



1997 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 6 December 1997 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:

Marc Asquith
Henry Blackshaw
Jim Bowyer
John Clarke
Jolyon Harrison
Chris Jones
Dick Long
Walter Neumark
Angus Pinkerton
Merv Turner
Mark Woodhams

97 Voting members
of the Association

In attendance:

Tom Beardsley
Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Clive Robinson
Joe Schofield
Dave Thompson
Ann Welch
Dave Wootton

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that although many members viewed the BHPA as some sort of separate entity, it was really nothing but a very big club made up of its members. He said that many members gave their free time to work for the BHPA in some voluntary capacity and in order to illustrate the point he asked all those who served on the many panels and committees of Association to stand up. The majority of those present then stood up.

The Chairman then said that the officers of the Association were just ordinary pilots and the BHPA was here to represent the interests of all its pilots. This was the message that he wished those attending the AGM to take away with them.

ITEM 1: MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the 1996 AGM, held on 8 December at Telford, were approved.

ITEM 2: TREASURER'S REPORT

Dick Long said he was pleased to report that the BHPA remained on a sound financial footing. However, he said it was going to get tighter, nothing was known about future Sports Council grant aid and he felt that this would probably not be forthcoming. Dick also said that this year we had changed auditors to Clear & Lane who would provide very good back up but would be cheaper than our previous auditors. Finally, Dick informed the meeting that this would be his last year as Treasurer and he intended to resign after the audit to the end of March 1998.

Bill Morris asked for confirmation that BHPA was only a limited company for the protection of officers and not a money making scheme for its Directors. Dick replied that it was a limited company for the protection of all its members, if it was not limited and there was a claim it could devolve on the members themselves. It is therefore essential for all members that BHPA is a limited company.

ITEM 3: RESOLUTIONS

3.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 1997 be approved.

The Accounts were presented to the meeting and the resolution was approved.

3.2 That four members be elected to the Executive Council from the following six candidates: J Bowyer, B Clark, J Clarke, T Denton, O W Neumark, H Pottinger.

The following candidates were elected:

J Bowyer, J Clarke, O W Neumark, H Pottinger.

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

The resolution was approved.

The Chairman said that the formal part of the meeting required by the Companies Act was now concluded and the meeting would now continue with reports from officers. Before proceeding however, he wished to pay tribute to Bernard Kane who died at the end of October. Bernard had worked selflessly for the sport for many years and was often referred to as the fourth member of the Technical Staff. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.

ITEM 4: REPORTS

4.1 Club Liaison

Chris Jones reported that he had found it difficult to get feedback from members so he had arranged for members of Exec to attend club meetings. A successful meeting had been held at the Mercian Club and others were planned for next year. Chris asked for anyone who had any other suggestions to contact him.

4.2 Competitions

Jim Bowyer said that most of what he wanted to say was contained in his written report but he did wish to congratulate John Pendry for winning the gold medal at the 1997 World Paragliding Championships and Hugh Miller and Kaz Harland who won gold medals at the World Air Games.

Jim thanked the chairmen of the three panels, Arthur Bentley, Trevor Birkbeck and Steve Senior, for the enormous amount of work that they put in and in particular John Aldridge who had worked very hard to put the Lottery Sports Fund application together. Unfortunately the application had been refused on the grounds that it was not internationally significant.

He then expressed his thanks to all the members who assisted at competitions and all the clubs who allowed their sites to be used for competitions.

John Lawrence asked about funding for the three panels and how it was allocated. Jim replied that each panel submitted a bid for the amount they required and the funds were apportioned on a pro rata basis.

Raphael Lytton said he had heard that speed gliding had been shown on prime time TV in Spain and asked if there were any plans for TV coverage in the UK. Jim informed him that each of the panels had their own PR Officer. They always tried to get the media interested but unfortunately the media were generally only interested in international events.

4.3 Sites

John Clarke had produced a written report but said he would be happy to answer any questions. One suggestion he did want to make was that clubs should consider buying or even leasing their sites. He said he was not recommending that they buy a whole mountain but take off or landing sites. This would protect them from any problems should the ownership of the land change. John said he would produce an information leaflet on this and it would be available from the office shortly.

Chris Strong asked what was happening in regard to a National Centre. Jolyon Harrison replied that he had been tasked with looking for a site suitable for a National Centre and he had looked at several. The problem was that when sites did come up for sale they were usually purchased for building land. He was looking at a site at the moment which the local council would like to be used for sport and therefore Exec would be discussing this at their next meeting. Marc Asquith also said that he was having discussions with the BPA re a joint National Centre.

4.4 Events

Merv Turner reported on the progress of the 1998 All Out. He said that it would almost certainly be held at Wroughton and he hoped that this would be a permanent site for the event until BHPA had a National Centre. In order to secure the site, and avoid possible cancellations as in 1997, BHPA would now have to sign commercial contracts and pay commercial rates etc.

In regard to the Trade Fair, Merv said comments from members would be welcomed. He would like to involve all air sports and have a show that would appeal to everyone who had an interest in flying. This would probably be held at the NEC. However, some members may not wish to have a bigger show and Merv said he would like to hear other peoples views on this.

4.6 External Representation

Walter Neumark said if anyone had any questions concerning AFNOR, CIVL, CEN, etc. he would be please to answer them after the meeting.

4.7 Public Relations

Dave Wootton thanked everyone who had taken the trouble to email the BBC re not including John Pendry in the Sportsman of the Year programme. Dave said the BBC would definitely be showing a programme on John Pendry in the spring. Dave also reported that Darren Arkwright would appear on the BBC's "They Think It's All Over" on 18 December. There was now some hang gliding and paragliding material starting to be shown on the TV and Dave appealed to anyone who had media contacts to get in touch with him.

Michel Carnet congratulated Dave and said that he could not remember the BHPA ever having such a good PR Officer. Loud applause from the floor followed.

4.8 FSC

Angus Pinkerton started by saying how incredibly sad he had been at the death of Bernard Kane and how Bernard's contribution to the sport could not be exaggerated by anyone. He said Bernard had had three lives, his family, the army and paragliding and he had put as much into each of those three lives as most people manage to put into one. He will be greatly missed.

Angus then gave a lengthy report on what the FSC and it's Panels had been doing over the past year. This included the excellent news that there had been no fatalities during the year, which meant that there had been only one in just over two year.

There had been some changes in Panel Leaders. Andy Cowley had taken over the Examiners Panel following the death of Bernard Kane. Ian Currer had taken over Airworthiness from Dave Sollom who had resigned after many years as a voluntary officer for BAPC, BHGA and BHPA. Dean Crosby had taken over the Pilot Training Panel from Ian Currer.

John Lawrence welcomed the publication of the Instructor & Coach Newsletter and asked if it was possible for Instructors to be sent a copy of Training Wings. Angus thought that this was already done but Tom Beardsley said it was only new TIs who received it when they registered. Angus agreed that the next issue should go out to all instructors.

Kathleen Rigg complained about the £50 cost of registering an uncertified hang gliders and heated debate on this point followed. John Aldridge said that whilst the Competitions Committee agreed that an airworthiness scheme was necessary, they could not agree with the high registration fees being charged. Tom Hardie pointed out that when the BMAA had set up their own certification scheme and several people were killed, the CAA had stepped in straight away. We did not want this to happen in BHPA. As this discussion looked as if it would go on for some considerable time it was agreed that a separate meeting should be arranged.

Steve Young had a query regarding the FSC parachute packing courses and asked if the members of his club who already helped fellow pilots to repack their parachutes were required to go on a BHPA course. Angus said that it was perfectly alright for them to carry on as they were since they were not offering to repack, merely helping others to follow the manufacturers guide lines in repacking their own parachute.

4.9 Henry Blackshaw

Henry informed the meeting that he had now been on the Exec for a year and had been investigating the reported decline in hang gliding.

He asked for any ideas from members and wondered whether using static tethers on a windy day was of any real benefit to the student or was it just a way of ensuring that the schools got their money. Graham Phipps felt that using static tethers was very useful as it allowed the students to get used to the harness etc. He said at his school if the weather was windy each student would get at least three goes on static tethers. Harriett Pottinger said that if she had got thirty minutes on her first day, even on static tethers, she would have considered it very worthwhile.

Henry said there was a problem in that although there were hang gliding students going through the schools, very few of them were actually achieving Club Pilot. Michel Carnet replied that his school did not make any money from training, their profit came from selling equipment. As hang gliders were around for years and usually bought second hand, the schools did not make any money. Paragliding was much more profitable. He went on to say that although he received many enquiries for hang gliding, the enquirers were really only interested in getting into the air and usually changed to paragliding either before or shortly after they started a hang gliding course.

Trevor Birkbeck felt that there should be some financial assistance for the training of hang gliding.

Steve Young suggested that all new members should be directed to their local club. They could attend club meetings and make new friends which would hopefully keep their interest over the winter when they were unable to train.

Bill Morris said hang gliding was in crisis and it was no use keep going over old methods, a completely fresh look was needed. He had started to hang glide and enjoyed it but had given it up because it was too difficult to learn. He was reluctant to use up his spare time learning to hang glide when he could be flying a paraglider.

John Aldridge believed that students got frustrated because of the lack of progress early on. If they could go to a warmer climate and train, with BHPA approval, they would be more likely to stay in the sport. Angus Pinkerton said that this facility was available but there were very strict rules and all details were required before a school could be given a dispensation.

Harriett Pottinger said a combination of clubs and schools was needed. Schools have to do the training but student should be encouraged to join clubs as well so that they can see others flying and have an incentive to carry on.

Before the meeting closed Paul Dancey and Roger Bassil made an appeal to members for contributions towards the fund to purchase the Blorange. They explained that this was an important site nationally, not just to South East Wales, and must not be allowed to slip through our fingers.