

Christmas Coaching Column



Crossed: A few days ago, on one of those occasional sunny, moderate wind days we get squeezed in during winter, rather than go flying, and being a bit tight on time, I decided to have an hour's ground-handling. One of those useful activities we tend to deny whenever it comes to selling our wing. I'm very fortunate in having a host of excellent places 15 minutes from my door. Not for me a flat, mud and poo infested green field, mostly unlike anything we usually take off from. No - I have the luxury of soft moorland grass, wind-blown clean and more akin to our usual take off hills. What I especially like are the various slopes, bumps and hollows; in this case to find a slope with the wind part across it.

Like anyone else I prefer the wind to be square on – not simply because the ridge may work better, but it makes the take-off easier. Unfortunately, it's often not quite so convenient and taking off with the wind to some degree across the slope is fairly normal. All aircraft prefer taking off into wind, having some power can negate this to a point, but a paraglider needs the wind to be square to it. One slight exception to this is the cross-wind/cross slope launch.

There's a lot to be learned from observation in this case watching take-off's when the wind is across the slope – we're only talking about up to 30 degree, as beyond this it's not likely to be a soarable ridge. You may see a variety of scenarios:

- Cross slope/light wind – pilot attempting to make a take-off square to the slope as opposed to the wind. The wing rises – lightly loaded and veers off to the downwind side of the slope.
- Cross slope/moderate wind – pilot sets up square to wind, not slope, and may with deft footwork and wing control get away, but again the wing is likely to fall to the down slope side or tend to get slewed that way.



A useful technique that work well is to set up square to the wind, but take one large step up the slope – the effect on the 'wall' will be to raise the downslope side and counter any

tendency for the wing to fall that way. A couple of things to bear in mind. Because the wind may have a longer run along the ground it may be more prone to rolling turbulence – this will be shown

by the wing bouncing around more near ground level – once above your head, in smoother air it should be better. In smooth air you can bring it up with both 'A's in one handle and the downslope brake in the other; alternately, for greater control both A's held separately may provide better control. To reiterate, the big thing is the **one step up the slope** as it effectively prevents the wing dropping down the hill – even to the point where it rotates 180 degree onto its leading edge which is not a good idea with modern leading edge rods.

So ... in that short hour I was out, that is what I practised. Trying it with slightly different riser and brake techniques, differing amounts of force and even setting up deliberately wrongly to see what the effects were and if I could correct them. My final point would be to have a plan – imagine a real life take off situation, do your homework (lots on-line) and then purposefully work on it. Try also to concentrate on those things you feel weakest at.

Winter flying conditions: It would be easy to see winter as providing smooth, if cold flying with the occasional wave days. Actually, winter needs to be considered as having hazards of its own – we tend to think of the hard edged and turbulent thermals of spring and the cu nimb's of summer and fail to fully appreciate that winter conditions have associated hazards, that especially on lightweight wings like paragliders we need to be aware of.

I'm not qualified to go into this in detail (where's a meteorologist when you want one) so I'll give you just a short lay-man's version. Basically it's a lot colder (and this really applies to those cold, high pressure days), consequently, the air is a lot denser and with more power. This in effect means it will behave differently and bring increased levels of mechanical turbulence (like rotor). You may find very different conditions at different levels and some marked (and often turbulent) shears at the boundaries. Valley bottoms can be calm and fogged in as the cold air sinks and slides off the hills, yet the tops could be fairly breezy; although they may even feel OK for flying. However, take off and you could find it noticeably windier at height – this is the upper wind that is being screened by the cold, dense air in the lower levels. We also need to factor in the possibility of wave and the effect this will have - remember, the Dales is a fairly wave ridden place.

This is not to put anyone off the joys of winter flying – simply to suggest that you should assess the



weather and flying conditions with a different mindset to spring/summer flying. So far this winter I've had some great days, most recently on Ingleborough, and whilst smooth, the effects of cold winter air were apparent. Anyone who walked up will have noticed

the cold air pooling in Chapel le Dale and the stronger met wind kicking in 100' below take off. As the day wore on the limited effects of the sun warming the valley air caused the wind on the hill to drop away. At the end of the day on the final long glide down we easily reached the landing field – 3 hours earlier it may well have been a lot more difficult.

I'm just an amateur weatherman, so if anyone wishes to start a thread up on the forum I'm very willing to learn. Perhaps a professional could be enticed along to one of our club nights? It's certainly a useful topic to explore.

Club Coaches Day (last call): As previously mention (last month) the DHPC coaches list will be checked and re-freshed at the end of January (after this course). Please consider attending the coaches course– they are very good – if you wish to take this further and become a coach please contact me as it needs the course, plus club endorsement. I've pasted the details as received from the CSC below. I have also put myself down on the course as it's time for my refresher – if anyone wishes to leave transport at Ingleton and go with me they are very welcome.

The Cumbria Soaring Club is running a 2 day BHPA Coaching Course on Sat 25th & Sun 26th January 2014 and we have a number of places left!

Currently the Coaching Course is the only post CP training offered by the BHPA.

The primary purpose is 're-training' existing coaches and recruiting/educating new coaches. But we consider it to be very worthwhile for all CPs and want to encourage more to attend; even if they have no intention of becoming a coach.

We think they will definitely find it useful & interesting and become a better pilot as a result!

Cost £30 (not inc food/refreshments). £20 for re-training.

Venue: Eagle & Child Pub at Stavely (between Kendal & Windermere).

For a place: Contact Dave Ascroft at canddashcroft@hotmail.com or david.ashcroft@sellafieldsites.com

Paradower: Could I please remind folks of Pat's excellent set of winter talks. Details can be found at

<http://www.patdower.co.uk/p/coaching-courses.html>

On one of these courses you will get the chance to see (as well as hear) the irrepressible Barney Woodhead – always an experience. Many of you will have attended Pat's talks in the past and will have appreciated the informative, authoritative and professional manner in which they are delivered. An enjoyable and useful learning experience.



Merry Christmas to you all and fly safely during 2014

