



2001 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Sunday 2 December 2001 at the Telford Exhibition Centre, Telford, 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
Paul Dancey
Martin Heywood
Brett Janaway
Dick Long
Harriet Pottinger
Angus Pinkerton

Andy Shaw
Peter Studzinski
Merv Turner
Steve Varden

?? Voting members
of the Association

In attendance:

David Barber
Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Clive Robinson
Joe Schofield
Petra Slangen
Ann Welsh

ITEM 1: CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS: REPORT OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The Chairman, Harriet Pottinger, welcomed everyone to the tenth AGM of the BHPA and then went on to talk of the effect that Foot & Mouth Disease has had on some of our schools. She also mentioned that some schools have managed to get government compensation. Harriet wished everyone well for the coming season and hoped that 2002 would be a better year.

Harriet then expressed her thanks to the many volunteers and the staff who all work hard for the good of the sport. In particular, Steve Varden who is standing down from Exec this year after three years. Steve has put in a great deal of time and effort to raise awareness for Flyability.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 2001 be approved.

The Treasurer, Dick Long, reported that he expected the Association to make a small surplus in the current year, which is surprising given the problems due to F&M. He also mentioned that the Introductory Membership fee for Under 18s will be reduced from £10 to £5.

Steve Uzochukwu asked whether last years accounts would show a loss if the interest on the reserves was taken out. Dick replied that they would but the interest has to be shown as it is part of the accounts.

The resolution to approve the accounts was passed.

2.2 That four members be elected to the Executive Council from the following six candidates: M. Asquith, P. Dancey, R. Long, C. Robinson, P. Slangen, M. Turner.

The following candidates were elected:

M. Asquith, R. Long, C. Robinson, M. Turner.

Harriet thanked those who had stood for election and said she hopes that Paul and Petra would continue to be involved even though they had not been elected to Exec.

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

The resolution was approved.

This concluded the formal business of BHPA Limited as required by the Companies Act.

Harriet informed members that this was the first AGM that Walter Neumark had been unable to attend since 1962. Walter was to be promoted to the post of Vice President in recognition of his unstinting service to the sport and to the Association.

ITEM 3: OFFICERS' REPORTS

3.1 Insurance

Martin Heywood reported that there have been no major claims to affect our claims record and our insurance has been renewed at the same premium as last year. However, he made the point that even though activity has been down this year due to F&M, it has not stopped the claims coming in as members have been flying abroad.

Personal Injury claims can now go well beyond £2m and this could cause us serious problems in the future. We will be liaising very closely with our insurers.

Some sites are already asking for £5m+ cover and although we are managing to stave this off at present, it is bound to come in eventually.

3.2 Skywings

Paul Dancey said that the last financial year had been very good for Skywings, however, this year advertising had dropped considerably due to F&M. This has resulted in a much thinner magazine. It is hoped that the advertising will come back as things return to normal.

Paul then thanked Joe Schofield and Colin Fargher for their hard work on the magazine and all the contributors for supplying the articles etc.

John Lawrence (Green Dragons) asked if it is possible to include information from Skywings on the website. Peter Studzinski replied that the Safety Matters page was not on the web at the moment but there was no reason why it could not be.

3.3 FSC

Angus was unable to be at the meeting at this time but Mark Dale asked if members had any questions on the written report. There were no questions.

3.4 Sites

Clive Robinson informed the meeting that the last reported outbreak of F&M was in September and hopefully everything will be back to normal for next season.

The search for a National Centre is continuing and Clive asked members to contact him if they thought they knew of somewhere suitable.

3.5 Competition

John Aldridge pointed out that paramotors were missing from his written report as the Competitions Committee does not have a Panel to deal with this. This was run by the BMAA at a higher level and John said thanks are due to Dave Soden and Richard Meredith-Hardy whose efforts have benefited our members.

3.4 Brett Janaway

Brett explained that cancellation of the 2001 All Out had been left to the very last moment in the hope that it would go ahead but unfortunately it had had to be cancelled due to F&M.

As Merv has now taken over Events Officer, Brett does not have a specific role on Exec at the moment.

3.6 Events

Merv Turner was not present but Harriet informed members that the next Festival of Free Flight is planned for the Long Mynd. Ann Underwood asked when this will be and Russ Hicks replied that the date has not yet been fixed but is likely to be the first weekend in July or August.

3.7 Website

Peter Studzinski said he has done a lot of work on the website since the last AGM. There is now a members' area and the list of schools is a copy of the data held in the office. There is also a 'Learn to Fly' section for beginners.

Peter is currently doing all the work on the website himself and said he will need some volunteers to help keep it up to date.

3.8 PR

David Wootton reported on a major TV programme showing Bob Drury and Rob Whittall in India. The BBC think this is the best footage of paragliding that they have ever shot. There is also a prime time weather programme being shown which features paragliding.

David then went on to report on in-store activities and forthcoming exhibitions; reminded clubs that the virtual hang glider is available for them to borrow and the new PR leaflet is available free for promotional purposes.

3.9 Membership and Fundraising

Petra Slangen said she has been looking at membership renewals etc. and will be exploring ways of recruiting and keeping members. There are various projects that she is currently looking at.

3.10 Flyability

Petra also made the Flyability report on behalf of Steve Varden and gave details of scholarships awarded and the success of the Flyability website.

A new Flyability project is being run by Wayne Thacker, a student at Manchester University, and he and his colleagues would be giving a short presentation later.

3.11 Club Liaison

Andy Shaw's aim is to work closely with clubs and schools so that misunderstandings with Exec do not arise. Andy reported on a recent survey which he has done where he had telephoned lapsed Instructors to find out why they have allowed their licence to lapse. It had been a very worthwhile exercise and he has received some good feedback.

ITEM 4: PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Ann Welch addressed the meeting as follows:

"I am rapidly coming to the conclusion that our airports are the only sane thing left in this world. Perhaps it helps that the media takes little notice of us. If you think I am becoming cynical you are right.

If you read the papers you soon discover that today a lot does not seem to work properly - like trains. Last month as my train pulled out of the station the voice came on and said 'Is there a train driver travelling as a passenger?' We have no driver for this train. We went slowly on and then the voice came again. 'We still have no driver so at Woking we will attach ourselves to the back of another train which will pull us to Waterloo, but we do not know which stations it will stop at.'

Fortunately, the BHPA does work - and well - with much of the effort by volunteers who believe in what they are doing and know what they want. Over the last year of FMD the BHPA has appeared competent and responsible, gets on sensibly with regulating itself on pilot standards while elsewhere indecision reigns widely over simple projects like the NPPL. Long may BHPA commonsense continue.

I am not going to make a long speech as I would like to say quite a bit about Wings Over A Cloud. So I will close this bit by saying a big thank you to our Chairman Harriet for all her excellent work, and to wish you all a successful 2002."

Ann then gave details of the articles that she had shortlisted for the Wings Over A Cloud award. The final winner of the Wings

Over A Cloud award for the best article in Skywings was Richard Westgate for X-Ceara 2000 (June edition)

The presentation of numerous BHPA and FAI awards followed. These included three Awards of Merit which were presented to Les Smallwood, Mark Taggart and Tony Webb.

Noel Whittall has been nominated for a Tissandier Diploma which will be presented to him at the Royal Aero Club Awards in April.

Harriet thanked Ann for making the presentations and then presented her with a bottle of wine as a token of our appreciation.

ITEM 5: DISCUSSION FORUM

5.1. Proposer: John Mayer

That the BHPA introduce urgently a class of Club Coach qualified to coach and/or observe FLPA pilots. There should be two classes of FLPA coach, for paramotoring and powered hang gliding; coaches would be experienced FLPA-rated pilots of at least Pilot standard. The aim is to enable experienced pilots who are already flying FLPA to get their practical tasks signed-off by their FLPA Club Coach and so encourage them to get their FLPA Rating; also to advise not-so-experienced pilots to obtain professional training.

After some discussion it was agreed that FSC would look at this as a matter of priority at their meeting the next day.

5.9 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That in the interests of democracy and transparency, minutes of BHPA Exec meetings should be made available for members via the BHPA website.

Dick Long said that BHPA Board minutes should not be available to the wider public and therefore cannot be published on the web until we have a secure site. Peter Studzinski added that this was possible by using passwords etc. but we would have to spend money for the software etc.

Steve Varden suggested that a second Smartgroup could be set up which members could join if they wanted to. He said he would be prepared to help set this up if it would help.

At the moment minutes are sent out to all schools and clubs but Harriet said that Exec would look at the possibility of a secure website so that all members could access the minutes.

5.2 Proposer: Michel Carnet

That the BHPA management immediately cease to apply its disastrous policy on taxing instructors and tandem pilots, first introduced by previous Chairman Marc Asquith a couple of years ago and carried on ever since by present Chairman Harriet Pottinger. So far this policy has resulted in the BHPA losing more than half its instructors and a record low morale within schools, even before the advent of FMD. Accounts presented at the last two AGMs have shown an operating loss, draining on reserves and highlighting what I consider to be poor BHPA management.

5.6 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should not provide insurance for school instructors. they give rise to the majority of claims, and as commercial operations should pay a premium direct to the insurers that represents the risk they present based on their claim history.

Neither Michel Carnet nor Paul Johnson were at the meeting. Harriet read out a note from Paul Johnson in respect of his proposal and Steve Uzochukwu presented Michel Carnet's proposal.

In response to Steve Uzochukwu, Martin Heywood explained that our insurers no longer want to cover schools. It is the insurers who have demanded that the premium should be weighted to reflect the risks. We have therefore come up with something that is acceptable to us and the insurers.

Steve Varden asked whether it will be possible to renegotiate the premium if the claims history improves. Martin replied that when the big claims are off the history and we reach the point where we are paying the insurers more than they are paying out, then it may be possible to renegotiate.

Angus Pinkerton said the fact that there are two completely opposed opinions on this is something that the Exec recognise.

Exec do not agreed with Paul Johnson that we should not be providing any insurance for instructors, nor do we agree with Michel Carnet that we should be spreading the cost evenly over the whole membership. If it is too easy for instructors to remain instructors even when they are no longer current, then there is a greater risk. Only active instructors will continue to renew their licence and that is the safest way.

5.4 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should allow member pilots to fly any wing of their choice and enjoy the full protection of the third party insurance for which they have paid through the membership fee (it has recently been stated by the insurance officer that pilots are not covered by BHPA third party insurance if they fly non-certified wings).

Martin Heywood replied that in order to be covered by our insurance you have to be a member flying within the rules of the BHPA. There are some areas where this is not black and white and if there were to be a claim then it would be up to the insurers discretion as to whether they would cover this.

5.5 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should break the link between flying membership and third party insurance to allow members to buy their insurance, should they choose to do so, from whichever source suits their own needs.

Martin Heywood replied to this proposal by pointing out that to obtain insurance on an individual basis the premium would be between £150 and £200 as opposed to £28 on our block policy. If there is an accident that hits the headlines, it is important for us to be able to say that there is insurance in place. To take the insurance out of the membership package would be a backward step.

5.7 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should revise the section in the Pilot Handbook regarding reserve parachute sizes to reflect the fact that it is at odds with the combined wisdom of virtually every free flight trader in the UK and has led to considerable confusion amongst pilots, especially those new to the sport.

Angus Pinkerton replied to this proposal and said that firstly he would like all the people who are criticising the book to actually read what it says, rather than what they think it says. Angus had been in touch with the best parachute manufacturing experts in the world; they said that the parachutes people were using were too small and there were dead pilots to prove this. There is now a CEN standard, which matches almost exactly what we have published, so the argument should now be finished. A second edition of the Pilot Handbook is in the pipeline.

5.8 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should publish school league tables to give new pilots the ability to make informed decisions on which school to use.

Harriet said that the Club News section of Skywings is available to all schools to publish their results and the pilots that they have qualified. It has been discussed many times but it is difficult to come up with something that will help the newcomer to the sport to make a decision. Would a school's position in a league table depend on how many students they have? how many EPs or CPs they get qualified? etc. etc.

Angus added that there had been a plan for "Gold Schools" but it was so complicated that in the end it was felt that FSC had enough to do in order to deal with the safety aspects of schools and could not get into dealing with their commercial operations. Training standards are more important than whether they have heating etc.

5.10 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That all testing of hang gliders should be left to the DHV and the BHPA rig should be sold to the BMAA.

5.11 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That if the test rig is retained the results should be made freely available to members, who own the rig.

Firstly, Angus said that DHV had published their test results. They have 1, 2 or 3 qualifications but we have only pass or fail.

Most of the runs on our test rig do not pass because they are testing for manufacturers and the results belong to the manufacturers who have paid to use the rig. If you want to know the results of a particular glider then you can test your own on the rig.

BMAA are not interested in buying the rig, they want to use it as they do at present. In the US the only test rigs belong to manufacturers, there are only two independent test rigs in the world - ours and the DHV one. DHV charge much more than we do so small manufacturers can only continue if we keep our rig. The AAIB have used our rig and we have a letter from the CAA saying how impressed they are with the facility. Most importantly, UK built gliders cannot be built without the use of our test rig.

5.12 Proposer: Paul Johnson

That the BHPA should spend more time and money on promoting rather than regulating free flight. To achieve this aim resources should be moved from FSC to promotional activities.

Harriet replied that additional resources are being given to marketing and promotion and Petra will be working with David Wootton to promote the sport. It will be up to Dick Long where the money comes from but it will be made available.

Angus said that hang gliding is shrinking everywhere, not just in the UK. Some organisations have spent a lot of money trying to arrest this decline abroad but it has made no difference at all. Nothing that we do will change the fact that it is easier to learn to fly paragliders. If anyone has any ideas then please let us know.

ITEM 6: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Harriet informed the meeting that it had been discovered on the day before the AGM that Paul Johnson's proposals had not in fact been seconded by the South Wales club, but as they had been published they had been discussed. She reminded members of the process for submitting proposals and requested that they should be worded in a less vitriolic way.

6.2 From the floor, Chris Strong said that anyone who puts in a raft of proposals for discussion should at least be at the meeting to speak for them.

6.3 There followed a presentation by Wayne Thacker and his colleagues showing work on their Flyability Project at Manchester University.

Harriet thanked Wayne and said she hoped that this would be an inspiration to others to set up university clubs.