

INSURANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – DECEMBER 2009

You will recall at previous AGMs I have advised that our claims history since 2000 has been good and that eventually one day that might mean that there would be a chance of a little more competition in the market to underwrite our activities. Well, this has happened this year and we are pleased to announce that we received a very competitive quote from Hiscox to cover the BHPA on the same terms as before. The reduced price means that there is much needed relief on the BHPA's budget, and we hope that this will continue to be the case with reduced accidents and claims. As this note goes to press, we will still be in the midst of working out the wording, so please bear with us. One improvement we hope to have gained is with relaxation of the situation in relation to cover for site owners who demand £5m cover. Again, we are still at the point of negotiation and refining of the details in this respect and we want everything to be in place by the time of membership renewals in January 2010.

This does of course mean, that because of our rolling renewals, members who have signed up/renewed in the last few months will still be on the old policy, but that will taper away as we move through 2010. In addition, please note the cap of £25,000 remains in place for instructor and tandem activity.

There is always a risk in making a big change such as this, and when we have discussed our situation with alternative brokers and underwriter in recent years, the risk has not weighed up sufficiently well. However, this time the deal looks very good and Hiscox is a serious player in the market. We are of course vulnerable to a big claim coming in, but that would be the situation whether we moved underwriters or not. Such an event would cause a rise in premium without doubt. I would still like to take this opportunity to remind the membership that although our claims history looks good for the past nine years, we are still an industry where the long term past shows that more has been paid out by insurers on our behalf than has been received from us in premiums. The situation remains quite fragile therefore. So the message to all clubs is to keep up the high standards of site management and safety and we will continue to maintain an affordable insurance and preserve access to the air.

Regards to all pilots.

Martin Heywood

TREASURER'S REPORT TO THE AGM – DECEMBER 2009

In the year to 31st March we made a loss of £22,009, partly offsetting the £33,373 surplus we made in the previous year. The overall financial position of the BHPA remains sound with reserves at the end of the year standing at £448,630 (2008: £470,639).

The increase in member subscription rates at the beginning of 2008 was planned to offset the anticipated reduction in our Sport England (formerly the Sports Council) grant, the increase in our insurance costs and the general effects of inflation. Overall subscription income increased from £583,705 in the year to March 2008 to £624,915 in the year to March 2009. Shop sales, having fallen in the previous year, remained fairly steady but margins improved as the mix of goods sold included a higher proportion of more profitable lines. The Sport England grant we received fell, as expected, from £34,822 to £17,022.

The BHPA's accounts have been buttressed for many years by the interest earnings we receive on our reserves. In December 2008 as interest rates were falling we took advantage of a one-year deposit at 2% with HBoS and this has safeguarded some of our interest earnings, though we were fortunate indeed when HBoS was rescued by Lloyds and then the taxpayer when the financial crisis struck.

The costs of producing Skywings are partly subsidised by the revenue from sales of advertisements. In common with other print media we've seen a large fall in our advertising income which dropped by £30,000 in the year to March 2009. The fall in income has been partly offset by the steps the Skywings team have taken to curb costs, but even so the net cost to the Association of producing Skywings increased from £72,351 to £97,086.

With the withdrawal of our profit share arrangement insurance costs increased from £197,539 to £233,903 as expected, and despite our efforts to control overheads overall administration and FSC costs were driven higher by inflation which peaked at 5.5% in September 2008.

Looking ahead, the operating climate is unlikely to show much improvement in the short term and we remain dependent on the weather. I am confident however that, with a modest increase in subscriptions, the strength of the BHPA's financial position will enable it to ride out the current difficulties.

I am grateful for the unstinting efforts of Carolyn who runs the BHPA accounts and shop single-handed and the work of the team in Leicester which makes the Association run so smoothly.

Angus Langford,
BHPA Treasurer

BHPA Flying and Safety Committee.

Report to the 2009 AGM



The current FSC membership is:

Angus Pinkerton (FSC Chairman)
John Lovell (Accident Investigation Panel)
Trevor McLaughlin (Instructor and Coach Training Panel)
Chris Dawes (Development Panel)
Paul Mahoney (SPHG Panel)
Michel Carnet (Pilot Training Panel)
Ken Raines (Chief Examiner and Examination & Inspections Panel)
Joe Schofield (Publications Panel)
Russ Hicks (Towing Panel)
Mark Dale (BHPA Technical Manager)
Dave Thompson (BHPA Technical Officer)

As I hope you will all have noticed after a particularly poor year of flying weather in 2008, 2009 has been much better in the UK (for example I know that a record number of flying days were achieved in Scotland). This good weather has clearly translated into training days, and during 2009 our schools managed to train and qualify 555 new PG CPs (compared to 438 in 2007) as well as 54 new HG CPs (33 in 2008), and 1 new PA CP (2 in 2008). This is encouraging and we hope that this trend will continue now that the arrangements are in place to enable BHPA Registered Schools to operate with a permanent base anywhere in Europe.

During the year there were 7 flying fatalities involving BHPA members – all paragliding; three in the UK (including a double mid-air fatality), one each in Bulgaria and Spain, and two in Morocco. In addition there was one UK fatality of a paramotoring pilot who was not a BHPA member. A full summary of the Accident and Incident reports received in 2009 will be published in Skywings in the New Year.

I would like to emphasise the value to all of our flying community of completing Incident Report forms. The one-off incident or near-miss that affected you (or one of your flying friends) might not be as rare as you think. Without reports we can't investigate, and without investigations we can't provide timely advice and guidance to pilots or manufacturers.

Now that the dust has largely settled on the topic of Paraglider Certification testing, there have been some ructions in the area of Reserve Parachute testing. This has partly risen from the fact that, like the previous situation in PG testing, there are two significantly different standards: the DHV who test descent rates by measuring the drag of a parachute behind a moving truck, and the EN standard that uses a weighted drop test. Both of these tests are prone to substantial differences in behaviour, especially when there is any hint of instability in the performance of the parachute. 2010 will likely see some significant effort to resolve these issues and hopefully we will be able to settle on a single approach.

The BHPA Technical Manual is available as a PDF from the BHPA Website, and we now use this electronic copy as the primary version. The ease of update, ability to search it, and reduced printing costs offer significant advantages. The Tech Manual received one update during the year, probably the most significant aspect of which was a change in terminology, something I always try to avoid as it inevitably causes confusion. In this case however we were able to achieve a significant reduction in overall complexity by doing away with the series of separate "endorsements" and the variety of training and experience requirements they demanded. Now all of our Pilot Ratings are qualified with one or more "environments" (for example; hill or tow) and the way a pilot adds a new "environment" to their Rating has been standardised.

The workload of the Technical Staff has been particularly high this year, with the much higher number of fatal accidents to be investigated combining with the loss from the office of both Tony and Elaine who provided administrative help to Mark and Dave. The office staff continue to provide excellent support, but the reduction in experienced staffing (partly brought about in response to worsening finances) has definitely had an impact.

As always I would like to say "thank you" to all the people who have volunteered to work on FSC, we are all passionate about our sport and I feel privileged that such a skilled and experienced group of people are willing to give up their valuable time to contribute to its safe development.

Angus Pinkerton, Chairman BHPA Flying and Safety Committee, December 2009.



I'm afraid the economic downturn has decimated Skywings advertising income. During 2008/9 this fell by around £21,000. The copies ordered were also down by around 4,200, a reflection of the continuing decline in BHPA membership.

As a result the cost per issue consistently broke the £1 barrier, and the total number of pages published during 2008/9 was cut by 100 to achieve a balanced budget at year end.

The management figures for the last four years are shown below for comparison.

	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Expenditure	£169,757	£163,379	£162,001	£148,339
Revenue	£90,198	£84,398	£82,198	£60,698
Net cost	£79,559	£78,981	£79,803	£87,641
Average net cost per magazine	£0.92	£0.94	£0.92	£1.06
Copies ordered	85,681	84,388	86,666	82,420
Pages printed	688	664	648	552

With the economic situation worsening by the day, and advertising income continuing to fall, Exec agreed to increase the Skywings budget for 2009/10 by £9,000 to help see the magazine through the difficult times ahead.

In the current year, with advertising income continuing to slip, albeit at a much gentler rate, this budget increase has been used to try to stave off any further cuts in issue size.

We have also obtained fresh quotations for the magazine print contract, and have used these to negotiate a substantial saving in this area. The November issue was the first to benefit from that saving.

It's hard to know what lies ahead in these troubled times, but the Skywings team will continue to do everything they can to deliver the best possible magazine within the constraints of the budget available.

My thanks as always to our talented and hard-working team, designer and advertising agent Colin Fargher, and editor Joe Schofield, and of course all the magazine contributors. It's their articles and photographs that really make Skywings such a great magazine.

Paul Dancey,
Corporate Communications Director, November 2009



Website Report – 2009

The BHPA web site continues to slowly evolve as new information is added, and systems updated to allow more direct input from the office to ensure the information displayed is up to date. This year the main improvements have been to the safety information available.

A new searchable online database of BHPA Incident Reports (Informal Investigations) has been created. This can be searched and/or filtered by discipline, and can be directly updated from the office.

BHPA Incident Reports (Formal Investigations), often referred to in the past as Board of Enquiry reports, are also now available on the web site. So far only a small number of reports have been uploaded, but as this work can now be done from the office, it is hoped that the numbers of reports available will start to grow quite quickly. These reports are listed by date on the BHPA Incident Reports (Formal Investigations) page, and can also be accessed from the relevant on-line Incident Report (informal Investigations).

BHPA Annual Incident Analysis Reports and a list of registered parachute packers can also now be found on the web site.

A new edition of Training Wings will be published shortly and will only be available as a download from the web site. This reduces publication costs, and makes it easier and cheaper to update.

There have also been a number of minor tweaks to the overall design of the web site. The web site will need a full redesign in the not too distant future, but for the moment it seems sensible to put this on the back burner until finances improve. I am however hoping to update the layout of the schools and club pages in time for the 2010 season.

Other work has also been going on behind the scenes this year as it was necessary to update the web site and a number of office systems to improve security to become PCI compliant so that we could continue to take credit and debit card payments. This turned out to be rather more work than any of us first realized, and I would like to thank Kriss Burdett and Andrew Wakelin for their assistance with the necessary security upgrades. I'd also like to thank Andrew for his help with the automation of database file uploads from the office.

Paul Dancey
Corporate Communications Director
November 2009

COMPETITIONS REPORT – AGM DECEMBER 2009

Competitions continue to be popular, partly as social gatherings of like minded individuals but also as a way to improve and measure achievement. All disciplines continued to attract a solid following with an encouraging number of newcomers.

National level competitions in all disciplines are well organised with due regard to safety and both hang glider and paraglider pilots have enjoyed an accident free season at this level. Sadly this was not the case in the less structured environment of the British Clubs Challenge.

On the international front we have had mixed successes this year with our members in the UK paramotor team earning FAI silver medals and Michel Carnet adding an individual gold to his already impressive tally of championship medals. Our paragliding team also produced their best result for many years in Mexico where they placed 4th but our hangies not only failed to maintain their world champion title but dropped completely out of the medals in a contest where the Italians dominated, as they have for the past 12 months, and we were even behind a resurgent US team, something that has not happened for as long as I can remember. Our Accuracy team also suffered with no team or individual medals – the first time this has happened since Accuracy became an FAI recognised discipline. Let us hope that our paraglider pilots continue to improve and this year's results act as a spur to our hang gliding and accuracy teams.

Report by the Hang Gliding Competitions Panel

World Championships. Laragne, France: After a difficult inception the team worked hard at the World Championships but were dogged by illness. The result was a disappointing 7th place for the team overall. Whilst a team medal was perhaps unlikely in this competition the team was a mere 225 points behind 4th placed Brazil (<2%) showing how close it was at the top. Two individuals managed creditable results; Gordon Rigg and 5th Carl Wallbank 15th.

Pre Europeans. Ager, Spain: This competition had significant support from UK pilots and produced a podium finish all round with both Carl Wallbank individually and our team in 3rd position. The level and intensity of the competition provided useful training for several upcoming pilots and will make the 2010 team selection more difficult. 6 British pilots finished in the top 25 overall.

UK Nationals, Ager, Spain: After good weather and 6 tasks in the Pre-Euros, the following week was a bit of a disaster in terms of the weather. Nonetheless 2 good tasks were flown to produce a new British Champion; David Shields. There was more limited attendance by pilots from other nations due in part to the (unavoidable) timing of the competition after the Pre-Euros. Despite this the changes employed this year seem to have been welcomed by the pilots and the format was popular.

British Open Series: This series continues to provide an excellent environment for good quality competition at the top level as well as a friendly environment in which to encourage new participants into national level competition. Despite sometimes unfavourable weather 48 pilots tackled 7 tasks over 3 meetings and down days were used to discuss competition techniques and to provide Q&A sessions for newer members. The overall winner was Gary Wirdnam

BOS Sports Class: This new addition to the BOS this year proved a very popular class. It was designed as a way to encourage pilots with club level experience to enter a competition and improve their XC techniques in a relaxed environment. This is quite likely to be a growing part of future UK competitions and there are indications that some of these newcomers are set to become successful at higher levels of the sport. Seminars to provide general and specific help with techniques, instruments and tactics proved useful to all.

Class 5: There has been a greater interest in class 5 during 2009. It is hoped that a separate competition will be held in 2010 if sufficient support can be found.

Bleriot Cup: With the score set at 17 wins each, this year's Bleriot was expected to be a hard fought affair, especially as there is some doubt about the future of the series. The intention is a friendly match with our rivals the French in which good relations, good flying and pilot development are the key. This year the French

fielded a very strong field that we felt was not entirely in keeping with the Bleriot Cup ethos. As such we were roundly beaten but all the objectives for our team were met.

UKNXCL: This year the website was revamped and entry fees removed. Better publicity is required to encourage more participation in 2010. There is a possibility of a tie up with the PG XCL in 2010. 2009 Winner: Malcolm Beard and best UK flight 201Km by Bruce Kavanagh.

Report by Paragliding Accuracy Competitions Panel

Classic Accuracy: The Classic Accuracy Nationals was held at North Luffenham for the second time thanks to hosts Skylincs. Andy Shaw became National Champion for a sixth time and also became the first ever pilot to win the title flying a paraglider. Green Dragons (Andy Shaw, Simon Sykes, Billy Elliston) won the team trophy for a record ninth time.

All legs (French, British and Dutch) of the European Grand Prix were validated this year with French pilot Xavier de Sailly winning the series for the third consecutive year. John Lawrence was top Brit in third place and also won the classic accuracy league for the second time.

Paragliding Accuracy: The Paragliding Accuracy Nationals took place on Cordon Hill and thanks go to Beyond Extreme for running a successful event. Andy Shaw became National Champion for a third time and Green Dragons (Andy Shaw, Billy Elliston, John Lawrence) won the team trophy for the second time.

This year there were two big world paragliding accuracy events with the World Air Games in Italy and the 5th World Championships in Croatia. Don Bodill and Nick Simmons represent the UK at the World Air Games with their selection being based on positions in the WRPS. The target area was a pontoon in the middle of a lake making it an attractive event for spectators.

The World Championships had a record attendance and Great Britain claimed a creditable fourth place behind Slovenia, China and Bulgaria. Great Britain was represented by Andy Shaw, Andy Webster, Don Bodill, Nick Simmons and Tony Blacker, with both Andy Shaw and Andy Webster making it into the top ten.

A busy year meant that UK pilot participation in the Paragliding Accuracy World Cup series was low. Legs were held in Macedonia, Turkey, Hungary, Austria and Bulgaria. Andy Webster (27th) was highest placed Brit. Don Bodill's commitment over the season paid off as he won the 2009 paragliding accuracy league title.

Meetings were held after both the Classic and Paragliding Accuracy Nationals where those involved in accuracy were able to discuss issues with the Accuracy Panel. The Panel has also been able to obtain the services of Caroline Lonsdale who has re-launched the 'bhpa-accuracy.org' website.

The big event in 2010 will be the European Championships to be held in Turkey. The selection of the British team has already started with a performance based selection process using training camp and competition results from the 12 months prior to the selection date.

December 2009

John Aldridge
Competition Director

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION REPORT TO THE AGM – DECEMBER 2009

The BHPA continues to be formally represented on a number of external bodies relevant to our interests.

In the UK we have BHPA director Marc Asquith as Vice President of the Royal Aero Club (RAeC) and myself on the council of that body. Our aviation legislation officer (Tom Hardie) is an executive of the GA Alliance. One issue of note at the RAeC this year was the formal adoption of the WADA approved version 2.1 of the FAI's Anti Doping Rules and Procedures, something that we voted against but which was approved by a small majority. The BHPA view is that the intrusiveness of some of these rules, the draconian penalties for infringement and their relevance in a sport where there are no recognised performance enhancing drugs is unwarranted – a view that was also taken by CIVL when the rules were adopted by the FAI.

In Europe we are represented at a number of levels at the European Hang gliding and Paragliding Union (EHPU). Our Chairman (Martin Heywood) is, by virtue of his position, UK Delegate. Our Senior Technical Officer (Mark Dale) is currently General Secretary and other FSC members are involved with the Airworthiness and the Safety and Training Committee. I shall leave any reporting on these activities to the FSC.

Internationally we are represented in CIVL, the hang gliding and paragliding commission of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale. I am the UK Delegate and I am also an elected Vice President of that body and chair its Sporting Code (rule making) Subcommittee. I have also been appointed by CIVL as its delegate to the Commission d'Aéronautique Sportive Internationale (CASI), the rule making and appeals body of the FAI where I am also an elected Vice President. CIVL funds me for these CASI activities.

Our alternate delegate to CIVL is Chris Burns and he also chairs its Paragliding Subcommittee so we are well represented for both hang gliding and paragliding.

The hot topic within CIVL continues to be airworthiness standards for both hang gliders and paragliders flying in world and continental championships. Currently being considered are measures to restrict some aspects of the development of paragliders and to ban prototypes from both hang gliding and paragliding championships. Further work is also being carried out to ensure the pitch stability of hang gliders in major events. I am not in a position to forecast what decisions may be made on these important safety matters at the CIVL Plenary meeting in February.

ADMIN DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE AGM – DECEMBER 2009

There have been some significant changes in staffing at the office over the past year.

Due to the economic downturn we were forced to make Tony Mitchell redundant in May and Elaine Lane retired in September. Tony had been with us for ten years and Elaine for twenty-four so their experience and expertise will be greatly missed. This leaves us with only four staff at the office (Jennie, Carolyn, Stef and Ruth) and I would like to thank them for their efforts to keep things running smoothly during the recent changes.

Reallocation of the workload and improvements to our computer system have enabled us to continue with fewer staff and hopefully members have not noticed any difference in the service they receive from the office.

There will be further changes in 2010 as Carolyn will be retiring and we will need someone to replace her. Also, the lease on our current office expires in September so we will most likely be moving to new premises during the year.

Marc Asquith

SITES OFFICER'S REPORT TO AGM

Summary for 2008-2009

Site Purchase Fund

The voluntary contributions to this fund are still coming in and it currently stands at £7200. While this is not a meteoric rise the fund has risen significantly since last year and is being contributed to by hundreds of pilots a year. To put the fund into context there was an agreement to support the purchase of a site, at a level well in excess of the funds value, this year but even with major commitment by the club and the BHPA the area was lost to higher bidders. So while the fund is still growing it will be years before it can make a significant contribution towards buying land that sells for a premium over the pure agricultural value. Given the economic climate the suggested donation to the fund has not been increased for the second year running but members may donate any amount they wish to.

I am sure that the clubs who have had offers of help from this fund are grateful to the members who feel able to donate. I know of at least one case where the fund will be offered to help in the bidding for an area of land in 2010. So if you are wavering about making a contribution to the fund then now would be a very good time to help secure another site for free flight.

Environment policy

I have written an environmental policy for the BHPA that has been approved by the executive committee. This has been done to help highlight and limit some of our impacts on the environment and to bring us in line with the other major recreational aviation organisations in the UK and Europe. A copy is attached to this report and members are encouraged to comment on any changes they wish to make to improve the policy or to make it more relevant to their own activities. Such a policy is only of use if we make it grow and adapt to our organisation over time.

Wind Farms

Proposals continue to be sent to the BHPA for comment. Surprisingly few seem to conflict with existing flying sites but all clubs need to be alert to any proposals in their area.

National Trust

The Trust is still in the process of reviewing the national agreement that provides the policy framework that guides the regions on their approach to allowing free flight at their properties. Work being done by other executive members in improving our insurance should make discussion with the Trust much more productive and may regain the support of some regions who were concerned about our level of cover.

West Wales Airspace changes

There have now been several consultation stages to this change over the past year and the most recent proposals are far less worrying than the initial ones. This seems partly due to the need to provide low-lying airspace for the RAF. We are currently waiting for the final decision as to the exact format of the new airspace.

Steve Walsh
BHPA Sites Officer
December 2009

British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association Environmental Policy

The British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) is an association of member clubs and schools. The individual members take great pleasure and excitement from the environment while using it to pursue their own particular aspect of the sport. Most unpowered flying activities take place from hillsides, cliffs and mountains with tow launching and powered foot launched flying taking place from lowland sites. The Association recognises the need and the duty to protect and minimise the impact our sport has on the environment and has adopted this code as part of its actions to achieve this.

The environmental impact of the association and its members' related activities will usually be limited as the use of land tends to be intermittent and no permanent alteration of this land is needed on the take-off sites our members use. Our activities will however have effects on the environment and the major categories are briefly described in the Appendix.

While the BHPA cannot control all the actions of its members, it will take action to promote this code to them and provide advice and guidance in response to requests or environmental needs as they arise. The association will also undertake to monitor and review its environmental code on a regular basis to ensure it remains current and relevant to the sport and to the environment.

The BHPA has identified critical policies across a range of areas as outlined below.

1. Legislative and policy compliance
 - a. The BHPA will comply and encourage its member Clubs and individual members to comply with and improve upon the requirements of environmental legislation.
 - b. The BHPA supports the FAI Environmental Commission Code of Conduct for Air Sports available at http://www.fai.org/environment/code_conduct and asks its members to follow this code wherever possible.
2. Clubs and members
 - a. Associated clubs and pilots should aim to create minimal impact on the environment and should respect the needs of people who live and work in the countryside.
 - b. Pilots should seek to minimise the use of cars in supporting their flying activities whenever possible.
 - c. Pilots should include environmental and social concerns as part of their decision process when purchasing new equipment.
 - d. Whenever practicable Clubs and Schools should cooperate with landowners, other sporting organisations and environmental organisations in the protection and enhancement of the land resource used to support their flying.
3. Administrative Offices
 - a. Promote the waste hierarchy of "First Reduce, Then Reuse and Lastly Recycle" in the use of materials used by staff officers and volunteers and to dispose of waste in a responsible and harmless way.
 - b. Wherever possible to use energy efficiently and where practicable, use low carbon energy.
 - c. To source materials that have the least environmental harm in their manufacture; be they recycled or sustainably produced.
4. Transport and Travel
 - a. Its staff and officers should seek to minimise travel and to choose the least damaging forms of travel.
5. Cooperation with other bodies
 - a. To cooperate with all environmental protection bodies and land owners/managers in activities aimed at protecting and enhancing the environment or in reducing any damaging effect its members have on the environment.
6. Making things happen
 - a. Pursue a programme of continuous improvement of this policy and practice.
 - b. Ensure that this policy is available to its members, the public and other relevant organisations.
 - c. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate continued relevance.

The BHPA Environment Policy is a statement of our commitment to help reduce the impact of our activities on the environment. The BHPA will provide clear leadership on environmental issues through its policies, programmes and the way it conducts its business. The BHPA will ensure that its members understand and are enabled to take responsibility for their environmental impact through the dissemination of appropriate information.

In short;

Let's try and make the World we leave behind us better than the one we have enjoyed watching from the sky. .

Major areas of potential impact from BHPA related activities

1. Emissions to the land, air and water
 - a. Carbon dioxide is released to the air from fuel used in transport of pilots to flying sites, by the use of powered foot launched aircraft and from the production of equipment by manufacturers, from administrative activities related to the BHPA offices and from the staff and officers travelling to meetings etc. Emissions to land and water are possible from the manufacturing process of equipment and materials and from waste left at flying sites.
2. Effects on wildlife
 - a. There are potential effects on birds and other animals and on ground flora from flying and activity at take-off and landing sites.
3. Effects on communities and land owners
 - a. Conflict may arise between agricultural interests and flying activities and increased traffic may impinge upon rural roads and parking areas.
4. Effects on landscape
 - a. Although very subjective there may be concerns over the visual effect of flyers in some scenic locations.

PARAMOTOR LIAISON REPORT TO THE AGM – DECEMBER 2009

My report to the AGM last year focussed on the need to bring paramotor pilots within the BHPA club and training systems and I'm very pleased to report that we're succeeding. Numbers of BHPA rated pilots are up significantly, there are now 2 dedicated paramotor clubs, and 5 clubs in total listing paragliding (power) in their activities on the clubs database. Following a conversion course for existing instructors we now have 10 schools listing paramotoring in the UK as well as Paul Mahony's school in the sunny Algarve. Obviously we still have a long way to go, but the foundations are definitely in place.

Competitions; The World Paramotor Championship was held in the Czech Republic in August this year, and the British team achieved yet another superb result, just narrowly missing out on team gold by a mere 94 points out of more than 23000. A resounding individual win from our very own Michel Carnet makes him the new World Champion, a very well deserved victory I'm sure all will agree.

Negotiations with CAA continue on a number of matters, the latest win which should be written in to the Air Navigation Order in early 2010 is the removal of the 10 litre fuel capacity limit on paramotors and powered hang gliders. Both BHPA and BMAA provided input to CAA on this matter and you will certainly hear full details in the magazine when the change is fully sanctioned.

As always, your input required and gratefully received.

Edward Cunliffe

WINGS OVER THE CLOUD AWARD

2008 – 09

I have greatly enjoyed my first year of judging the Wings over the Cloud Award. The Award was originally intended for the best in what are called 'feature' articles that appear in Skywings over a particular year. The magazine has changed over the years to the extent that I feel that the remit of the Award could be extended to cover other articles in the magazine. Over each year a fantastic range of written material is published in Skywings. It obviously varies in quality but all of it is submitted free from the membership and I should like to congratulate and thank every contributor for their work. Without you, Skywings could not exist

I should also like to make a special mention of all those BHPA members who prepare the monthly regulars such as Hang Points, Comp Lines and of course the Glider Reviews. Special mention must go to Messrs Uzochukwu and Morris for the reviews, and to Neville Almond for his Classic Hang Gliding Routes: Westbury.

The criteria I have used to judge the work look like this: Originality 30%, Quality of Writing 30%, Depth and Scope 20%, Supporting pictures and graphics 20%. I have developed this breakdown to help me come to terms with a very wide and varied submission. We have read very compelling articles about travel, but which fell short of flying content and sometimes there were excellent flying pictures to support an article that was short on depth and scope. Occasionally it all came together and the results were spectacular.

And so to the Award itself. In third place, Alastair Collis's Red China Blues parts 1 and 2 provided an epic tale that spread over Skywings December 2008 to January 2009. This was flying at its most remote and full of advice for the intrepid flyer. In second place, Two Good Days in May, Skywings March 2009, by John Chambers ably supported by the excellent photography of Tom Payne. This was a glorious tale of a series of flights by two determined cross country flyers. 300 kilometres in 48 hours is some going!

In first place, and I have to say by a considerable margin, is Nick Collins' The Edge of Reason in Skywings May 2009. This was a story of a dramatic ridge run made in fierce conditions which only the brave would take on. Brilliantly written and with truly dramatic photos of a rugged and scary coastline also supplied by the author. Well done Nick and thank you.

Mark Woodhams

BHPA AWARD OF MERIT 2009

STEVE HUDSON

Steve Hudson has worked tirelessly to improve and promote hang-gliding and paragliding in Derbyshire for over 20 years.

Steve, a former hang gliding Nationals pilot, started flying over 20 years ago and has been on the Derbyshire Soaring Club committee ever since it first started as Sheffield Hang Gliding Club, when he was one of the club's more talented XC pilots. After learning his instructor skills from the late Keith Cockcroft of the Pennine Hang Gliding Centre and a summer hitching round Europe with his hang glider, he set up his own school, Derbyshire Flying Centre, in 1987, providing expert tuition to both hang glider and paraglider pilots and encouraging pilots into the local club environment.

The early days of the Derbyshire Soaring Club saw Steve involved in the club's hard-won battles to secure access to fly the main DSC sites that most local pilots now take for granted; since then he has continued to work hard behind the scenes to ensure friendly relations with landowners and improve the flying sites, not just visiting local farmers and landowners but also taking it upon himself to reseed take-off areas, repair walls and tracks. He also comes up with practical solutions to improve site safety, and continues to investigate new sites suitable for more experienced pilots.

His original approach is appreciated by the committee, as he often invents unconventional and clever solutions for a whole range of issues including improving social events, access to restricted airspace, as well as his main role securing access to flying sites.

On the hill Steve's a well-known character, inspiring other pilots through his flying skills, instructing ability and storytelling talent.

Steve deserves recognition for being one of the key pilots who've made free flying in Derbyshire what it is today.

BHPA AWARD OF MERIT 2009

ALAN HORSFIELD

Alan has been a flying member of the Derbyshire Soaring Club since qualifying in 1992, and after gaining his Pilot Rating went on to become a Club Coach. In 1994 he was a member of the DSC paragliding team that won the Airwave Challenge, and flushed with this success, went on to become a marshal in the British competitions in 1996. He is now Head Marshal for all British competitions; has been Assistant Team Manager for the British team on several occasions, and this year was Team Manager at the World Championships in Mexico.

Alan became a Senior Coach in 2003 and was subsequently elected as Chief Coach to the DSC. In this capacity Alan has served the Club and the membership selflessly. He presides over the administration of all of the Pilot Rating exams, organises the study lectures, each winter, prior to the exams, and provides revision material on disc for aspiring Club Pilots. When on the hill and not yet flying, he is always on hand to give advice when needed and often gives up his own flying time to help others.

Alan has clearly had a significant impact both at National and Club levels and, in this his 70th year, the committee and the membership would like to thank him by proposing him for this award.

BHPA AWARD OF MERIT 2009

BOB DEAR

At after twenty-five years Bob Dear stood down from his position as editor of Wessex Airmail. In a sport that changes rapidly and has quite a high turnover, a quarter of a century in any one post is remarkable. I can't think of many members that have been in the club for that long, let alone on the committee. Of course, twenty-five years ago there was no paragliding, so Bob has seen a lot of changes.

I have been a member of the Wessex for a mere fifteen years and, as a beginner, I can still remember how valuable the magazine was to me, especially during the winter months when the weather meant long periods of no flying. Airmail always contained good articles, but for me one of the things that sticks in my mind is Eye-in-the-Sky. In its original form it was more of a Spy-in-the-Sky – some anonymous member would post snippets and gossip of the days flying. I also know that other clubs regard Airmail as one of the best club magazines, and it's been mentioned in Skywings too.

I guess that editing the magazine can be a thankless task and is almost a job in itself. There is the constant need to encourage members to write articles and Bob always did a great job extracting articles out of our members and editing these into a presentable format. And then there were the cartoons. I have been told that for Airmail, and off his own back, Bob went on a cartoon/drawing course.

In our sport people like the competition pilots seem to get the majority of the glory. I can understand this, however, in my view it's people like Bob that really keep us flying and deserve more press. For the last few years Bob was trying to get someone to take over Airmail, but of course it's not easy to find a replacement for such a big task.

Bob, from all of the Mighty Wessex: well done and a big, big thank you for what you have achieved. Over the years you've done an incredible job.