC website a week before the meeting. If you do not have access to the internet then please contact a member of the committee, either on the hill or in writing to the address below, and we will be happy to send you a paper copy prior to the meeting.

The Southern Hang Gliding Club, 1 Stamford Cottages, Ripe Lane, Firl, LEWES, BN8 6NJ

Some committee posts will be coming vacant as of the 1st April. Although anybody can volunteer for any post, we will definitely be needing people to take over the posts of Secretary, Sites Officer and Windsock Editor.

Please do come along to the AGM and demonstrate your support for the club. If you can spare a few hours every month and volunteer to participate on the committee then that would be even better.

Anne Stenning, Secretary

SAFETY INFO

A lot of pilots will have been storing up their enthusiasm for a very long time now. The first thing to bear in mind before committing aviation is that the hills will still be there tomorrow, providing we don't upset the land-owners, but that's another story. Just because you have not flown for two months and have taken your last day's leave to drive sixty miles to go flying, if it is too busy for you, it is not flyable and if the weather is unsuitable, it is not flyable. Don't let your heart over rule your head!



'From our autumn trip to India.' Photo: Steve Purdie

If when you get to the hill it is empty, then if said hill is in Sussex you are missing something, because if it were flyable the hill would be crammed! If it is actually ok, you will quickly find that the now low sun is very dazzling, so make sure you bring your clean and unscratched sunglasses.

Remember, you can shield your eyes with your brake hand to help distinguish other gliders while you make your way to a safe landing... Also assume that the guy coming towards you cannot see you.

The ground is likely to be absolutely saturated, so no Doc Martens or you'll be sliding all the way to the car park, if you even make it to launch. If you are not reading this until January, you may well be looking at frozen saturated ground. This is particularly unforgiving of poor ground handling skills, with nice sharp flints frozen onto place. In that case dress appropriately and leave your fancy lightweight kit at home!

If you have waited, willingly or otherwise,

until the temperature has plummeted before next flying, you will be shocked by how cold it is up there. Wear loads of layers and layer your gloves too if you can still handle your glider thus dressed. I would strongly recommend heated gloves. Many years ago I got a frostbitten finger flying a hang glider. It is not a condition I would wish on my worst enemy. If you are flying in very cold conditions, land before you get too cold, rather than trying to land while you cannot feel your hands and/or you are shivering uncontrollably.

Oh, and possibly the most dangerous part of your day will be driving back down from Firl or Bo Peep in the ice. Consider parking at the bottom and save yourself a fortune in car repairs.

My last point before everyone nods off: Give everyone, including yourself, more room to manoeuvre than usual, because you will be rustier than you realise.

Fly Safe!

Safety Officer Steve 'Cliff' Purdie

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Air Walkers

A Portfolio of Sussex flying by Frances Valdes







The Brighton Run

By Emily Rawlinson

4th June 2009. The dog ate the cake. The day had not started well. I was now going to have to ration the remaining which would be challenging as there had been lots of cake-interest the day before.

Looking up, I could see the conditions looked great and people were already high. There were thermals, and today I really wanted to get one, and actually do something productive in the air. On launch it felt a little strong, but nothing too bad. I pulled Brian up and turned, 'oh no, what or which Watt is that' I held back my launch as an axis crabbed passed take off. I slowly moved to the side, impressed with my ground-handling skills, but suddenly got taken off my feet. Instead of sensibly aborting, I continued, ripping my harness on the barbed wire. Paranoia sneaked in and I decided to slope land incase my reserve was dangling below. I did one of the worst slope landings, and rolled down the hill. I stopped in a heap, and noticed that my reserve pins had come out due to my tumble.

Up above people soared, thermalled and played as far as the eye could see, and I was officially grounded and in need of the Loft.

Game over.

After much sulking, I stomped to the care park, avoiding looking up as the fun and frolics continued above my head. To my joy I bumped into Steve at the carpark, and not like seeing a lady in distress, he did an emergency Loft assessment, sorted my reserve and reassured me about my harness, then encouraged me back to launch for another go.

Feeling a little happier, I set up again, I sensed there was still fun to be had. The wind had died a bit, but we were ready to join the gang in the sky!

It sea breezed...

Bugger.

Feeling very frustrated, I packed up again. People were now landing and telling stories of having been in the air for 4 hours, doing triangles, XCs. You name it, they had done it that morning, and now they wanted bloody cake. I felt that beer o'clock may arrive earlier today.

Then I received the call. The cliffs were on, and it may be possible to do the Brighton run. That had been my goal last year, but due to rub-

bish weather I hadn't done it. What did I have to lose? I decided to head over and see what was happening.

We arrived and it looked great. My spirits began to slightly increase. I had Gorilla tape holding my harness together, and I was raring to go. Most people were still eating cake at Bo-Peep, so the air was quiet. Terry was going to be leading the way. Off he flew, then after the usual amount of faffing, Brian and I were ready, and up we went.



Err, not actually the Brighton Run - this is Beachy. Photo: Frances Valdes

As I left I saw some cake-ers had followed the cliff-call and were getting ready for the run too. That was OK because we were soon going around the point.

Wow!

What a view! The sun was shimmering off the sea, the gulls were marking areas of lift ahead, and flying around me. Walkers were waving, I was smiling, all was well with the world!

We made the marina with minimum topping up, and Terry kindly let me take the lead so I arrived first - Yippee! I'd reached Brighton for the first time. What a fabulous feeling! All thoughts of dogs, cake and barbed wire had vanished as I enjoyed the simple beauty of the flight. Heading back towards Newhaven I waved cheerily at fellow flyers, enjoying the camaraderie of the situation.

As I approached Telscombe, I began to lose height. I'd not had enough on the transition and realised after much cliff hugging that I was going down. I aimed for an area that seemed quiet and not too wet and landed in some rock pools just as Dave M and Tefal flew overhead. Oh well, I'd had a stonking flight and was happy again. All I needed to do was pack up and catch a bus and...

What the...?

I took a double take.

Yes, that is naked man walking towards me waving and smiling. Look up Emily, keep eye contact at all times...

'Hi there'

'Hi'

'Oh, I didn't realise you were a woman! You'd best keep your helmet on, or you may scare the other men on the beach. Did you realise this was a male nudist beach?'

'No, I didn't...errr...sorry.'

'Not to worry, you can't help where you land. Ha-ha! Do you want a hand carrying it and packing?'

I never turn down an offer for help packing my wing, so he helped me carry Brian out of the rock pools (I insured he was one side and I was the other. Didn't want any embarrassing accidental brushes!), and we laid the wing out on the pebbles, and he then insisted on helping me pack.

We had the usual polite chitchat from any non-flyer about your wing, which seemed sur-

real considering his state of (un)dress, and I felt the need to deepen my voice incase other male nudist became scared of me. It was the quickest pack I think I've ever done! He gave me directions to get up the cliffs to the road, I thanked him then headed off, sniggering into my helmet.

Tefal retrieved me (probably the one and only time I will ever use that sentence!) and we drove still sniggering. It was now definitely beer o'clock, so off we all headed to the Trevor for the usual drink and analysis of the day. Mark Watts may have flown a 45km triangle, but did he land amongst nudists? I think not - enough said!

Fantastic!



Ah yes - setting off from Newhaven

CB or Not CB

By Tefal

I just had to spit out my fishfinger. I was just having brekky, checking the weather and the forum only to find folks talking about "flying windows" on a cumulonimbus (CBs) days!

I mean unless you're one of the competition pilots that has had the operation, or you're an ex sailplane pilot with a posh voice, you shouldn't be messing with them? A CB that is on maximum suck, can suck you up quicker than you can Fall!

If a CB has been forecast, or if there has been any suggestion that they are around, land and give up flying for the day. To hang around waiting for CBs to pass, is a misunderstanding of the situation your in.

When I was training for my PPL I was told, because of the strong winds associated with them, to give at least 10 miles clearance to CBs. So you can imagine if that is the advise they give to small aircraft with engines, what advise do you think that they would give guys who fly bits of tissue paper?

Often Cbs start small and relatively numerous in the morning, eventually coalescing to just a few evenly spaced massive powerful clouds by the end of the afternoon. So unless you want to prove Darwin right and even if it appears blue between you and the sea, standing on top of Caburn holding a wind meter to the air on day where there is towering CB downwind is not very clever really (yes I have seen this happen).

But what to do if your not sure if they are around? Obviously as a pilot you should always, as a minimum check, look at the forecast wind and then glance at the pressure. I personally would add a synoptic to that but that's up to you.

The simple rule is, if the pressure is below 1010 mb be on your guard. If the pressures are below 10000 then watch out for CBs, as they are very likely. This rule does not cover all cases and often, especially after a long high pressure stable spell, we can have CBs at much higher pressures associated with what is often referred to as "the thundery breakdown".

For those that want a more accurate assessment then you need to find a "Convective Available Potential Energy" forecast or CAPE forecast for short. These used to be available on RASP however they seem to be relegated to specialist sites like www.stormtracking.ork.uk now. Frankly, I find it easier just not fly if the pressures are below 10010mb, I mean we are supposed to be enjoying ourselves aren't we?

So okay CBs are bad but compared to there evil brother the embedded CB, they are pussies. At least with normal CBs you get your warning.

Believe me Embedded CBs are real, not very frequent but very dangerous. These are effectively CBs hidden in an otherwise overcast sky.

Clearly the forecast based preventative mea-



Photograph Copyright (C) Tim Haynes - <http://pig.sty.nu/> - Used with permission

asures are by far the best way to avoid trouble, however having a good grasp of the visual clues is useful:

Generally speaking you should start assessing the sky from the moment you get up, well before the time you arrive at the flying site. Rarely do embedded CBs appear on skies that start overcast. Try to build a picture of the day. Experienced pilots are always on the look out for how "active" the sky is. Simply put they are looking for clues about how quickly things are changing and quickly they are going up.

If you have done all this, by the time it gets overcast you should know how likely embedded CBs are, yet there are still clues that can help:-
- A very low cloud base is an indication that pressures are likely to be low. This doesn't mean that CBs will be present but it mean you should pay attention.

- Weird clouds with bases that seem lower than those around them are a good clue. (the lower based comes from cold air already at dew point that is thrust down with strong air currents)

- If flying in an overcast sky and all of a sudden you notice extreme smooth "fuzziness" around you. This indicates of increasing winds associated with CBs. If it has happened in what appears to you to be a sudden manner, you should land immediately.

- A blue morning that starts with small clouds that grow vertically extremely quickly before vanishing are an indication that when the inevitable overdevelopment happens later on, it is very likely that the sky will contain embedded CBs.

- On an overcast sky with what appear as gigantic "fairy rings" (like those you see on football pitches) are a guaranteed sign embed-

ded CBs. Again the rings are due to cold air thrust down but this time they have a mammata ring appearance.

- Not necessarily an indication of embedded CBs, substantial areas of mammata clouds never-the-less are indication of earlier strong convection falling back to earth, you should be on your guard.

Hmm, I hope that helps someone and not just those with a sleep disorder. Speaking of disorders where did that last fish-finger go? I suppose I shall just have to wait for my lunch-time pic now.

Mmmm, Chicken and bacon I can't wait.



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Get Away: Bo Peep

Continuing the series, Charlie Merrett interrogates a few rogues about the XC opportunities at Bo Peep, the club's north-easterly site

DAVE MATTHEWS

What are the ideal conditions you look for when flying at Bo Peep?

Unstable NE preferably ENE. With the wind off to the east this helps getting around Brighton, Shoreham, Southampton etc. May and June seem to provide the best conditions although Tony L and Cookie did some big flights from there in mid-summer during a very hot and particularly dry spell a few years ago before the extended airspace at Southampton shut things down a bit.

With various options available, how do you decide what kind of XC to try?

I will nearly always look to do some form of closed circuit flight nowadays, (out & return or triangle) partly because I'm getting lazy and don't fancy the long retrieve, but mostly because the performance of modern HG's has improved enough to go out and back even with a bit of a breeze. I usually have a few closed circuit flights pre-planned, particularly triangles, to make sure they comply with the National xc rules. I'll then decide once I get to the site and assess conditions how far I think I can go and get back before it sea breezes. If there is a breeze from the NE I'll probably try for the Dyke and back or if it's a good day a bit further.

What landmarks/features do you use to help you?

If I'm heading west I tend to head for the ridge at Swanborough which faces ENE which I can

use if I get low, otherwise I'll keep going and head for the sunny slopes behind the Ditchling ridge. I resist the temptation to glide for the front face of this ridge as it has rarely worked well with the wind off to the NE. It's easy to end the flight somewhere between Offham and Plumpton. The slopes at the back all face the afternoon sun and generally work well. This track also keeps you on a course around the north of Brighton and Shoreham. I'll then head towards the back of the Dyke and run along the slopes at the back of Fulking escarpment.

What's the most interesting flight you've done from Bo Peep and how did you do it?

Flying out the front and reaching Heathfield and back a few years ago was a good flight as previous to that simply getting beyond the reservoir seemed like a big achievement. This flight was done mostly on the sea breeze convergence which came in from the east and set up over the Firlie area for most of the day.

What advice would you give someone who's never attempted going XC before?

The single most important thing about first xc flight's (and any xc flight in the UK) is altitude. It sounds obvious but many pilots, including some fairly experienced ones, leave thermals when there is still a lot of height to be gained. Providing it's not too windy and you're not heading out to sea, just stick with the thermal. If it's a reasonably good thermal and you lose it don't be tempted to glide off too quick, hunt

around a bit particularly if you're still a long way from base. The thermal should still be there and often closer than you think.

TEFAL

What are the ideal conditions you look for when flying at Bo Peep?

Though Bopeep hasn't got the same record as the dyke for XC's, this is down to pilots, not the location. In fact Polar or Polar continental air is some of the driest, coldest, air going, thus Bopeep gets some of the best XC weather. This usually take the form of a high (clockwise rotation) centred anywhere North of the Wash. Sometimes a ridge sets up all the way to Sweden then conditions are stonking :-)

With various options available, how do you decide what kind of XC to try?

There are so many variables at Bopeep, it is definitely one of those sites where you have to see what is happening when you are there. The Key is to watch the SBF coming from the Eastborne direction, this tells you everything about your flight plan. Carlo and I are often discussing on day, at the last minute, whether it is best to include the SBF part on the first leg of a triangle or not. The fact is there are no straight answer. It all depends on the time you get there and the opportunities that present themselves. Once we disagreed and ended up passing each other in opposite directions going around similar large triangle (both made it back though, lucky for Carlo :-)



Climbing out from Bo Peep. All photos: Carlo Borsattino

What landmarks/features do you use to help you?

Apart from the obvious use of sunny faces etc. I usually use clouds not landmarks. I think landmarks can be a big distraction, unless they are a very large heat source (huge brown field etc). That said if it's a tad windy and North I try to take one climb to cloudbase (usually



Matt Pepper climbing out. All photos: Carlo Borsattino

sends me deep over the back). On a windy day I always leave the climb before Seaford then aim for an O&R to the reservoir. If when I get there it has been working well I re-plan for an O&R to Hailsham. One of my ambitions is to do an O&R to Heathfield. If the sky is looking Epic I start to think about a triangles. Its a moot point whether going deep over the back is the best strategy for a triangle, I've heard all the arguments, I'm not convinced, it all depends. Often if it is well off to the east then I do an open distance aiming for Petersfield though it doesn't have to be for a decent XC as the SBF keeps you on the right track.

What's the most interesting flight you've done from Bo Peep and how did you do it?

It's actually the most enjoyable flight I have ever had. It was a nil win day and relatively stable in the morning. I was getting bored as nothing was happening. Anyway I spotted crow (normally a useless bird) be diverted in a glide in an otherwise still day. So, with what I thought was not very much to loose, I took a mad glide miles out front to the west of the Bopeep road.

Oh dear. I really was very very low. I got my legs ready to land... when... one vertical bump gained me about 10 feet. Compared to my current Gradient, my Aspen 1 wasn't very manoeuvrable so I struggled, with a series of swiping moves until I noticed I actually had enough height for a 360 :-)

Took me ages to get to base, watching as I did all the neatly layed out canopies going round and round relentlessly always keeping in mind that I NEVER leave the first climb unless an absolutes gimmi is on offer near by. The only other guy that risked the glide was Fin who was just a tad too late (you really have to risk straight out glides to improve). Anyway just as I go to base, behind Bopeep, It sea breezed. So what was a nightmare for everyone else (no one

else had even taken off apart from Fin), was a blessing for me as it gave me the confidence of a fall back position. At this stage the SBF wasn't too defined so I cloud hopped, off to north, with the intention of passing the North side of Caburn (means you can change your flight plan from and XC to a triangle if you want to). Anyway the wind picked up so I opted for an open distance. A bad glide later, I realised I had got too reckless as I nearly bombed into one of Jonny Barrat's HG lessons on Swanborough.

Lucky all the HGs were on the ground, as I then managed to get a low save just behind the hill (second of the day). I was really starting to get this superhero feeling when I nearly bombed in the middle of Brighton. Phew!

The rest of the flight was just peachy, I managed to blob all the way to Parham gliding club. Thinking back the reason I enjoyed that flight so much was my frame of mind I was in

was so positive despite, or maybe because of, all the emotional tests. I just couldn't seem to go wrong. Granted it wasn't Portsmouth, but then who is to say what makes a great XC? I've done Xcs that were more than doubled the distance and were less satisfying.

What advice would you give someone who's never attempted going XC before?

Watch out for the area near the HG take-off it is a bit rotary. Particularly at Bopeep, watch out at when the wind is off the slope it can be deceptively rotary in both directions. That said, and I wouldn't say this about any of our other sites, It's the safest place that the SHGC has to learn how to XC because you can land almost anywhere behind the hill. So concentrate on getting up and when you do, pick a spot a mile or so behind the hill and land there and then do the 15 minute walk back. The reason for this is that when you have broken your duck you will never want to stay on the hill again :-)

HUGH MILLER

What are the ideal conditions you look for when flying at Bo Peep? ENE to NE, and light. If there's more than 10 mph of wind and its north-easterly I'd be heading inland to a pimple launch site in Hertfordshire.

With various options available, how do you decide what kind of XC to try?

If there's some easterly wind - anything more than 5 mph - then head downwind to the west, I guess. Always try and punch north to

keep ahead of the seabreeze's progress inland. You want to be aiming for Mt Caburn really, heading well north of Swanborough. As you approach the Dyke, again, keep punching north - keeping below the 3500ft airspace limit. The seabreeze really rushes up through the valley north of Shoreham and it's nailed me there before. On a classic spring day with an ENE wind going SE the further west you go (as often happens), maybe we could get the record? You'd have to punch north of Southampton airspace but anything's possible!

What landmarks/features do you use to help you?

The spur to the east of take-off seems to work pretty well. Also the hedgerow that runs up the west side of the field directly in front of launch. Keep pushing out from launch if it's light, as thermals can develop well out front. Step climb up until there's no stronger lift out front, then drift over the back. If there's some wind, often the climbs develop well on the southerly leeside slopes, and once you drift over the back at 1000 ft or so above launch the climb will consolidate. Especially if the seabreeze is nudging in.

What's the most interesting flight you've done from Bo Peep and how did you do it?

One August a few years back it completely shaded out, with a sea breeze sitting just hanging out a couple of k's behind launch. I got up in a slow climb, turned left, and just straight lined all the way to Brighton. It was working all the way, you just had to weightshift left and right to stay slotted in the weak convergence. Incredible under a totally grey sky. I landed at the Level in Brighton, right by home!

What advice would you give someone who's



Heading west on an XC to Lewes and beyond

never attempted going XC before?

Just keep circling, and forget about going back to the ridge! Have an adventure!

CARLO BORSATTINO

What are the ideal conditions you look for when flying at Bo Peep?

For the most part, the 'ideal conditions' for me at Bo Peep are much the same as for any other site - light prevailing winds, good thermals (for a long period - early start, late finish), high

cloudbase etc. However I have learnt that you can often have very rewarding flights even when the conditions are not seemingly 'ideal' - and you will most likely miss out on a lot if you are always waiting for the 'perfect' conditions to happen. In any case, it seems to me that, even after over 17 years of flying XC and studying the weather, you often only realise that the conditions are (or were!) 'perfect' during - or even after - the flight, so it's hard to plan for! Re 'specifics' for Bo Peep (although many of these kinds of phenomena are seen/repeated elsewhere, particularly at/near High & Over): Due to the direction it faces (NNE-E) it sometimes/often receives a Polar Continental air mass (cold & dry) which can lead to strong thermic conditions; this is often quite/very turbulent - exercise caution! If the air mass is Tropical Continental it is often even more turbulent but no where near as good; punchy bullet thermals - beware!

The geography in the surrounding area has a great (and often very interesting) affect on the flying conditions: The whole hill range is a kind of large M-shaped ridge: Bostal Hill - Firle Beacon - Firle T/O - Beddingham Hill - Itford Hill (near Muggery Pope / Itford Bottom); Zooming out (looking at the bigger picture)

it is situated on the Beachy Head peninsula with 'flatlands' to the North and the sea/coast to the South (Seaford) and East (Pevensey Bay). On thermic days the sea breeze 'attacks' Bo Peep from three different directions (sometimes all arriving at the same time!): the SSE/SE (up the river Cuckmere valley); the E/NE (from Eastbourne / Pevensey Bay); and the SW (the main 'bigger' sea breeze effect which usually takes over later in the day, sometimes rushing in like a bath spilling it's water). LOTS more to say, but that's more than enough for now...

With various options available, how do you decide what kind of XC to try?

There really are many options available from Bo Peep - possibly more than for any other SHGC site - but this might be because it's also one of our most technical sites to go XC from. You can't really go straight over the back - not very far anyway (Newhaven / Seaford)! It's generally best for out-and-returns and triangles. If the wind is really off to the E (not good on the hill) then it can also be good for open distance (although still relatively technical). O&R ideas/goals: A27 & back; Arlington Reservoir; Folkington (a bit beyond the Long Man); Hailsham; Mount Caburn. Triangle ideas/goals: 1) Alfriston - Firle Beacon - Arlington Reservoir (&

then close the triangle); 2) Firle Beacon - Long Man - approx 1km north of Arlington. Again, LOTS more to say on this...

What landmarks/features do you use to help



Looking back at Bo Peep to Newhaven

you?

I mainly watch the conditions (including clouds, if any) and try to go where the lift looks best but it's also worth bearing in mind the into-wind ridges in case you get low. A word of warning on this however: Bearing in mind the sea breeze (and other) effects mentioned earlier (and other effects besides these as well, too many to mention here!) watch out that you don't get caught out by the wind coming from a different direction to what you expected!

For example, it may be NE on Bo Peep but SE at the Long Man ridge. Also, it may have been NE when you launched at Bo Peep but, whilst you were climbing out and concentrating on thermalling, you may have failed to notice that the sea breeze (SB) has come rushing in underneath you! I have seen this happen often (much too often) to pilots at all of our sites, generally demonstrating a lack of understanding / awareness. On one occasion at Bo Peep last year I saw many pilots getting caught out by this - even after several other pilots had been visibly caught out before them!

What's the most interesting flight you've done from Bo Peep and how did you do it?

I can't really say which is "my most interesting flight" ever from Bo Peep (I'd done a lot of

flights from there, and they are often interesting in one way or another!) however a few years ago I had a great XC flight from Bo Peep to near Chichester which was both challenging and rewarding - a great adventure! How did I do it?

Like most of my flights: General stubbornness and determination (and years and years of hard practice!) making up for a lack of natural ability - plus a good bit of luck here and there! I have learnt so much from the very many flights I have done from Bo Peep that it is impossible to even scratch the surface here!...

What advice would you give someone who's never attempted going XC before?

For me, 'going XC' is the greatest, most challenging aspect of freeflight - it always reminds me of why I started (and then carried on) paragliding in the first place - which, it seems to me, many people seem to forget along the way.

The sheer joy of leaving the 'security' of the hill behind and embarking on an uncertain aerial adventure is always a wonderful feeling. The fact that how the flight turns out is largely down to me - my skills, knowledge and decision making - makes it incredibly rewarding; and/or often frustrating! That there are SO many factors involved, all of

which are constantly changing, and the element of luck means that it is rarely boring (unless the conditions are poor and/or you are missing something!). Add to this that you are generally discovering new things along the way, and getting some amazing experiences and wonderful views, and you can see why my advice to those considering XC is to GO FOR IT!

How you decide to approach this is down to you. You can do it the hard way: Learn all the lessons, and make all the mistakes, on your own - the old school of hard knocks (which isn't such a good idea with flying). Or you can do it the (relatively) easier way by going on some thermalling and XC courses and trips with experienced pilots and instructors to 1) accelerate your learning and 2) greatly reduce the chances of making the mistake that will put an end to your flying (and possibly everything else). Even with expert instruction, you will find that there is still A LOT TO LEARN, trust me! Looking forward to flying XC with you someday...

MARK WATTS

I just bumped into Mark on the hill (Sunday 7th Feb at Firle) and he says; 'you need a bit of north in it for a big triangle. Head north first, then east to Hailsham, and ride the seabreeze back to the hill.' There you go - in a nutshell!



The view from the top of West Firl rendering the landscape as an abstract pattern of colour and texture accented only by the carving flight of birds. The sense of space freeing Scott from the relentless claustrophobia of his daily life, lending freedom to his thoughts, exciting him with seeming endless potential. Flowing under a uniform carpet of cloud, the wind was strong and smooth, facing it, the South Downs were the final hurdle before setting off out to sea. Forced to climb the seven hundred feet of West Firl it became broken and angry, the air felt powerful, it pushed and shoved like morning commuters, rude, unconcerned, barging past, leaving Scott feeling intimidated by its indifference. Twisting and contorting he struggled

Scott climbed into his harness, relaxing his grip while breathing deeply to release the tension held in his body. Leaning deliberately on the control bar, turning back towards the ridge, he targeted a thicket of gorse and a group of resting walkers, Scott began to settle, he was reborn.

Hanging loosely now, Scott felt his way round the first turn, under him the walkers lay on the grass watching. Not able to see his glider the sense of flight was complete, the theatre of his mind confounded all its expectations to accept, for this moment at least, he had wings and could fly. Soon his perception extended outward, his Kestrel

of the lift and began to descend towards the landing field. Dropping out of the golden light he picked a spot and climbing out of his harness he flew down to start his final approach. The hissing grew louder, the glider bouncing in the lively air near the ground, Scott pulled back on the control bar, building speed, lots of quick corrections kept him on heading, then at last, he felt the presence of the ground and the glider levelled off. The wings began to soften in feel announcing the the last seconds of flight, "where did all these sheep come from!"

“Just remember: wings level and run like fuck!” said Ozzie

with his glider fighting to level its wings. “Don’t fight, feel it” said Ozzie. Drawing in a deep breath and resting his gaze on the horizon Scott let go a little, surrendering to the wind. In the same moment a Kestrel cut his view in half as it swooped to a quivering hover. The moment felt perfect, the glider weightless, at last, after waiting impatiently all day, after at least a gallon of coffee and endless stories Scott ran for the edge. Like a sprinter exploding from blocks to the crack of a subconscious gun his feet crunched on the grass. Earthbound sounds blending transparently to the smooth hiss of the air as the glider took hold and lifted into the void.

Briefly startled by the transition to flight,

hovering under him, a pheasant exploded from the bushes fleeing some passing cyclists, the scene began to play on his heart, erupting in a fit of silly giggles.

As Scott flew along the ridge the contours of the Downs seemed to come to life, to become a great whale surfacing for breath on an ocean painted in the warm hues of a setting sun. It was only in this moment that Scott began to appreciate the intense beauty of the scene. Over his shoulder, he could see the warm evening light reflect off the English Channel. Skimming in low over the landscape sculpting fields and woods in richly detailed textural relief. His radio crackled into life; “OK Scott, you have had over 40 minutes up there time to think about landing!”

His attention narrowed as he eased out

Touchdown was perfect, the glider settling over him as he dropped to his knees, kissing the lush grass in a silent thrall.

As the sheep gathered quizzically around some crows squawked above a thicket to his side as they played in the wind – “yes” thought Scott, “I know!”

By Scott Barratt



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CAFE

Had we realised the lunatic expense involved in rebuilding our base we would have thought twice! But now it is nearly done, and we are almost ready to present to the flying world a proper clubhouse. The aim is to have well equipped coffee shop, with all the weather information readily on hand, with video links wherever possible, and we hope you will like it.

And there is more. We have commissioned a fantastic 14ft mural of flying at High and Over (now complete!) and Mick Stiff (our resident artist) will be working on his next masterpiece at the premises.

Our base is on the A27, near Mount Caburn, opposite West Firl.
All Southern Club members are welcome to use our new facilities.
Please pop in and tell us what you think.

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