

Coaching in the Wessex Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club

Welcome to the Wessex.

As you may know, the BHPA encourages clubs to have an active Coaching Scheme. They would like all clubs to have a team of Club Coaches whose sole aim is to help pilots of all standards, especially newly qualified pilots, to fly confidently, competently and safely. The Wessex is no exception.

Coaching is a fundamental activity for this club in its aim to promote safe flying. We have a number of dedicated club coaches with various levels of experience, in hang gliding as well as paragliding, who will be more than happy to give help and advice on all aspects of our sport, from ground handling tips right through to cross country flying. But the main aspect of our club coaching programme is to provide continuation training to help our newly-qualified, low-airtime members make a safe transition between the supervised flying in the school and the free-flying club environment.

We all know that the first time you go to a site, after becoming a Club Pilot, can be a daunting experience, so at the Wessex we have introduced a “Buddy” system, whereby a newly qualified member, or any new member, can get in touch with the coaching team and we will try and allocate one or two club coaches, (preferably ones living nearby), who you can call and arrange to meet on the hill.

Further on in your flying career, club coaches can also help with your preparation for the “Pilot” rating exam, both practical and theory. Our coaches are always available to offer advice and assist in helping to expand your flying experience in a structured and safe manner.

For the more experienced visiting pilots, our club coaches can also offer advice on the choice of site, depending on weather conditions and provide in-depth site briefings which may also include locations of house thermals, air space, and cross country potential etc.

In this part of the country we are very lucky to have an abundance of sites, which enables us to take advantage of most wind directions. We have some really excellent coastal soaring sites, as well as wonderful inland sites with good cross-country potential.

There's great flying to be had in the Wessex region!

Finally I would like to wish you many years of happy and safe flying.

Roy Ménage

Chief Coach

Club Coaches

Below is a list of club coaches and their contact details. Please feel free to contact any one of them. All will be happy to help with any questions you may have. Make sure the coaches have your name and mobile number and that they know you are keen to get out. If distance is not a problem, the best and easiest way to get in touch would be to come along to one of our monthly meetings where many of the coaches will be in attendance.

The meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month. Details are on the website.

Roy Menage (PG)	07967338800	W/end	Stalbridge	roy.menage@gofirecrest.com
Gary Mullins (PG)	07880586310	A/time	Portland	gary.mullins@virgin.net
Brian Metcalfe (PG)	07732609161	A/time	Salisbury	mickmetcalfe@gmail.com
Charles C-Smith (PG)	07968186308	W/end	Dorchester	charlescs@metronet.co.uk
Everard Cunion (HG)	01202483847	W/end	Christchurch	everard_cunion_777@postmaster.co.uk
Gary Puhl (PG)	07760321108	W/end	Southampton	gary.puhl@ntlworld.com
Gill Legras (PG)	07778302237	W/end	Bentley Hants.	gill@middlehurstg.freeserve.co.uk
Harry Dike (PG)	07929784248	A/time	Stur. Newton	mo@veales322.freeserve.co.uk
John Alder (HG)	07963580745	A/time	Shaftesbury	jr.alder@virgin.net
Jon Harvey (PG)	07968092752	A/time	Bridport	skyrunner355@wessexhgpg.org.uk
Keith Wright (PG)	07808916507	W/end	Bournemouth	keithawright@o2.co.uk
Matt Whicher (HG)	07977563664	W/end	Salisbury	matt_whicher@yahoo.com
Mike Bretherton (PG)	07773110442	W/end	Southampton	m.bretherton@sky.com
Neil McCain (PG)	07835896481	A/time	Blandford	njmcc64@googlemail.com
Nigel Bourn (PG)	07952288964	W/end	Bournemouth	nbourn@butterfly-conservation.org
Pete Chalmers (PG)	07710416682	A/time	Hythe	chalmerspete@googlemail.com
Richard Davis (PG)	07887851934	W/end	Christchurch	richard_a_davis@btinternet.com
Roger Edwards (PG)	07779337306	W/end	Bournemouth	wessex@blue64.co.uk
Sean Staines (PG)	07764566444	W/end	Basingstoke	sean.staines@virgin.net

Daily Site Information

Site Phone

For information, on a day-to-day basis, as to which sites are flyable, the club uses the site phone system. This is where members leave messages giving up-to-date information on flyable sites. These messages can be accessed by dialing 02070437777. You will then be asked for an ID, which is 1988461 and then a password, which is 1013. Full details about the sitephone are on the website.

Regional Contacts

If you have a long way to travel to our sites and there are no messages on the site phone and would like to know the current weather conditions, here is a list of club members that have kindly agreed to be site contacts for our four main areas.

North	South/West	Purbeck	East
Bell Hill (NW) Monks Down (N)	White Horse (SSW) Ringstead (SW)	Kimmeridge (SW) Ballard Down (SE)	Barton (S) Southbourne (S)
Harry Dike 07929784248 Derek Sadler 07890190769	Gary Mullins 07880586310	Ali Florence 07974954022	John Blessing 07984144109 Pete Chalmers 07710416682

Not all of the above numbers will be obtainable during the week but should be at weekends and please remember to call at a "civilised" time. (After 9am at least)

So What Happens Now?

Throughout the year we intend to have various coaching sessions to include:

“Red Ribbon” Days: Getting together as many new pilots on a hill as we can and talking through such subjects as site etiquette, ridge protocol etc. Basically, running through what has been learnt in school, honing those skills and getting everyone soaring competently, confidently AND safely.

Ground handling: Tightening up those “mouth drying” strong wind inflations.

Thermalling techniques: When to tighten up or loosen a turn etc.

What to look for when flying XC: Thermal indicators and the like.

Navigation and Instruments: Vario, GPS

Mini lectures on “Pilot Exam” theory: Meteorology, Theory of Flight, Air law.

I know that maybe it’s only a few weeks since you left the school after being awarded your Club Pilot rating, but now is the time to start thinking about the next rung in the ladder... the “Pilot” rating.

The BHPA recommend that you need to be Pilot rated to fly cross-country unsupervised. The skills you need and the knowledge required to do this are covered by this exam. All you need to do to get this rating is have a minimum of 25 hours of flying time in your logbook in varying conditions (25 hours on coastal sites is not enough), do a few flying tasks and then attempt a massive, massive exam! There is so much to learn that I recommend that you start on the theory as soon as you can. There are some splendid revision notes, written by Graham Taylor, on the club website. First of all, have a good study of these notes over a period of time, together with the Pilot’s Handbook, and if there is anything you are not sure of, or don’t understand and need a bit of help, feel free to ask any of our Coaching Team. As well as help with the theory, club coaches are also on hand to explain the pilot tasks and sign them off when completed.

Becoming a Coach

If you feel you would like to put something back into the sport, to help others through situations you may have found yourself in, or if you find yourself helping others but are unsure of what you should be saying or doing, then become a coach. Helping somebody off the hill requires competence and can create a daunting feeling of responsibility. A coaching course will give you the confidence to do this safely. Attending a course will also help with your own flying and your understanding of the sport.

How do you become a club coach?

You don't have to be an experienced or skilled pilot to be a good coach. Often the most effective coaches are those who have just gone through the early flying experiences that are still fresh in the mind. So after flying for several months and with about 10 hours or more airtime, lack of experience need not be a barrier to becoming a coach. Approach one of the existing club coaches, and talk through what is involved. Course dates and venues are listed in Skywings. The courses last for 2 days and are usually held at weekends.

What do you learn on a coaching course?

Topics include skills assessment, personal abilities, site/weather assessment, planning a coaching session, take off, flying and landing skills. The course is largely classroom based, but is practical and allows for interaction between all our flying disciplines. Once you have been on the course and signed off, you can then become a member of the Wessex coaching team, and will find out how we go about coaching in the club. The main coaching centres around newly qualified pilots with a list of several tasks and skills to develop, facing new surroundings, new conditions and lots of new faces. The function of the coach is to help these new, inexperienced pilots through a challenging few months, and to help them learn those skills so that they can fly confidently, competently and, most of all, safely.

Books and Things

Books.

There are many good instructional books written about paragliding. The ones I found useful when I first started and are therefore on my bookshelf are:

Touching Cloudbase by Ian Curren and Rob Cruickshank
Pilot Handbook by Mark Dale

Others in the coaching team have used the following:

Paragliding - The Complete Guide by Noel Whittall
Paragliding - From Beginner to Cross Country by Dave Sollom and Matthew Cook
Thermal Flying for Paragliding and Hang Gliding by Burkhard Martens is superb.

The Pilot Handbook is a handy one to have because it was written by Mark Dale, who also sets the questions for the exams! So, all of the answers are in there, somewhere.

The weather is quite a determining factor in gliding so meteorology books are useful to have on your bookshelf.

Here is a selection of those that some of our coaches have found useful:

Understanding Flying Weather by Derek Piggott
Air Riders Weather by Alan Watts

Understanding The Sky by Denis Pagen

If you really find meteorology fascinating, then Meteorology and Flight by Tom Bradbury should keep you occupied for a few weeks!

But for a more relaxed and quaintly amusing view of the weather and clouds, Gavin Pretor-Pinney's "The Cloudspotters Guide" is a good choice. The blurb on the back says: "The Cloudspotters Guide is the inaugural publication of The Cloud Appreciation Society. It aims to fight "blue-sky thinking" and teach us to enjoy the contemplation of clouds as nature's poetry. " Which, pretty much, sums it up.

DVDs

Jocky Sanderson's trilogy "Security in Flight", "Speed to Fly" and "Performance Flying" are very good, well made and extremely informative, as is Mike Kung's "Playground".

There are many, many more out there.

The titles above are just a selection of the DVDs that many have used and found useful and is not a "be-all and end-all" list. There are many, many more out there that are equally as good, so why not check them out. You could even write a review and have it published in our very own club magazine "Airmail".