



Scottish Airsports Club

Latest News

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Forthcoming Events

Celtic Cup trip to Iceland 19th - 26th June

This year the annual Celtic Cup (an informal hang gliding competition) is being held in Iceland and several of us are planning to go. Let Andy know a.s.a.p. if you're interested. £200 for return flights including free carriage of hang gliders (nicely negotiated by Andy!)

Website Updates

I've made a few minor updates to the site, including a couple of flying holiday links. As ever, any comments, suggestions or material for the website are very much appreciated.

Dead Dogs & Dysentery: Highlights of Guatemala by Bob Dunthorn

(stolen from the Doric Dangler - the Aberdeen Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club Newsletter)

We (Ian, Ross and Bob) arrive at Miami, in transit to Guatemala and are subjected to the US immigration system. There are two queues, one for US citizens which takes 10 minutes and another for other life forms which takes over two hours. Question: what is the purpose of your visit to Guatemala? As if this was anything to do with the good ol' US of A, which we're not even visiting, just waiting in line. Then it's immediately into another queue for an hour to leave the US.

We arrive at Guatemala City International, which is about the same size as ABZ, and collect all the bags. Except Ian's harness which is still at Heathrow. It's been a long day and we are in need of sleep, so meet up with Geoff and Henry at our hotel. Barking dogs and clucking chickens set the trend for sleep deprivation, but this is a third world country where things are different and I adjust my expectations.

Next morning our tour guide Mario is ready to transport us to Panajachel, our first destination, in a clapped-out minibus and a slightly dodgy Volvo (but no Sandy peering over the wheel). We collect gliders on the way and get to the site. This first day's flying is eventful, starting with rigging the gliders on the road. Most unusually I am ready to launch before the others. There is a small concrete ramp in a gap in the crash barrier. Mario has supplied the gliders and I have a 12.5 Seedwings Merlin which feels funny in the pitch. I can't get the nose up and fall over on the ramp with the nose down.



Geoff and Ross go, seemingly OK, but Henry has the same problem as me so de-rigs. Ian is still waiting for his harness so just acts as cameraman. Henry and I discuss the problem and conclude that the ramp does not take the air flow due to being at a different angle than the contour of the hill. A case of the wind "really" pushing down on the hill. Well, it's as good an excuse as we could come up with.

The following week saw indifferent flying due to light winds and cloudy skies. Geoff flew everyday whereas Ken and myself didn't fly at all. Several launch sites all had landings at Panajachel, which was a small raised beach next to Lake Atitlan, with an approach over the water. Everybody made it in some shape or form. There was an extensive briefing from Mario on how to survive for up to an hour after a water landing – a possibility that doesn't even bear thinking about. Henry did however manage to hit a retaining wall, rather damaging the glider in the process. He is now claiming he was distracted by the sun reflecting off Geoff's head.

My enthusiasm for flying was severely curtailed by sitting on the bog for hours at a time. We were all affected by Montezuma's Revenge, some worse than others. We all scrounged anti-shite pills from Mario but they didn't help much. Eventually he came up with some blue pills which he said would block you up for a month at least. If only that were true.

A few days later we were back in the van for another road trip to Quetzaltenango and to experience more culture as well as flying. The hotel had armed guards, very loud dogs and the dumbest waiting staff on the planet. I put it all down to experience and continued to lose weight through my bottom. I went everywhere with my blue bag which had spare grundies, bog roll and hang loops, which the others put to good use.

Next stop is Antigua, a popular resort town which is cleaned up every morning. The litter is picked up from the fountain square and from between the homeless and destitute people – what a contrast.

We next fly at La Cerra, adjacent to another polluted lake and back near Guatemala City. When we arrive some of the locals are already rigged. Mario suggests it is too strong (it's 2 o'clock in the afternoon) but I take one look and start stuffing battens as fast as I can. This is a good day with strong thermals and everybody flies except the two French-Canadian paras travelling with us, for whom it's too windy.

Later on the group splits up. Henry leads a team to visit temples in the jungle. Bob and Ian (and the paras) head off on another long drive to a non-tourist agricultural region where there is meant to be a resident pilot. Unfortunately he turns out to be a para. The landing field looks good but the take-offs (a choice) are rubbish for hang gliders. They are small, shallow

and surrounded by vegetation up to 40 feet high. The conditions are also poor, with low cloudbase and some rain. We stay at the hotel with no water; a terrible experience and I end up back on the bog again.

We return to fly La Cerra and conclude our stay in Guatemala. The trip was an experience and on the whole worthwhile, but I have no plans to return.

[Bob added a postscript to this tale about his bowel movements but in the interest of decency I have used my editorial powers to take it out. If you really would like a copy, then email me to ask for it. However I'm sure your knowledge of Bob will allow you to work out the wording.]

Big Ian has done a DVD of the trip so if you want to see it, contact either him or Matt.

Flight Over Everest

This was a well attended and fascinating talk by Richard Meredith-Hardy about his flight over Everest while towing a hang glider. I enjoyed this from the luxury of the Pullmans seats in the front row of the Dominion Cinema, complete with a drinks table and foot stool - very comfy! The talk was illustrated with lots of photos and some video, including some history of the various attempts to climb and fly over Everest.

One particularly amusing part of the story was how Richard and Angelo (the hang glider pilot) were doing altitude training in an Italian military simulator. A member of the Italian military was also in the capsule to supervise the exercise and assist in the event of an emergency. They were all hooked up to oxygen masks etc as the simulated altitude climbed towards 30,000 feet and all was going well. Then all of a sudden the emergency alarm bells started ringing and Richard looked around to find that the Italian military supervisor had keeled over and fainted! He therefore had to hook up this guy's emergency oxygen and help him come round again before they could restart the experiment!

As for the flight over Everest itself, you may know that shortly after climbing past 28,000 feet and not far from the summit the weak link at the tug end of the tow rope broke. From the video footage this appeared to be caused by Angelo losing concentration, getting too low on the tow and hitting the wake turbulence of the tug. Richard continued on and flew over the summit, and was even photographed by some of the climbers who were on the summit. Richard's photos of the climbers on the summit were the first photos that anyone had taken of climbers on the summit of Everest from the air. He then landed safely back at 12,000 feet where they had taken off from. Angelo strangely decided to land back at an Italian meteorology station at 19,000 feet rather than back at base, despite having 16,000 feet to spare when the line broke! This was also an option he had never discussed with Richard. He was picked up 4 days later suffering from altitude sickness.

Angelo's version of events from just before the line break is interesting. He claims that the tow line broke after they hit "Everest sized turbulence". This is odd since Richard never experienced such turbulence. Angelo continued his flight, found lift and flew over the summit on his own, claiming to have arrived there at a time which was before Richard's arrival! Too bad that no-one else saw him, or that he was able to provide any video or photographic evidence of this. However Richard explained that for an Italian, particularly one with an Italian main sponsor (Fiat), failure is not an option. It may even be true!

For more information, visit <http://www.flymicro.com/everest/index.cfm>



The SW face looking North

Airfield Updates

Sue reports that people have been busy helping out at the airfield:

Leon and his brother-in-law have made a great job putting up boards on the notice board wall ready for all the charts of Scotland. He has also formulated a plan to maintain and paint the runway markers. Peter Stewart has done some amazing work. He organised 40 tons of road scrapings, and a roll of Terram, and spent all Sunday morning with a massive digger laying out the chippings and flattening out about a third of the car park. He also removed fence posts. Al Huntly tidied the microlights in the hangar and sorted the hose leak. Bob Dunthorn re-titled his hang gliding photos and put them back in the hangar for the summer.

At least some good comes of wet windy weekends, and many thanks to all those who helped out.

Sand Dune Soaring - 1st attempt

On Saturday 7th April, spurred on by a forecast of 20mph North Westerly winds, Sergey, Dave, Colin and myself took my Amour 159 and Sergey's Aeros Target along to the sand dunes at Gullane. We were hoping to have some fun soaring and flying long the tops of the dunes, competing with the kite surfers and windsurfers to impress the beach walkers, particularly the attractive females, and we were confident of winning. After all, the forecast was perfect, and the wind station at East Fortune was reading 14 knots WNW before we set off.

Unfortunately when we got there, the wind was 5 - 10mph, WSW. Undeterred, we carried my glider along the to the North (i.e. most Westerly facing) end of the beach and rigged the glider. We then tried to work out how we were going to get the glider to the top of the steep dunes. As we tried to figure this out, we realised that the wind had now died away almost completely. By now the kite surfers and windsurfers had also given up and retired to the beach. A period of waiting and pretending we were just enjoying being at the seaside ensued.

After a while the wind was still less than 5mph, but had at least swung round to the forecast direction of NW. Unfortunately we now realised that the tide was coming in fast and the bottom landing was disappearing into the sea. It was therefore time to give up and pack up. Once the glider was de-rigged, Sod's law dictated that this was a cue for the wind to pick up again, and sure enough the kite surfers and windsurfers started playing again. At least the fact that the entire beach had now completely disappeared and the wind had swung back round to WSW (i.e. no bloody use), meant that we hadn't packed up in vain. Sergey, showing his usual dedication to the sport suggested that we wait 3 hours for the tide to go back out and hope that the wind come round. However, the rest of us weren't convinced, so we headed off home having learnt the following:

- 1) You'll need at least a 20mph wind since you can't run off the dunes, and you may not have much beach to land on.
- 2) Check the tide times before you go. It's no use at high tide. Check out www.bbc.co.uk/weather/coast/tides (hopefully more accurate than the weather forecast) and don't forget to add 1 hour to the times which are in GMT and not corrected for British Summer Time.

We'll be back another day for our next attempt!

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