



1998 Annual General Meeting of the BHPA

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 5 December 1998 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
Paul Dancey
Jolyon Harrison
Chris Jones
Dick Long
Walter Neumark
Angus Pinkerton
Harriet Pottinger
Merv Turner
Mark Woodhams

115 Voting members
of the Association

In attendance:

Tom Beardsley
Phil Bibby
Jennie Burdett
Mark Dale
Joe Schofield
Dave Thompson
Ann Welch
David Wootton

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He referred to last year's AGM when he had asked everyone who worked for the BHPA in any kind of voluntary capacity to stand up. This had revealed that the majority of those present worked for the BHPA in some way and understood the importance of the Association. Marc went on to say that one of his concerns at the moment was that many members were not aware of this because they never attended the annual conference. It is important to put the message out to our members what the BHPA does for us all, working in the UK and internationally so that we can fly. We have officers continually working in all areas for our sport.

At the end of the meeting the election for new Executive members would be held. Mark Woodhams and Jim Bowyer are standing down after giving years of sterling service in their respective areas of Skywings and Competitions. On behalf of the membership the Chairman thanked Mark and Jim and wished them well in their retirement.

The Chairman also said that he had informed the Exec that this would be his last year as Chairman and he intended retiring from the post at the next AGM. The Exec would be appointing a Vice Chairman after this meeting.

ITEM 1: TREASURER'S REPORT

Jolyon Harrison said the financial outlook was not good and it was important that corrective action was taken as soon as possible, either by cutting services or increasing the membership subscription. He suggested an increase of £3 to bring the membership fee up to £62.

Jolyon was asked what he meant by 'cutting services' and gave Coach Courses and the Parachute Packing Scheme as examples.

ITEM 2: RESOLUTIONS

2.1 That the Accounts and Report of the Executive Council for the year ended 31 March 1998 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: B Allen, P Dancey, R Long, D Smyth, M Turner, S Varden.

The following candidates were elected:

P Dancey, R Long, M Turner, S Varden.

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 the formal part of the meeting required by the Companies Act was now concluded and the meeting would now continue with reports from officers.

ITEM 3: PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

BHPA President, Ann Welch, addressed the meeting and said that she was very pleased to see so many people there. Ann then spoke of the increasing difficulties faced by all airports. She said we were all failing to get our message across to the media and planners etc. All airports must continue to work hard to publicise their achievements.

Ann then thanked BHPA Chairman, Marc Asquith, for looking after the Association so well.

Presentations followed. Sheelagh Bailey, UK Delegate to the FAI Education Committee, presented a gold medal to Rochelle O'Neill for her winning entry in the Junior Category of the FAI Young Artist Contest 1998.

Ann presented the President's Trophy for the longest flight to Alan Barnes and the Wings Over A Cloud for the best article in Skywings was awarded to Bob Drury although he was not at the meeting to collect it. Ann then presented numerous other hang gliding and paragliding trophies.

ITEM 4: REPORTS

4.1 Flying & Safety Committee

Angus Pinkerton said that '98 had been a very bad year as far as accidents were concerned, there had been two hang gliding and four paragliding fatalities. Whilst these fatalities did not share any characteristics, Angus did stress that mid air collisions were far and away the most common cause of hang gliding fatalities. These were happening on relatively quiet ridges and were preventable.

Two paragliding accidents were abroad and Angus asked members to remember that sunshine was not the only difference with weather abroad, there were more turbulent conditions and canopies may fly completely differently from the way they flew at home.

The technical team now had two new members, Tony Mitchell and Phil Bibby. Tony was working in the office as Technical Administrator and Phil was an Assistant Technical Officer and would increase our ability to conduct school inspections.

Michel Carnet asked what progress was being made in regard to the harmonisation of hang gliding and paragliding standards. Angus replied that where other countries were involved things did not happen quickly. However, a working group had been set up earlier this year and progress was being made. The working group intended that canopies currently certified as DHV 3 would not be certified at all as they were too dangerous. Angus expected the new scheme based on the CEN standard to be finalised by the middle of next year and in use by the testing bodies before the Millennium.

4.2 Skywings

Mark Woodhams reported that the Skywings Committee had had a very busy year during which time the magazine had been redesigned. One of the reasons for this was that when we had tried to get Skywings on the news stands it had not been acceptable. The new style had received a mixed reception but the Skywings team had taken on board most of the criticisms. On line subscriptions were now available on the web site and this was working very well. Mark said he was very proud of the team, who were all BHPA members and pilots.

Mark said he was being succeeded by Paul Dancey, who was also a pilot, and he hoped that Paul would receive the support of the membership.

4.3 Competitions

Jim Bowyer had produced a written report and asked if any members had questions. Michel Carnet asked if the Paragliding Competitions Panel has any responsibility to limit canopies flown in competitions to only safe canopies. Jim said that this would be discussed by the panel and they would appreciate any input. Harriet Pottinger said that Robbie Whittall's initiative was supported by the BHPA Executive Council.

4.4 Public Relations

Marc Asquith pointed out that David Wootton was a paid sub-contractor, unlike other officers who were voluntary.

David mentioned some of the items on his written report and in particular noted that stand space at events held at such venues as Olympia was very, very expensive. He was therefore pleased to tell everyone that he had persuaded the organisers of the Daily Telegraph Travel and Sports Show to actually pay us to have a stand. Any schools willing to volunteer to man the stand were asked to contact David.

4.5 Sites

John Clarke said if any club was interested in purchasing a piece of land or taking on a long lease, they should contact him as there was money available. John then informed members that he had negotiated an agreement with the National Trust which should considerably help our access to Trust land.

4.6 Communications

By blindfolding a member of the meeting, Harriet Pottinger demonstrated how difficult it was for him to find his way back to his seat. And, given some guidance from other members how easy it became. The analogy being that if schools would introduce members to clubs when they had completed their EP they would get on much better and hopefully stay in the sport.

A point was made from the floor that many members believed that if they assisted another pilot and something went wrong, they could be sued and lose everything they possess. Marc Asquith replied that BHPA would not allow members to be left without cover, provided that they were acting in good faith and in a sensible and reasonable fashion.

4.7 Insurance

Marc Asquith said the main thing to mention was that one element of the premium had gone up by £30,000 which was as a result of a bad year in 1996. He had produced a written report and asked if there were any questions.

Phil Chettleburgh expressed his concern that he was open to litigation when launching someone. Marc Asquith replied that if he was acting within the rules then the insurance would always cover you. If you were only just outside of the rules, then we would still seek to ensure that you were covered. However, if you were absolutely outside the rules then the insurers may decline to respond.

Andy Cowley asked how the insurance was looking for 97/98 in terms of claims. Marc replied that it looked pretty good at the moment but pointed out that personal injury claimants have three years in which to claim so we could get a big claim in later.

Benet Allen asked how much had been paid out over the years and Marc informed him that insurers had received £593,000 from us over three years. They had paid out £748,000. There was concern that this indicated a substantial increase in insurance premiums but Marc said he believed that the situation was under control. Tom Beardsley said we had tightened up on

the insurance procedure and had also persuaded the loss adjuster to challenge the claims more.

David Smyth asked if it would be possible to publish more information on the insurance, what claims are pending and how much has been paid out etc. Marc said he was extremely reluctant to put our claims history in the public domain as it would not be long before some of our members went to the insurance market. We have told our insurers that we wish to stay with them and build up a claims history, they would become very nervous if we have others out there broking the market.

Derek Sadler said that the insurers did not act as Marc Asquith had said. They would only cover you if you were negligent. For the benefit of the meeting Marc Asquith gave background information on Derek's claim which involved damage to a hang glider. The loss adjusters had taken the view that there was no negligence involved and the pilot was just unlucky.

Bertie Kennedy was concerned that it was apparent that schools produced the majority of claims yet no information was available on how schools were being negligent. Marc replied that it was usually a matter of judgement and gave an example of a claim from 1994 to illustrate the point. Mark Dale said that on the Instructor Courses old incidents were used (disidentified) as examples to teach instructors.

Tom Hardie referred to Marc's report, which said that Annual Members were subsidising the schools, and asked whether it would be worth splitting the insurance so that members and schools were insured separately. Marc did not think that this was the answer as there had been terrible problems in BHGA when they had had several different insurances. He said that what BHPA has is the 'Rolls Royce' of policies but if the claims history continues the schools may find themselves having to find their own insurance.

Glen Stockton asked why the Training Conference was in London. It was expensive for people to get to and they had to take time off work (and lose pay) to attend. Angus Pinkerton replied that this had been considered and in future years it would be tacked on to the end of the AGM weekend i.e. on the Monday. There would be a discount off the school renewal fees for those attending.

4.8 Club Liaison

Chris Jones mentioned clubs which had already had meetings attended by members of the Exec and said that the Exec were open to invitations. These meetings helped to keep them in touch with grass roots and find out what the members wanted.

Trevor Birkbeck, Dales, said that they had been very pleased to welcome the Exec to their club meeting.

4.9 AOB

Henry Blackshaw said there was now a letter going out in response to enquiries from the public advising them to contact their local club. The working group had considered various ways to try to get students to stay in hang gliding and had decided that getting potential hang glider pilots to make contact with clubs first was the way forward. Hopefully they would meet a group of people who were friendly and enthusiastic and would participate in the social activities of the club even though they were not yet flying. The club would put them in touch with a local school and they they would actually learn to hang glide rather than being redirected into paragliding because it was financially more profitable for the schools.