



Bell Hill

Site Code 2.028

OS Grid Ref: ST 797 086 (Map 194)

GPS: N50:52.549 W2:17.312

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|------------------------------|--|
| Owned by: | Wessex HGPGC Ltd | Wind Direction | W - NNW (275° to 340°) Best: NW (305°) |
| Farmed by: | Mr Owen Yeatman Lowbrook Farm Belchalwell 01258 472528 | Height AMSL Top to Bottom | 800ft (262m) 350ft (115m) |
| Nearest Phone: | At road side, below T/O | Pilot Grades | HG Club Pilot PG Club Pilot Site briefing advisable |
| Casualty Units: | Poole General Hospital Dorchester County | | |

Notes by Alastair Florence

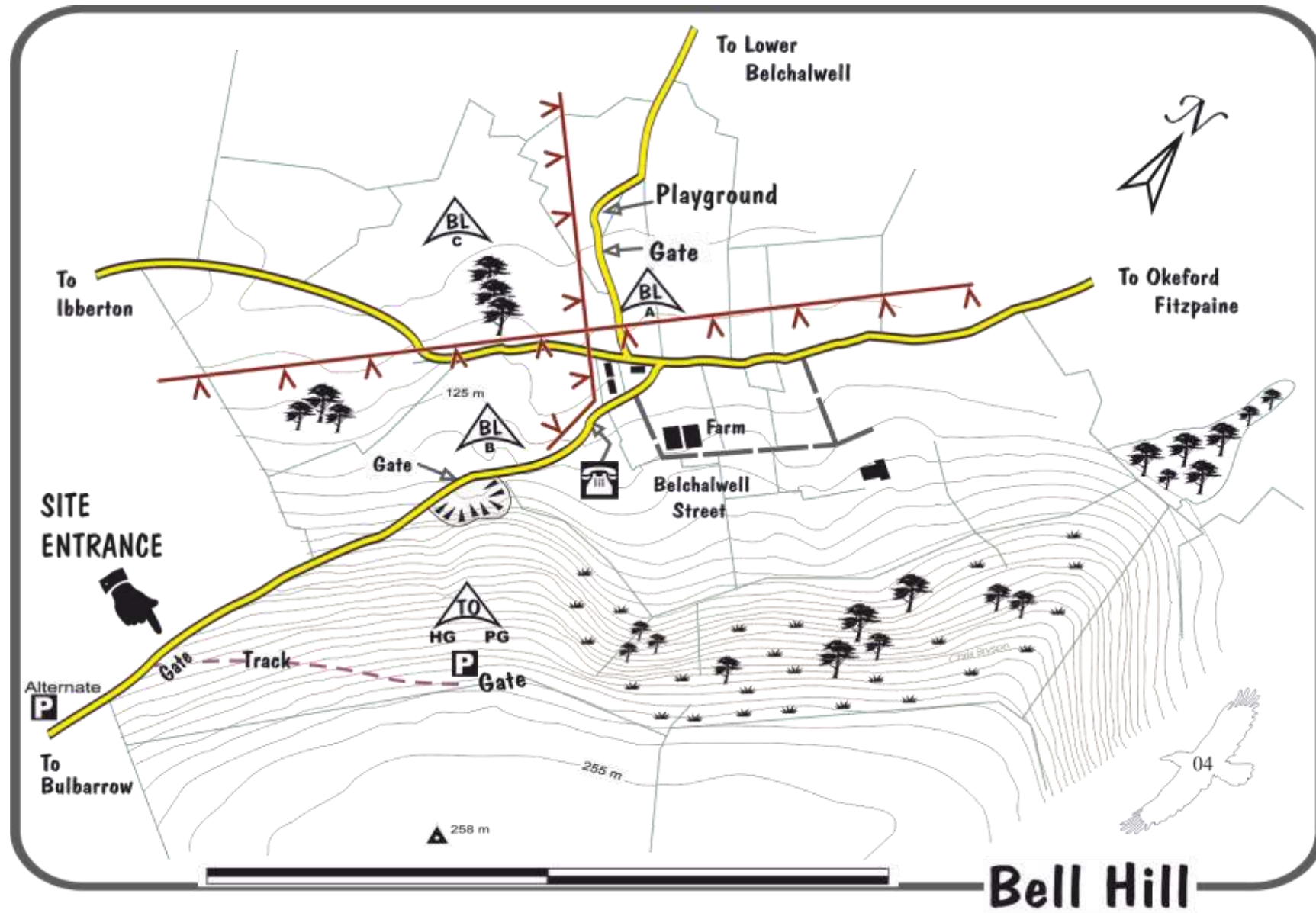
General Site info

Bell Hill has been a Wessex flying site for many years. During 2002 the owner broke the news to the club that he intended to sell the hill which totalled about 45 acres of chalk downland. We were offered first refusal on the purchase. In September 2002 the Club Committee backed by the club members decided to make a bid to buy the hill. The club set about raising the funds required for the purchase. Funds were raised by the sale of life memberships of the club, a raffle, member donations, other BHPA club donations a BHPA loan and grants. By December 2003 the full amount required for the purchase was raised and the deal completed.

The hill was particularly important as it provides our most popular site for both HG and PG activities. The site gives excellent soaring and XC opportunities. The site can offer many challenges to experienced pilots but is fairly benign for beginners and is, in fact, also used for schooling.

Wessex now lease the grazing to a farmer and the hill is maintained to provide a balance between free flying site, grazing land and chalk downland conservation.

However, it should be noted that it has not been possible to secure agreement for top landing since ownership of the top field changed in 2012.



Bell Hill

Directions

Travelling from either Sturminster Newton or Blandford drive into Shillingstone on the A357. From Blandford look out for the war memorial on your right, now take the next left turn signed for Okeford Fitzpaine. If travelling from Sturminster this turn will be the first right hand turn after entering the village.

Drive to Okeford Fitzpaine, pass the church set back on the left until you reach a 'Y' and 'T' junction. Take the left side of the 'Y' and turn left at the 'T' and drive out of Okeford Fitzpaine. Shortly after leaving the village you will pass a left hand turn that leads up to Okeford Hill, go straight ahead. You will now see the ridge to your left. Take the next left turn signed for Bulbarrow and Ansty.

You should now be climbing uphill. You will pass a chalk pit on your left (see parking). Just before the crest of the hill on the left is the locked gate with stile leading up across Bell Hill.

Several other routes will bring you in from the South or via the Winterbornes. Most routes will lead you past the Bulbarrow view point. From the view point drive North along the front of the ridge. Keep going past a left hand turn. As the road starts to drop off down the hill side you will see the entrance gate on your right.

Access

Access is via the track from the gate. If on foot simply walk up the track to the hill crest or simply walk up the hill and along the fence line until you find a suitable launch area.

If driving, drive to the top of the track.

The gate is padlocked with a combination lock. Details of the combination are available to members on the Wessex web-site. Please ensure the gate is kept closed at all times and that last off the hill has locked it.

In summer most vehicles have no problem with the track although a little rough, traction is fairly good and the ground is mostly firm.

TAKE NOTE

After or during a wet spell the track can become extremely slippery and may only be accessible to serious 4X4's. Getting up to the top is often possible but the track turns to grass higher up and many vehicles end up sliding sideways on the slope unable to park. You then have to turn and drive/slide back down which can be a frightening experience. Please think twice about taking vehicles up the track during wet weather.

Parking

If ground conditions are suitable and your vehicle and you are capable drive to the top of the track. Park off the track along the fence line. On busy days by parking nose or tail to the fence more vehicles can be accommodated than parking side on.

Alternatively, park on the road side on the Bullbarrow side of the entrance gate and well off the road (on the west side) Tractors towing attachments often use this road so do not obstruct it.

If the road side is busy we have permission to park in the chalk pit at the foot of

Bell Hill. Wessex HGPGC do not own the pit, Mr Yeatman has kindly agreed to its use as an overflow car park only, not for general parking. It's a hard walk up from here which is another good reason to use the road side parking first. The chalk pit is also quite slippery in places when wet but is fairly flat. Ensure the gate is closed at all times.

Hazards

Probably the biggest hazard on this site is other pilots. On a good summers day, particularly when the wind is light, and everyone is trying to fly in thermic cycles. Things can get crowded and a little manic. Please ensure that you know the collision avoidance rules, and use them. There are times when some politeness and plain etiquette come into play.

If you feel uncomfortable in a crowded sky, land.

The ridge shallows to the West above the entrance gate and further west power lines run down the hill. It is possible to become pinned in increased venturi in this area.

If the wind is off to the north, the take off and landing areas can be turbulent.

Don't get caught out by patches of sink and dumped in the scrub or trees if scratching in the bowl.

Launching

Launch in front of the windsock or anywhere south along the ridge. Be sure you are far enough down the hill that you will not get dragged into parked cars or the fence if you fluff the launch.

On busy days ensure the air is clear above you before pulling up your wing.

Please ensure hang-gliders have plenty of room to launch when present.

It is possible to launch directly into the bowl on light days or when the wind is more northerly. It is advisable not to use this launch on busy days to avoid the risk of collision.

Top Landing

The Club has not been able to establish an agreement for top landing since ownership changed in 2012. Therefore, landing in the top field is a personal decision and any consequences are matters between the individual and landowner.

It is possible to land back on the launch area. Please watch out for gliders launching who should be giving way to you on your landing approach. Slope landing is usually straight forward here. However, you must ensure that you know your into wind beat.

Bottom Landing

Bottom landing fields are available. The field directly below launch is most suitable for paragliders.

Hang-gliders: main bottom landing fields have power lines along the edge of the road, so it is better to leave fairly early to get to the bottom fields beyond the road. The close in bottom field slopes more than it looks from above and can be very muddy and cropped so is best avoided, other than as a last resort.

Avoid fields containing livestock.

Please use gates to exit fields. Try to avoid landing in the horse paddocks in front of the bowl and to the north. You are unlikely to be chastised if you do but still avoid if you can.

XC, Ridge Runs etc

Bell is a relatively easy site to get away from. The spur just east of take off often works as a trigger point for thermals, as does the bowl and the fabled 'Magic Tree'. The 'Magic Tree' is situated about 1/3rd of the way down the slope on the north side of the bowl (the first proper tree you come to). Fly over it and you will normally find lift. Many pilots have experienced their first XC from this site. Be aware of Bournemouth ATZ and controlled airspace, also the danger area around Lulworth ranges.

XC is possible to Swanage or to the north of Bournemouth airspace, however you will be getting blown toward airspace all the time on the northern side.

It is possible to fly southward down the ridge toward the aerals at Bulbarrow when conditions allow.

Flying Generally

The site is excellent in thermic conditions and provides a great fly in dynamic lift all year round. The site is fairly straight forward to fly and is used for training at times. For experienced pilots the site can offer interesting challenges and XC opportunities.

After a light warm summers day it is often worth hanging around into the evening as 'restitution' lift often develops to give incredibly smooth buoyant conditions allowing flights well out in front of the hill.

And best of all its our very own hill!

License number (100043849) Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright. All rights reserved.



Bell Hill