GLIDEPATH

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From the Editor

It has been good to get back out on the flying filed again and see lots of happy faces out there. As Martin reports below the first e-soaring competition will (weather permitting) take place on May 16th. Also I am planning to hold the Limbo event on June 13th; hopefully I will manage it this year because in 2020 I had to give up as all three of my attempts to do were called off due to the weather.

From the Chair

Hi all, hope you are all keeping well, I have seen quite a lot of flying activity this month one way or another. I was able to organise a couple of fly-ins at Chalbury when the weather allowed, thanks to all who came along.

Dalton's Slope

I explored this flying site along the track from Horses/Barbara's. It flew well in a NNW wind with quite a good landing area; very similar to the Win Green front slope. This hopefully should give us an alternative to OXO/Swallowcliffe while alterations are underway. It is pretty easy to park about 4/5 cars off to the side of the track and access is over a couple of stiles. The track up the hill is still in excellent condition.

E Soaring 1

Well it is that time again, dust them off, charge them up, and hopefully if the weather plays ball (I will advise via email by Sat 6pm) we can hold the first round on Sunday 16th May. It will be small planes in the morning big in the afternoon, same rules as usual, launch to 150m.

Picnic Site

Things are still under negotiation and nothing concrete has been sorted as yet. I will advise as and when I know more.

Slope Tour

Each year I have organised a "Slope Tour" mainly aimed at new members, however on quite a few occasions existing members have come along for the fun.

I propose to run it this year on Sunday 6th June. If you are interested in coming along please contact me via email at martinburr9@gmail.com. I plan to cover the usual sites plus, where available, Death Valley and Dalton's.

Slopeside by Pete Carpenter

A quick update regarding the Oxo/Swallowcliffe situation. I have spoken to Perin again and he said that there has not been much change. Apparently that area is going to be cultivated and needs to be drilled; I am not sure what that means in farming terms. Because of the lack of rain the ground is too hard to do anything with at the moment (t*hough of course this being a Bank holiday lots of rain is forecast for latter today , Ed*). However, he did say that he was fine with us flying there, but no vehicular access is allowed, so it is up to us if we want to risk parking on the track or in the lay-by and walking etc.

There is still no change with Stoney Down so for the time being we can continue there as we have done.The situation regarding the other slopes is shown below. Please use your own common sense and apply the countryside rules. Therefore if things look different at a site, particularly if it involves crops or livestock, please do not enter and contact me on pete.carpenter12@gmail.com or 01722 328728.

1) Winklebury (W to NE wind) - Available.
2) Norrington Down (S to SW wind) - Available.
3) Donkey Valley (SE wind) - Available.
4) Swallowcliffe (NW to NNE wind) - Not Available.
5) Quarry (W to WNW wind) - Available. Access to the slope must be via the Stony Down / Berwick St John route only. Launching and landing from the slope face is OK, but the slope is perfectly flyable from the Berwick St John field. You may encounter some paragliders as they also have permission from the farmer to fly there. In this case it is best to have a friendly chat with them and see if you can agree separate airspaces for models and paragliders.
6) Oxo (WNW to NW wind) - Not Available.
7) Horses/Barbara's Field (WNW to NW wind):- Available.
8) Daltons 1&2 (NW to NNW wind) - Available.
9) Crockerton (NW to NNW wind) - Available subject to rules in slope guide.
10) Death Valley (SW wind) - Available until early summer
11) Berwick St John (SW wind), Stony Down (ESE to SE wind) - Available. Code on gate padlock is 5823 . Please do not over fly the parked cars on your landing approach at Stony Down.
12) East Bowl (NEE to E wind) - Available. There is a gate with a keycode, which is 7850. The shepherd is Mr.Fletcher (red Toyota pick-up) and he has asked that anyone parking on the track put a little note on the dashboard of their car, letting him know that they are a WSA member.

There are also a number of public slope sites, particularly in the Purbecks that anybody can fly form. A list of these is maintained on Christchurch Club's website so please have a look there for details.

Flat Field Update

If you are the first to arrive at Chalbury go to the green box in the farm yard.

1.The field number is shown on the small plate on the box front . LEAVE THAT WHERE IT IS.
2. Remove the large red plate from inside the box and place it on the box front. It indicates the WSA are on site.
3. Also take the required equipment out of the box and to the flying field, i.e peg board, bungees etc.
4. If it is an event where you are expecting a large number of people take the corresponding field number out of the box and place it on the fence hook at the road entrance to the drive. There is no need to put the number on the hook if you are flying there alone or with just a few other people
5. The last to leave the site, ensure everything is replaced in the box, including the red plate and number on hook if used, but LEAVING THE FIELD NUMBER INDICATOR ON THE BOX FRONT.

Be aware of the field condition, e.g. after rain. Do NOT leave wheel spin marks. If in doubt, park off the lane outside the field. Leave space for farm traffic.
Be aware of footpaths across the fields, Do not launch if walkers are on the paths. Do not launch if horse riders are nearby.
No low flying over power lines. **No flying over farm buildings and the cottage, AT ANY HEIGHT, or immediately upwind of the farm complex.**
Fly SAFELY at all times. Especially launching and landing. Do not launch over cars and do not approach a landing over other flyers, fly a proper circuit.

Report any problems to the flat field rep, Doug Bowmann.

For Sale by Nigel Bennett

Optera 2m flying wing, complete with motor, folding pusher prop, ESC, servos and LiPo. All in carry box. Unmarked condition. Flat field or slope. Offers please.

Folding prop blades , all very cheap.

Auronaut. 10x5, 11x6, 11x8 12x6.5 14x8

Graupner cam 11x6, 14x8

Vitaprop 8x5

Contact:- nigelcbennett@gmail.com

Autonomous Gliders by Roger Crickmore

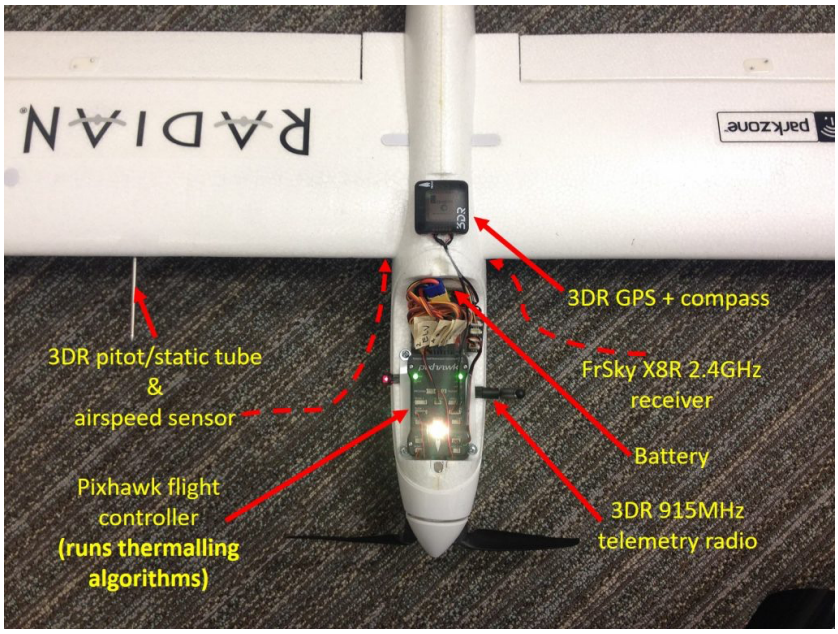
Longer term members of WSA may remember that back at our silver anniversary in 2004 I wrote an article guessing what developments would have occurred by the time of our golden anniversary. Back then it seemed a long way off, but it is now only 8 years away so I thought I would take a look at how close we are getting to some of my predictions.

In 2004 we were all still on 35 MHz and so you had to make sure you were using the correct channel to avoid interfering with a different model. I predicted that this would be replaced with some sort of coded transmission of the signal, that would effectively mean an infinite number of channels; a prediction that came true somewhat earlier than I had expected with the advent of 2.4GHz systems. Of course I still use an 35 MHz system, but as nobody else does channel clashes are not a problem.

On the other hand some of my more fanciful predictions still seem a long way off. For example I suggested advances in genetic engineering might enable you to biologically grow anything you wanted from a modified human stem cell, including a model glider! These creations would have the advantage that if they got damaged they would simply repair themselves as a living organism can do. Whilst there have been significant advances in this field and scientists are trying to use it to create spare body parts, I do not think we will see model gliders from this technique by 2029. I suspect the

closest we will have is the expanded use of 3-D printing to create models, which is similar in the sense that you install the correct bit of code and the model slowly grows before your eyes.

Another prediction was that we would see the development of autonomous gliders, which after the install climb would then seek out and exploit lift all by themselves. A number of organisations are developing such gliders for use as aerial platforms capable of flying for many hours at a time for such tasks as forest fire monitoring. One of the the leading programs seems to be the Microsoft Frigatebird project, which has taken a number of model gliders including a Radian Pro and F3J Shadow and modified them for autonomous flight. The onboard equipment varies slightly depending on the airframe type, but always includes a GPS, compass, telemetry radio, RC receiver, airspeed measurement and barometer; which as you can see makes for a tight fit inside the Radian Pro.



Collecting all this information is the easy bit, the tricky part is determining what actions the plane should taken in response to it. The models therefore also contain a flight controller that runs an artificial intelligence (AI) program to determine how best to find lift and then exploit any it does find, while following overall mission objectives such as staying in a particular area. These are decisions that that we humans make every time we fly, but it turns out that getting a computer to do them is not straight forward.

They are also looking at installing camera systems in some larger models to use visual clues, such as circling birds or certain cloud types to help determine the likely positions of lift. However the benefits of doing so has to be offset against the weight of the extra equipment and the processing power required to analyse the images. Similar models are being developed by other groups including NASA who reported that their model managed a 800m climb in a single thermal; something that would be very difficult for a human pilot to without losing sight of the model.

Whilst these autonomous sailplanes are being developed for practical purposes I can foresee in future you could start having competitions with models competing against each other. Many though would say, ‘where is the fun in that if all I do is launch the model and let it do its own thing ?’. Some though would see the challenge in developing the systems in the first place so perhaps we will end up like the situation we have in the World Chess Championships where we have one event for humans and another for the computers. I wonder whether like in Chess we will soon get to the stage where the best automated gliders can beat the best humans every time.

Calendar

Sun 16th May E soaring round 1
Sun 13th June Limbo Event
Sun 20th June E soaring round 2
Sun 18th July E soaring round 3
Sun 15th Aug E soaring round 4
Sun 19th Sept E soaring round 5
Sun 17th Oct Multitask
(Each following Sunday will be the fallback date for the e-soaring events)

Contacts

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