

SOUTHERN HANG-  
GLIDING CLUB



WINDSOCK

APRIL

2022

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***“There is an art, or rather a knack to flying. The knack lies in learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss.”***

**Douglas Adams**

## 1. Introduction from the Windsock editorial team.

Hello all, and welcome to the April 2022 edition of Windsock.

As always, it is packed full of interesting and exciting 'stuff', and given the season, this edition has a focus on safety. Most/ all pilots will likely be re-emerging onto the hills after an extended period of hibernation. We have (re)published Ian Grayland's Spring Safety briefing, essential reading for all pilots new and old.

We have assembled a veritable collection of articles and are very grateful to everyone who has contributed. Thank you all. Please think about submitting 'copy' on anything that you find interesting PG/ HG related. If you find it interesting then chances are others will do so too.

If you are lucky enough to go on a flying trip, please write it up and send a summary of the experience; Jeff Royal's guided trip to Columbia and Ant James' SIV course in Turkey are both amusing and informative.

We have included Toby Colombé excellent article on fast tracking your flying career. Whilst this is aimed at newer pilots there are suggestions and thoughts that will resonate with more experienced pilots too; think of it as a refresher for all. Greg's comments in Coaching Corner and Carlo's article on flying in light(er) winds will help you gain experience and maximise your airtime. Robin Clark's article on putting together a dedicated first aid kit is extremely useful and we hope more pilots will fly with a bespoke first aid kit.

In this edition we have also published a very honest and frank summary of what went wrong for PG pilot Dermot Ryan on his Christmas Eve flight at Newhaven Cliffs when, after an unexpected beach landing and a rising tide, he needed to be rescued by the RNLI. Dermot has been particularly frank over his poor decision making and as he admits, it was due 100% to a cumulative cascade of errors, that almost cost him his life. *NB. What was very frustrating, from a safety perspective, was that (some) other pilots continued to fly during (and over the rescue scene) while the rescue was actually taking place. That should not have happened; perhaps it was fortunate that only two pilots had to be rescued not more.*

This edition also asks for volunteers. Club sites' office, Dave Lewis, has proposed that we appoint site custodians to help us maintain our precious sites. It is an excellent idea and with responsibility shared the burden (on the few) is materially reduced. If you meet the criteria outlined then PLEASE do volunteer. Section five

The Beasty Boys' said ' you have to fight, for your right, to Party! We really need a party! If you and/ or a small group can organise such an event then it will be greatly appreciated by all.

Please note the reminder of the SHGC AGM on 23 April. This will again be held virtually and we would encourage as many members to participate on-line as possible. Page four.

Finally, the membership year begins on 1 May 2022 and this year fees will return to the pre-pandemic level of £50. Please watch out for the reminder emails!

## 2. Chairman's Chat – John Turczak

Here we are, at the start of a new flying season and a great Windsock to help kick it off. We are leaving the relatively smooth winter air and moving into thermic conditions. We have already seen some cracking XC flights from a group of very talented pilots in the Club. As enthusiastic as we are to get in the air and have some great flying, it's also a time to take the extra care in checking your set up, before you take off. Give yourself enough time for a complete pre-flight check and ground handling practice. Once in the air be prepared for some sporty conditions and busy sites. Refresh yourself on air law and please remember it's everybody's responsibility to avoid accidents; let's keep the skies safe!

To help with getting you away from the hill (but not so far that you can't get back) we now have the Southern Waypoint Challenge you can find it here: <http://southern.wpcomp.uk>. This is a fun competition. So, check it out and give it a go.

Also, there will be monthly coaching talks to help with your pilot development. We have a lot of great coaches in the Club who can help with improving your flying skills.

I would like to thank all members of the Committee for their tireless efforts to ensure that the Club functions efficiently; particularly ensuring that the sites remain open, that we fly safely, and to the coaches who are helping out on the hill and in the forums. It does make a difference. A special mention to Robin Clarke doing a great job of looking after all the new CPs (Red Ribbons). Thank you Grita for all your work on the membership front particularly as we start the new membership year and Chris as Club Secretary for all the behind-the-scenes administration that keeps us rolling along.

Have a safe flying season and, importantly, make it a fun one! - John.

### Southern Hang Gliding Club AGM

The 2022 SHGC AGM will be held on Saturday 23rd April at 7:30pm. Once again, it'll be remote, so look out for an invitation to the online meeting over the next couple of weeks.

This year, all current committee members have agreed to stand for re-election to their current positions, but nominations from others are also welcome - see full list here: <https://www.shgc.org.uk/committee>  
If you'd like to stand for any committee post, please e-mail our esteemed secretary Chris ([secretary@shgc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@shgc.org.uk)) with a brief summary to say why you'd like to join the team, and how you feel you'd be good for the role. We'll then send these summaries out to the membership prior to the AGM, along with any other proposals. Members will have the opportunity to vote either by a nominated proxy beforehand or on-line during the AGM. Persons nominated to be a proxy must be a Club member.

Proxy voting works in 2 ways:

1. Either you can e-mail Chris with the names of those you would like to vote for.
2. Or you can allow Chris to vote on your behalf as he sees fit.

If you want to take the proxy route, please make it clear which option you choose. The formal deadline for nominations for committee posts, was Wednesday 6th April. If you're reading this after this deadline and still want to get in touch, and/ or nominate a proxy, please email Chris.

You may have noticed we've not had any parties for a while. COVID aside, this is also because we still don't have a Social Secretary. After the last couple of years, a good party is something we could all get behind, so if you want arrange the event of the year (alone or with friends) and maybe also the Christmas prize giving and meal, why don't you stand for the position?

### 3. Coaching Corner: How to use a coach – Greg Hamerton



The Southern HG Club has an active coaching programme and many coaches (HG and PG). They can be identified by their red caps and helpful nature.

Coaches are different from instructors. Where an instructor would be expected to be directly teaching a skill and perhaps even offering turn-by-turn guidance on a radio, a coach offers only assistance. They have some flying experience, and have attended a BHPA coaching course, but are not expected to be experts in any particular aspect of flying. Coaches are volunteers who have agreed to help pilots on the hill.

They make a huge difference to the safety on the flying sites by giving inexperienced pilots an assessment of conditions and by offering tips on the launch site, which creates a welcoming atmosphere for newcomers.

#### So how do you use a coach to improve your flying?

Firstly, as a low airtime pilot (less than 10 hours post Club Pilot licence) if you haven't already done so, join the Red Ribbon Telegram group the link is on the SHGC website ([www.shgc.org.uk](http://www.shgc.org.uk)) where you can connect with the coaches and get introductions to the sites.

This group is the most active part of the coaching scene, and relies on coaches coming forward to help the lead coordinator and take a session on a site on a particular day, based on the weather forecast. If you turn up at the site, you can expect to find a coach at a windsock, able to give you a site briefing and some idea of what flying conditions are like.

Once you've progressed, you can join the Southern coaching telegram group using the link on the SHGC website. Here you can ask questions about all aspect of flying, and get prepared for taking your Pilot rating, which is the next logical step in the BHPA ladder. Studying for this rating gives you the tools for going cross country, the most important being a deeper understanding of how to avoid restricted airspace.

Pilot exams are taken in person, with an invigilator (coach), and usually run every few months, depending on demand. Before you take the exam, you should work through your practical tasks on the BHPA Pilot Task Sheet. This is where the coaches can be especially helpful. Get them to witness and sign off the tasks, and give you some pointers for achieving them.

Top landing, slope landing, spot landing, thermalling, and competently flying various sites are some of the required exercises. You'll need at least 50 flights and 25 flying hours, during which you have displayed 'good airmanship', which a coach can attest to.

This relies on you approaching the coach on site to get assistance. Coaches are usually happy to help, but also don't want to interfere with independent pilots who don't want to be told what to do. So, if you feel you could do with some help, and you see a red cap, don't be shy!

And if you want to help your Club, join the next coaching course and become a coach yourself. It will benefit your own flying, because when you try to explain why we fly in a particular way, or you try to set a good example, you begin to master the skill.

If you have special requests or ideas about how coaches could help you, pop them on the Telegram chat and we'll discuss them.

There is a Coaching Corner page on the Club website [ <https://www.shgc.org.uk/node/4649> ] that collects helpful resources.



*Greg Hamerton, Chief Coach SHGC. To supercharge your progression as a pilot, join my academy on [flywithgreg.com](http://flywithgreg.com) where I offer focused training videos to develop your flight skills.*

#### **4. Club Sites update: Proposal to appoint volunteer Site Custodians – Dave Lewis (Sites Officer)**

Many of you may not be aware that David Watts (AKA the 'Mad Farmer') is no longer flying due to ill health. You may also not be aware that, as he travelled around the Club's sites, he carried out numerous small/medium sized site maintenance tasks. Unfortunately, his ill health also means he can no longer perform these tasks either.



Given Dave's retirement, it has fallen on me as the sites officer, and other volunteers, to undertake the critical site maintenance jobs as they come up. However, it is now time to look for and implement a better, long-lasting, and more sustainable solution.

This idea, which has been unashamedly, pinched, from another club (where it is working well) is to have one or more volunteer site custodians for each of our flying sites. They will take some responsibility for looking after their nominated site and either undertake smaller matters of maintenance or discuss with me any other matters that, may require the work of an external contractor. The good news is that the Club has a sites maintenance budget for such tasks.

Normal 'duties' would include the following:

1. Maintaining good relations with locals and other users.
2. Performing maintenance tasks, such as trimming bushes, mending fences, oiling padlocks, tidying up.
3. Performing, or organizing contractors for bigger jobs, such as mowing, replacing fences, and ground works.
4. Generally keeping an eye on our precious sites.

Ideally site custodians:

- Would live locally to their site (or sites) to be able to respond quickly, without having to make a long journey.
- Be a long-term pilot (or planning to be) so relations with locals can be built up over time.
- Be DIY literate, and have access to relevant tools.
- Be willing to undertake maintenance tasks.

If you and/or several 'yous' are interested in volunteering to be the designated maintenance team at a specific site (or sites) then please get in touch with me, Dave Lewis, SHGC Sites Officer, at:

[dave@skylarkparagliding.co.uk](mailto:dave@skylarkparagliding.co.uk) and I'd be happy to discuss further. Whilst, it's not guaranteed, in addition to the warm glow of pride and satisfaction gained from 'helping-out', it is possible that volunteers will be rewarded with reduced membership fees.

## **5. Spring safety briefing – Ian Grayland**

This spring safety briefing was written in 2007 or 2008 (and is available on the SHGC website in the folder 'Old News').

The Windsock editorial team decided to republish it in this edition for three reasons: it's spring, the contents are relevant and pertinent to pilots now as they were then, and it's extremely well written. The comments relating to the sea breeze should be treated both as a warning and a cautious invitation to play.

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At last. It's that time of year again. The thermalling season has started!

We've already had some strongish thermal activity, though this has been limited so far by thin cirrus filtering the sun a bit - even Caburn at lunch-time in sea air has been relatively benign. But, look out for the next cold night and really clear day...

### **Things To Remember**

Despite being at its warmest for years, seasonally speaking the sea is at its coolest now, so there may not be much of an early morning land-breeze to give you an indication of the impending wind; pay attention to the forecast and upper wind-speeds.

The air at night still gets pretty cold at this time of year, but the morning sun now has a bit of punch and will rapidly produce a shallow, super-adiabatic layer with small parcels of air going both up and down quite fast. Within about half an hour this layer will deepen and flows will become more organised and suitable for soaring.

Surface heating will gradually raise the temperature to the point at which the wind can get down to ground level and, as you catch sight of the first cumulus of the day, a gusty surface wind will start. Thermals going up start to cause downdraughts coming down to fill the 'holes' and these sinking parcels of air bring their upper-level wind momentum with them adding to the gustiness and sharp direction changes of the air at flying levels. Average climb rates will leap from the 2-400 fpm of the last few weeks to 800fpm or more. Downdraughts will increase in similar magnitude.

Be prepared to get gusted off the ground during your launch or whilst ground-handling and don't forget to sit on a wing tip when parked. If you leave your glider, make sure it is securely bundled under the weight of your harness.

### **Crowded Skies**

This is one of the seasons when over-crowding can get to be a real problem. Lots of pilots, all scrabbling for the same small thermals, some of them insufficiently experienced, others out of practice, others totally oblivious of the conditions. If you have the opportunity to go elsewhere to fly, now is the time!

The problem is not so much that there will be more fliers because the sun has come out, but is more due to increased instability and typically small spring thermals. In this kind of air we all need more room to allow a safe margin. Add a couple of wingspans extra horizontal clearance and do not take your vertical separation for granted; gliders can change height very rapidly. You can find yourself only a few feet away from someone who is climbing at over 1000fpm when you are literally falling out of the sky.

Allow space for the pilot in front of you to circle and centre in thermals. Make it clear that you are giving way by making a slight turn to one side, holding off, then joining behind them. They will afford you the same courtesy when it is your turn.

### **Sea Breeze Fronts**

Spring sea breezes are generally patchy broken affairs, often more of a curse than a blessing. Onset may be sudden and with little warning, though there is usually a flurry of intensified thermal activity just ahead of the front. As the season progresses they tend to develop as more organised large-scale flows and may even stretch for some miles in straightish lines. In these conditions the wind will gradually back and decrease as a SW sea breeze front gets nearer, finally increasing sharply just before the front comes through. Look for vertical movement in the approaching curtain cloud. If this is rapid or disorganised, stay well clear.

As a rough guide, I would not recommend you to play with sea breeze fronts at low level unless you have some hundreds of hours and are current on your wing. If, however, you have good height when the front comes through, go with it and enjoy!

## 6. My Columbian adventure - Jeff Royal



Still on a high from completing a PG Mentor course in Spain, I received an invitation from Rob Mansley (from Fly Spain) to join him on a guided paragliding trip in Columbia in Feb 2022. This set my heart racing for two reasons, the opportunity to visit South America had always been on my bucket list, but with only six hours of flying time 'under my belt', I felt that this was way so soon in my flying career. I said no.

Rob explained that the course was aimed at low airtime pilots just like me. Despite his reassurances I still felt that it would be too demanding. A few weeks after my return from Spain, Rob asked me again. I was certainly wavering, partly because the weather in the UK had been very grim, with six trips to Southern sites without flying once and the nagging comment I heard in one of Greg Hamerton's blogs, eating away in my brain, that flying abroad over the winter months helped pilots remain current and improve skills were, were both wearing my resistance down.

Fortunately, Rob was extremely persistent and, when he asked again, I said yes! I still wasn't entirely sure but I was certainly hooked, and, oddly enough, having said yes and paid the deposit, I felt February couldn't come quickly enough! Roll on Columbia.

I spent time getting my kit together, which in addition to my regular flying gear now included a GoPro, a new Insta 360, spare batteries, laptop, and cables. I booked my flights: The first from City Airport to Amsterdam, the second from Amsterdam to Bogotá, and the third from Bogotá to Cali. Yes, I know direct flights were available, but an excellent deal with KLM (£459) and internal flights in Colombia (with kiwi.com) costing just £55 won out.

So, departure day arrived and with bags packed I set off. I was a little worried that I would have a problem with my flying gear being regarded as sporting equipment having booked it in as normal luggage. But my fears were unfounded, check-in was painless and, 40-minutes after take-off, I arrived in Amsterdam. I had a few questions from customs who wanted to know why I had such a large piece of luggage? But once I had explained that I was on my way to Colombia on a paragliding trip, I was waved through. First leg, completed!

It was around this point it dawned on me that I was actually going to paraglide in Colombia. My colleagues, and friends had all said I must be mad (although I suspect that they were a little envious too), and yes, I had seen Narcos! Nervous, but undeterred, I was headed for Columbia.

The windows onboard the Boeing 787 Dreamliner are huge and provided a fantastic, uninterrupted view a huge volcano in the Azores enroute and of Bogotá, as we landed, 10 hours later. Second leg, completed, the third and final leg would depart shortly.

The third leg of the journey began with a bang, quite literally! The plane took off during a massive thunderstorm and, was immediately hit by a lightning bolt. As impressive as this was, it (fortunately) had no discernible effect on the aircraft at all; little was I to know that thunderstorms would play a significant part of this paragliding adventure.



*Picture left: The 'trusty' Landcruiser being packed in Ginebra after our 25+ KM XC.*

Rob met me at the airport, and we drank ice-cold Club Colombia lager, whilst waiting for the other pilots to arrive.

Two hours later we were all headed to the hotel in a rather battered 1984 Toyota Landcruiser.

We were staying at the hotel Siga La Vaca (meaning 'follow the cow').

Next morning Rob introduced us to Aaron and Dylan, our instructors for the trip, and provided a full briefing. He gave us a sense of the flying we could expect over the following two weeks, beginning with several short flights from the Piedechinche launch. Then without further ado, nine of us climbed into the trusty (we hoped) Landcruiser, and we were off.



After a brief stop in Santa Elena for provisions, we made the first trip, of many, to launch. The road was steep and the driver needed the low-range gears; well, there were nine of us on board.



The view from take-off was simply incredible with views right across to the other side of the Valle Del Cauca. (Picture Left.) Check-in was needed here too, and we required a colourful wrist band to fly. The launch is quite wide, steep, with enough room for about eight or nine gliders to be laid out, and covered mainly by grass on top of deep red soil. There are two ridges which run down from launch and the best chance of catching a

thermal was to fly over one of these ridges, and go to cloud base; well, that's the theory!

We para-waited for an hour, passing the time by watching dozens of tandems launch, before Rob said it was time to go. We laid out our wings and then, under supervision, we each launched. Conditions were not brilliant, and my first flight lasted six minutes; 1702 metres to 1170 metres in roughly 360 seconds. We went straight back up to take off. Second flight was 12 minutes. I consoled myself with the thought that I was improving!!!



The next day we each made four top-to-bottom flights and were all utterly exhausted and yes, in truth, a tad frustrated too!



On one of the many trips to launch, we had a tyre blowout. With no spare, we had to wait for a new one to arrive, an hour or so later. Unfortunately, the road was completely blocked by the now not so trusty Landcruiser; nobody could get past in either direction, needless to say, we were not very popular!

After five days of top-to-bottom flights, which admittedly, were getting longer each day, we awoke to a thunderstorm of biblical proportions; our first non-flying day. It rained so much that the road next to the hotel became a river! However, next day was a new day, and we woke to beautiful clear blue skies, although we couldn't head off until 11am as the roads to take-off were too slippery.

We stocked up on supplies and headed to launch. Today's task was different and we were planning to fly back to the hotel. Unfortunately, despite my best efforts, my wing (and I) went straight down to the landing field.



*Picture: The landing Field.*

Frustratingly, all the other pilots made their way slowly across the blue sky which was punctuated with small cumulus clouds. I was gutted, but equally determined to go back up.

Launching on my own was a little daunting and with nil wind, required a forward launch. I pulled this off OK, and made my way to the

right-hand ridge, which has several buildings and various radio antennae dotted around, which at first sight can seem somewhat daunting.

I was pretty much back in the landing field, when I caught a thermal; would this be the one? I hoped so. I milked the weak lift for all it was worth and slowly and incredibly it worked. As I climbed the thermal became stronger (several small thermals joining together). It was a slow and steady climb and I got to 2200 metres; the highest I have ever been on a PG. I was nearly at cloud base when I noticed (for the first time) a rather dark, ominous looking, cumulonimbus cloud over the top of the mountain; well, that would explain my 5.1 metres per second climb rate...! Remembering my training and the instructions from Rob and Aaron (run away!) I pushed on my speed bar and headed for the valley, which I made with more than enough height, 2200 meters height to be exact!

The task was to fly to the hotel. I couldn't see any other pilots flying and I was struggling to even see the hotel, which was at least five km away. I was also sinking quite fast and seemed to be heading for the same sugarcane field I had landed in the day before. However, I was determined that today would be different.

Aaron had told us that when you fly XC don't look down, look up. Look for all possible signs and signals of thermic activity - birds, clouds, other paragliders, bits of stubble rising, and sometimes even noise - then you will have a better chance of staying up. I was looking up and through gritted teeth, I slowly started to climb out of the field. I saw some vultures eighty or so metres to my right. What should I do? I could stay in the climb I was in, but I realised it was getting weaker. I made up my mind and went to join the vultures. It was the right decision. I had sacrificed weak lift for strong, buoyant lift. I was thermalling with about eight vultures and soon had climbed back to 2100 metres. Yippee, I now had enough height, and time, to reach the hotel.

I aimed for a narrow field next to the hotel losing height and making S turns but then saw power lines beneath me so, I made my way to the other side of the field for my landing.

Seeing my arrival, Aaron came to watch me land. Due to the lack of wind, it was going to be fast. I flared, my glider pushed slightly to the left, I landed, tripped, and fell over. Oops! But it didn't matter as more importantly, I had made goal; I was as happy as can be. I packed away under the Colombian sun watching the massive thunderstorm slowly making its way across the valley. Time for para-chat and an ice-cold beer. Surprisingly, some of the pilots



were still not back. One of the pilots, 'Madeira' Dave, (an entirely appropriate nickname given he had tried to board a flight to Madeira instead of Madrid and only just made his flight!) had gone on a very long flight although he had landed in a field and had struggled to get out. Some of the others had landed short. I was chuffed to bits with my efforts. *Picture above: The landing field next to the hotel.*

The next day, spurred on by the previous days flying, Rob, Aaron and Dylan announced that they were giving us a different task. A short 15Km triangle from launch to the hotel, back towards a mountain quarry and then back over launch to complete the triangle. We were issued with GPS trackers. Things were looking up. We programmed the flight into XCtrack or FlySkyhy (for iPhone users), and then given a thorough briefing on the task ahead.



We waited an hour or so for conditions to improve. In the distance, we saw that a farmer had started a fire to burn the stubble in the harvested sugarcane field and the smoke had created an enormous pyro-cumulus cloud. *Picture left.*

We launched into perfect conditions and I followed Rob, who gave excellent radio guidance where the best thermals and vultures were to be found. It was hard work and it took time to leave the mountain. Unfortunately, a big XC was not on the cards and after trying everything to stay up, I landed in young sugarcane field where several other pilots had also landed. I hadn't done the triangle but I was ecstatic as had just done my first "mini" 10Km XC. I packed my glider and made my way to the edge of the field, where other pilots and Rob (who had landed to assist us) were gathering. After topping up on water and snacks we were retrieved to the hotel for a welcome swim and an even more welcome an ice-cold Club Colombia. It doesn't get much better than this...!

That evening, the next day's task was set; to repeat the triangle. After a lot of excited chatter over breakfast, we headed to launch, and set off with Rob guiding on the radio. We flew to the right and followed the mountains taking whatever thermals we could. Rob's expert eyes spotted one over a lake, seeing the ripples on the surface. How he managed to do this from 1600 metres up I don't know, but he had, and it worked?

Given the improving conditions the task changed. Rather than fly a triangle we would head for Ginebra about 25 km away. A gaggle of six or so pilots formed around me and we made our way to, over, and past Ginebra.

I was struggling to find a thermal, but spotting a tractor ploughing the field, Rob suggested I test the theory that tractors can trigger thermals. I flew

over the tractor and indeed it worked and I was in a quite strong thermal. Unfortunately, it weakened quickly and I and fellow pilot Dylan were again struggling to find lift. However, I was determined to try and stay up and saw some birds close to a factory.

Suddenly everything went quiet, my risers went slack; what was happening? Seconds later, my wing cracked like a whip! I had just experienced an enormous frontal (and/ or asymmetric) collapse, only 27 metres off the ground. Fortunately, my trusty Alpha recovered and kept going. I had hit sink at the edge of a strong thermal coming off the steel-clad factory. Phew, that was interesting. Fortunately, Dylan and I climbed back up to over 1900 metres and a return to Ginebra, to land, was in our sights.

I was slightly lower than Rob, Dylan, and the other pilots who had joined us. I headed off slightly to the right as I could see several places to land. To land in twenty feet of sugarcane, where the fields which all look like a mown lawn from above, is not advisable. I spotted a green field near the road about 2kms west of Ginebra. However, as I neared the field, I found myself in a lifty line and I gained another 200 meters without turning. I spotted another field of newly planted sugarcane. I planned my approach and made a textbook landing near the path. I was really happy to be on the ground after a long and bumpy flight and I had just done my longest, highest, and furthest XC flight; two and a half hours, 2400 metres altitude gain, and a distance of 28 Km.

I walked towards Ginebra keeping in radio contact, and not forgetting to pin my location on WhatsApp for the retrieve; a very useful tool.



Tired and exhausted we headed to the hotel for a swim and the obligatory beer. The next day was our last and I had two short top-to-bottom flights; having had such a wonderful time I didn't want to spoil it.

I had had such a fantastic adventure and once again met new friends bonded over a common goal. I can honestly say that if any low airtime pilots have the chance to go on such a trip like this (Columbia or elsewhere) do not hesitate, just do it! Choose a reputable company and you will have an experience of a lifetime. I made my personal best, had 26 flights and added nearly ten hours of flying time to my tally.

My thanks go to Rob and Dylan Mansley as well as Rob Aarons for their patience and expert guidance. To the drivers who took us back up the mountain countless times. To my fellow pilots who made the adventure so much fun and finally, to the Colombian people who were kind and friendly and who within minutes of us

landing, would stop and offer lifts whether it be on the back of a scooter, pick-up truck, or an old sugarcane lorry. Happy days!

Vaya Con Dios Amigos!



## 7. Flying Abroad – The BHPA

The following has been taken from the BHPA website and provides advice and recommendations when flying abroad.

### The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

If you're planning to visit a country in the European Union (EU), your existing European Health Insurance Card can still be used to gain access to state healthcare up to its expiry date. If your European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) has expired, or you don't have an EHIC, you will need to apply for a UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC).

### Using your EHIC or GHIC

An EHIC or GHIC covers state healthcare, not private treatment. With an EHIC or GHIC you can get emergency or necessary medical care for the same cost as a resident in the country you're visiting. This means that you can get healthcare at a reduced cost or for free. Further information about what your card covers in each EU country is available on the European Union website.

An EHIC or GHIC is not however a replacement for travel insurance, and will not cover everything. For example, it will not cover mountain rescue or being flown back to the UK (medical repatriation). You should therefore make sure you also have suitable travel insurance, and that it includes health cover for the activities you are planning to undertake.

### PPI Card

The International Pilot Proficiency Information Card provides a standard reference by which all national rating programs may be compared. When you travel abroad this card, together with your BHPA membership/rating card, gives flying site managers, instructors and others responsible for hang gliding and/or paragliding flight operations an easy way of verifying your pilot experience level prior to approval of flight activities.

The IPPI system works by converting your BHPA pilot rating into the equivalent Safe Pro Para and/or Safe Pro Delta rating (hang gliding).

The tables below set out the Safe Pro Para and/or Safe Pro Delta stage that will be shown on your IPPI card.

Hang gliding:		
Elementary	=	Safe Pro Delta Stage 1
Club (Novice) Pilot	=	Safe Pro Delta Stage 2
Pilot	=	Safe Pro Delta Stage 4
Pilot*	=	Safe Pro Delta Stage 5
Advanced Pilot	=	Safe Pro Delta Stage 5

**Safe Pro Delta Stage 5 \*:** To obtain a hang gliding IPPI 5 rating with only a Pilot rating, applicants must submit a statement from a Club Chairman/Club Chief Coach/CFI confirming that they have checked the pilot's logbooks and are satisfied that he or she has a total of at least 50 flying hours on hang gliders and

has completed at least 5 cross-country flights in various types of lift (flights conducted solely in ridge lift or along the same ridge do not count).

Paragliding:		
Elementary	=	Safe Pro Para Stage 2
Club (Novice) Pilot	=	Safe Pro Para Stage 4
Pilot**	=	Safe Pro Para Stage 5
Advanced Pilot	=	Safe Pro Para Stage 5

**Safe Pro Para Stage 5 \*\*:** To obtain a paragliding IPPI 5 rating with only a Pilot rating, applicants must submit a statement from a Club Chairman/Club Chief Coach/CFI confirming that they have checked the pilot's logbooks and are satisfied that he or she has a total of at least 50 flying hours on paragliders and has completed at least 5 cross-country flights in various types of lift (flights conducted solely in ridge lift or along the same ridge do not count).

### Obtaining an IPPI Card

Please download an [IPPI Application Form](#) and return the completed form to the BHPA office. The current fee for issuing an IPPI card is £15.

Please note: The IPPI scheme only applies to hill pilots. IPPI cards cannot be issued to tow pilots unless they hold the appropriate "hill" endorsement.

### Additional information for pilots flying in Europe

Useful Links

- [France](#)
- [Germany](#)
- [Spain](#)

### Flying in the Italian Dolomites

In the last few years there have been serious problems in the Italian Dolomites, particularly the Canazei-Col Rodella-Pordoi-Marmolada area. The FIVL have therefore put the following rules in place to improve the situation:

- Please install the "112 Where ARE U" app on your phone. This free app is available for [Android](#) and [iOS](#) phones.
- If you have an accident, call the 112 phone number (the app does that for you and provides your exact position to the emergency team), then activate a red smoke bomb if you need to be rescued. Smoke bombs can be purchased in Canazei at the "Sport amplatz" shop.
- PMR radios should be tuned to channel 8 subchannel 16 (446,09375 MHz and subtone 114,8 Hz). This is the channel conventionally used for safety in the mountains. It cannot be used to call for rescue, but keep listening for any contact.
- If a red or yellow rescue helicopter appears, free fliers must clear the area for a radius of 2km or land immediately.
- If a rescue helicopter appears, pilots have a responsibility to advise others in the air by radio.
- If the radio message is not heard or understood, pilots have a responsibility to advise others in the air by pulling big ears.
- Pilots who do not need assistance must fold their wing or let off a green smoke bomb.

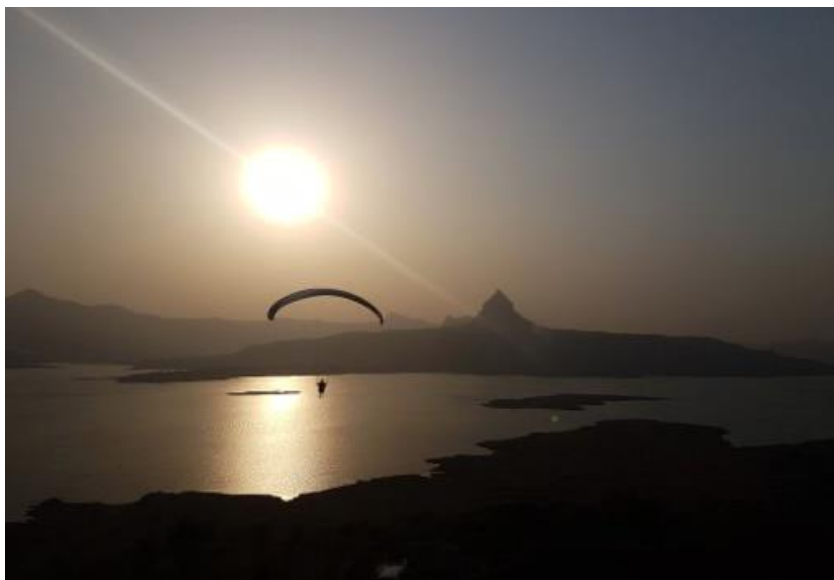
Pilots should note that a hovering helicopter may not have reached its target; it may be waiting for pilots to clear the area. Flying in the Dolomites is under serious threat if these rules are not adhered to. Any damage or danger to rescue helicopters caused by free fliers will see the Dolomites area closed to us. The BHPA fully supports the FIVL and hopes that pilots will co-operate so that the sites can be preserved for all.

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## Way too many puns.

1. Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
  2. What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.
  3. Writing my name in cursive is my signature move.
  4. Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? 'Swarm.
  5. If you're bad at haggling, you'll end up paying the price.
  6. Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
  7. A commander walks into a bar and orders everyone around.
  8. I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.
  9. Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
  10. How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? A buccaneer.
  11. I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
  12. My friends and I have named our band 'Duvet'. It's a cover band.
  13. I lost my girlfriend's audiobook, and now I'll never hear the end of it.
  14. Why is 'dark' spelled with a k and not c? Because you can't see in the dark.
  15. Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.
  16. When I told my contractor I didn't want carpeted steps, they gave me a blank stare.
  17. Bono and The Edge walk into a Dublin bar and the bartender says, "Oh no, not U2 again."
  18. Prison is just one word to you, but for some people, it's a whole sentence.
  19. Scientists got together to study the effects of alcohol on a person's walk, and the result was staggering.
  20. I'm trying to organize a hide and seek tournament, but good players are really hard to find.
  21. I got over my addiction to chocolate, marshmallows, and nuts. I won't lie, it was a rocky road.
  22. What do you say to comfort a friend who's struggling with grammar? There, their, they're.
  23. I went to the toy store and asked the assistant where the Schwarzenegger dolls are and he replied, "Aisle B, back."
  24. What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? Suture self.
  25. I've started telling everyone about the benefits of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin' awareness.
- 

## 8. For new(er) pilots: Fast track to being a better pilot – Toby Colombé



I have run many trips for PG pilots, who often ask me what is the best way to improve my flying?

Some want to be able to stay in the air longer. Some are trying to master the black art of thermalling. Others want to achieve big cross-country distances. Some simply want to be able to land without falling over!

The flying mantra goes something like this; "the best pilot is the one having the most fun". Whilst this underscores magnificently the freedom that is paragliding, the best pilots are also the ones not putting themselves (and others!) at

greater risk than is necessary in a sport that might already be considered inherently risky.

In watching and observing clients over the years, I have seen some pilots improving and progressing much faster than others. Luck? I don't think so. Good pilots display certain habits and even attitudes that seem to get them to that place of real confidence or mastery in a few short years (rather than never at all?). In this article I'll give you some tried and tested techniques for getting "there" sooner.

Most of these ideas won't be new, but hopefully at the very least they'll underscore an approach that you can use to becoming a better pilot.

## Want to learn?

Just occasionally I have the challenging task of trying to help someone that has nothing to learn. When things go wrong it's the air, when they crash launch or crash land, there was rogue thermal, or a tree "appeared", ...again! Very occasionally such excuses are valid, but all too often this attitude can mean that a serious accident is in the tealeaves. Most of the time I'm very fortunate to spend time guiding and coaching pilots open to improving their techniques. Just as with anything in life, hunger leads people forward. So, if you've read this far it's looking good!

## The two aspects of flying

I often like to consider paragliding as having two personalities. First of all, there's the "chess player". He's reading the sky, making calculated decisions based on a thorough understanding of how the medium (air!) is flowing. Secondly, there's the "surfer" epitomised by the screw-loose (?) acro dude. The surfer knows how to "pilot" his wing, how to put it where he wants it, rather than the other way round! Both chess player and surfer dude personalities are essential if you want to fly well. Let's have a look at each one in turn.



## The chess player

To improve your knowledge of the air, by all means read all the books and all the articles (and I thoroughly recommend Burkhard Mertens' *Thermal Flying* by the way); but there's also something else you can do to accelerate your learning, something you can do when you're out there in the air. And it's just as important as reading the books. Here it is: When you go flying, take the "explore attitude" with you.

Explore the air for a better understanding of what it's doing. Explore the ridge lift. Push out in front. Sniff upwind. If you've been boating about happily for a while and it's clearly easy to stay up, why not explore a little? As you're coming into land and you see an obvious (or not so obvious) thermal source scoot over and have a look.

From the comfort of the hill or your lift band, you can also explore using other pilots. At least there's now one advantage to having lots of pilots in the air. If there are lots of pilots you have a lot more real-time information. Watch where they fly; did they find lift or sink, smooth air or something else? All the time you will be refining your "map" of how the air is flowing, and that's what this chess-player stuff is all about, refining your map. And even once you've landed you can keep refining: the learning is far from over. In fact, I sometimes think we learn even more *after* the flight than during. Talk to others that flew. If you're on a local hill, how was it different from last week? Why? Theories and ideas are great, but be sure to keep them open, that way you'll develop them, refine them and synthesize them. There was definitely an inversion! Definitely? Sometimes keeping your theories loose and open is the key. Remember, what you experienced is just that and only that. Five minutes later was the wind blowing from an entirely different direction? Or was that change in wind direction due to a rather large thermal kicking off? Understanding how the air is moving is as much an art as it is a science. Keep refining your map and you'll get better at the chess game.

## The 'surfer dude'

Some pilots tend to shy away from this stuff, at their peril. Yes, folks. Guess what! It's ground handling! If you like it, it's usually because you're good at it. Otherwise, you tend to ignore it.



Of course, it can be difficult to find the time and inclination, but if you can do a little here and there whilst that's good, it's the attitude with which you attack it that counts. So rather than building a wall, collapsing it and starting again why not use your ground-handling to try out new techniques. Anything is possible. Acro pilots even practise the "helicopter" on the ground. As with "fly exploring", the key to learning from your ground handling is to be "playful". Try launching with new techniques, try changing your weight shift (yes, on the ground!) If your wing collapses try to rescue it, before it hits the ground. There's really a lot to get into here, but most pilots benefit enormously from some time spent playing on the ground.

The other (more exciting) way to improve your "surfer" skills is to be playful (that word again) in the air. Now, if you're not in the environment of a properly organised wing control course with life jackets, boats, motors and so on and so on, then there are obvious limits to how "playful" you can be. However, there are a few

things you can still “play” with. Try, for example, experimenting with your turns. Notice how weight shift affects the responsiveness of your wing. How does adding some outside brake feel compared to having no outside brake? I urge against experimenting with increased inside brake as too much and too sudden and prolonged an input can cause a wing to spin, something you don’t want to be trying out over the ground for the first time! So since there are limits and particularly if you’re up for mastering the thermic air, find yourself a decent wing control or SIV course. You’ll make a huge leap forward!

### Finally

It never ceases to amaze me that more people aren’t attracted to the adventure that is paragliding. Mankind has dreamt of free flight since the beginning of time. The moment has arrived. Free flight is here – in our lifetimes! And although it’s true that paragliding requires no small amount of dedication, I’m afraid that the final key to “fast tracking” your skills is to fly as often as possible. So, good luck with that one! Make sure you focus on improving both your chess game and your surfing skills and you’ll fly far, high, upside down or just comfortably, whatever you’re up for! Then maybe the best pilot really is the one having the most fun.

*Toby Colombé is a Tandem XC distance world record holder, former British Team Member, and an Advanced Pilot and professional Tandem Pilot. He is a BHPA Instructor and has guided and instructed all over the world. He founded Passion Paragliding in 2004 and travels all around the world with pilots of all ages and experience. Toby is based in Ager, Spain.*



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After every flight, UPS pilots fill out a form, called a "gripe sheet" which tells mechanics about problems with the aircraft. The mechanics correct the problems, document their repairs on the form, then pilots review the gripe sheets before the next flight.

Never let it be said that ground crews lack a sense of humour. Here are actual maintenance complaints submitted by UPS pilots ("P") and solutions recorded ("S") by maintenance engineers:

- P: Left inside main tyre almost needs replacement.
- S: Almost replaced left inside main tyre.
- P: Test flight OK, except auto-land very rough.
- S: Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.
- P: Something loose in cockpit
- S: Something tightened in cockpit
- P: Dead bugs on windshield.
- S: Live bugs on back-order.
- P: Autopilot in altitude-hold mode produces a 200 feet per minute descent
- S: Cannot reproduce problem on ground.
- P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.
- S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.  
S: DME volume set to more believable level.  
P: Friction locks cause throttle levers to stick.  
S: That's what friction locks are for.  
P: IFF inoperative in OFF mode.  
S: IFF always inoperative in OFF mode.  
P: Suspected crack in windshield.  
S: Suspect you're right.  
P: Number 3 engine missing.  
S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.  
P: Aircraft handles funny.  
S: Aircraft warned to: straighten up, fly right, and be serious.  
P: Target radar hums.  
S: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.  
P: Mouse in cockpit.  
S: Cat installed.  
P: Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.  
S: Took hammer away from midget.

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## 9. A word on first aid kits - Robin Clark



Firstly, a disclaimer. I am neither a trained medic or a first aid trainer. But my first aid training is current and I have assembled first aid kits for situations ranging from a day on the Downs to many weeks flying and climbing in the Himalaya. So, this is based purely on my personal experience and judgment. First and foremost, the contents of your first aid kit should reflect the activity being undertaken.

If you haven't done a first aid course, I would highly recommend it (see the article in Windsock Dec 2021 for more details). Importantly, you will not need specialist training to carry and use the items suggest below.

Firstly, I do not recommend buying a ready-made first aid kit. These are often poor quality, and contain many things you won't need, and not those which you do. Secondly, I suggest the purchase of a small empty first aid pouch from eBay or Amazon. It should easily fit in your harness with negligible weight penalty.

The items below are appropriate for a day flying, whether for your personal use, to help another pilot, or a member of the public. When attending a first aid course, the most important first lesson is that first responders at an accident scene are there to assess, stabilize, and maintain the victim (bleeding and breathing), until fully trained/ experienced personnel arrive.

### **Tablets**

Take 500mg Paracetamol for pain relief, and 400mg Ibuprofen for anti-inflammatory (to treat a sprain/ damage to a ligament in a joint such as the ankle, knee or wrist). These are available over the counter from any pharmacy or supermarket. Follow dosage instructions as exceeding these can be dangerous. Strictly you shouldn't offer medication to someone else, but they can request it. On longer / overseas trips I will also carry stronger medications for which I have obtained a prescription.

### **Hardware**

Ticks carry the risk of Lyme disease, which exhibits as a red rash about a week after being bitten. They are a risk all year but are most prevalent on all of our sites between March and November. Whilst para-waiting on a site or when leaving a site/ arriving home, do check for any unexpected passengers. I recommend that you carry a tick removal tool, shaped like a small plastic fork that are available, quite cheaply, online.

I prefer to carry a pocket knife rather than scissors for cutting dressings, as it has more potential uses. It is also a good idea to carry a whistle to attract attention, and safety pins which can be used to hold bandages and remove splinters.

### **Dressings**

A small selection of plasters will be sufficient to deal with minor grazes and blisters. Wound closure strips (steristrips) are a tape used for closing deeper cuts (similar to stitches). A crepe bandage can be used for larger wounds, to create a makeshift sling, and to support a sprained joint. I also carry micropore surgical tape, but plaster tape can be used instead.

### **Other items**

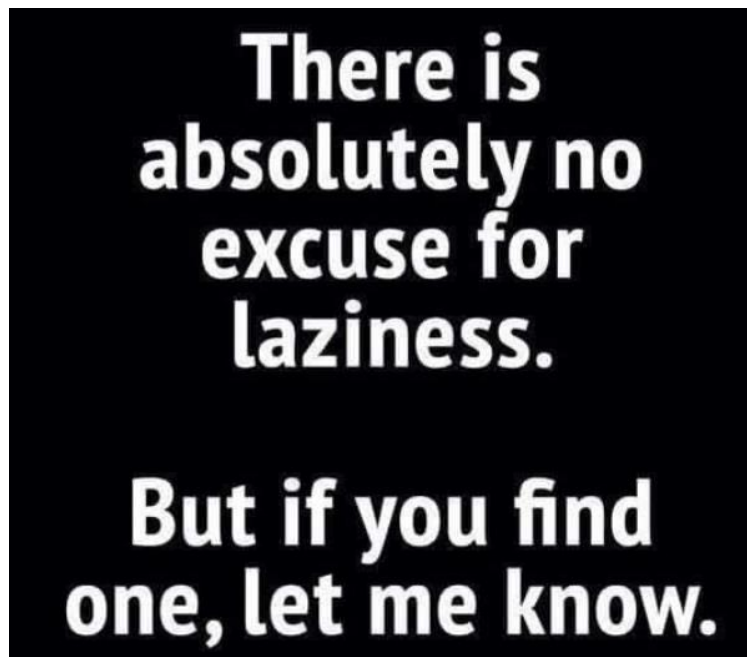
- Nitrile or vinyl gloves (not latex because many people are allergic to it) are used to avoid the risk of infection from other people's body fluids.
- Saline solution (contact lens fluid) can be used to wash a wound or rinse dust from an eye. Antiseptic and iodine wipes don't take up space so take them if you have them, but probably aren't worth getting specially. I also carry a spare set of my prescription contact lenses.
- Pocket tissues have multiple uses. They can be used to clean a wound in place of cotton wool and as a temporary dressing; they can be essential when toilet facilities are limited.

Finally, I would recommend that you carry a roll of dental floss in your pocket or in an easily accessible place whilst wearing your harness; dental floss is incredibly strong and is the time-honoured component of any good tree-landing, rescue kit. The floss can be unwound and lowered to rescuers below who then attach a rescue rope that can be pulled back up and assist in a rescue.

How many of these items would you find in a ready-made kit?

*Robin Clark: Pilot, Club Coach, and Red Ribbon C leader*

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**“If the number 666 is considered to be evil, then technically 25.8069758 is the root of all evil”**

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## 10. Simulation d'Incidents en Vol (SIV) Course Oludeniz, Turkey (October 2021) – Ant James



As a newbie to paragliding (11 hours airtime at the time of the course) I was very keen to accelerate my learning, but was in two minds as to whether to hold off on an SIV course until I had a little more experience. Finding a window of opportunity amongst COVID travel restriction madness, I headed off to Turkey in late October 2021 with Revolution Paragliding (affiliated with FlySussex). I am very pleased I did, and I can wholeheartedly recommend the course for any level of pilot. The mountain onto beach location is extraordinary, the flying was exhilarating, the company was

exceptional, and the beaches, bars and restaurants added further fun to a fantastic trip.

The course itself was brilliant - providing me with an understanding of my equipment that I would never otherwise have been able to explore, leaving me with a far greater level of confidence, greatly accelerating my flying capabilities and rendering me a safer pilot as a result.

The course consisted of four days of instruction with two training sessions a day (weather disruptions absorbed within the seven-day trip duration). Manoeuvres covered included dynamic 180°s and dynamic 360°s, point of spins, spiral dives, collapses, auto-rotations, wingovers, stalls and spins. Exercises were tailored to the abilities of the individual pilots and the extremes they were prepared to push themselves to.

The mountain launch sites vary in height with the top two launch sites at an altitude of a little over 1,900m. Lessons on how to launch were complimented with displays of how not to - a constant procession of faded tandems patched with sticky tape missing each other by a hair's breadth, accompanied by the occasional paraglider dangling from a tree below the launch site. A smattering of chaos, random in nature, and a joy to behold. Perhaps not so much for those on the wrong end of it.



The flight out to 'the box' above the sea preceded the session exercises. We placed our safety in the hands of Tim, aka Scrappy (the nickname could be a worry) - the dude on a radio instructing us through some pretty enlightening shit.



I had the utmost confidence that when I tucked it up, Tim would tell me how to untuck it. And if the radio connection went, well the worst case scenario would be a very large splash followed by a boat ride. Probably.

The sky became a giant fairground, offering the most intoxicating of rides. The days' proceedings were videotaped from the land and from the air (GoPro cameras attached to pilots). There was a meet in the evenings where we dissected the supreme flying capabilities of the students, learning from the good, the bad and the plain ugly (no

offence intended Rob). Big Neil, your superman dive from above your wing was both inspirational and instructional.



Picture: Butterfly Valley Oludeniz

Course completed, our final day consisted of a flight down to Butterfly Valley, a beach wedged between two cliffs and accessible only by wing or by boat. Beers on the beach and a boat ride back to Oludeniz - a beautiful wind down from the intensity of the course.

A giant thank you to Tim, Nikki, Graham and Jenni for introducing me to a world of bedlam, learning and exhilaration, washed down with a healthy quota of flaming sambuca - an annual pilgrimage

in the making. I cannot recommend the experience enough, and hope for a reunion with the rest of our party next October.

Ant James – SHGC Member



### 11. Lessons learned from a failed flight and near drowning at Newhaven Cliffs – Dermot Ryan

I love paragliding. I am totally addicted to the sense of freedom that free flying provides. I've been flying a paraglider, on and off, since 2008. Although I've experienced a few scary moments in the air, it hasn't put me off at all. Dealing with wing collapses, turbulent air, rowdy Spring thermals etc. is all part of the game – right?

On Christmas Eve 2021 I almost lost my life while paragliding at Newhaven Cliffs. It wasn't due to equipment failure (very rare these days). It wasn't due to adverse weather conditions. My accident flight was 100% due to pilot error.



I set off for Newhaven Cliffs to fly my paraglider before work. The wind was forecast to be SSW 8-12 mph and low tide was at 8 am. I planned to take off around 09:30 for a possible cliff-run XC flight to Brighton Marina and back.

I picked my friend Paul up on the way and we got to the take-off at about 09:30-10:00.

We both got in the air about 10:15 and flew around "the point" to the West of take-off, onto the cliffs that face mostly SSW. I was easily staying above the cliffs and decided to head towards Brighton. I knew it would be too light to get across some of the gaps in the lift, so I planned to get to

the first gap at Saltdean and then return to take-off. This flight was uneventful. I arrived back on take-off and executed a good top landing.

After having a cigarette, checking the time (as I had to be at work by 3pm) and warming up my hands up, I relaunched at about 11:45. There were 7-8 pilots still on the SSW cliffs, so I headed in that direction, thinking that the lift was still working on that section.

I failed to take into account the state of the tide. We were now about 2 hours before high tide. Although there were still land-able spots below the cliffs, they would soon be underwater.

The inevitable happened. I dropped below the top of the cliffs and was forced to land on a little beach at the base of the cliffs. Even before I landed I knew I was in serious trouble. I remember looking back over my shoulder, even before I reached the point, and realising that I was already out of gliding range of the beach

I and another pilot, who landed shortly after me, packed up as quickly as possible and made our way West, towards the nearest exit point. We got to a larger beach before the tide cut off our escape route.

I had already called Paul to let him know the situation and asked him to call the coastguard. We now had to await a rescue by boat. By the time the RNLi arrived on-scene we were being pounded by the waves, barely clinging on to the little chalk shelf at the side of the cove.

The other pilot managed to use his glider rucksack as a flotation device and swim out to the small RIB that the RNLi had launched from the lifeboat. The RIB couldn't get closer than 50-100 m of the cliffs, as the waves were pounding them and then bouncing back, colliding with the next incoming wave. My glider bag had already been washed away by a big wave.

While he was being ferried back to the lifeboat I got washed off the chalk shelf, into the centre of the cove. It was really difficult to get away from the cliff. I kept getting 5-10m away and then getting washed back in by the next big wave. I was getting really cold and exhausted and realised that these might be my last few minutes of my life.

However, I remembered the aviation saying "Aviate – Navigate – Communicate". Never stop flying the plane. That is your primary task. It served me well when learning to deal with high wind launches. I used to panic and try to abort when the glider wanted to fly and I didn't have the skills to abort safely. Never giving up on controlling the wing helped me improve my launches.



In this situation I needed to focus primarily on being able to breathe (I had swallowed and inhaled some seawater) while swimming out to get within range of my rescuers. I lay on my back, with my mouth and nose pointed to the sky and frog-kicked as hard as I could away from the cliff. I couldn't see the RIB but I just kept on going as long as I could.

The volunteer RNLi heroes saw me struggling and did a dangerous "dash and grab" manoeuvre to

retrieve me from the water.

I am very lucky to be alive to write this article. Why did this happen? The site guide for Newhaven is very clear about the dangers of flying the SSW cliffs without any bottom landing options. This accident was 100% down to pilot error, and was totally avoidable given the right decision-making processes. What caused me to make such a bad decision? On reflection, I have identified three human factors that contributed to the accident.



**“Intermediate Syndrome”** has been recognised as a cause of accidents among progressing pilots.

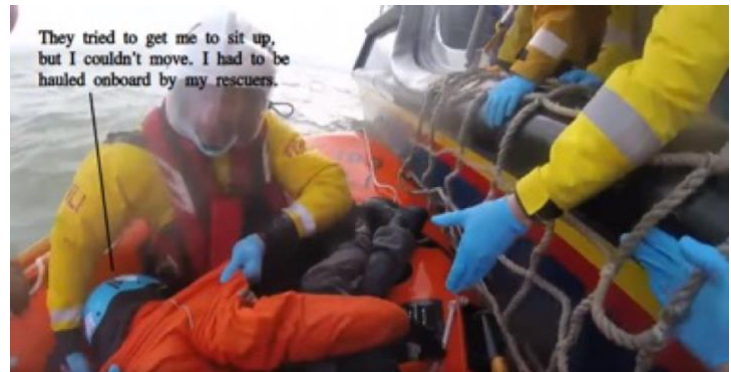


Low airtime pilots generally have more accidents and incidents than more experienced pilots. That makes sense – right? Generally, we would expect the probability of experiencing an accident to reduce with experience. However, if you plot airtime against accidents you will see it initially declining, but then starting to rise again. What’s going on here?

When you are newly qualified you are naturally cautious about the sites and weather conditions that you fly in. As your

experience and competence grow, so does your confidence. However, it is very easy to become a bit complacent and over-confident. That is why the accident rate starts to go back up again.

We think that we have mastered the air, when in reality we are always still learning. But more importantly, we are now flying in stronger conditions and not taking the risks so seriously. Getting away with a flight in top-end marginal conditions doesn’t necessarily mean that you are competent. You may have just been lucky. Getting away with it several times in a row may cause you to become over-confident in your own abilities. Once we begin to think that we can handle anything that the sky can throw at us, we are setting ourselves up for a big lesson from “Father Sky”. He does not suffer fools!



**Confirmation Bias** refers to the mode of thinking that looks for evidence that confirms our belief or assumption, and ignores evidence to the contrary. In effect, we want to believe that what we think is true. We effectively “filter out” evidence that contradicts our belief or assumption. We have become “blinker”, unconsciously ignoring things that are telling us that we are wrong.

On my accident flight I wanted to believe that the SSW cliffs were still working. I saw that several gliders were still above the cliff, confirming my belief that I would be able to stay up. I ignored the fact that they were much lower than earlier in the day, as that did not fit my mode of thinking.

I realised my mistake even before I got to “the point”. I noticed that the pilots on the SSW cliffs were a lot lower than earlier. I thought about turning back, so I looked back over my shoulder, and realised that I was already out of gliding range of the beach. The only landing options available were ahead of me, and would soon be under water. I had backed myself into a corner, from which there was no easy escape.

**Self-imposed pressure to fly** also contributed to my poor decision making on this flight. The weather hadn’t been good lately and I was desperate to get some airtime. I was also chasing a self-imposed goal of reaching 300 hours.

## Conclusions

I am writing this to try to ensure that other pilots don’t repeat my mistake. It almost cost me my life. The SSW cliffs at Newhaven are a death-trap if the tide is in or rising. Please heed the advice in the site guide and never fly there unless the tide is fully out, or falling.

I had landed at the bottom and walked out several times before. This led to complacency and over-confidence. Beware of **“Intermediate Syndrome”**. Especially at Newhaven and Beachy Head make sure to do a proper risk assessment before each flight. Where is your bail-out landing zone?

Avoiding **Confirmation Bias** firstly requires you to be aware of this phenomenon, and its effects. With that awareness, you can choose to consciously look for evidence that contradicts your belief or assumption, as well as evidence that supports it. You are sort of “stepping out” of yourself and observing your own thinking processes. I like to think of it like those cartoon pictures we have all seen. A person has a devil sitting on one shoulder and an angel on the other, both giving conflicting advice in each ear.

- The devil says “believe what you want to believe”.
- The angel says “look at all the evidence before you decide. You could be right, but you could also be wrong.”

If you believe you are right and it turns out that you are wrong, it could be painful, or even fatal. If you start out believing that you are right, but change your mind because of what you observe, that could prevent you from making a bad (painful or fatal) decision.

As progressing pilots, we frequently set goals or targets for ourselves. That is a generally a good thing. To progress quickly we need to push ourselves outside of our “comfort zone”, but not into our “danger zone”. That is a hard thing to do. The effects of Intermediate Syndrome and Confirmation Bias may make us push beyond what is safe for us to do.

The addictive nature of paragliding is a danger in itself. Some people can “take it, or leave it”. I can't. I get so much joy from the sense of freedom that free flying provides that I just can't get enough of it. That is similar to a drug addict needing their “fix”, no matter what the cost.

I have recently realised that the cost may be your life.

## 12. Light wind freedom on a paraglider (or hang glider) – Carlo Borsattino



"You should've been here earlier it was much better!" a pilot told me smugly as I was setting up my flying kit at Bo Peep. I'd actually flown earlier (doing our dealer checks on a new wing) and didn't like the conditions; easy to stay up, but windy, so the thermals were all broken up. 'Better conditions' depends on what you're wanting to do with your flying.

We all look for different things. If you're still learning the basics, you want cloudy, gentle days with no thermals. If you want airtime, strong wind is simplest, although it comes with increased risk. But if you want to be free from the hill and go exploring, you need to

aim for a specific kind of flying conditions.

*Picture: Light wind days are made for flying together.*

### Is strong wind best?

For downwind XC it's useful to have a base wind, but big numbers can be a distraction. When the wind is weak, it isn't so easy to stay up; you have to time it right and make use of thermals. You'll develop essential skills here. It is more challenging than soaring up and down a windy hill, but flying in less wind also means you're freer to go where you want, when you get up.



### Watch the conditions, look for changes

On light wind days, there's often a narrow window when it's really good. Don't miss it! Watch the birds, smoke, clouds and other wings for signs of changing conditions. On the day in question, my timing was right: I found a thermal in front of launch and climbed out. I saw pilots doing well towards Firlé Beacon so joined them. My partner Nancy soon caught up, whilst my friend Pete, only slightly later, had to work harder to get up. After step climbing our way up through the stable layers, we all reached cloudbase. Time for an adventure! We glided off towards Mount Caburn.

## Fly as a gaggle

To increase our chances we worked together, catching a climb off the Vintage Summer Fair and working the broken bits of lift we found along the way. Cooperating helps, especially when the lift is weak, broken and elusive. Eventually we got up to base again over the hills to the east of Lewes. Nancy decided to fly home to Ringmer; Pete and I aimed for Bo Peep. We were unlucky, or chose the wrong line, and had a very sinky glide, so Pete landed on top of the hill at Firle.



*Working together increases success, especially when you increase the search area.*

**As long as you have good landing options, never give up**

There were sea breeze front clouds just to the south, and some birds milling around over the stubble fields over the back hill, so I took a low level glide towards them. It was the only chance of getting up, and if I didn't work I'd just have a short walk back. Since my kit is quite light, and I quite like walking anyway!

## Patience is often the difference between landing & staying up

I found a scrappy thermal near the Firle launch area. I can't call it a climb as I was actually slowly going down in it, trying to find the core as I drifted slowly south. Since the ground was dropping away below me, I was just maintaining ground clearance while drifting. After a few minutes of chasing my tail, the thermal eventually strengthened into a decent climb, up to 3,000 ft.

## Move to the best lift if it's within reach

There was a good-looking cumulus ahead and I could see a pilot climbing further upwind, so I took a gamble and left the weak climb I was in. I found a good climb under the cumulus and didn't have to work much to



get up to base. If I'd waited until the weaker climb had eventually run out of steam, the stronger thermal cycle might have ended too, leaving me with nothing but sink in a large area.

*Watch other pilots for signs of lift. Someone else climbing faster? Glide on over!*

## The reward?

High above the terrain, I could enjoy an effortless glide on my Niviuk Artik 4, marvelling at the scenery, without the stress of ridge-soaring traffic or risky winds. Being high is the safest place to be on a paraglider: there's space for the wing to recover from any kind of turbulence, the landing options are numerous, and there's absolutely nothing to fly into.

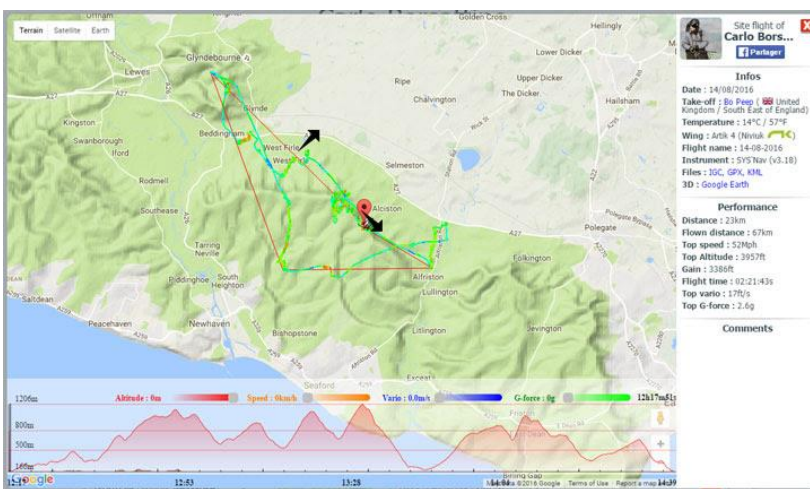
High above the terrain, I could enjoy an effortless glide on my Niviuk Artik 4, marvelling at the

I floated into the flats then hooked another thermal, just to enjoy the feeling of drifting gently, silently, back to my van. Light wind days really give you a sense of freedom!



Nancy climbing out above the Summer Fair.

### Flight track on a map



See the full flight track: <https://bit.ly/2ZDK7Yq>

### 13. Looking out for each other – Johnny Carr

It had been a pretty windy day at the Dyke. Two HG pilots had landed in the big westerly bowl which is a safer option when it's very windy, compared to landing in the hang-gliding paddock, which can be much riskier.

It's important for all pilots to be aware that if a hang-glider, or a paraglider, lands in the westerly bowl, the last three metres, or so, are completely out of view from the front face of the Dyke and the hang-glider paddock.

Fortunately, a fellow HG pilot was sufficiently concerned that he went to take a look from the earthworks. From his new vantage point, he could see that the wind was so strong that the pilots were now pinned under their gliders and didn't dare move for fear of the nose lifting and a gust blowing the glider over causing damage and injury. Fortunately, he was able to help by holding onto the noses of the glider(s) allowing the pilots to safely unclip and secure their gliders.

So, the moral of this tale, is a plea for fellow pilots to help each other. Whilst everything may look ok that may not be the case and please check, especially on windy/ gusty days. No one may have suspected that these two HG pilots were having such difficulty, whether the landing had been OK, or if a HG/ PG pilot had been injured from a bad landing, and possibly being dragged across the hill.

My point is this... please let's look out for each other, especially when a pilot lands out of view.

**Also - As a safety precaution, please can all PG pilots remember not to inflate their wings in the HG paddock if hang-gliders are rigging or rigged in the paddock or flying the ridge.**

## 14. Weather watch: Blocking weather patterns and stratospheric warming – The Met Office

### Blocking patterns

Blocks are areas of high pressure that remain nearly stationary and distort the usual eastward progression of pressure systems.

#### What is "blocked weather"?

Usually, weather fronts (which bring rain) move from west to east across the UK, but sometimes they can stay where they are, or even go from east to west, and this is usually due to a 'block'. This just means that a big area of high pressure is remaining almost stationary over the same area for a long time. The high pressure can stop weather fronts moving past it, so that they skirt around the edges, or stay where they are for an extended period.

In terms of the weather you will get, this means that under the high pressure the weather will remain mainly dry and settled for a few days or perhaps weeks. However, if you are in the area where the weather fronts are, you are likely to get wet and windy weather for a long time.

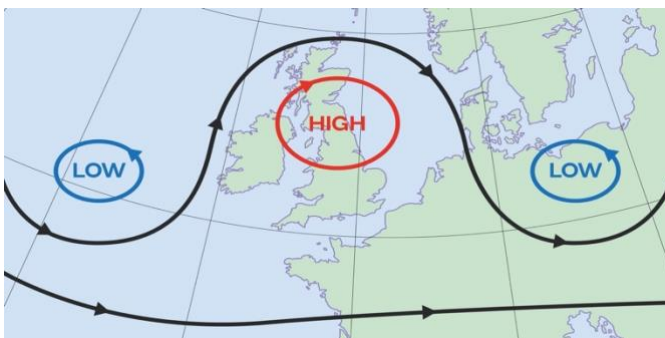
#### How does the weather become blocked?

A weak jet stream (or its position) is one way in which an area of high pressure can become slow moving. The jet stream helps to develop and steer areas of low pressure around so if it's weak or positioned well away from the UK, high pressure can become more influential in our weather.

As the jet stream is driven by a temperature difference, it will be weaker if the difference is small. Sometimes the jet stream's flow buckles and an area can become separated and almost break off, taking low pressure with it and weakening its west to east movement. Another thing that changes the jet stream is something called a Sudden Stratospheric Warming. This alters our prevailing wind direction and can sometimes bring us easterly winds with high pressure sitting to the east of the UK. However, blocking patterns form, large areas of high pressure can become quite stubborn and difficult to move once established.

#### What are the main types of blocking?

There are two types of blocks; an Omega Block and a Diffluent Block, and are most common in spring. Exceptionally they can persist for months around mid-summer, like in 1976, or mid-winter, like in 1963.



#### Omega Block

Omega blocks are named due to pattern they form which resembles the uppercase Greek letter omega,  $\Omega$ . An area of high pressure will be sandwiched in between two lows to the east and west, and also slightly to the south. These blocks frequently occur on the eastern edges of the Atlantic and eastern Pacific, and can lead to easterly flows to the UK.

#### Diffluent Block

A split in the eastwards flow can lead to a Diffluent Block. Examples with a closed high centre to the north of a closed low centre in the south are more likely to last for a prolonged period of time.

#### Sudden Stratospheric Warming

Sudden stratospheric warming describes an event when rapid warming occurs high up in the stratosphere. However, it can lead to changes in our weather at the surface.

#### What is a sudden stratospheric warming?

In recent years some extreme cold, winter snow events have all been connected to the surface effects of sudden stratospheric warmings, such as those in 2009-10, 2013, and 'the beast from the east' in 2018. You may be asking why it is called a warming then, if it leads to cold conditions?

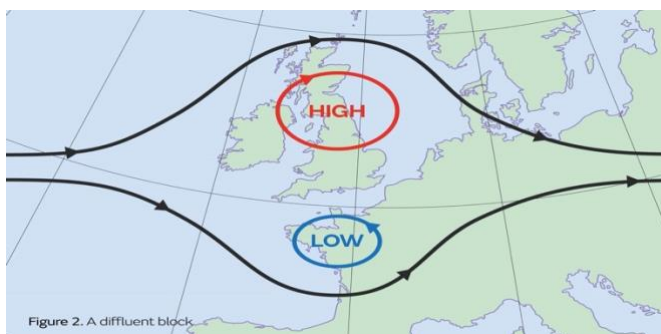


Figure 2. A diffluent block.

The term sudden stratospheric warming refers to what is observed in the stratosphere:- a rapid warming (up to about 50 °C in just a couple of days), between 10 km and 50 km above the earth's surface. This is so high up that we don't feel the 'warming' ourselves. However, usually a few weeks later, we can start to see knock-on effects on the jet stream, which in turn effects our weather lower down (in the troposphere).

However, the stratospheric sudden warming doesn't happen every year, and it doesn't always affect our weather when it does.

### **How does a sudden stratospheric warming occur?**

Every year in winter, strong westerly winds circle around the pole high up in the stratosphere. This is called the stratospheric polar vortex and it circulates around cold air high over the Arctic.

In some years, the winds in the polar vortex temporarily weaken, or even reverse to flow from east to west. The cold air then descends very rapidly in the polar vortex and this causes the temperature in the stratosphere to rise very rapidly, as much as 50°C, over only a few days; hence the term sudden stratospheric warming.

As the cold air from high up in the stratosphere disperses, it can affect the shape of the jet stream as the cold air sinks from the stratosphere into the troposphere. It is this change in the jet stream that causes our weather to change.

### **How does a Sudden Stratospheric Warming affect our weather?**

The stratospheric sudden warming can sometimes cause the jet stream to 'snake' more, and this tends to create a large area of blocking high pressure. Typically, this will form over the North Atlantic and Scandinavia. This means that northern Europe, including the UK is likely to get a long spell of dry, cold weather, whereas southern Europe will tend to be more mild, wet and windy. On the boundary of these areas, cold easterly winds develop and in some cases the drop in temperatures leads to snow, which is what happened in early 2018.

### **Can we predict these events in advance?**

Currently we can reliably predict individual sudden stratospheric warmings about a week in advance, and we can detect them early on with satellite and other observations. This means we have some time to see how they develop and may impact our future weather. The sudden stratospheric warming usually takes a few weeks to influence our weather at the surface, or into the next month.

Jet streams high up in our atmosphere, in both the northern and southern hemisphere, circumnavigate the Earth from west to east. One of these, the Polar Night Jet, circles the Arctic.

Sometimes the usual westerly flow can be disrupted by natural weather patterns or disturbances in the lower part of the atmosphere, such as a large area of high pressure in the northern hemisphere. This causes the Polar Jet to wobble and these wobbles, or waves, break just like waves on the beach. When they break they can be strong enough to weaken or even reverse the westerly winds and swing them to easterlies. As this happens, air in the stratosphere starts to collapse in to the polar cap and compress. As it compresses it warms, hence the stratospheric warming.

### **How does it move down through the atmosphere?**

As it turns out, waves can only move around the Earth's atmosphere in westerly winds. Fluctuations in our weather send waves up through the atmosphere to the easterly winds in the stratosphere, where they travel no further, and instead break and reinforce the easterly winds, bringing the easterlies lower. This pattern continues until the easterlies have moved down to the troposphere – the lowest part of the atmosphere where our weather is.

**By replacing  
your morning  
coffee with green  
tea, you can lose  
up to 87% of  
what little joy  
you still have  
left in your life.**

**15. The last word: Ben Gallagher, SHGC member, veteran, athlete, and explorer**



Ben Gallagher. He recently completed his EP and CP courses with Fly Sussex Paragliding and now flies as part of the Southern Club.

Ben lives in Eastbourne and on the 25th March he travelled to Morocco to compete in “the toughest foot race on earth” Marathon des Sables. 250 kilometres in 6 days across the Sahara Desert in temperatures of up to 45 degrees Celsius. He will also carry everything required for the duration of the race on his back.

But why is Ben entering such an extreme event and what does he hope to achieve?

Back in 2019 whilst serving in the British Army Ben was seriously injured. Whilst on active duty, he was shot numerous times and received blast/fragmentation injuries to both arms and his upper torso. Without a doubt his body armour saved his life. Following his physical injuries Ben suffered with mental illness and also tried to take his own life. After psychological therapy he was diagnosed with PTSD and later discharged from the military.

Ben would like to raise £5,000 for Walking With The Wounded and the amazing support they provide to Veterans, their families, and the National Health Service.

[https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAjw0a-SBhBkEiwApIjU0oUKi9rHx\\_mDP2zV8Q9SktmbcqBMCKrlbupP258P1TtCIMljGHpHwhoCTm4QAvD\\_BwE](https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAjw0a-SBhBkEiwApIjU0oUKi9rHx_mDP2zV8Q9SktmbcqBMCKrlbupP258P1TtCIMljGHpHwhoCTm4QAvD_BwE)

Ben now finds purpose and drive in testing himself through extreme events and is an outdoors enthusiast. He shares his story to inspire others to think beyond the conventional, and not let their circumstances limit their ambition.

Since learning to paraglide Ben has found another way to enjoy the outdoors, learn a new skill and overcome adversity.

You can learn more about Ben and follow his progress at [www.bengallaghergbr.weebly.com](http://www.bengallaghergbr.weebly.com) and @bengallagher.gbr

Donate> <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/ben-gallagher-gbr>

\*\*\*\*UPDATE 5 April 2022: Ben made it! Congratulations, well done Ben!\*\*\*\*

567		WELCOME		INFO ↓	RUNNERS	↓	FOLLOWING	↓
<b>Benjamin GALLAGHER</b> ☆								
Bib 567 36ème MARATHON DES SABLES 2022 - SE H								
Infos share Contact	<b>Status</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Rank SE H</b>	<b>Last timing point</b>		<b>Race time</b>		<b>Speed</b>
	Finisher	272	109	Sat. 10:53 FINISH LINE		Official : 38:48:54 Real : 40:38:34		5.95 km/h 5.69 km/h
	Stage 1	175	63			03:56:02		7.44 km/h
	Stage 2	229	90			06:29:06		5.87 km/h
	Stage 3	404	138			06:21:18		4.77 km/h
	Stage 4	342	127			17:14:39		4.91 km/h
	Stage 5	98	42			04:47:49		8.75 km/h
	Stage 6	510	135			01:49:40		3.68 km/h

