



Tony Fillingham The 3 Peaks Challenge

It was whilst driving to a club meeting this winter that Trevor Birkbeck mentioned to me that there was a Three Peaks Challenge, which had never been done on a hang glider. The previous year I had flown home from Wether Fell to near Settle, via Ribbleshead and Inglebrough, and I felt it was possible. I had explored the peaks on my Mosquito power unit taking every chance to power-down and thermal in any lift. I have also climbed all three on several occasions and look at them every day from my home, so I guess I know them well.

Attempt 1 – 31/3/2016

The day started bright and cool as all the best thermalling days do don't they? We were in an arctic air

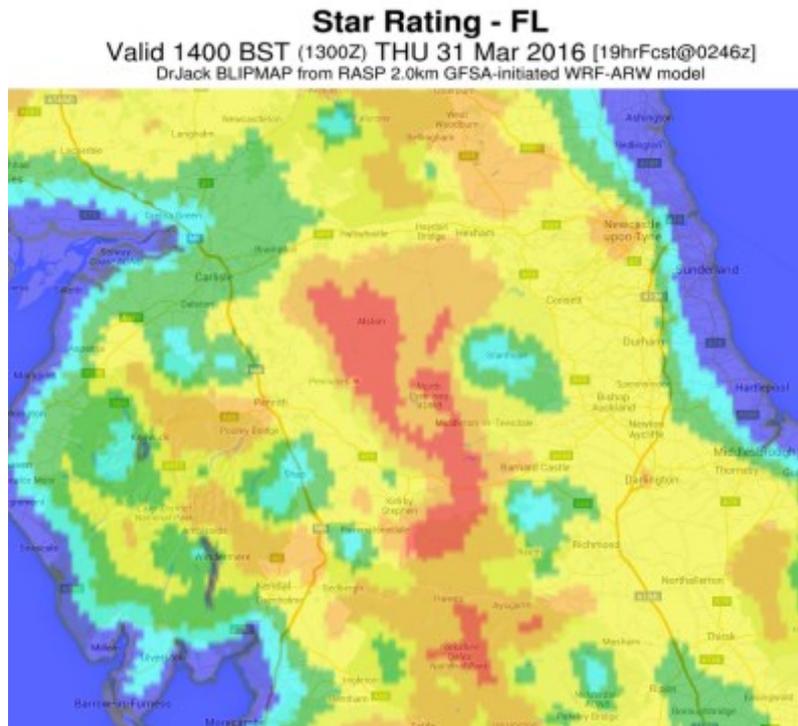


Photo: Alison Jones





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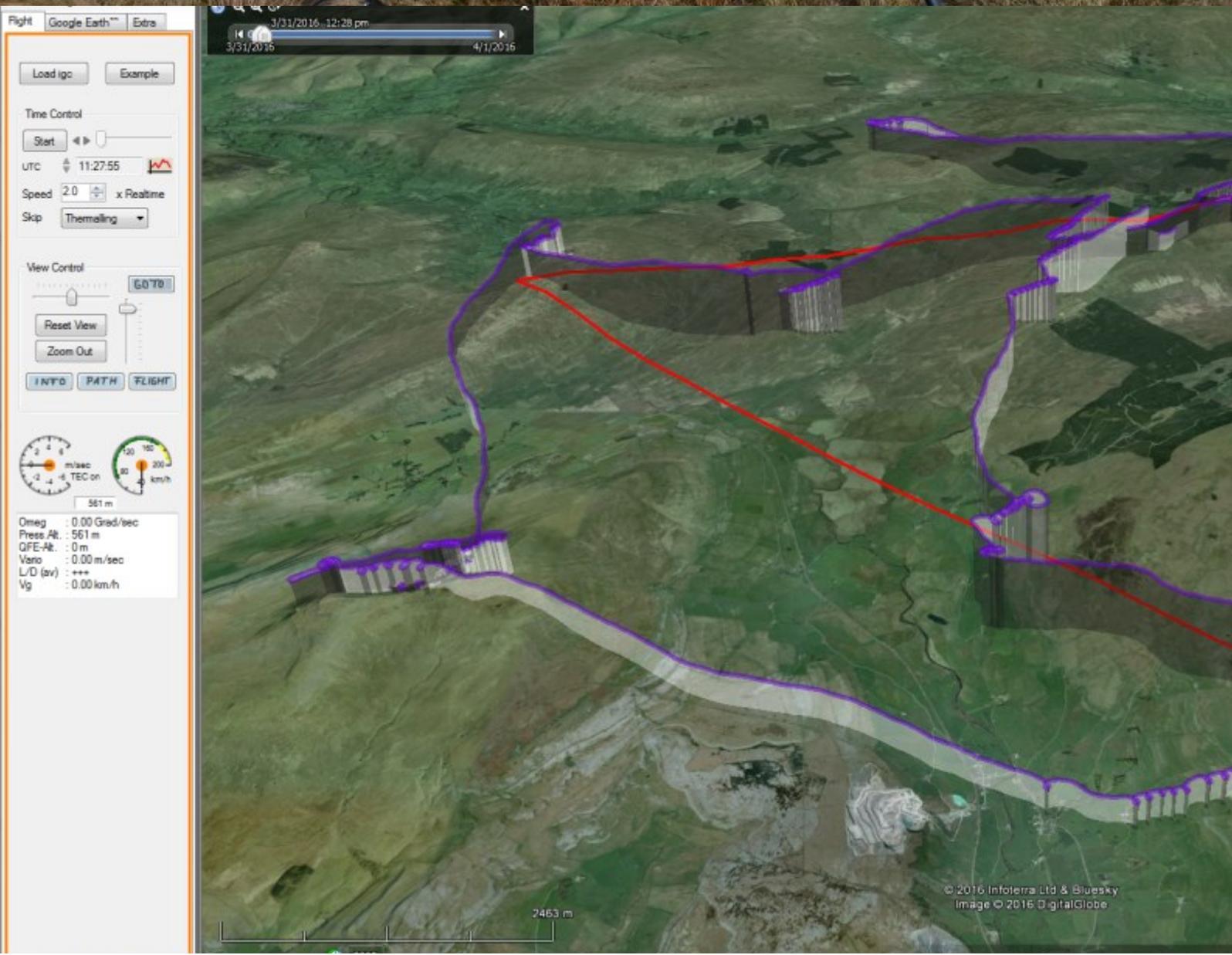
mass and RASP was forecasting very light wind, high cloud base and very good thermal strength for the time of year.

On arriving at Wether the wind was blowing pleasantly 6-8mph on the face and I rigged with anticipation, as small cumulus of about the right size for the time of day started to form. By lunchtime the sky looked good, I launched the Atos and soon found a good climb to cloud base to the right of the take-off, topping out at around 4600ft. Gliding forward to Dodd was no problem and I reached it with plenty of height and continued forwards to Gt Knoutberry Fell and Widdle Tarn, with the intention of going crosswind to Brantside and onto Wherside. To the left of me, towards Wherside, was a huge blue hole which looked uncrossable so I milled around waiting for the sky to develop before eventually giving up and scurrying down wind back to Dodd. This time I followed the high ground at the end of Dodd which always seems to work, it gave me a run onto the hill behind Wherside and in front of Gearstones, this was also working and I had an easy glide under clouds on to Wherside where I could see some

paragliders below. Now on a mission, I didn't hang about here, and after going around the trig point I set off on a glide to Ingleborough in pretty sinking air. I underestimated the width of the valley and by the time I got there I was below the summit chatting to hikers while milling up and down the ridge with two paragliders, Dennis Marston and Simon Tomlinson I think? I wanted to get around the corner onto the steep west face above Ingleton, where I could see it working, this took some effort as the westerly was whistling around the steep corner.

“There are two types of triangle flight for me, the ones where you push upwind but always have enough height to get back and those that take you right out of your territory and comfort zone, this was certainly the latter.”

Besides my Flytec 6030 I also use the I-Glide app on my basebar mounted phone which is linked to a Sensbox via Bluetooth. This was saying my required glide angle to get back to take-off was infinity, not ideal, I normally look for 14:1 as a banker down-wind in sink.

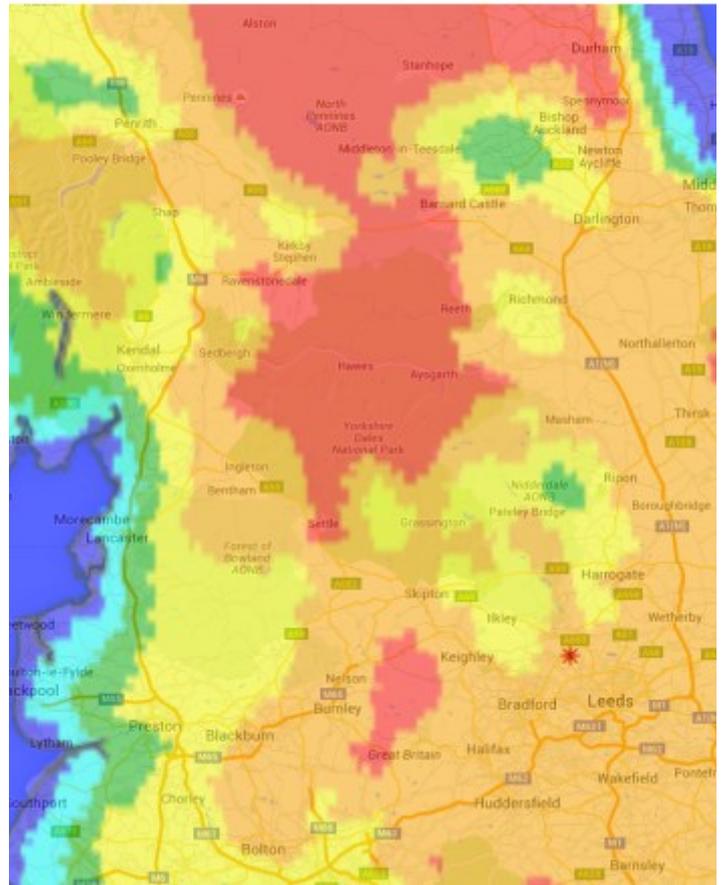


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DrJack BLIPMAP from RASP 2.0km GFSA-initiated WRF-ARW mo

Finally, I managed to hook one to get to the west face where I drifted in weak lift without getting to base and went on glide following the terrain and some beautiful limestone pavement towards Horton-in-Ribblesdale quarry. Down, down, down until it reached rising ground at Pen-y-ghent. This was really working and I climbed out easily over the back of Pen-y-ghent with a cloud street stretching over Fountains Fell and into the distance (very tempting). Once around the back of Pen-y-ghent I pushed out into the valley in buoyant air and started on my way back to Dodd with Andrew Lumb instructing me on the radio. I soon hit the magic 14:1 mark and I knew I'd made it, flaps off and 70mph back to Wether. I landed elated at 15.40 and was met by Andy who took my photo, cold and tired.

We examined my flight later in the Fountain at Hawes, Andy announced that I hadn't gone around the Ingleborough trig point, only past it. A small dampener to say the least.



Attempt 2 – 19/4/2016

Once again the RASP forecast was good but the wind on Wether was nil and with the sun hitting the back first a large static cumulus developed above us blocking the sun from the face for most of the day.

I stood rigged and clipped in on take-off for 11/2 hrs waiting for a bird or something to show a sign in the valley – nothing – the sky looked epic but even the odd bird we saw flapped as they flew straight overhead without stopping. Eventually, a tiny bit of breeze came up the face and a few paragliders took off, some going down and a few going up. I made a run for it at 13.35pm and after a few beats up the ridge flew out into the valley to the back of Dodd and joined some paragliders in a lovely nil wind thermal. Once a few hundred feet up it was a doddle, with large well-formed thermals and a 5,000ft cloud base. I made quick progress forwards and joined Dean Crosby and Dave Smart over Widdale. They continued up to the Howgills and completed superb triangles. I headed for Wherside and beyond toward Gregareth, turned and glided easily to Ingleborough. I made sure I closed the loop around the summit this time! However, I then found myself scratching again in the same spot as be-

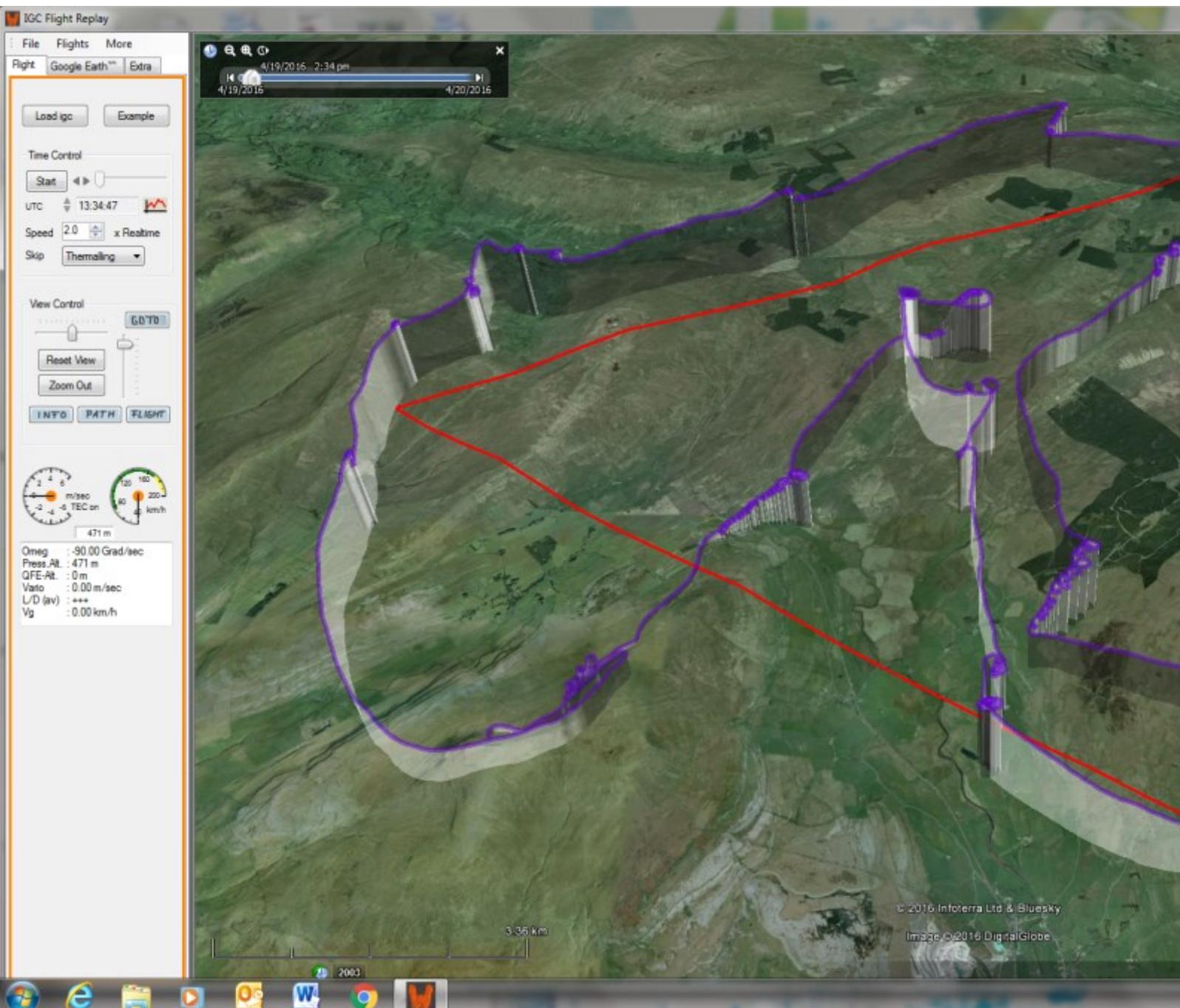
fore, with blue sky above. Getting lower and lower, clinging foolishly to the ridge, before I decided to head into the middle of the valley where the clouds were and glided low towards the viaduct. Harness unzipped ready to land with several tea sipping hikers watching I flew low over the quarry with about 150 ft to spare and hit a peach, my legs had tensed up like tree trunks while I was low and I could feel them slowly relaxing as I climbed out. At this point I decided to cut my losses and head back to Wether but as I reached cloud base in the middle of the valley I looked back to Pen-y-ghent to see the previously blue sky now looking very inviting indeed. With the reassuring voice of Andy Hetherington on the radio, offering a pick-up, I headed back down a very bubbly valley and arrived at Pen-y-ghent

with plenty of height and closed the loop behind the trig point. The small ridge in front, out in the valley, was kicking off thermals well and I was soon on my way back to the safety of Dodd's high ground. It was after 5pm now and still working well, so I had a little run down Wensleydale and came into land not realising just how little wind there was I overshot! The two Andy's stood on the edge willing me down as I scratched and sweated for 15 minutes before just getting enough height to sneak in – Thanks lads.

Probably one of the best nil wind thermalling days in the Dales I can remember and driving home in the setting sun through the valleys and hills I had just flown certainly felt sweet.

Hang gliding, what a sport!

TF



Congratulations to Tony—a stunning come-back year, already!

Tony collects £300 as the declared prize money for being the first Hang Glider pilot to achieve the Dales 3 peaks, matching Dave Smart's feat on a paraglider in 2012.

The cover photo is of Tony's flight on March 31st, and is taken from Dennis Marston's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgoTSKQOeL8>



Situations Vacant

Professor of the

DARK ARTS

required



Tony Pickering is hanging up his abacus at the end of this year. We therefore need someone to take up the role of Club Treasurer. So, if you feel that you can add up (mainly), subtract (a little), and pull the wool over the rest of the committees' eyes, you'll be a shoe in.

Tony is leaving the accounts in a healthy state. The duties are clearly important, though not massively onerous. If you would like to know more, or demonstrate some interest, contact either:

Martin Baxter (Chairman)
mrbaxter@hotmail.co.uk , or

anthonypaulpickering@hotmail.com

for an informal chat about what will be required.