



2011 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 12th February at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, commencing at 11.00am

These minutes are not to be taken as a true record without referring to the minutes of the Executive Council meeting at which they were approved.

Present:

John Aldridge
Marc Asquith
Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Paul Dancey
Martin Heywood
Brett Janaway
Angus Langford
John Lawson

John Nash
Angus Pinkerton
Joe Schofield
Dave Thompson
Steve Walsh

In attendance:
19 Voting members
of the Association

ITEM 1: CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and said apologies had been received from Ed Cunliffe, Joe McCarthy and John Welch. The meeting would take the usual format: presentation of awards, formal business, then Officers' Reports and members' questions. An Exec Meeting would follow immediately afterwards.

Martin reported that 2010 had been a fairly average kind of year, although we now have a brand new purpose built office on the edge of Leicester, which is a big improvement on our previous premises. Also, our finances are healthy and the £5m landowner clause in the insurance policy seems to be working very successfully for clubs and schools.

Martin then informed members that John Aldridge would be retiring from the Exec as he has been appointed President of CIVL. John has worked tirelessly for the whole of our industry over many years and his presence on the Exec will be greatly missed.

John was then presented with the President's Trophy for his outstanding contribution to the Association and hang gliding and paragliding competitions.

Helen McKerral was awarded the Wings Over A Cloud for the best Skywings article over the last year.

Nikki Bodill (Accuracy comps) and Andy Wallis (Derbyshire Cub) both received a BHPA Award of Merit.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 2010 be approved.

The resolution to approve the accounts was passed.

2.2 That four members be elected to the Executive Council from the following seven candidates: W. Bell, C. Burns, E. Cunliffe, P. Dancey, A. Langford, J. Lawrence, J. McCarthy.

The four candidates elected were: A. Langford, P. Dancey, C. Burns, W. Bell.

2.3 That Clear & Lane be re-appointed as auditors and the Executive Council be authorised to fix their remuneration.

The resolution was approved and this concluded the formal business of BHPA Limited.

ITEM 4: OFFICERS' REPORTS

Martin informed the meeting that our President, Lembit Opik, was appointed to serve for five years and that term of office only has a couple of weeks to run. Martin therefore proposed a vote of thanks to Lembit for his assistance and support during his tenure.

Members with suggestions for a new President were asked to contact Martin direct.

4.1 Treasurer

Angus Langford reported that the Association had made a loss of just over £20k, which follows a similar loss the previous year. Skywings is costing us more due to the economic environment, we have lost our Sports Council grant and interest rates are low.

The outlook for 2011 is that we are on track to make a small profit. The membership subscriptions were increased last year, we will make some savings on office rent and we have a good deal with our insurers so there will be savings.

Our reserves have been used for the purchase of the new office and will save us on rent as well as corporation tax. We have invested £330k in the building, leaving us £100k. All in all it is looking quite good and despite having spent a lot of money we are doing alright. We plan to make a small surplus year on year as the economy recovers.

Bill Morris asked how the spending of £330k on the office would affect our insurance as we used to keep enough in our reserves to cover the insurance premiums. Martin replied that this is no longer necessary as our new insurers are happy for us to pay monthly and this has not cost us significantly more than paying up front.

Bill went on to say that in previous years it had been said that the BHPA was not in the business of owning property, particularly when Dick Long was in charge. Angus Pinkerton explained that this was originally his view too but having looked at this he felt that our long term interests over the next fifty years would be better served by owning our own property.

Marc Asquith added that we have a long term steady decline in membership, not dramatic, but steady. The only time things improved was when the BAPC and BHGA amalgamated. The opportunity to co-locate with the BGA was too good to miss. The shared facilities save us money. The lease on the BGA's office was up for renewal at the same time as our own and we needed to get out of The Old Schoolroom. Marc then explained that Merus Court Limited is the owner of the building and the company has two shareholders, BHPA and BGA, and they have a nine hundred and ninety-nine year lease.

John Lawrence asked why the AGM was not being held at the new office and Marc replied that the boardroom is not big enough for an AGM.

Alexander Kirk-Wilson congratulated the board for their foresight. He added that the OAP discount on membership fees may not be such a good idea as many of our members now fall into this category but would actually be willing to pay the full membership fee. Angus P said that many of them continue with their membership even though they no longer fly and this is worth more to us. Martin promised that the Exec would keep an eye on the demographics and take action if necessary.

It was noted that we have a Non-Flying Member category. Accuracy competition members made the point that all their judges etc. are at least NFM so that they are covered if they find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Bill wondered what the long term future was for BHPA/BGA and whether there was a prospect of amalgamation. Marc replied that next year the AGMs of the two associations may be co-located.

4.2 Insurance

Martin Heywood apologised for the lack of paperwork over the last year and said that we now have the KeyNotes document. Everyone will get a copy upon their renewal.

For 2011 we have managed to obtain some additional benefits, in particular dual and instructional activity has had the cap raised from £25k to £50k. It is very unlikely that this will ever get back to £2m but at least it is going in the right direction.

Landowner cover of £5m is now included in the policy and is working well, although no doubt they will be looking for £10m before too long.

Alexander Kirk-Wilson thanked the Exec for their efforts in getting the £5m cover which has saved many sites for us.

4.3 Skywings

Paul Dancey reported that Skywings seems to have stabilised and we have been able to increase the number of pages without putting costs up. At the moment we are holding our own.

Paul was asked how often the printing costs were reviewed and he said that every three years he gets quotes from a number of printers but so far our current printer has been very competitive.

4.4 Website

There was some discussion on how the clubs and schools are displayed on the website. The postcode does not necessarily reflect where a club operates so we now have longitude and latitude available to give an accurate location. However, Paul said he was disappointed to find that very few clubs have taken this up.

Later this year it is hoped that members will be able to submit incident reports on line.

4.5 Competitions

John Aldridge presented his final report as Competitions Director. He said he could not remember how long he had been on the Exec but he had been Competitions Chairman since then and had always found his job very rewarding. The highlight for him had been standing at the 2007 AGM when the World Hang Gliding Team had presented him with the gold medal that they had won in Texas.

John said that after many years of BHPA trying to produce a competitions handbook, he had now handed over the incomplete draft to Exec and no doubt it would be completed in due course. He added that he would be happy to help his successor in any way that he could.

John Lawrence said he would like the opportunity for all the competitions people to get together and take their game to a higher level, maybe using sports psychology etc. In reply John said that they had tried something similar some years ago but it had not worked particularly well. The competitions panels did used to have combined panel meetings where they all got together for the start of the meeting then separated for their own panel meetings. Maybe the new Competitions Chairman would reintroduce this as the cross fertilisation of ideas is always useful.

4.6 External Representation

John Aldridge reported that he would be standing down from the Royal Aero Club Council as he would no longer be a BHPA Director after the AGM.

John then explained that Marc Asquith is still on RAeC Council as he was Chairman and is now a Vice President. Also, Tom Hardie continues to work for the JAR Alliance and keeps an eye on things for us.

4.7 Sites

Steve Walsh reported that the Sites Fund has now increased to just over £8,500 and whilst this is not enough to buy a site, it is available and could maybe help towards a landing site.

Six sites have been threatened over the past year, mainly from proposed wind farms and conservation concerns. He asked all members to be alert for possible threats to sites.

In regard to funding, John Lawrence suggested that maybe we could encourage members to leave a legacy in their will and Steve said he would raise this at the next Exec meeting.

4.8 Paramotor Liaison

Ed Cunliffe was unable to get to the meeting so the Chairman read out Ed's written report which said that the number of rated paramotor pilots continues to increase and the club and competition scene is flourishing.

4.9 FSC

4.9.1 Angus Pinkerton reported FSC is now holding its committee meetings in the boardroom at the new office and this is working very well.

4.9.2 Angus said that only once since 1988 had he been able to stand at the AGM and report that there had been no fatal accidents, although there had only been one last year. Unfortunately we have already had one this year so it is not a very good start. FSC had wondered whether the low number of fatalities last year was because the weather was not good for flying XC and consequently not so much flying going on. However, it turned out that it was a spectacularly good year for XC. Dave Thompson is looking into this to find out if there is any correlation between the weather, XC and number of fatalities.

4.9.3 Training Wings (Elementary Pilot Training Guide) is really important for new students and as this no longer carries advertising there is no excuse for schools not to hand this out.

4.9.4 During the coming season FSC will be pushing to get people to do proper pre-flight checks. It is clear from reports that many incidents would have been avoided if proper checks had been done but people do not seem to realise the need until they have had an incident.

4.9.5 FSC will be progressing the development of a speed flying structure this year as well as looking at getting coaches to go back to a coach course. Things change over the years and coaches need to be up to date.

Angus then thanked all the people who work for the FSC which he said cannot be described as fun but it does make our sport much in full.

Bill noted that Exec minutes on the website are only up to January 2010 which is not really good enough. He said that this was not a criticism of officers as he knew that they did lots of work and were very busy but he felt that this did need to be looked at.

Referring to speed gliding, Bill suggested that FSC should progress this as soon as possible. He said that there were people both within and outside of the Association who would not wait so this needed to be formalised quickly.

4.10 School Liaison

John Welch was unable to be at the meeting but his written said that the number of BHPA registered schools had increased despite the economic recession. Also, there had been no accidents likely to affect our insurance.

4.11 Admin

Marc explained that it had been a rather difficult year from the office point of view, particularly as arrangements for the office move were taking place at the busiest time of year. Nevertheless, the office had continued to function normally throughout and everything is now working well at Merus Court. Marc thanked the office team for all their efforts to ensure that the move went smoothly.

There being no more reports or questions from the floor, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 12.25pm.