

Hole of Horcum



ANDY ELLISON
HOT-FOOTS IT
'OOP NORTH AND
REPORTS FROM A
SUNBLESSED
BMFA SLOPE NATS

heat winners - glue, covering, cross weave tape and the like - which were all well received. Alex McMeekin's own-design Banjax 2 was looking to be one of the quickest models all day, as had my own Halfpipe 60 Prototype until the sink came through and it needed to be gently

Despite the pace of the event the atmosphere was fairly relaxed all day. I guess we were just please to get eight rounds in for a change.

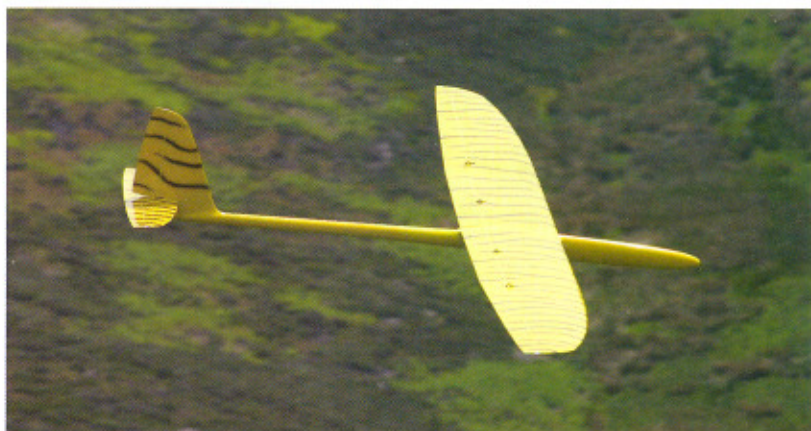
Ian Mason steadily improved throughout the day with his pretty Wizard Compact.

The 2006 BMFA Slope Soaring National Championships were held over the weekend of 10th / 11th June at the home of the North Yorkshire Moors Ridge Soaring Association, The Hole of Horcum. To be honest I'm struggling to remember a more epic weekend of slope racing; the event was blessed with glorious sunshine, winds over 20mph and booming thermal activity that provided some of the closest racing witnessed for many years in this often overlooked annual challenge.

60" PYLON

The Saturday is traditionally 60" EPP Pylon racing day, and this year the class saw a record 26 entries - commercial designs plus a smattering of prototypes and scratch-built efforts gathered from across the country ready to fight it out. 60" BMFA League Co-ordinator Paul Wright had made a few tweaks to the racing format to ensure pilots of similar abilities flew together through the heats - these were generally flown with 4 models up at a time and it was soon clear that the conditions were to be very variable throughout the whole event.

With the sun baking down and the valley floor warming there was occasionally very strong thermal activity, with some models entering the course at well over 100mph. The heats progressed quickly and Paul had arranged small prizes for the



nursed around the course. Ron Broughton's Polecat designs were turning well, but lighter, bendier models like Wannabees and Rampages were struggling with the occasional crosswind and dropped off the pace. EPP Pylon racing always has some attrition and the odd clatter could be heard from the course. Ron Broughton, Mark Abbotts, Steve Clark and Ronnie Lampe all suffered to some extent, whilst some pilots like my F3F teammates Frank Hulton and Ian Mason could crash pretty well all on their own as they got over-eager with the elevator stick!

Once all the pilots had completed five races they were ranked for the knockout stage. The varied conditions meant that straight-winged models had the edge here as the emphasis was on turning ability

American Fred Seaman was campaigning his new Acacia 2 after struggling to get on with his Trinity.

rather than straight-line speed. However some swept-wing aircraft (e.g. my Halfpipe 60 and Ron Broughton's own design Ballistik) could gain significant ground when the thermals came through.

Toward the end of the knockout, last year's league and Nationals winner John Bennett was still in with a chance, flying his older Gulp SR,

marginally behind with his heavily modified GV60.

The last showdown was to be flown over 25 laps of the 70m (77 yard) course, and both Alex and I crossed the start side-by-side at the conclusion of the countdown with masses of energy in what turned out to be the fastest flying of the day. My Halfpipe seemed to carry this

No shortage of competitors in the 60" pylon racing class as the local clubs turned out in force to swell the numbers.



apart throughout the entire race and at times it looked more like a synchronised show display flight than a race for British Champion, the lead swapping again and again as the models repeatedly rolled and pulled through the turns side-by-side. Conditions picked up again mid-race with the arrival of a massive thermal that caused the

CD Jon Edison did an excellent job keeping us all in check. Old campaigner Dave Woods double checks over his shoulder. You can never be too careful with these Yorkshire men!

as was Mark Abbotts flying a Polecat. Unfortunately both either lost pace or cut turns in the latter stages, costing them a place in the final line-up.

MAN ON MAN

One of the format changes Paul made was to introduce a straight 2-pilot 'man on man' race to determine the British Nationals Champion, which would follow the usual four-man final. So it was still all to play for as Alex McMeekin, David Elam, Paul Wright and yours truly battled it out over the 20 laps. Alex and I established a comfortable lead early on, and we both opted to fly higher and stay out of the melee for the 3rd and 4th slots, coasting over the line with Alex in 1st, myself 2nd, David Elam in 3rd with his Gulp SR and Paul bringing up the rear just



better over the first few laps, but as the conditions faded to a patch of sink Alex' Banjax 2 regained the lead with its tighter turning ability. Both models were never more than 20'

aircraft to visibly shudder with acceleration, now flying tip-to-tip at more like F3F speeds than foamie pylon. As we both tried to get the edge and find the fastest racing line I

This was the first outing for Mark Southall's new Skorpion - flown in Mark's usual aggressive style into the 2nd place spot.



Being a buzzerman can be a lonely job!

Scot Ron Russell fluffed the last round with a starting error and a cut.



BMFA 60" League co-ordinator Paul Wright breaks away from his exemplary organisation for a spot of lunch.

Four callers all about to pat at the same time - very close racing indeed!

figured I'd have to apex inside Alex' turns at the near base over the last few laps, and I managed to just nose in front going into the final legs. On the last lap the expected sink came through, forcing the Halfpipe to be pulled wide around the final turn before diving for the line, giving the Banjax the opportunity it needed to sneak back in and cross the finish about 6' in front for the win. And so it was that Alex was the new British Champion, and I the runner-up. A great contest, down to the wire!

The Slope Nats doubles as the third BMFA league event in the series, with pilots accumulating points based on their finishing positions throughout the heats and

The 4 finalists. L - R: Paul Wright (GV60), David Elam (Gulp SR), me (HP60), Alex McMeekin (Banjax 2).

Mark Southall campaigned his shiny new Skorpion for the first time.



knockout sections of the race. At the conclusion of the Nats the top ten in the 60" Pylon points table looked like this:

Pos.	Pilot	Points
1	Alex McMeekin	100
2	David Elam	97
3	Paul Wright	96
4	Andy Ellison	96
5	John Bennett	93

6	Mark Abbotts	87
7	Mike Shellim	86
8	Paul Potter	85
9	Nigel Potter	85
10	Peter Bailey	84

F3F

Sunday was F3F day, with 32 of the country's top slope racing pilots prepared to fly. F3F is currently the most popular 'F' class gliding event

seconds working time before launch can gain an advantage if they know how best to avoid any sink. With a few new models on the scene and some Scottish entrants making the journey south in preparation for hosting the International F3F Viking Race later this year, the win could have gone to any of around 50% of the field, such is the world class level of competition in UK F3F these days.



in the UK and is effectively a 1 kilometre time trial flown with high performance moulded gliders of around 3m span. The course is 100m long, requiring nine turns to be made in order to complete it. The ability to anticipate these turns and retain the model's high energy throughout is

The first round started promptly at 10am on the Hole of Horcum's fine, south-facing bowl. Times began in the mid- to high-50's but steadily increased as the valley below warmed up. There were, of course, casualties of sink, and some pilots had a little cut trouble as they got



the key to winning here. The technical set-up of the glider aims to optimise control surface inputs to achieve the best performance. As the models only fly one at a time the day can be a bit of a thermal lottery, but the chance to fly a high number of rounds can reduce this benefit and level out the playing field. Pilots experienced enough to read the conditions well during their 30

dialled in to the course length; notably Tom McPherson, who managed to turn shy of base A in most of the early rounds with both his 'T' tail Pike WR and (German-designed) Caldera.

The bases and safety line had been positioned on the lip of the slope, prompting many pilots to complain about being unable to take the best racing line through the strong



compression on the edge. Many were forced out from the hill or up and over the bases, and a good few of the usual suspects incurred early penalties for infringements over the buzzer men.

In the second round Alex McMeekin took full advantage of a huge thermal to go sub-40 with a time of 39.93 for the kilometre with his own-design Falcon; with the other top pilots still posting 50's in the same round this set Alex at a significant advantage. Alex' fastest time came under threat in round 3 from Mark Redsell with a 40.42 but stood until round 6 when John Bennett smoked it with a 37.49, which was to be the fastest time of the day.

John Phillips has a reputation for being a very quick pilot, but also for leaving nosecone-shaped holes in hillsides all over the world! Yorkshire was to be no exception as he clipped the ferns a few yards short of the finish after a particularly blistering run with his old Ellipse 2V in round 5. Kevin Newton slipped down the field a little in round 7 with poor air seemingly attracted to his VV Models Viking, whilst Ian Mason started to improve his times after eventually

getting the hang of the full reversal turns that benefited his smaller Wizard Compact cross-tail.

Relative newcomer Steve Forbes took round 4 with his new Race M flying particularly well through some good air but he couldn't match this form in any of the other rounds,



It's a long and lonely walk back when you hit the hillside for a zero!

The F3F prize-winners. L - R: Mark Southall (2nd), John Bennett (1st and Fastest time of day), Alex McMeekin 3rd.

hanging inverted for a particularly long time until he got the buzzes. Last year's league champion Mark Southall was campaigning his new Skorpion model for the first time, working it well to stay with the

leaders. He did manage to flick it at one stage and, as a result, will no doubt be backing the elevator throw off just a little.

As for me, I was subliminally gaining ground with my own New Sting after poor air in the two opening rounds, and a couple of low 40's brought me back into the top five. My Tyldesley MFC team mate



Frank Hulton was one of the lucky pilots who managed to break his personal best with his Falcon in the latter stages of the 7th round with a 41.80 as the conditions died off, only for Mike Shellim to sneak in a last



Old cricketer Kevin Newton was on hand to provide fast pace launches for many. This time it's Mark Southall's new Skorpion.

Mick Lideard, from the home club, has got himself a beautiful blue and red Elita. One of the first with a more conventional wing lay up.



Even the organisers get to fly you know. CD Jon Edison on course while his right-hand man for the day, Richard Bago, runs the computer.

minute 40.98 with his Sting to take the 1000 points and wipe at least some of the smile from Frank's face!

As the 8th and final round drew to a close it was clear that John Bennett would be crowned British National Champion by a couple of hundred points, Mark Southall just sneaking up into second place with his usual aggressive flying style. Viking Race organiser Ron Russell cocked up his last round by re-entering the course on the climb-out and unwittingly starting the clock. As he flustered with his camber switches he managed to make matters worse by cutting a turn, compounding his agony and bumping himself down to 27th in the round and 10th place overall.

With over 260 competitive flights in just over 7 hours (including re-flights and a long pause for the Air Ambulance to attend a nearby road traffic accident) the pace of the event was fast, to say the least. The completion of so many rounds before the 5.30pm cut-off is a

Pos.	Pilot	Model	Points
1	John Bennett	New Sting	6558.64
2	Mark Southall	Scorpion	6341.30
3	Alex McMeekin	Falcon	6337.01
4	Andy Ellison	New Sting	6198.14
5	Mike Shellim	Sting	6141.97
6	Mike Evans	Tragi	6086.84
7	Mark Redsell	RaceM	6067.25
8	Kevin Newton	Viking	6060.99
9	Dave Woods	Elita	5969.61
10	Ron Russell	Viking	5933.39

credit to CD Jon Edison and his assistants from the local club. When the dust had settled the silverware was scooped up by John Bennett, Mark Southall and Alex McMeekin, whilst I scraped the 4th spot. The table adjacent shows how the top ten finished up.

If you'd like to know more, full score spreadsheets and pictures from both events are available online at Mike Shellim's excellent website: www.rc-soar.com