

# Skywords



Email [katerawlinson@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:katerawlinson@hotmail.co.uk) if you wish to submit anything for next month's mag.

*Kate X*

## **CHAIRMAN'S CHAT – NOV 09**

The AGM was held at the Ilkley Moor Vaults on Wed 4 Nov. There were 10 committee and 10 ordinary members present, making a total of 20 out of a total membership of 163. The offer of a free beer didn't exactly break the bank.

John Ellison (Chairman) and Pete Balmforth (Safety) both stood down. Fortunately John Lawson stepped up to take over the Safety Officer's post and Ed Cleasby agreed to take on my job as Sites (North) Officer, allowing me to stand as Chairman. Kate Rawlinson stood down as PG Comps Secretary but agreed to take on Skywords following the sad loss of Dennis Wray. Kev McLoughlin volunteered for the Comps job. In the end we had one volunteer for each job so nothing was contested. The important thing is that we have every post filled for the next year. John, Ed and Kev bring in a wealth of new experience to the team and we are very grateful to all committee members for giving up their time and energy for the benefit of the club.

Tony Pickering (Treasurer) reported that the club's finances were in generally good order. Having added another £1,400 into our flying

fund (which now stands at nearly £6,500) we were up an additional £172 on last year.

We had a lot to talk about on our first committee meeting. The 2 main issues being the Dales Club Party and the British Clubs Challenge (BCC).

For the last 3 years the Dales Club Party (Dinner Dance) has been poorly attended. The majority of members don't come and not many farmers can face the journey down to Skipton. Despite the best efforts of the committee it has been a struggle to persuade the minimum number of people to come and it has been pretty stressful at times, gambling on whether to cancel early or push on and risk losing our deposit.

So next year is going to be different. The focus is now going to be on entertaining the farmers. The venue will move further north (somewhere between Cracoe and Hawes) in order to make it easier for them to attend. Committee members will be expected to host the farmers and will get a subsidised meal as a reward. Other members will, of course, still be very welcome to attend on a pay as you go basis. The annual presentation of trophies will switch to the March club night. Following the hugely successful Dales Northern Bash we

plan a repeat performance sometime in the summer months where (fingers crossed) we can fly and drink, in that order.

Following the accidents at the Long Mynd, and the conditions experienced at some of the BCC rounds last year, we have also spent a lot of time discussing competitions for our less experienced pilots. The BCC seems to have evolved into a higher level of competition, more akin to the BPCup, where the emphasis is more on competitive XC flying. This move has been at the expense of the friendly and relaxed learning environment that was originally envisaged. Our feeling is that low airtime pilots can find this learning curve a little too steep and intimidating. We believe that we would be better off concentrating on coaching and friendly local competitions. With regret we have decided not to enter a team into the BCC next year. Watch out for a letter in Skywings explaining our rationale.

Lost more to do, but the new committee is still finding its feet. If you have any comments or suggestions then please do get in touch – why not try our forum: [www.dhpc.org.uk](http://www.dhpc.org.uk) One thing I think we have recognised over the last few years is that the main aim of DHPC members is to fly, and possibly to have a drink afterwards). I'll try to bear that in mind.

Fly safely,

Martin Baxter  
Chairman

## Neal Goss



Ed McDonald for Parhouse

POLK CITY, Fla. -- After flying 50 combat missions over two tours of duty in World War II, [Neal Goss](#) returned home a reluctant American hero.

Sixty-four years later, he has done it again.

Goss, who turned 89 earlier this month, never left the skies he once helped patrol for his country, trading his B-17 bomber for a variety of private aircraft, eventually leading to his hang glider, which he still flies solo at least two days every month at the Wallaby Ranch in Central Florida.

He was recognized three years ago by the Guinness Book of World Records as the oldest active hang glider, a record to which he continues to build.

Time may have taken most of our heroes from the most devastating and significant war in world history, but time hasn't robbed the zest from Goss, leaving him to inspire a whole new generation.

"I figure that they probably have hang gliders and sail boats up in heaven somewhere," he said after one recent flight. "I don't plan on being there anytime soon, but I want to be ready when I get there."



Courtesy of Neal Goss

Goss, a First Lieutenant in the Army Air Corp until 1945, served as a bombardier/navigator as part of the Flying Fortress squadron that dropped more than 9,000 tons of bombs and shot down 200 enemy planes during the war.

Today, he flies only for the thrill of the sport, soaring in his light, unmotored aircraft that takes him as high as 6,000 feet above the ground, using body control and thermal drafts to navigate his way across the countryside, providing a view and a freedom that few have enjoyed.

"I'm not a hero (from the war). I didn't think I was brave. I was just doing a job for my country," he said. "This flying now is fun. It makes you feel like one of the birds. I never had this view from inside the bomber."

When he returned home from the War, Goss promised his aging mother that she would be proud, not so much for what he had done for his country, but for the way he would live the rest of his life, so grateful for coming home

alive, making sure his time here was well spent. He certainly has gotten his money's worth.

At a time when most of his peers have either died or turned to a sedentary lifestyle, Goss keeps pressing the accelerator. He lives alone today in his Panama City home where he and his wife raised their four children, now making the four-hour drive by himself to the Wallaby Ranch at least once a month to fly.

His concessions to age still rankle him, yet he knows how far he can push. He no longer jumps off cliffs and mountains in other parts of the country with his hang glider, preferring the more controlled starts he gets with a tow. He gave up racing motorcycles almost 10 years ago. He no



longer sky dives or goes deep sea diving with friends. He stopped wind surfing shortly after he closed his dental practice at age 82, leaving behind patients of 50 years. He stopped making his annual week-long trip to Guatemala, where he provided free dental care to Indians in the poor parts of the country.

He has cut back on his sailing, too, although he made a 200-mile voyage just last year down the West Coast of Florida, from his home to the home of his daughters who live in the Tampa area. His biggest regret is being bypassed by NASA several years ago when they were looking for a senior citizen to join a space shuttle flight.

"They wanted someone with a bigger name, but I've been very fortunate. I wanted to fly since I was a young boy," he said. "And I'll do this for as long as they let me, hopefully another 10 years. I would just tell anyone my age to go for it. You have nothing to lose."

Goss is amazingly healthy for 89. He suffers from a frustrating neurological disorder that affects his speech, making him difficult to understand, forcing a questioner to piece

together his sentences. Yet his body remains taut and strong. His walk is slow because both his knee joints need replacing. None of that matters, though, when he is soaring close to the clouds, guiding his craft with a veteran's experience, surveying all that is below and above him. He calls it a peek of what to expect in heaven.

He will be part of a flying extravaganza at the nearby [Fantasy of Flight](#) attraction Nov. 7-8, when he makes his usual trip to the area during the week of Veterans Day.

"He's way beyond unusual," said Malcolm Jones, a longtime friend, who met Goss when they both were just learning to hang glide in the Tennessee mountains. At the time, Jones was 18 and a daring teenager. Goss was 53, considered old to be learning a new sport. "He's an inspiration to everyone he meets," Jones said.

Although flying a hang glider is considered relatively safe, Goss has had his share of close calls since starting almost 36 years ago. There was the broken ankle, the skull fracture, the four different times he landed in trees when he missed his approach, once leaving him in a swamp where he spent the night before he was rescued in the morning.

One crash resulted in a gash on his head that was closed by another flier with a staple gun to stop the bleeding. Through the years, he has flown from the beach, behind boats, off mountaintops and across hundreds of miles in competition.

He still uses the same helmet he has used for the last 30 years. It's nicked and dented and ugly orange. It's both a reminder and a badge of courage. For each of his tree lands, there are distinct notches in the helmet, a way to celebrate his survival each time.

His flying harness is old, still held together by duct tape, his do-it-all answer to anything that breaks. Still fiercely independent, Goss sounds embarrassed when he must ask Jones for help in moving his glider or getting into his sling to fly.

His daughters, who came to his flights this month, have watched him for so many years;

they don't worry anymore about the dangers or potential problems that could arise because of his age.

"He's made it clear to us, that if anything ever happened to him -- like something really went wrong and he crashed -- that we better not let anyone know about it," said daughter Sigrid Edwards. "He loves this place too much, and he wouldn't want his end to reflect badly on anyone here. And we'd honour that. He's always pushed the envelope a little bit."

Daughter Carol Goss has another theory about her father, the way he has lived his life, and the way his amazing story eventually will end. After surviving bombing missions over Sicily, Italy, France, Austria and Greece, after skidding off runways during the War, there is nothing now that could deter him.

"We don't worry about him up there," Carol said. "But it would be a helluva way to go, wouldn't it?"

Her father, she believes, won't be taking his last breaths on earth from a hospital room or in a rest home with the elderly, not after living such a free-spirited life.



"If he was told his days were numbered and he had to go to a nursing home, he'd try his best for one last adventure," she said fondly, "He'd get on a sail boat and tell us he wanted one last trip around the world. And we'd all say goodbye."

### **Glider/Reserve/Harness Servicing**

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

Martin Baxter

## **FORTHCOMING DALES CLUB NIGHTS**

### **Dec Club Night cancelled - go to Northern PG do instead**

We have no special function arranged for Wednesday, December 2nd at the Ilkley Moor Vaults so we have cancelled the evening.

Instead, it is recommended that you go to the Northern Paragliding bash which is happening at their base in Kirkby Stephen on both Saturday, December 5th and Sunday, December 6th.

DISCOUNTS, FRIENDS, CHAT, PARTY, LIVE MUSIC DON'T MISS THE BEST DEAL OF THE YEAR!



DECEMBER 5-6

Check it out here:

<http://www.northern-paragliding.com/northern-news/no-nec-no-problem-2.html>



SEE YOU THERE

### January Club Night

#### January Club night on 6th - Sale night and Library sale

Bring along all those bits and pieces that you want to move to the Sale Night. This is not an Auction in the old sense that Noel used to organise so well - you can lay all your items out on tables with a price and your name on them and, hopefully, you will end up a Happy Seller and the recipient of your stuff will go away a Happy Buyer.

Also on sale will be items from the library that might make some interesting viewing/reading over the New Year. Don't miss this night - bring all your unwanted items along - they can be non flying goods as well, of course!

### February Club Night

#### First Aid Talk on February 3rd by Sara Spillet

Don't miss this Club Night! Sara's talk last spring was most interesting and didn't fall into the category of a dull old discussion about ABC. More a talk about the real facts of how to cope with incidents that could actually happen to you or your mates on the hill.

And how lucky can we be in the Dales

Club to have a really experienced PG pilot like Sara to give this talk!!!

Don't miss this night - it was great last time and I'm sure it will be most excellent this time.

### DHPC Trophies 2009

I am now starting to collect trophies back in for engraving. If you have one at home, give it a dust and get it back to me before the end of January please at a club night or committee meeting.

Thanks Kate x



**Your Newsletter Needs You**

**Come on you lot, keep me in a job I have seen stacks of holiday pics etc on Facebook so get typing next issue out December 28<sup>th</sup>!! Articles to Kate by 23<sup>rd</sup> December.**

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*Merry Christmas  
From the committee*

