

SKYWORDS

July 2021

Chairman's Chat

There is a saying in Flight Safety that there are no new lessons; just existing lessons that have been forgotten about. Last week I heard a report of a bizarre incident: perhaps it's the exception that proves the rule, or perhaps it's just Sod Law.

An unnamed (to spare their blushes) tow group were using an old Landrover. Following a successful tow, the driver released his end and drove back to the pilot's end of the line, with the intention of towing it back to launch. Leaving the engine running he jumped out to make the connection. Before he could get back in, the vehicle somehow* set off without him, presumably with him in hot pursuit. Alas he couldn't catch up, and the Landrover only came to rest when it collided with a light aircraft. Surprisingly perhaps, the repairs are not too expensive, and our insurance premiums are unlikely to be affected.

The story reminded me of an incident that I was involved in many years ago. I was the Captain of a Gazelle helicopter and we had just returned to Netheravon following a sortie on Salisbury Plain. My pilot landed the aircraft on its landing spot near the hangar, and started to wind down the gas turbine engine. Neither of us took much notice of the Landrover parked outside the hangar on the tarmac that gently sloped down towards our position.

Now the blades on a Gazelle are floppy and are only maintained in the horizontal position by the centrifugal (or is it centripetal?) force of the engine running at full chat. As the blades slow down, they droop. It's particularly important that nobody enters or exits the aircraft during this phase in order to avoid decapitation. It's equally important that the blades don't hit anything solid – the kinetic energy can easily flip the aircraft leading to it 'thrashing itself to death'.

To our absolute horror, as the blades began to slow, the driver of the Landrover started to reverse towards us. Clearly, he hadn't checked his mirrors – what an idiot! We were very vulnerable: we didn't have time to stop the rotors before impact; and we couldn't take off again because the engine was winding down. Later we found it quite amusing that, despite the noise of a gas turbine engine, our immediate action was for both of us shout 'STOP'!

Whilst my pilot started to wind the engine back up (to lift the blades) I took my life into my hands. I undid my harness, opened the door, and got out. Keeping my head well down (like they do in the movies) I ran to the driver's door of the Landrover. I ripped open the door,

* To be fair to the unfortunate tow group, I'm told that old Landrovers can vibrate so much that they can knock themselves into gear.

planning to tear a strip off the driver. My face must have been a picture - to my astonishment the cab was empty! The Landrover must have rolled down the slope by itself. I jumped in and applied the brake. Then, when my pilot got the blades horizontal again, I slowly drove the vehicle out from underneath the disc with inches to spare. Phew!

I forget now whether the driver was charged for not applying the handbrake correctly, or whether the handbrake was found to be faulty...

Fly safely,

Martin Baxter
Chairman

The International Baildon Sod



Hi Folks,

I saw we're due a few easterlies which put me in mind of the Sod. There's the added possibility of very little bracken this year after a chop down last winter and the cold spring seems to have delayed the sprouting. Keep your eyes open for notifications - it'll be on a weeknight whenever the conditions are right.

From the guidebook:

Each year, we hold a fun event on Baildon Moor. It takes the form of a gliding task, in which each competitor attempts to fly as far as he/she can in a straight line or dog leg, to perform a stand up landing within two glider spans of a predetermined line out from the hill. Conditions should be nil wind or very light in order for the best fun to be had.

Normally washed down with fish & chips and a pint afterwards. No experience necessary, although forward launching is

usually the order of the day. Jungle survival skills can help later in the season when the bracken takes on Jurassic proportions!

Pete Logan

Lanark or Bust... *Richard Meek*

“Personal best flight today. Launched from Semer Water in the Yorkshire Dales and landed at goal in Lanark 7:36 later. 186km flight to goal.”

Tricky flight to begin with, took an hour and a half to leave the hill with Jake, Pate & Jacob Cleverley. And although nearly landed after 30 mins, some dogged scratching got me out of that particular hole.

I was on my own as transitioned into Eden valley, Jake spotted me just a couple of km



behind him and called me on the radio. Try as I might I couldn't quite catch up with him, closest I got was about one km.

Climbed to base at about 5,500' to cruise across a blue hole before Carlisle. Jake didn't find anything and got decked, I stumbled into a little sustaining climb which allowed me to push on to a great looking cloud over Carlisle.

Pete caught up a bit north of Carlisle and we flew together for the next 50k or so. ***The air was quite lively in places***, I saw Pete take a front collapse which he handled superbly and he took it from bag of washing to flying again in 3 seconds. A little later I had one as well as we battled a feisty lee side thermal. Not long after our collapses we got separated and Pete landed.



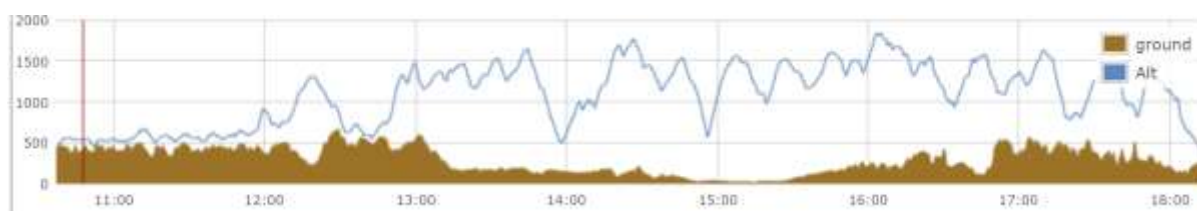
Pressing on to my goal the sky was looking good but came to a massive area of wind farms, forest and boonies. Having decided I didn't fancy that I hung a left (west of course line) to a more civilized route, and started regretting that decision as I got low over some other wind

mills but at least these were spread out and I knew I could land without getting minced by one of them.

I think that was about 20k from goal and that climb took me to 4 grand or so. Good cloud street on course line and as I went for them I passed over another flying site where a few gliders were soaring and another was at base. That hill gave me the final climb and I took it higher than required leaving me with a final glide of 5:1. I then had to spiral off the height as the airspace was lowering and the cloud street to goal was booming.



Fish and chip tea in Lanark and now on the train to Motherwell then to Penrith where Jake is going to meet Pete and myself to take us back to Hawes. Top man. What a day!



Detailed track available here: <https://www.paraglidingforum.com/leonardo/flight/2798463>

Postscript - Drat & double drat, looks like I messed up the declare again! This is fast becoming my specialist subject - how to miss 200 point flights through bodged admin! And to think, planning used to be one of my strengths... Here's the flight on the UK XC League <https://www.xcleague.com/xc/flights/20211034.html>

Richard Meek

(Editor's Note: Richard has now topped this distance, this time from Model Ridge heading south, but that's another story)

Pete Logan's day - A couple of days after the BUSY, BUSY Sunday at Semer, Jake and I joined Rich and Jacob there again for, well, more of the same... Crappy, inverted and torn thermals kept us pinned near the hill until Ges Hey showed us how it was done by contacting what looked like a bit of wave and going tall. We minced out the hard way and set off across the valley. Running out of ideas, we got low over the back of Stags and although I found a sustainer but we were definitely not going up!

The air was rocky over Buttertubs as you'd expect and we started to separate. My form of separation included landing on a shallow hillside at the head of the Swaledale valley.



Argh! The day had looked pretty usable as well. Jake and Rich had built a climb out and I was forced to watch as Jacob flew below me quite a distance, fighting to stay in the air.

He hooked a snorter of a thermal and soon left me on my own.

It was windy where I landed and stupidly shallow but I was at the head of the valley - the wind was naturally bringing all the warm air to where I was.

Relaunching, I crabbed round to be more face on and the physics worked. I got a good climb that turned out to be a bubble only. Enough to clear the peak of the hill but I was now heading for the bottom of the next valley. Luck provided me with a lee side climb that had come off the descending slope (you don't get many of those and I'm so... thankful I stumbled into this one). I joined Jacob and we made some rapid progress passing Appelby and then north - into a massive blue hole. The same one that Rich squeaked over and Jake couldn't find a way through.

My compatriot, Jacob, fought all the way to the ground. He just does not give up, but in the end couldn't find enough air to sustain him. We'd got low around Langwathby which had some warmed air that was waiting to trigger. I had an extra 50m in hand which meant I

could stay in this blob as it meandered its way up the shallow slopes NE of Penrith, and eventually released on a wooded escarpment (sometimes it takes multiple triggers to actually get the thermal to release). I got high again and this enabled some fast progress to Carlisle and the Solway Firth Estuary.



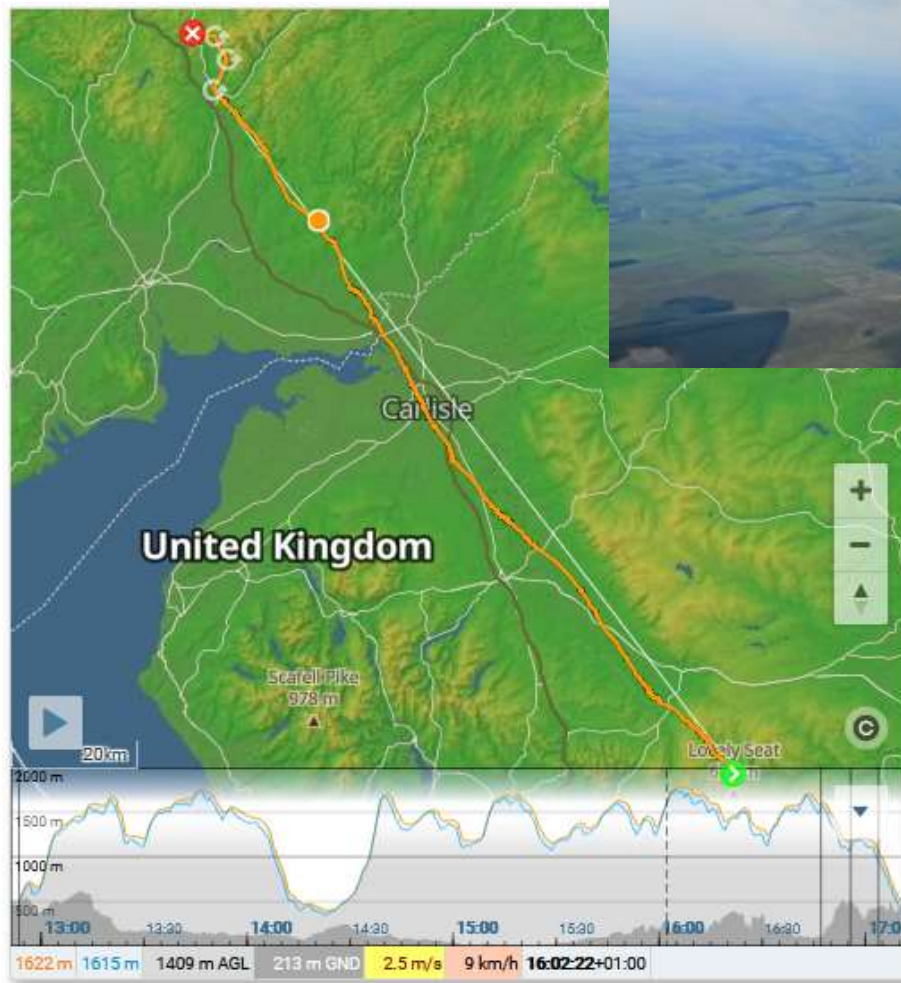
I knew there could be an issue with sea breeze on the estuary so made sure I stayed high to be out of it as I'd been put down by a strong westerly flow on a previous flight. No danger though - I think the stronger SE wind on this day was keeping the sea breeze at bay and I was there early'ish in the day too. That high section continued and I was able to catch Richard on the Zeno (how often does it happen that you catch up a Zeno!) north of Gretna heading up the M74. ***Plenty of sun left and now with a wingman, the day was improving further!***



The lonely forestry of the Southern Uplands was working well, occasionally too well, as we continued rapidly. Skirting a big, dark mass of cloud to its western side I was using about 3/4 bar and I entered some (more) turbulent air. The wing took a frontal deflation. I was not fast enough on the brakes to prevent the classic frontal tips clapping but I was happy with the recovery. ***An SIV course really helps the muscle memory kick in - legs in, look at the wing, keep shoulders back in the harness, hands down to reinflate.*** No direction control was needed and I was able to bring out the frontal quickly and without a cravat. Need to be faster on the brakes next time though. This was some snotty air and I made a note that the Southern Uplands had seemed to be bringing stronger conditions.

We discussed options for the last leg of the flight but a couple of small mistakes put paid to that for me. ***It had been 5 ½ hours of flying to this point and I was starting to get a bit tired.*** We went back onto the high ground around Moffat to a nice looking cloud but we probably arrived out of sync, or at least couldn't find a decent climb. Richard pushed into wind with a bit more height than I had and knowing that I'd have to push further into wind to contact the same thermal lower down I elected to move onto whatever the landscape brought next. What I then ignored were some huge slopes that would certainly have kept me up in dynamic lift whilst I waited for a climb out. There was dry forestry and dark moorland but I wasn't helping myself by not going for the obvious geography.





I landed in a pretty stiff breeze at ***Tweedhopefoot, interestingly the source of the Tweed, (Editor: who knew?)*** Deploying the thumb and a smile wasn't really working as it was a fast road and I knew Moffat was not going to be the easiest place to get back from. But I've been having some brilliant retrieves lately and eventually this was no exception. Pippa, a teacher from Fetter/Hogwarts school was on her way to Worcester to see her Mum. Amazing! I got dropped off at the Penrith junction and sent her some aerial photos as a thanks. Jake and I enjoyed a meal and beer or two, waiting for Rich's train. Not quite a personal best, I'm calling it my pit stop PB - 15km and then 146km.



Pete Logan

North South Cup 2021

Northern Squad - Richard Meek, Jake Herbert, Chris Fountain, Dave Smart, Martin Underdown, Jacob Cleverley, Rob Cruickshank & myself (Pete Logan)

Time and Place - Long weekend of the 4th June, SE Wales (*Deep in enemy territory*)...

Many of us covertly entered Southern Squad home turf on the Thursday night. I elected to home in and evade their defences early Friday morning, targeting.....

Day 1 Task 1 - Merthyr Tydfil

Known to the locals as Mynydd Cilfach-yr-Encil. A magnificent site, only marred by the fact that it doesn't seem to work that well which means that you spend extra time looking at fly tipping that people take the care to put at the top of the hill. An open triangle task was set up to the centre of the Brecon Beacons to the north, then across to the head of the Black Mountains, Hereford's Knob (see song of the same name by Half Man Half Biscuit). Finally back down south to the campsite and goal.



The sky gods launched on an early waft and spent an age mincing away from the hill leaving a good proportion of us stranded on the hill with the few breaths of wind crossing south. Chris Fountain and I launched into something with five or six others but couldn't make anything of it and counted ourselves lucky we only had to walk up half way in the heat. We schlepped back to the top and started drying off. With some urgency I clipped in as a breeze came from the south. **With my wing facing 90° off to the south I side stepped off the hillside and started a climb out** that just went along the hill heading north... bizarre. Small and brief too. Chris was a few tens of seconds after me but couldn't contact it. He managed his climb out later in the afternoon.

I joined a loose gaggle that banded together to head north across the heads of the valleys road and onto the the Pen-y-Fan turnpoint in the Beacons. I stayed conservative and worked well with Ben Keayes, later joined by Jocky who'd worked himself out of a hole. From the

difficulty of Merthyr to the dark heart of the Beacons at cloudbase with more lift than you needed and tendrils forming underneath. It couldn't be more different.

Normal service resumed crossing the wide Usk valley heading NE into the Black Mountains. High cloud downed our group of three and I took a pitstop on the top of a small hill to wait for the sun to poke through again. Thirty minutes later sunny ground and swifts darting about gave me the evidence and I took a really decent climb out to start towards Lord Hereford's Knob. Late in the afternoon by now it was dark and just not working for me and I decided to turn S to the campsite before bagging the turnpoint. I made it to within a reasonable walk of the campsite and packed in a tight field. True to form with my recent retrieve luck. Lynne, a local gardener, passed by, then reversed back in her truck and offered a lift right back to the campsite. Sweet. Yogi her dog had been rolling in something a bit fragrant though.



The first day went to the southerners. Still, there are many battles that make a war...

Day 2 Task 2 - Magic Mountain, Pen Cerrig Calch

It was a bit of a mission getting up there but rest assured the north weren't beat walking up hills. Tasks was notionally set to Crewe but was really open distance. Get ready, Go. The day looked plenty good with the only drawback being a band of heavy cloud heading our way. With that motivation everyone dived into a working hillside and formed a giant column of gliders working the early thermals out of there.

A good Dales gaggle had formed and we headed NE onto the next ridge for a top up. I led to a climb that sort of fizzled out, then I moved over to one that wasn't working either. Then I saw Jake leading north and staying high. Following him didn't work either. Somehow ***I'd totally spooned up good conditions whilst everyone else was getting on okay.*** I'm now a few ridges back from take off with three other tail end charlies, low on the hillside trying to get a climb out whilst a wall of grey advances. Yay!



In awkward, ill formed, bullet climbs, that faded quickly, we climbed out to enough height to dive back onto the next ridge



And repeat. Sometime later we'd thinned out to a pair of us left and were on the last big ridge of the Black Mountains between Hay Bluff and Tywn Llech. I took a climb out of the bowl triggered from a planation, ***the guy in front had just missed it and had to land up high. I felt for him.*** At base I'm on my own and head NE for the next problem - survive the falling ground and make it to the flatlands.

I do this thankfully, and a few hundred metres above the ground I take a climb from a hop farm (obviously close enough to notice the crop). This all seemed to work, staying high

towards Shobdon glider field ATZ. It's active and I decide to go over it but leave myself leeway to go south of it if I hit sink. I pass over Gary Stenhouse and Jim Mallinson trying to dodge the airspace, locked in north south mortal aerial combat. North of Leominster I join another straggler and we press onto the Clee Hills east of Ludlow. We have to get in tight but it works and we find a climb out sure enough over the quarry, lookout and some domed antenna.

I make a mistake here, a couple of good clouds over the back tempt me to head over into the sink in the lee of the hill. Turning north / left would have kept us on the high ground - an obvious series of triggers. We're immediately fighting for lift in zeroes, finding little. Bugger!

I felt guilty as the other guy lands in the boonies as I'd led out that way, ***but 50m more height enables me to go a couple of fields further*** where fully a hundred crows are exiting a pair of trees and wheeling around. They wouldn't do that for laughs, the air's got to be triggering there so I plough into them half expecting birds in the lines and all sorts of mayhem. We managed to keep clear of each other and I spot a kite, but off to the east a little so go join him/her (how do you tell the sex of a kite?). With a bit of peace and quiet around us we build a climb out and I'm rewarded with a view over the Ironbridge gorge and then onto Telford.



Okay so Telford town centre is less of a reward but hey who's judging? Crewe's a possibility at this point but the grey cloud has definitely moved in that way. The sun looks good to the east but am I going to hit Birmingham airspace - little did I know that those that did fly further than me mostly went right to Stoke and the Peaks. I'm pretty tired after 5½ hours of flying and saving my ass several times. I elect to call my daughter who lives north of Telford to see if she and the family can see me flying over.

They're just driving back from Shrewsbury and happen to be facing the right direction so I give them a few wing overs, take some photos of their house and press on. But not for long. The grey means I can't climb effectively and I'm down north of Telford for 105km. As I get to the road my son in law picks me up and there's a brew in the car on the way to the train. My daughter can't make it since she has a set of rug rats around but that qualifies as a top retrieve in my book. I meet Tim Pentreath on the train back and get a cider and a good chat. He'd made it to Crewe but found he was the only one. Thanks to Tim's wife for a left back to the campsite too.

It's eventually decided after much calculation and pinning of pins and string on boards that ***the north won day 2 with plenty of northern pilots flying home to the Peaks.***



Day 3 Task 3 - The Blorenges

The threat of rain will not stop battle. We meander our way to the front of the hill to be greeted by a low base but usable conditions. The task is fly the 10km back to the campsite and land on a tarpaulin. 1 point for pilots that make the campsite, another for nailing the accuracy landing. Clearly we're going to need a climb along the way to get us there. The Dales pilots launch late and I find myself getting to base 500ft above the hill with Theo and Mike Cav. Obviously I'm in good northern company.

We top up on the way under some pregnant looking clouds. Light lift low down but getting back up to hill height and near the clouds, that lift was accelerating indicating that the clouds were sucking. I pottered about the valley around the campsite not wanting to waste the flying time I had. I took the time to observe other's landings and plan my approach.

The Cayenne5 is tolerant of reasonable brake inputs and I was able to nail the landing...



(Editor: will he / wont he – you can find the answer in the video here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi4roPRvQKg>, was that a constant aspect approach?)

An emphatic win for the north this day, proving we can fly well in the damp and then land.

Plenty of time for a party that night and you meet the oddest of folk....

(I'm not sure who's holding who up here!)

Day 3 Task 4 - Back to Merthyr

Heads cleared and off to Merthyr for our last joust. It managed to be windy and way off to the south but



still with no lift. A few gliders were getting away'ish but more were going down to the valley bottom. I launched, managed to squeeze back at the top launch again later and just, I mean just, managed to maintain height going along the hill. Richard Meek and I stuck together like glue getting the most out of mincing along the side of the hill. It released a little more as we crossed over the Ffos-y-Fran open cast mine.

We got to **base at the dizzying height of three and a bit thousand feet**, joining everyone else in the lead gaggles mincing about there. Low base, grey skies inconclusive climbs set the scene for the day - an epic mince fest but one that showed that staying in a tight knit group works. We flew over the campsite, onto Magic Mountain, across the ridges of the Black Mountains and out east, to the north of GCHQ. Our group was pretty good, Theo on tandem with Serina? Rich Meek, Jacob Butty, Lawrie Noctor plus others.



We'd thinned out though and crossing a valley I'd got low with Rich and Lawrie above, a few others ahead. It's early afternoon but the climb comes out of the north end of the bottom of the hill. Odd, but I'll take it. Once out of danger, Rich and I have a good section over to Leominster and catch up with two errant southerners idling about. Hugh Miller and Jim Mallinson shout some abuse at us but we give as good as we got and press on with flying over to the Clee Hills.

Jim takes what looks like an odd line to the south with Hugh in tow. Rich and I are toward the higher ground but it's Jim who connects. I know I probably haven't got the into wind performance to go get the climb but go for it anyway. It's a roll of the dice that doesn't work but who would have thought you could have got 90km out of a grey day and low base. Rich and Jim flop over the hill but Hugh manages to take the day with another 40km. For a southern win. Retrieve perfection continues as I'm offered a lift right back to my

van in Aber by a mate of Lawrie's.

Two tasks all so it's an honourable draw although the grumbling continues about lengths of string and open vs turnpoint distances. To be continued next year...

One last thing to say is that the flying is second to none in SE Wales. Mountains and sites all over the place is the reason the Dragon Hike and Fly is so successful there. *If you get the chance go there, it will not disappoint...*

Pete Logan

Talking of which....

Dragon Hike & Fly 2021

Charles McDonald

Way back in 2017 when I was waiting for my EP/CP training weeks to come round, I watched a series of Greg Hammerton's vol-biv across the Pyrenees. ***This was very inspiring, but well before I understood the truth of lugging full-fat paragliding gear up a mountain.***

Subsequently I had rejected the idea of H&F as way too physical. I'm lazy by nature and prefer the easy way...



So it was with some surprise that I signed up for the Dragon Hike and Fly 2021.

Alistair Andrews had done a Zoom call regarding the Dragon H&F during the depths of the second lockdown and made it sound so accessible to newbies (*Editor: I remember that too, very inspiring*). So much so that a group of 5 Cayley pilots (of which I was one) got swept up in the excitement and entered the race. For the most part my incentive was something to encourage me to get out and train. During 2020 lockdown I had become so sedentary, with my 'office' 3m from my bedroom, that I got DVT which I ignored and subsequently suffered a painful PE. Training went very well for some months until I got some nasty blisters and lost momentum, but I believe that training still paid off.

The first planned date was a washout, and the race was delayed to the weekend of 11/12 June. As the weekend grew closer excitement built. Forecast winds for the Brecon Beacons was light (with many stars), and looked like the perfect conditions for a Hike & Fly...

Friday midday I switched off my work computer before heading off at 12:30. What an unpleasant drive. Very busy with no chance to chill until well into Wales. Arriving at the Park Farm campsite in Crickhowell (roughly 5 hours later) I found the rest of the Cayley 5

establishing camp and set up close by as well. The race briefing was via Zoom at 7pm, the route, extracted from a [fabulous post](#) by Darren Goodlad was:-

Race start was to be at the visitor centre in Libanus, TP1 was at Hay Bluff 28km to the ENE, TP2 at Blorengge 24km South over the Black Mountains, TP3 at Sugar Loaf 7km North, TP4 at Magic 8km WNW and Goal was in Crickhowell 5km SSE. This year to make things more interesting, Ali included further conditions to TP1 and 2; the competitors had to land at both turn points and take a selfie!

So Friday night was spend poring over maps planning the start and extended route. The agreed approach was to hike from Libanus to the lower into wind slope to the right of Pen y Fan as you face the mountain.

Saturday morning my supporter, Tom Pentith, picked me up and gave me a lift to Libanus... The start of the race was not good to me, and perhaps the first of my learnings. We had to provide livetracking throughout the race, and although I'm set up with my Flymaster Live, I (thought) I was struggling to get my flymaster to register start. (I sprinted a few times in the minutes before the race started to try trick it into starting, but could not see evidence of this). The race started, everyone headed out, with the pack split into two groups and heading in opposite directions, leaving me standing on the start line not ready to go!

Tom then went for a quick drive with my instruments in the car to start tracking, and I eventually started my race about 10 minutes late, not a total waste though. I had assumed I would head down the road towards our chosen hill, but seeing the pack split in two made me question my initial plans. Checking out Viewranger I noticed a much better route down the back. Unfortunately the rest of the 'Cayley 5' had headed off with the group going down the tar road. They did not realise that crowd actually had a different mountain in mind and lost a lot of time before figuring out they were on the wrong track. Their problem being they were following a crowd and none did any navigation for themselves. Certainly a learning there...

So 10 minutes after the start I eventually got going and even made it to the planned launch point before the rest of 'the 5'. I assumed at the time that they had already departed so it was just me and Helen (not sure which Helen) on that launch. Helen quickly departed but I needed to take my pre-flight constitutional. That, combined with my general tardiness in getting prepared resulted in the rest of the 5 showing up.

Launching soon after I scratched around for a while and finally connected. ***Wohoo, I was away... or so I thought.*** Soon enough I lost it and had to top-land for another attempt.

Fortunately I quickly re-connected and flew over the back of the ridge to connect with the face of the bowl below Pen y Fan . An energetic thermal there took me close to cloudbase. It was really nice to thermal up over the peak, seeing the loads of walkers on top.

Progress was fairly good from there on, with me entering a little haze of the lower cloudbase, but never any danger of whiteing out, and once getting an asymmetric. I chose to follow the ridge and had good height all the way until I got drilled over Gwaun Cerrig Llwydion and was forced to top-land. Wind had picked up more than expected so rotor was becoming a worry for those low down (someone even threw a reserve) and as I was further south than intended I tried pushing forward into wind, hence the top-landing.

Walking to the front of the ridge the wind was now pretty strong, and I had to wait for a lull before launching. By this time 2 beautiful wings, both U-Turn (I love the design), flown by two others of the Cayley 5, namely Richard Shirt and Nicky Baxter, were overhead.

I launched with the confidence that I would soon connect and be on my way. Hmm... with confidence comes the fall. The 3 of us got stuck on this ridge for a good hour or so. This was the point before a big crux. Decent altitude was required, but things had seemed to cut off. Not a very high cloudbase and everyone that pushed out to the NE was getting drilled. We also needed to be sure to cross the A40 and the river, which reputedly had very few crossing points. Landing this side could mean a very long detour on foot to cross.

Finally Richard got some good height and headed north. After an hour of waiting about on this hill I got frustrated and decided to follow a thermal over the back, pretty much on the route I had been an hour before when I had been forced to top-land. This push went fairly well and I managed to make some fair distance, catching a few thermals on the way to land well past the river and A40, with Langorse and Langorse Lake a little to my north. A hill to the east of Langorse was my target where I hoped to take off and hop over the back onto the main range of mountains to work my way up to Hay Buff and TP1.

At this point my supporter turned up before I had finished packing up and I stuffed my face with some of the food and water in the grab bag in his boot. This stop took 54 minutes!! Mostly due to my slow packing up. Certainly something to work on in future.

Walking to, and climbing the next hill took around 90 minutes. Not quite where I wanted to be. I had thought I could walk along the ridge to the higher peak to the north but it turned out to be a totally separate mountain with a valley to cross! Choosing not to cross on foot I launched and tried for 50 minutes to get enough height to hop over the back and cross to the main range. During this time I never got more than 30m above the top of the ridge so never really had confidence I could run and avoid dropping into rotor.

Finally after about 50 minutes I flew down the valley between the two mountains. The valley I had previously chosen not to walk down! And ended up landing out, it was now 6pm so a quick hike down the valley to the intersection with the A479 where I figured would be a good place to end the race, and where I hoped to get reception to call Tom.

No reception but there was a BT call box. Yaay, or no. Did not take cash. Had to call to make a collect call, but that was also very difficult, with automated messages timing out and a

nightmare trying to get it working. After about 15 minutes of trying to get the call box working I was so frustrated I yelled in frustration. A chap in a nearby house came to chat to me. Unfortunately he did not have a phone and although we tried to call using his internet, that was down as well. He eventually gave me a lift back to Crickhowell and the campsite.

So fairly decent progress for day one, but still not at TP1. The top dogs had already finished the course, the best in 7.5 hours. All the Cayley 5 still in the race were scattered at various positions in the crux.

My day 1 tracklog can be seen [here](#). You will notice the last hour I blast down the A479 to Crickhowell. I had neglected to switch off my instruments so it also shows the lift back to the campsite.

Day 2 and a long 10km walk for me to the top of a valley culminating in Waun Fach then followed. I probably got going at about 09:50 and reached my chosen takeoff site at around midday. The wind was SSE moving SSW so this was the best for launch for me. Walking up I had met two pilots who had called it a day and were walking back to Crickhowell. At the chosen launch I met Emma who was working her way south. Meeting another pilot who had also judged to launch where I had was comforting. Emma soon launched and I guess she must have made a few km southwards at least.

I once again messed around. 1 hour 12 minutes between arriving at the launch and eventually launching. Not very good "Daylights a-wasting dude!!"

Part of this faffing around was uncertainty. The valley was fairly sharp, with a stream and trees in the bottom. Slope was covered with rocks and fairly steep as well. I did scout it out and decided there were some options for slope landing. I spotted a number of areas fairly clear of rocks and chose my 'commit to landing now!' point. The valley had also been baking in the sun all day so thermals were a certainty. Nevertheless, I was nervous if not plain scared, the wind was occasionally howling, but I think that was mainly the thermal activity.

Finally, around 13:10 I launched and spent some time scratching. In and out of bullet thermals not quite managing to get away. At one point I was very close to my 'commit to landing now!' point, but managed to scratch back up. 17 minutes in this area before I had enough altitude to bolt over the back, aiming for the into wind ridge that was downwind from me. I definitely could have got more altitude but the thermals were rough and sharp. I had taken off into the 'witching hour' if you will.

Scratching the next ridge for a little while, I connected with a screamer. Physically grunting as I was yanked upwards. Fearing my wing would explode under the shock load and struggling to try core the thermal. I struggled here for a while. Looking at my tracklog not for nearly as long as I thought I did, I soon scuttled off for the next ridge. It does not look so bad on the tracklog, but I was afraid of being dropped into the rotor behind the ridge so did not stick around to fight this beast much longer.

At this point as I fled my sink rate was quite bad, somewhere between 2 and 3 m/s and I headed out towards the edge of the next ridge. I did fly through some lift but instead of turning right and working the into wind ridge, I turned left and headed out into the flats. By this point I had no mental fortitude left. I was thoroughly scared and could not continue. I think it was a combination of exhaustion, the unfamiliar and potentially sketchy launch site, fear of rotor and the screamer that had exhausted my capacity. I should really just have slope landed and reset, but it proved to be the end of my race. I landed around 2pm with TP1 still about 7km and a big climb away. I was not going to attempt that.

The second day's [tracklog](#) will show I did not fly much more than half an hour. A little confusion and then I caught up with Tom who took me back to Crickhowell. Three of the Cayley 5 spent their entire 2nd day walking to make TP1. One had realised the race was way beyond his ability and had retired early on the first day.

	Flying	Walking
Day 1	4 flights, 3hr 17m (17 + 41 + 89 + 50 mins)	17.8 km over 3hr 28m
Day 2	1 flight for 33min	10.4km over 2hr 3 min

Turned out I placed 37 out of 47 pilots...

Learnings

- Sort out instruments before the start, especially if you need to trick it into tracking mode.
- Do your own navigation
- After spending a lot of time faffing about on takeoff and landing. I need to speed up the prep and packing stages.
- Learn to tame the thermal beast. Hopefully that comes with experience
- When scared take some time out to reset. Don't run away. I could have made turnpoint 1 if I had just a little more capacity.

Overall - I loved it. My confidence levels in evaluating unofficial locations for suitability on takeoff is through the roof. I am much more comfortable going over the back (as demonstrated since on Semer water) and not daunted at all by the possibility of a long walk out. I will most definitely be entering next year and hope the conditions are as conducive to flying. I loved the change in mindset (where it is OK to land, reposition, and continue your flight).

The whole concept of vol-biv has me interested again (and I will probably be purchasing some ultralight camping gear - I already have my eye on a Tarptent Notch Li double skin tent @600g).

Charles McDonald

Ilkley Pancake Stone

Apparently this is what the locals get up to at our Ilkley Take Off.....

Folklore

Good old Nicholas Size (1934) added this site to his list as a place where he had visions of the old christian cult, upon whose bare face were enacted blood rites and sacrifice. One Beltane Eve when he decided to amble up onto the moor edge, he could see a strange glow coming from behind the rock. He continues:

“Then suddenly I noticed there was a figure dancing upon it. The figure seemed to swirl round and round with floating draperies, grey or white, and I can only say that it looked very uncanny. Stupidly, I wondered that anybody could be such a fool as to dance in the darkness upon that precarious footing...”

But such activities on these moors, at certain times of the year, have been enacted for many centuries. It's just kept quiet and, as more modern pagans (as they like to call 'emselves) keep coming up here and to other places, so the original folk move to their older and increasingly more secluded spots... In the latter half of the 20th century the site was used as a focus by chaos magicians, shortly after the inception of that particular movement...



Pete Logan