



# 1999 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 4 December 1999 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  
Paul Dancey  
Jolyon Harrison  
Chris Jones  
Dick Long  
Walter Neumark  
Angus Pinkerton  
Harriet Pottinger  
Merv Turner

97 Voting members  
of the Association

**In attendance:**

David Barber  
Jennie Burdett  
Mark Dale  
Joe Schofield  
Dave Thompson  
Ann Welch  
David Wootton  
John Aldridge

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

The Chairman, Marc Asquith, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that as usual the company business, which was the formal acceptance of the accounts etc., would be conducted first. Then there would be the award of trophies followed by officers' reports and questions from the floor.

As a matter of interest Marc informed the meeting that, barring two days, it was exactly twenty-five years since the amalgamation of the British Kite Soaring Association and the BHGA. Since then the BHGA, and following a second amalgamation the BHPA, has worked as a unified body and what this shows is that if we work together we get far more done than if we go off into our own corners and work alone.

Marc then went on to say that this would be his last AGM as Chairman. He had been Chairman for five years and now felt it time to make way for someone else. He wished his successor the greatest of success. The Chairman is a conduit for the members to speak to Exec. and it is important for him to have a calm and patient manner. After five years Marc felt that he was not a patient as he should be. However, he would be continuing as Insurance Officer on Exec. if he was re-elected.

## ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

### 2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 1999 be approved.

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

### 2.2 That four members be elected to the Executive Council from the following six candidates: J. Aldridge, M. Asquith, B. Clark, J. Harrison, B. Janaway, A. Pinkerton.

The Chairman invited the meeting to appoint Bill Morris and Trevor Birkbeck to count the votes and the following candidates were elected:

J. Aldridge, M. Asquith, B. Janaway and A. Pinkerton.

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

The resolution was approved.

The Chairman said that this concluded the formal business of BHPA Limited as required by the Companies Act.

## ITEM 3: PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

BHPA President, Ann Welch, addressed the meeting and began by saying that she was becoming somewhat confused about hang gliding. When it started hang gliding had been affordable and gave many people the pleasure of flight. Following the great take over of paragliding, hang gliding seems to have been hijacked by the media. We must ensure that the wonderful soaring aspect of hang gliding is not missed out. Gliding had had a similar problem, by aiming for the top all the time newcomers to the sport wondered whether there was any place for ordinary pilots.

Ann then went on to talk about the articles in Skywings which she had been asked to judge for the Wings Over A Cloud Award. Ann said that up until now she had not included articles on powered paragliding/hang gliding on her list of possible winners. However, next year she felt she would have to as they were amongst the most interesting and readable articles in the magazine. The winner of the Wings Over A Cloud Award for the best article in Skywings was Steve Young for The Italian Secret.

Ann reminded everyone that it was their articles in Skywings which got newcomers interested and hooked on flying.

The presentation of hang gliding and paragliding trophies and awards then took place, including the President's Trophy for the longest flight this year, which was won by Nick Pain with a flight of 258 miles.

The Chairman thanked David Wootton and Phil Chettleburgh for taking charge of the awards for the last two years, and Ann Welch who had been our President since the BHGA was formed.

All those people who had responded to Harriet Pottinger's recent questionnaire had been put into a prize draw for the first copy of the new Pilot Handbook. Ann drew out the name of the winner who was Edward Farmer.

Harriet informed the meeting that three BHPA members would be receiving Royal Aero Club awards this year. Tom Beardsley and Marc Asquith would both get Bronze Medals and David Wootton would receive the Nexus Trophy.

Harriet then went on to thank Marc for his Chairmanship of the Association over the last five years. She referred to his first Chairman's letter in Skywings in which he confessed to suffering from "Foot in mouth syndrome" and then read out anecdotes from some of Marc's colleagues. Marc had worked extremely hard on behalf of the sport, above and beyond the call of duty, he had even spent time working in the office.

Flowers were then presented to Marc's partner Susan as a token of appreciation and Marc was presented with an old biscuit tin (in which to keep his Barrister's wig) and some whisky and Edinburgh Crystal glasses.

## ITEM 4: REPORTS

### 4.1 Treasurer

The Chairman said that although during the first part of the meeting Jolyon Harrison had not been re-elected on to the Exec. as he had been Treasurer for the last two years he would give the Treasurer's report. Marc thanked Jolyon for his work over the last two years.

Jolyon started his report by saying that this was a report of financial bad management, intrigue and back stabbing. He said that a year ago he had made known his concerns in respect of the financial position of the Association and said that it was essential for subscriptions to be increased. This was agreed and at the Exec. meeting following the AGM it was agreed that subscriptions should be increased from January 1999. Jolyon explained that this instruction was then countermanded without reference to him as Treasurer. He was deeply concerned at what was happening to the Association and had gone over the figures for the last few years to find out what the situation was.

Jolyon had produced OHPs to show the members exactly what was being spent where. He said that the BHPA was essentially an administration organisation and could not prevent costs increasing. If we did not increase our income then we would continue to make a loss. The loss for the last six months is £60,000 and the loss for the year will probably be £80,000. Had we increased the subscriptions by a modest amount year on year we would have had reserves over and above the amount now required for the insurance premium. We were, however, running at a loss and could not absorb the increased insurance costs.

Jolyon then referred to the Financial Report in Skywings. He had submitted his report to the Editor several weeks ago and it was therefore a considerable surprise to him when he read the report in Skywings, as it was not his. His report had been withdrawn by other Exec. Members and the Editor had been told to say nothing. The plan was that Skywings would be held back at the printers and not arrive on members' doorsteps until after the AGM. However, there had been a mistake and Skywings had gone out before the AGM. Jolyon was asked to name names and he said it had been Dick Long and Marc Asquith.

Barry Clark asked how much we had lost on Skywings during the year and Jolyon replied that Skywings cost approximately £90,000 per year. Unfortunately in order to keep the subsidy at this level it has meant that Skywings has got thinner.

Steve Uzochukwu asked whether the drop in income related to the drop in Sports Council grant. Jolyon said that the grant was dropping by much less than our increased deficit.

Damon Robinson asked whether there were any actions which Exec could have taken which would have prevented this problem. Jolyon referred to his figures and said that there was no one area of expenditure that could have been cut, no area of the Association was responsible for vastly overspending.

Steve Uzochukwu said Jolyon had used the word "incompetence" and asked him what he meant by that. Jolyon said he meant specifically no increase in membership fees. The refusal of the Exec to increase fees was, in his opinion, incompetence.

Benet Allen said that raising fees is not always the answer. If we lowered fees this could bring in more members. Jolyon replied that we lose one third of our members every year and replace one third each year. Losing some members due to an increase would not be a financial disaster.

Edmund Potter said he had been pleased when subscriptions had gone down but would have preferred them to have been kept up if this was what was needed. He asked if there had been any market research to prove that membership fees should be kept down, as the Exec said. Jolyon replied that there had not been any market research to his knowledge, it had just come down to a battle of wills.

Andrew Wakelin referred to the Balance Sheet which showed that the Association has £360,000. He said that had fees increased by 4% over three years, as Jolyon had suggested, there would be an extra £400,000 in the bank on top of the £360,000. He asked if Jolyon was really suggesting that members should put their hands into their pockets to put money into the coffers of the Association. Jolyon said that any excess funds could be used to purchase sites but Andrew pointed out

that if that was what had been agreed by the membership then it was fine, but the Exec could not just do it without consultation. The Association should not be aiming to build huge reserves.

Angie Weir asked if Jolyon had done any comparisons with other countries such as the USA where fees are considerably cheaper. Steve Uzochukwu said the situation was completely different in the USA and it was not possible to make comparisons.

The Chairman was then going to bring the Treasurers Report to a close but the meeting felt that a response from himself and Dick Long should be made to Jolyon's allegations. The Chairman's response was that he was reluctant to engage in tit for tat mud slinging but it the meeting wanted he would reply.

In regard to subscriptions not being increased after the AGM last year, he explained that in a short Exec meeting after the AGM, when Exec Members had not really had time to consider the implications, it had been agreed to increase subscriptions from January 1999. However, it was subsequently realised that they had only agreed on the Full Annual fee and all the other categories of membership also had to be considered. Membership fees could not be increased at different times without incurring significant costs and therefore F&GP delayed the increase until April when everything had been agreed.

In respect of Jolyon's Financial Report being pulled out of Skywings, at the last Exec meeting Jolyon had proposed new membership fees which not one member of the Exec had agreed with. It was realised that Jolyon's report in Skywings reflected these fees and that it was undesirable for this to go to 8,000 members, the majority of whom would not be at the AGM. Jolyon's original report is included in the AGM folder in order to allow discussion at the AGM but had not been sent to the 8,000 who could not participate in the AGM discussions.

Dick Long said that the Association had very substantial reserves and there must come a point when we stop building a war chest that we have no particular plans for. We should keep the subscriptions to the minimum required to run the Association properly. He also said that what we must have is a budget so that we could keep an eye on how things were going. No budget had been produced for the Association during the last two years and to use Jolyon's words, this was incompetence.

Robin Brown asked whether the Exec planned to use the substantial war chest to pay the insurance premium if there was a majority decision not to put fees up. Dick replied that the war chest was only the equivalent of one years insurance premium. Dick went on to say that he had a financial model for the Association which was used very successfully for our budgets and negotiations with Customs & Excise etc. On paper we lost £58,000 in the first six months of this year but £38,000 of that was a technical calculation for fees in advance. The fees in advance was based on £62 from April but in fact some members had paid £59 so the fees in advance were higher than they should have been. The true position was nothing like as bad as was reported by Jolyon. He said he had all the accounts and a computer model and would be pleased to speak to anyone who wanted to see this or had any questions.

Steve Uzochukwu said the decision was either the membership mandate the Exec to increase subscriptions by small amounts every year or we stay as we are. Marc pointed out that we had not needed to increase subscriptions in previous years because he had negotiated a lower insurance premium. Dick made the point that the £3 increase in fees in April was the increase agreed at the 1998 AGM. We had not had a rise in membership fees for a number of years and felt that it was right to increase the fees. The increase which will come into effect in January 2000 is mainly to do with insurance.

John Klunder suggested that instead of spending more time going over what had already happened we should be considering what is going to happen in the next year.

Brian Hindle did not believe that increasing subscriptions would stop people joining the BHPA, in fact he said he was amazed that subscriptions had not gone up. He was also amazed that anyone could believe that the insurers would continue to reduce our premium.

Dick replied that even if subscriptions had been increased we would not have had enough to pay the insurance premium. He believed we should control costs and then fix our income to match, he wanted to see costs controlled not cut.

Edmund Potter asked whether the BHPA had enough in its reserves and Dick said that we had £300,000 which he felt was about right.

Benet Allen felt concerned that the pulling of Jolyon's report from Skywings was underhand and asked if Jolyon was given the right to reply. Jolyon said that he was never contacted at any time to say that his report did not reflect what had been agreed by the Exec and he was not told afterwards. He only found out when he received his copy of Skywings. He said that the Chairman's opening address in which he had said we all need to work together, smacked of hypocrisy.

Marc said that Jolyon's report had been late and at the last minute Joe Schofield had had to chase him for it.

Michel Carnet said it appeared to him that Marc Asquith and Dick long had both been on the Exec for many years and in effect they controlled the Board. In response Marc said that this was definitely not the case, all members of the Board were involved. All the other members of the Board who were present then stood to signify their agreement.

Marc then proposed that this discussion should be closed and the meeting agreed.

## **ITEM 4: REPORTS**

### **4.2 Skywings**

Paul Dancey thanked Mark Woodhams for leaving Skywings in good shape and for producing a structure to keep it on track.

Paul had produced a written report which he went through briefly for the membership. He was asked why Skywings was subsidised at a cost of £90,000 and what could be done to resolve this. It was explained that this subsidy was simply the members' subscriptions to Skywings. Skywings is funded by a combination of membership subscriptions and advertising revenue. We were trying to get more advertising in and magazine subscriptions were being promoted on the web through Brown Bear.

Marc Asquith mentioned that Sports in the Sky had folded after a couple of years. It had tried to put a magazine on the news stands but it was a very small market. Joe Schofield felt that there was some misunderstanding in regard to Skywings and it was very good value.

Steve Auld queried whether it was really necessary to print the list of Exec Members, Club Contacts etc. every month. Paul said that this was actually being looked at and not everything would be printed every month. This would be kept under constant review.

Derek Godfrey wondered whether we really needed a glossy magazine, as it was not on the news stands. Marc replied that Skywings was an important part of our image of professionalism which we needed to have when dealing with outside bodies.

Andy Shaw asked whether the future for Skywings was on the internet. The printed copy would no longer exist and we would save thousands of pounds in printing costs. Paul said this technology was being taken on board and there may come a day when Skywings is published on the web.

Several members felt that Skywings did not contain enough information and would prefer a magazine with less gloss and more content. It was suggested that a section of the magazine could be on cheaper paper. However Paul said that this would not achieve the desired result.

Michel Carnet noted that although the web is our window to the world, no improvements had been made to our site since the last AGM. Members had been asking for hyper links etc. but none had been done. Brett Janaway informed the meeting that within the next four to six weeks the site would be completely updated. He had just taken over the site and he was already working on improvements. Paul said that both he and Brett were very committed to the web site.

Stuart Cathcart asked whether there was any point in producing Skywings during the winter months. Paul replied very definitely yes. It is the one thing that binds us together and when the weather is bad and there is no flying it would be terrible not to have a magazine to find out what was going on with other members in other parts of the country.

Trevor Birkbeck said Joe and the Skywings team were doing a really good job and should be congratulated.

### **4.3 Club Liaison**

Chris Jones informed the meeting that the Sites Guide was now on the web and despite reservations it had not resulted in over crowded sites. Chris asked all clubs to keep their information up to date and any club which was not on the site should contact Benet Allen.

Chris did not re-stand for election to the Exec and Marc thanked him for all his hard work at one of the worst jobs on the Exec.

### **4.4 Insurance**

Marc Asquith explained that we had had a fairly spectacular rise in claims. The insurers had therefore re-valued the insurance which had resulted in a huge rise in premiums. Our broker had expected the premium to be remain the same (around £200,000) but in fact the insurers wanted £500,000 with no rolling policy and a cap of £100,000 on personal injury.

We had three or four underwriters willing to quote and the only one that was reasonable was Colonia Baltica at £350,000. They said they would insure just the members, not schools, for £150,000 so we took that immediately and then went to the Trainers Conference with the information. Unfortunately, although schools have less accidents than members, it is at schools where people can make a claim as they actually have someone they can sue. Marc then showed the meeting various graphs and charts showing the claims relating to each discipline of the sport. The message which had come out of the Trainers Conference was that we should place the block policy.

Having decided to place the insurance we then had to decide how to raise the money to pay the premium. Marc said Exec were very wary of putting up fees as this could result in a drop in membership which would mean we did not reach the minimum premium for the insurers. If we did not reach the minimum premium this would have to be paid for out of our reserves. It was felt that the new membership fee would not result in people leaving in droves.

Schools would have to pay an Instructional Insurance Capitation Fee for each member they signed up, whether they were Introductory, Training or Annual members. Also, Instructors and Paraglider Dual Pilots would have to pay a supplement. Marc believed that the IICF was a good system because it would mean that small schools paid less than the big schools.

Marc was asked whether the Block Payment for schools would still operate but he said that he believed that it would be financially unviable.

Andy Houston believed that these new fees would result in smaller clubs closing down. His own club had eight members and he said they would have to close because they would not be able to afford the £550 club fee plus instructor supplements.

Alan Phipps asked if this scheme could be looked at again to make those clubs that contribute nothing to the BHPA, i.e. never do any training beyond EP, pay more. Marc replied that those schools that did taster days would be paying more through their IICF whereas those schools that did real training would only take the IICF hit once.

The dual pilot supplement was discussed. Marc said that there was no claims history for dual hang gliding and dual parascending so there would be no supplement for these categories. The Underwriter had not wanted to insure dual paragliding at all but accepted that the supplement should help to ensure that dual pilots were committed and current.

Bill Morris asked if it was correct that people taken up on a dual flight did not contribute in any way to the sport. Marc agreed but said in the real world pilots would not get members of their own family to sign up as members so that they could have a dual flight. Bill thought that this was wrong and that everyone should contribute. He pointed out that if a pilot had an accident whilst flying a member of his family, the only option would be for that family member to sue the pilot. Bill also said that three large dual claims had brought the insurance problem to a head and he wanted to know what was going to happen to raise standards.

Andy Shaw asked whether the BHPA would get involved if pilots continued to fly dual but without paying the supplement. Marc replied that they would be flying outside the BHPA rules and therefore not covered by our insurance.

Angus Pinkerton told members that our new insurers had taken over the British Parachute Association insurance when they were almost uninsurable. The insurers had made the BPA introduce some radical mechanisms and had also wanted to

exclude dual parachuting as there was a higher risk of a claim.

Steve Uzochukwu asked whether it would be possible to make monthly payments by Direct Debit but Marc explained that as we have to pay the premium up front we would lose money if the Direct Debit bounced or was cancelled before the full amount had been paid. However, Exec did like the DD method of payment and would like to develop it further by offering incentives.

Barry Clark pointed out that he believed the IICF would completely kill one flight schools such as overwater parascending operations.

Brett Janaway asked if there could be a one flight membership. Marc replied that when we had had a one flight Introductory Membership some schools had abused the scheme and had been using the one flight option for a whole days training. Since getting rid of the First Flight membership we had stopped the misuse of the scheme and generated a further £10,000 in insurance premium.

Marc then went on to speak about the "reverse no claims bonus" for schools. This meant that if they had a claim in the system then they would pay a penalty of £500 per claim. He stressed that 75% of the schools would not be affected by this at all. The penalty would be paid each time the school renewed until it was no longer on the list. Therefore large claims that take years to settle will penalise unsafe schools as they will be paying the penalty for years. Small claims would be settled quickly and fall off the history.

Steve Uzochukwu asked if the penalty fee would be refunded when a claim did not succeed. Marc said that a claim would still have to be fought and therefore there it would be unlikely that there would be a refund.

The schools requested time to consider the new membership fees and possibly come up with alternative proposals. It was agreed that any proposals would be considered but they would have to be in within one week in order for increases to be implemented in January.

#### **4.5 Flying & Safety Committee**

Angus Pinkerton reported that Tom Beardsley had now left the Association, a little earlier than his official retirement date. He said that Tom would be a tremendous act to follow, his assistance has been enormously valuable. Tom had not completely gone, however, as we would be hanging on to him in a voluntary capacity. Angus wished Tom well in his retirement.

The full FSC written report was in the AGM folders and Angus briefly summarised the contents for the meeting.

The Trainers Conference had gone very well and next year Michel Carnet will be on the organising committee as he had been the most critical. The test rig is now working and we had done some testing of microlights. Steve Uzochukwu has been appointed head of the Airworthiness Panel and will be working hard to introduce the international standard for hang gliders. After 1st January, 2000 hang gliders, paragliders and parascending canopies will have the same certification process. As far as hang gliding is concerned this means that certification from other countries will be accepted. The grandfather and development pilot schemes will be the same for all disciplines.

Angus then reported on the work of the various panels of the FSC. He mentioned that Les Smallwood had resigned from the FSC after many years and we needed someone to take over the Airspace Panel. Angus thanked all FSC panel members and said that some panels were almost invisible, like the Airspace Panel, but they all work very hard and we are very grateful to them.

Arthur Bentley asked whether it would be possible to allow inexperienced pilots to fly on a canopy that was not certified but was a jump 'chute. Angus replied that he would like to see it go through the certification process. We are not interested that this canopy has been around for years but that it has been used in our sport. He did not want to get into the position where any old canopy could be used for training activities.

Andy Shaw was concerned that canopies were being manufactured for parascending which were using different fabric and lines etc. Angus replied that we would require all clubs to register each individual aircraft rather than the type. Anything manufactured new, even if it is apparently identical, will have to be individually registered.

Andy then asked if we could have a rating for tow only as

it was completely different to hill flying. Angus said that as the Elementary Pilot was a school award they could make the questions on tow only if they wished. However, the Club Pilot was a BHPA rating and although some of it may not be relevant to your particular discipline it is worth knowing nonetheless. Angus was happy to include towing questions in the Club Pilot exam but did not want to have a separate exam as pilots may have to fly with other pilots from different disciplines or may wish to try another discipline themselves.

#### **4.6 Any Other Business**

There was no other business and the Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.