

Skywords

Email katerawlinson@hotmail.co.uk if you wish to submit anything for next month's mag.

Happy New Year *Kate X*

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

It's that time of year when it's traditional to review the events of the previous year and to look forward to what is promised for next.

We hit the ground running in January. Ogi took over as Chief Coach and briefed his plans at the Jan club night. This led to us organising a highly successful club coach's course during Feb and running a number of coaching days throughout the summer.

The club also arranged transport to take gliders to Aerofix in Jan, returning them serviced, repaired and repacked 3 weeks later. Pete Balmforth organised a reserve repack in Otley for those who wanted to do it themselves.

Feb saw membership renewals and the annual Dales Club Party at Herriots in Skipton where we entertained the farmers, presented trophies and destroyed a few brain cells.

Our club nights were initially held at The Black Horse in Otley. There we saw

excellent presentations from Jocky Sanderson and Rod Buck; and our very own Sara Spillett ran a First Aid evening. However the May club night had to be cancelled when the roof of the Black Horse fell in and the pub closed. We managed to secure the upstairs function room of the Ilkley Moor Vaults by Jun and Melise Harland gave an excellent presentation on the Ascent of Aconcagua. Oct brought a very informative presentation by Squadron Leader Kev Walton, the SATCO from RAF Leeming.

We turned down the owner's 'generous' offer to allow us to park at the bottom of Great Whernside for an annual fee of £350 (+ VAT). We failed to get permission to fly Pen Hill and Pen-y-gent and decided not to pursue Nidderdale and Wild Boar Fell. No one could find the elusive local agreement giving us permission to fly within the airspace at Ilkley and Baildon. Many 'happy' hours were spent converting our sites' guide into an electronic format.

The Lakes Charity Classic in early Jun was a washout, but Kate and Dave did a great job in organising the Dales Northern Bash later in the month. It proved to be a great success with much flying, drinking

and general merriment, although we lost the war of the roses to the Pennine Soaring Club. We hosted rounds of the BCC, the BP Cup and the Hang-gliding British Open. The BCC team pilots fought hard and secured a well earned place in the final at the Long Mynd over the weekend of 8/9 August. And that is where it all went horribly wrong...

Hamish had an accident on the Fri. Dennis Wray was involved in a mid-air collision on the Sat. Stephen Allen, the other pilot from the South Wales club, died almost immediately and Dennis died from his injuries about a week later. It was around this time that we heard that Stephen Mertens had had an accident whilst on holiday in Annecy a few weeks before. Those of us that went to Dennis' funeral and visited Hamish and Stephen in hospital will confirm that it wasn't a happy time.

The Baildon Sod was held in Sep and helped to restore battered confidence and spirits. At the AGM in Nov we managed to find enough members to fill all the committee posts, and here we are.

So what's the plan for 2010? Hopefully more of the same but with fewer accidents please. The Aerofix run is on again and John Lawson has organised another reserve repack. The next club night is on Wed 6 Jan and you are invited to bring along any unwanted flying gear (or anything really) for a table-top sale. Sara will be teaching us about First Aid in Feb, and Mar will see Melise repeating her Aconcagua presentation together with the ceremony to present the DHPC trophies from 2009. We hope to have more Ben Keayes Vol-Bivouac Adventures in Apr.

Dave is trying to negotiate the use of Stoodley Pike and we are making progress towards securing a local agreement with the Leeds/Bradford authorities to allow us to continue to fly at Ilkley and Baildon.

Trev has organised a visit to RAF Leeming on 5 Feb. We intend to hold the Farmers Function on Sat 27 Feb. The venue hasn't

yet been booked but it will be further north this year (to suit the farmers). After much deliberation we have decided not to enter a team in the BCC. Details of many of these events are elsewhere in this newsletter and on the website (www.dhpc.org.uk).

The plan is to repeat the Dales Northern Bash and, if the webmaster can find the time, you should be able to access our sites information via the website.

Finally, you may not be aware that Ogi is fairly poorly at the moment. I hope that no-one will object if, on behalf of all members of the Dales Hang-gliding and Paragliding Club, I wish Ogi, Hamish and Stephen a speedy return to full health in 2010.

Fly safely,

Martin Baxter
Chairman

THE CROSS ON WEATHER FELL IAN FAIRBROTHER

Hi guys, where to begin, Martin dropped me an email, can I shed some light on the whereabouts of the cross at Weather Fell.

For those of you who may not have any knowledge of it, the location is to the south of take off, just over the wall (towards the 5 barred gates).

I say the location is, the fact is it appears to have gone... Of course it may just have fallen down; after all it was erected in 1994. For those that have ever wondered, I suppose a little history wouldn't go amiss.

Back to 1994, a cracking weekend, blue sky smooth lift 500' in just ridge lift, fly anywhere you want. The usual hardcore gang were there, five in the morning until dark. There was a joke at the time easterly wind ok see you at Weather.

Of course Ian was one of the hardcore. Imagine if you will. Xmas just gone, January 16th a crisp day, blue sky, smooth lift, 500' in just ridge lift. Fly anywhere you want, and wave was evident. It was agreed one of the nicest days flying for quite some time.

Sadly the day was to be remembered for other reasons. At 450' Ian's glider clapped wings (later discovered the keel had snapped).

On the descent he pulled his reserve but the handle came off in his hand. Amazingly Ian survived the fall, and was conscious. An ambulance was called; we couldn't believe how lucky he had been. Ian and I were soon on our way to Northallerton hospital joking about it all. I won't go into the details but, we lost Ian on route to the hospital.

At the funeral I promised Ian's father I would place a cross on the spot. Now going back a little, as I say, the cross has gone. If anybody could throw any light on it at all that would be nice. But the chances are we will probably never know, regardless, the Fairbrother Pilots Pilot trophy is still on the go which is good. But if you guys spotted it while flying give Martin a call.

Thanks Bob Del

NOTAMS

Ever struggled with the NATS web site? Or maybe you just never bothered looking up NOTAMS for your area, because it was all too difficult? How do you work out whether that latitude and longitude is anywhere near you? Hopefully, this web site is the solution to your problem.

<http://notaminfo.com/ukmap>

Some of the flying site info is a little out of date but the rest looks really

useful - in an easy to absorb format. Haven't tried registering yet but I intend to.

I have saved the link onto the DHPC website.

Martin



[Visit to RAF Leeming ATC - February 5th](#)

Following Kevin Waltons (head of ATC) brilliant talk about Air Traffic Control at a recent Club Night, we are invited to visit ATC at Leeming.

Kev was really impressed by the interest and knowledge shown by club members and I think is going to lay on some special features for our visit - this will involve a look round the aircraft (sadly, not a flight up in them) and a talk by a special visitor. I've been before so I know it'll be a great visit.

The date is as stated above on [Friday, 5th February]. Not quite sure what time but it will be during a normal working day, so I guess during the afternoon. I will let you know the time later.

To go this trip, you will need to log on with me in advance and let me know the names of the folk in your car and your car reg number.

So email with your details to log in on this trip.....

trev.birkbeck@virgin.net **Don't miss this trip - it will be a good one!**



Dales Reserve Repack

I'm really pleased that, again, the club is organising a repack with the BHPA's Bill Morris and his team of packers who will provide a briefing, supervision and advice.

This year we will be at **St Mary's School, Menston, on 13 March, at 10.00 am**
The cost is £15, on a first come first serve basis. Please e-mail johnklawson@googlemail.com or phone 07747 081975 for more details.

As a newly qualified pilot I suspect I was not unique in being almost entirely ignorant of the necessity of a reserve parachute. I cheerfully flew for eighteen months, fortunately mainly on nice gentle sea cliffs, without one.

If I thought about a reserve at all, it was probably just to think that I'd never need one or to decide that I couldn't afford one. Or, just possibly, to fret that I didn't understand how they were packed and fitted. I opted for putting my head in the sand as the best option, and simply ignored the issue.

It took my old instructor, on hearing that I was going to fly in the Pyrenees, to physically grab my harness, put a reserve from his shop in for me (and only after I got back shake me down for the money, so I could keep it). As I deployed that reserve barely two years later, back in the Pyrenees, it feels like he did me a big, big favour.

Even so, it still took me another four years of flying, at an SIV course over Lake Lugano, to really understand how slowly badly packed reserve opens. 15 seconds for a reserve to fully open is a long, long time for a pilot under a hopelessly cravatted wing, even more so when you know that a properly packed reserve should open in three or four seconds:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yByGAI Md4EM&feature=player_embedded

But, even though I was shown the value of a reserve, I'm still (if I'm honest) a bit wary of them. Like many pilots, I can, and do, spend hours sitting on the hill fiddling with my harness, speed system and instruments, but am strangely averse of pulling and repacking my reserve, just once a year.

Which is more than a bit daft, as we all know that reserves are so important. As the BHPA safety notice says

"A reserve parachute is not worth carrying if it is not going to work."

BHPA Safety Notice 014 December 1996

The BHPA has also analysed more than 60 reserve parachute deployments reported to BHPA in UK 2003 - 2008 (and estimate that there must be *at least* as many again unreported).

Unsurprisingly, that analysis concludes that failing to repack regularly and properly can be very dangerous.

As well as missing the opportunity to spot dangerous errors in packing or installing reserves, failure to repack each year can seriously affect the effectiveness of the reserve, when deployed.

After about a year the rubber bands that hold everything together long enough to deploy properly start to decay. Just as bad, the fabric of the parachute can start to stick together enough to slow down inflation.

It couldn't happen to me... (1)

“On 23rd March a French pilot died when, following a major suspension line failure (see FSC.SN.14)) his parachute system also failed. Investigations have revealed that he had interlocked the sewn loop at the end of the fairly stiff, 40mm flat webbing parachute bridle with the sewn loop at the end of the softer, narrower ‘Y’ bridle that connected to the reserve attachment points on the harness. When this junction pulled tight during the free fall reserve deployment the ‘Y’ bridle cut right through the parachute bridle. (This was a ‘hot knife’ cut, due to the heat generated by the compressive loads.)”

BHPA Safety Notice 015 September 1997

It couldn't happen to me... (2)

““The primary cause of this accident was (of course) the collision. However, the hang glider pilot had enough height to deploy his parachute, and did so, but it did not deploy correctly. Apart from photographs, the wreckage and eye witness reports, we also have a video of the event. All the evidence is so far consistent with the parachute having been seriously incorrectly packed.

The parachute in question has a 'clover leaf' deployment bag, which is held closed until the bag reaches the full extent of the bridle by the bridle being looped through a small elastic loop. The rest of the bridle is then S-folded on the outside of the deployment bag, the folds held neatly by two elastic loops.

In the case of this parachute, the bridle line itself (rather than a loop of bridle) had been passed through one of the elastic loops. The result of this was that, on deployment, instead of the deployment bag falling away it remained attached to the bridle line, and at some point during the deployment sequence the cover and elastic loop moved up the parachute lines and held the mouth of the parachute tightly closed. We have met this re-packing error before. At least one pilot had decided that he didn't want to risk losing his deployment bag and attached it to his parachute in just this way.

Fortunately this error was discovered during a repacking event. More worrying is that we have discovered another identical error since the accident, so it is clear that this repacking problem is by no means unique. Please, please, please learn from this fatality. A reserve parachute is not worth carrying if it is not going to work.”

BHPA Safety Notice 014 December 1996

It couldn't happen to me... (3)

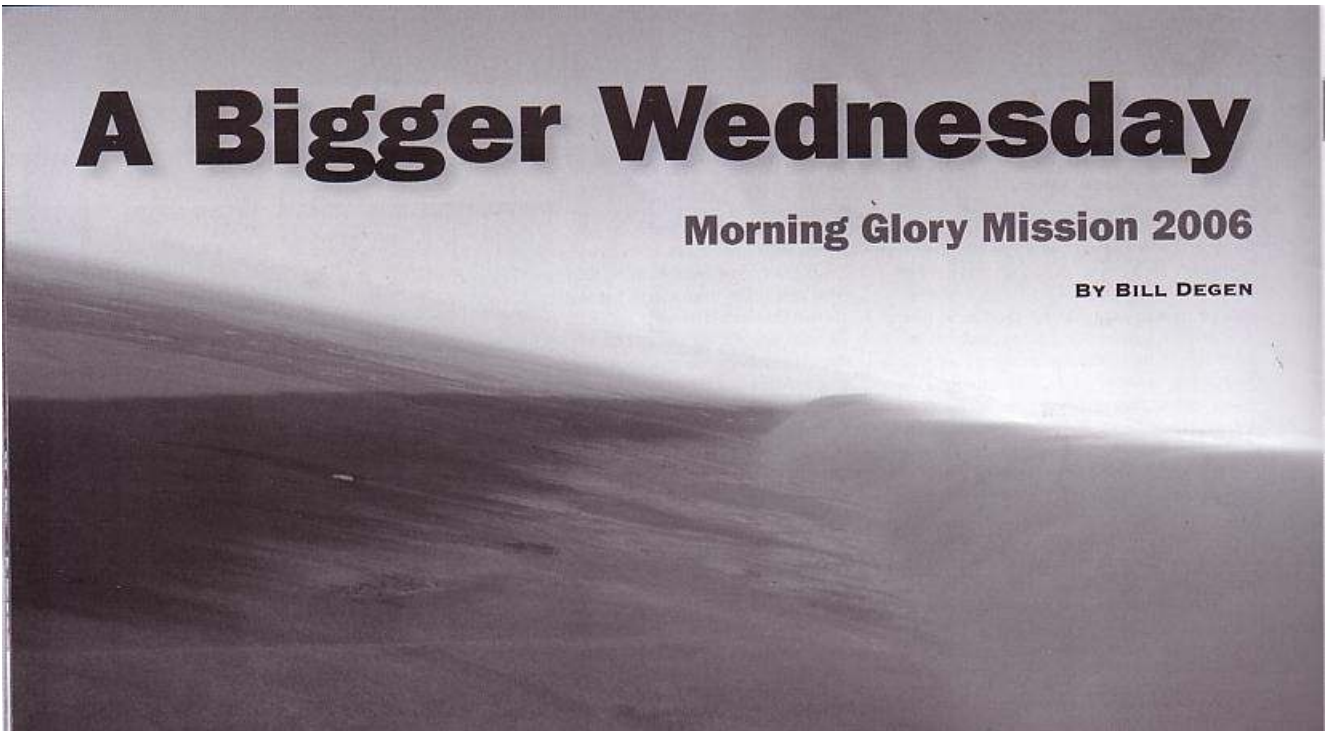
“Another emergency parachute has been discovered to have its deployment bag permanently attached to the lines. On deployment, instead of the deployment bag falling away, it will remain attached to the bridle, move up the lines and hold the mouth of the parachute firmly closed. At least one fatality in this country has been caused by this packing error”

Skywings December 2009

A Bigger Wednesday

Morning Glory Mission 2006

BY BILL DEGEN



A spectacular wall of cloud rolls in off the sea at dawn, travelling at 15-30 knots, up to 1500 km in length, starting from 100-2000 feet from the ground and reaching up to 6000 feet. Sometimes the whole length is perfectly rounded, other times broken and billowing like a front but in a surreal straight line. The cloud appears to rotate backwards as it advances, sucking up humid air from below in front, condensing into cloud as it goes up and back, dumping cooled air in its wake.

The "Morning Glory" moves like an ocean wave, it can be small or gigantic, or even dry and invisible. It may be calm everywhere else but the glory is preceded by a strong gust front. Up in front of the cloud there is smooth but powerful lift. Under and behind, there is severe sink and turbulence with more gusts with direction changes. It's then often followed by a secondary or more glories. As it passes overhead, the dawn light is blacked out by the rolling cloud.

The glory is the main suspect in local plane crashes, but for a hang glider, trike or sailplane pilot, the area of smooth lift in front can allow soaring up to 9000 feet and hundreds of kilometres while it is visible and working.

The top has a strong laminar flow and the lee side has massive sink and turbulence, it's important to be able to actually see the glory so that you can handle the winds that come with it. Another issue is that you have to be able to stay in front of the glory and it could be travelling at up to 65 km an hour, so staying in front may be difficult for slower wings. There's only one road to follow, so staying within reach of that before landing areas become scarce must be considered too. Already a couple of hang gliders have been overtaken by a glory but have survived to tell of it.

Glories happen randomly in other areas, but Burketown, Queensland, Australia in October is the most predictable place for those who fancy flying this most unusual cloud

formation. The most unlikely time of year is the few weeks between the dry season and the "wet".



The popular theory is that the glory is caused by a convergence of sea breezes the day before on Cape York. The converged air crashes down in the night, causing a linear shock wave that triggers a release of hot humid air from the sea surface that cools, condenses and falls behind the wave, helping propel it along. That explains the usual North East glory, but not the Southeast and Southerly glories which have been observed on the same day, even intersecting!!

It's a huge drive to Burketown, for most it takes 3 or 4 days, but from Cairns it takes about 12 hours. A lot of the road is dirt, but with no rain the roads are fine, apart from the dust, that is. The terrain is savannah "tiger country" with vast roadless and unlandable areas. There are large dry

grassed plains, but more common is jagged small trees about every 4 m.

The area has saltwater crocodiles, so going near rivers is not advised. The climate is blazingly hot and when it's suitable for the glory, it's so humid that water drips from the gliders, so much that it's worth taking a towel to mop the water off. On the coast the humidity is higher, turning the red sand to sticky mud. Sandflies and mosquitoes abound on the salt flats too.

Burketown has about 200 people, many leave during the "wet" when continuous rains flood around 40 km in from the sea, sometimes leaving Burketown an island cut off from road transport. The people are invariably friendly, and welcome the fishermen and glory pilots that fill the town's accommodation.

There are approximately 1500 Aboriginals in the Burke/Doomadgee area. To control the social problems and violence caused by alcohol, there is a limit (for all people) of 52 cans or 27 litres of beer that each person is allowed. You have to wonder what this is supposed to achieve, when SUVs crammed full of Aboriginals arrive to stock up on booze!

Burketown has just one iconic Aussie pub, one general store, one gas station, and public internet is via dial-up at the Council's public library. The fishing is good, though. Barrimundi season was just finishing when we arrived.

A thermal bore just east of town has a swamp with loads of wildlife; exotic birds and kangaroos abound. Cane toads in their thousands at night. Not good to step on in bare feet, they excrete a poison that is absorbed into the skin, making humans ill or killing any animal that eats it. They are universally hated, so are popular for target or golf practise. Mornings and evenings there are large flocks of fruit bats, it's surprising that there were no bat strikes with all the morning air traffic in the dark, I guess they are very agile and good with their sonar.



I had a holiday long overdue, recently bought a motor harness and with a new Sting 175XC available in Oz, I took a chance to catch a "Morning Glory". I flew direct to Cairns to team up with Brod Osborn and his Dad while Billo brought my glider from Newcastle. The harness was "dangerous goods", so needed inspection and a certified box to airfreight. Customs in Australia was tough too. The motor harness cost more to ship than I did.

This year's pilgrimage featured hard core Aussie hang glider and trike regulars like "Billo" Olive who drove for four days with trike and gliders from Newcastle. Kerry, a kiwi trike pilot, Dave who flew his 912 trike all the way from Cairns in record time. Anders Palmquist (ex Queenstown HG) and Scott Barret (Airborne) were there too.

The only hang glider pilot we heard of who caught a glory this year was Rolf Schatzmann who drove with his caravan all the way from Perth to stay in Burketown for a month. Using an Explorer motor harness with a Fun 160 he was able to follow the motor gliders up from the airport. See "Surfing on the Glory!" later.

The sailplane boys at Burketown had about four motor gliders. They can fly 50 odd kilometres out to sea where glories are more abundant, but this year most dissipated on reaching land.

The powerful trikes have a blast, tearing around the countryside, croc spotting along the rivers and aerotowing the hang gliders. They have the power to get up and go fast as well as to soar along the glory.

The schedule was: bedtime at 9ish, wake at 4 a.m., grab flying gear, drive to the strip, snacking in the car, set up gliders in the dark and be ready to fly at 5.30 a.m. first light.

Most times we flew the motor harnesses anyway or aerotowed for practise or thermalling (there were thermals before 9 a.m. one day). We were usually finished and back at camp to have breakfast and shelter from the sun by 8 or 9 a.m. The rest of the day was recovery time and too hot to do much.

The early activity is tough if you are not a morning person. While adapting to the strange sleep pattern, it's frustratingly easy to forget things.

Most days a glory did not appear, or it was dry, fizzled as it hit land or came through too early in the dark, but the glider pilots talked of one year when they had a week of them!

The first day I rigged on the airport lawn in the dark under the security lights, it was hot and humid with no wind and we saw a glory approaching in the faint light on the horizon. My motor harness refused to start. The trikes scrambled and flew to the roadside where the hang gliders set up. This glory dissipated just before reaching us, but we still got the gust front and wind changes... scary.

Next day my motor ran fine but no glory appeared. I launched the Sting across the runway in barely a breath of wind, but from 300 feet up the wind rose to 22 knots as I climbed. It was smooth, though, so I boated around Burketown watching the sunrise and trikes aerotowing the hang gliders up or croc spotting low along the rivers. This was to be the pattern for most days.

A local had a trike which he used for pig hunting, landing on an island covered in croc tracks. One day a wind gust flipped the trike, so he used a toy inflatable boat to row himself and his wife, just barely above water, back to shore!!

He told us about the place with a short strip where he'd been hangared. After a clean-up of an old shed we barely squeezed the Sting and Fun in, then barricaded it to stop any cows chewing our gliders. It saved us half an hour of rigging in the dark by keeping the gliders ready, but we were a little nervous that someone would discover them. I found a Taipan snake skin nearby, so we were sure to wear boots and make lots of noise on arrival.

I had more motor troubles, but thanks to Rolf's mobile internet and the motor harness online group, we cleaned the carb and set it up correctly. It's hot work in 40 odd degrees under a caravan awning with the wind blowing dust around, but from then on it ran perfectly.

One morning at 5 a.m., a glory gust front hit in the darkness. Some hang gliders were caught by surprise and blown over, fortunately without damage. When first light came we saw the glory and a secondary disappearing in the distance. We flew but just got a 15 knot wind and thermals to about 2000 feet. It is strange watching the sunrise from the air and thermalling at 8 a.m. By 9 a.m. it was too hot and gusty so we packed up.

On a humid and hot morning at 3.30 a.m. we heard another glory come through, again too dark to be used, and by 5 a.m. the wind was too strong for anything but trikes and gliders.

The next days were dry, 5 knots on the strip, 20 knots at 500 feet. The wind dropped in the afternoon, so Scott and Billo aerotowed. Conditions were very scratchy but Scott managed to thermal up high.

Another morning I was clipped in and about to start up when a dented leg broke on my motor harness. The rubbish tip became the hardware store that day. I converted some sleeving and saddles from chair legs, an exercise machine and bike parts. Back to work in the caravan awning sweatshop and it was fixed for the next day.

After another windy day off, most pilots left for home. There was just Rolf, me and a trike pilot left in the now almost deserted campground.

Then a cool 19°C morning with no surface wind. A million flies sat on my leading edges, maybe that's why the glider wouldn't fly as I ran as hard as I could but dropped it onto the wheels. On my second launch attempt I hit 15 knots at 300 feet heading for a promising cloud line that was probably a glory earlier, but arrived as a tightly packed line of cu's about 5 km deep travelling at 20 knots. I flew to meet it with high hopes but the lift was only light. Rather than outrun it, I climbed to 4700 feet and let it pass under me. I landed in 20 knots which rose to 29 knots just afterwards.

I'd delayed leaving and we had high hopes for our final morning; there were lots of good signs. One of the sailplane pilots had confidently reserved his glider. A wise-looking aboriginal guy in the pub told us, "The glory will come tomorrow, the sandflies are out." There was condensation on the pub fridge doors. A slat on the restaurant table was bent upwards, we were sure it had been flat the night before, but the barmaid blew off our "sign" with, "Nah, they just get wet and bend." Well, it was still high humidity, lighter winds were forecast, it was looking really good...

At 3.30 a.m. I woke to a gust front bashing the trees against the roof. I dashed outside to see the smooth white form of a glory cloud approaching, lit up by the full moon. The trees

thrashed wildly as I ran into the street for a better view. An ominous shadow blotted out the sky and when the moon reappeared, a long smooth half cylinder of cloud about a kilometre thick stretched from horizon to horizon. It moved on quickly at 20 knots or more. Then the wind stopped as it stalked away, leaving behind an eerie silence. Another gust front hit moments later with no warning. My last day and a perfect glory had come early to taunt me.

An hour later, ready in the pre-dawn light, we saw something coming, but as it came closer we saw it was much slower and another band of tightly packed cumulus was revealed. With the luxury of a couple of knots to launch into, I was soon at the cloud front. It turned out similar to the day before's but larger. With no lift this time I motored on over the top. Flying between the cu tops was pretty and then from 5500 feet it looked even better from behind. When the gas was used up, I landed in about 15 knots at 9 a.m.

A memorable flight anywhere else, but my "Big Wednesday" wave ride would have to wait for another year. We packed for the long drive back to Cairns.

Surfing on the glory

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2006

by Rolf Schatzmann

Today was the day. It almost wasn't, though. I have been getting up whilst it is still dark for too long now. I hate mornings and they physically hurt me, I am not at my best. But despite this I have been getting up and rigging my glider in the dark and damp because I knew it would be worth it eventually.

My back is probably my weakest part and I have been pretty rough on it lately. This morning when my alarm went off at 4.30 a.m. I felt lousy. I really did not want to get out of bed. I looked at the radar from Mornington Island and that showed nothing, I looked at the infrared satellite pic and that showed nothing. I went outside and there was some dew, but the humidity was only 85%, 5% less than yesterday. I decided that my bed was a safe thing, the last few glories have been very slow moving and have fizzled on the coast, this would probably do the same so I went back to sleep.

Around 6.30 a.m., Charles, one of the glider pilots (he has the Zemango (sorry about the spelling)) knocked on my door and said there was a glory about to cross the coast at 35 knots, he asked if I wanted to come and watch it pass overhead at the cemetery.



Bugger that, I want to fly it, not look at it!! I sculled two cans of Red Bull, threw on the nearest clothes and raced out to the airport. I rigged the damp Fun in daylight for a change and took off in nil wind with the cloud visible perhaps 6 miles away. It was the fastest rig I have ever done. Charles reckoned it was less than 20 minutes from when he knocked on my door to when they watched me intercept the cloud over the cemetery.

As I climbed up over Burketown it looked as though the cloud was almost stationary. It was only when I got within a few kilometres of it, that it suddenly seemed to speed up and grow in size. It became this huge, black ominous-looking thing and I was level with the bottom of it!

I changed course so that I could get more height before it caught me. It was about now that I realised how fast it was travelling over the ground; it was really moving!

I had rigged so fast that I didn't bother with the Sony video camera under a wing-tip or any instruments or even any underwear. It was really seat of the pants flying.

About 1 km away from the cloud I could start to feel gentle lift, as I got closer to the cloud the lift continued to increase until I was flying with the bar to my knees, directly away from it and still going up. As soon as I realised that I didn't need it any more, I shut down the motor and braked the prop.

The Fun was just able to stay on the leading edge, I had about a 10 kph speed advantage over the cloud. It quickly became obvious that the cloud was taking me into tiger country and the nearest roads were disappearing off to my left. I started trying hard to work my way along the cloud to the left to keep the road in sight. It was interesting flying, the cloud would advance on me as I tracked left, and as soon as the first wispy bits of cloud started to form around me I would change course to the same direction as the cloud and slowly get in front of it again.

As you can guess, the first time the cloud started to form around me I was really interested to see whether it was going to let me go again. Even though I was flying as fast as I could to stay out of it and it was obviously a very powerful cloud, it was very smooth. The theory is that when the cloud forms the energy is concentrated according to its height, so the higher clouds that we have had previously move much slower.

I was feeling pretty comfortable with my position in front of the cloud, but was really starting to get bothered by the lack of roads or landing options directly beneath me. The way I was looking at things I was not entirely sure how long the cloud would tolerate my presence, and if I lost the lift I was in I was going to be on the ground within a minute, possibly landing in a gust front too, so I wanted a nice clear area and preferably a road too.

the Glory!

"...I knew I was going down fast and just held the bar to my knees and waited..."

I decided my priority was staying over a safe landing area, rather than getting maximum distance, and so I started tracking left to get closer to the one gravel road that I could see. I was flying the Fun at a speed that meant I was slowly losing height and staying in front of the cloud, or I could slow down and go up over the cloud.

I decided that going over the top would be a bad thing, I knew that a couple of hang glider pilots had been through the middle of it and survived, so I figured this was the least bad option if I could not outrun it forever. Several times the cloud caught me and then let me go again, the lift does extend into the cloud a fair way, I was accidentally whited out once and then flew back out in front of the cloud and kept going.

So I was riding the cloud and having a ball. Abundant gentle lift in front and above the cloud. You can tell how easy it was up to this point because I managed to take 142 photos during the flight and you cannot fly a hang glider easily one-handed in rough air. I was getting further and further from Burketown, but really I didn't care, even if I had to walk back through the bush for a whole day, it would be worth it for this flight.

The cloud was starting to become uneven at the leading edge, in places small holes would appear and then fill back in again, probably related to the terrain it was covering, I guess. I was still tracking as far left as I could and staying in front of the cloud. As the terrain under me became more and more tree-covered, I tracked harder and harder left to stay closer to a landing option. It was about at this point that I stopped taking photos as it became obvious I could have the cloud or a safe landing place, but probably not both.

I was tracking left and about in the middle of the front of the leading edge when the cloud pounced. Suddenly it was cold and I knew exactly what that meant. The cloud very slowly and gently enveloped me, I was desperately trying to start my bloody two-stroke so I could perhaps get out again. I gave up once inside the cloud. I knew I was going down fast and just held the bar to my knees and waited.

I was only whited out for about 20 seconds and popped out directly under the cloud. I had just enough time to unzip the harness and get the legs down and as luck would have it I was directly over a gravel road. I could see the second cloud only a minute away, so I landed as quickly as I could and had all my weight on the base bar when the gust front hit. I had landed on a small gravel road, on a cattle grid with barbed wire fence running down each side, and perfectly too!

Once the gust fronts from the second and third waves had passed, I took off again and flew back to the airport. I had to stay low to get good ground speed, but if I was not 100% comfortable with the power harness before, well I certainly am now. I landed where I took off back at the airport and packed up. Wow.

I only used about 10 minutes of fuel to get onto the glory and was lucky with just a cross wind on the way home so I was actually able to self retrieve! How cool is this sport!
Trevor Birkbeck

Glider/Reserve/Harness Servicing

Don't forget the club is planning to offer the same service as last year, namely the provision of free transport to and from Aerofix near Keswick. The deal is that you drop off your glider/harness/reserve at the club night on 6 Jan 2010 in Ilkley, and then collect it again at the next club night on 3 Feb. That saves you a total of £26.50 in parcel force collection/delivery fees, or even more in petrol. Simple? The only proviso is that you need to label you kit with your name and contact details. Payment (by credit card) and any negotiation is entirely your responsibility; if it isn't paid for we won't collect it. Oh yes, and in this horribly litigious society that we live in I probably ought to point out that if my car bursts into flames (or anything) with your glider in the back

please don't expect me to replace your pride and joy .

Our experience of Kirsten & Nick at Aerofix is that they provide a thoroughly professional service. Check out their details at:

<http://www.aerofix.com/index.php>

Regular users should be aware that they are off to New Zealand, and will be closed for the entire month of December 2009.

My car is only so big, so if you want to take advantage of this service please book a place by email to

mrbaxter@hotmail.co.uk I need to know your name, what items you want servicing and a phone number.

Martin Baxter