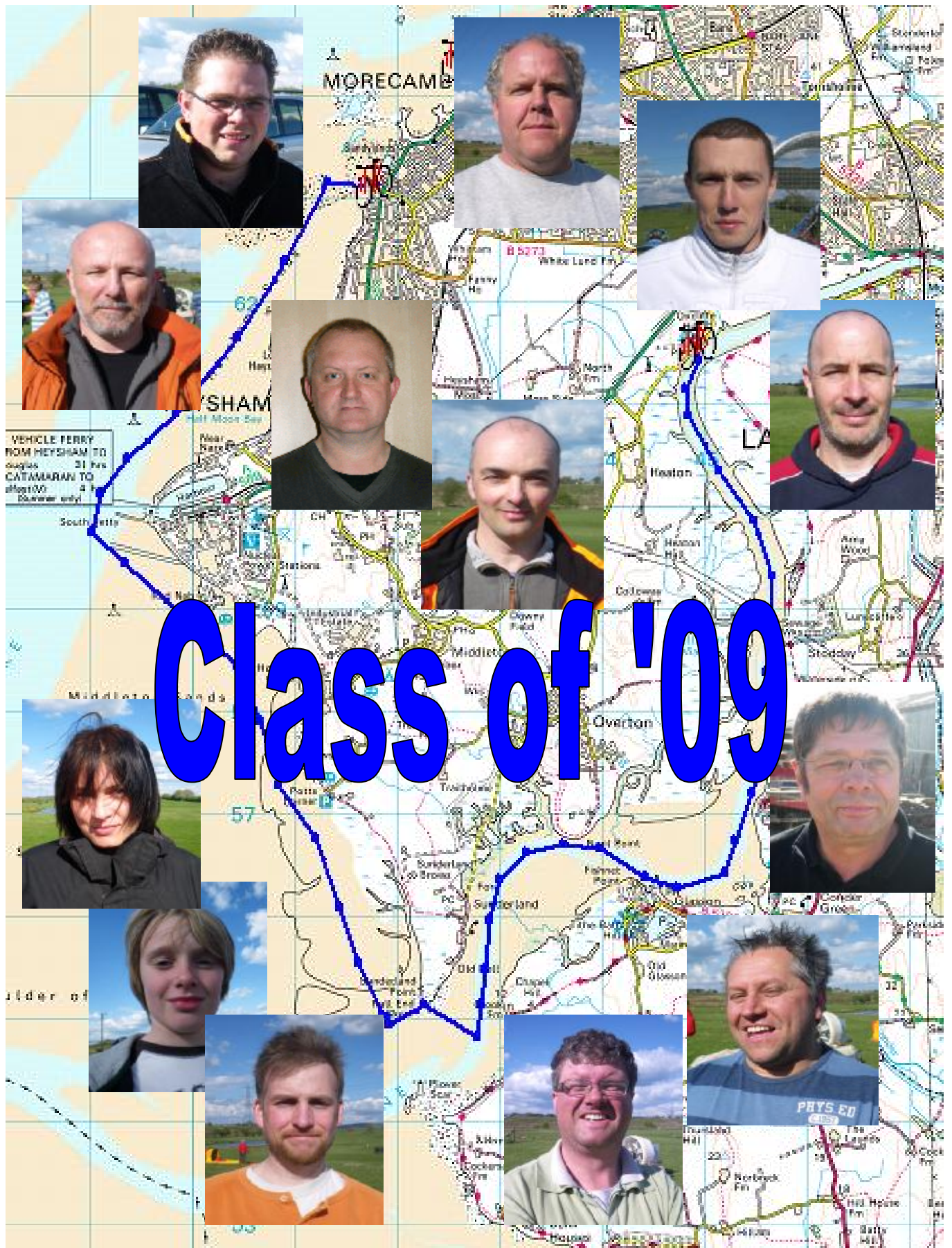


Training Event



Training Event



Training Event '09

The HCGB has had the Pilot Qualification Scheme for some years now – I graduated through it in 2005, although it did seem a bit haphazard at the time, relying as it did on knowing one of the trainers and attending enough events. For some time now it seemed to the Committee that there was a need for more formal training, and the result has been the recent Training Event, which we are pleased to say proved to be a great success – so here's a report on the proceedings.

The current event was preceded by an “unofficial” training event last year – that too was a success, although there were some lessons learnt which contributed to this year's official event. As before, we were had the use of Magnolls Farm, thanks to Charlie & Co, which is an ideal venue for this event.

The event was spread over two days – the first to consist of a theory session and a practical session on the field, the second to be a novice-friendly cruise.

The first day kicked off with a Trainers Briefing, followed by coffee and introductions. Next was the theory section - this is designed to cover all the questions a “newbie” might have - what is “the hump” anyway, etc etc? The presentation is available in the downloads section of the website if anyone wants to see what they missed out on!

Once the theory was out of the way, each trainee was allocated to their trainer. We were able to assign trainers familiar with the trainees craft, from Osprey to UH, on a one-one basis to ensure proper supervision. At last year's event we learnt that speed must be kept to a minimum, so following a short safety briefing we adjourned to the field.

We had a huge range of craft – from a nice new Osprey 1 through an Osprey 5 to a UH18. The little Osprey was no problem, but the UH was a different proposition! Fortunately, we had probably the only experienced UH pilot in the UK – John Robertson – as one of our trainers, and plenty of room... we needed it!

The first task for the trainees was to demonstrate an emergency stop “*straighten up – back off*” as this was the ‘pass’ to the rest of the field. Then we had the usual slalom, slow circles and a circuit through the water. These exercises are designed to give practise at low speed handling, whilst building an awareness of the trainees own craft and the peculiarities of hovercraft in general, and by lunchtime most people were getting the hang of things.

By this time the UH had been separated to the other field – it needed LOTS of room - and it's pilots were beginning to make progress under John's tutorship despite the obvious fact that the craft is far from a ‘starter’ craft.

The ‘5’, however, was still being ‘fettled’ by Bryan W, nothing serious but the blades needed to be set up to get any real performance from it. Once it was running properly it soon became apparent that it wouldn't be completing the tighter exercises either, so once the emergency stop was completed Brian R was instructed to proceed slowly round the race course with Bryan White administering advice via intercom, and correction with his wooden spoon! One tap for ‘good’, several whacks for ‘slow down’!

Nathan (14) was training in my Surveyor – although in truth he was more than ready and in the way of kids everywhere, proceeded around the exercises with deceptive ease, and then went on to empty both fuel tanks – 50 litres - whilst keeping to ‘walking pace only’ (when I was watching!).

Training Event



Sadie and "the pink craft"

Once the starting exercises were finished, we moved the trainees on to the more advanced obstacles – some very realistic and tricky puzzles that demand a real understanding of the craft. I was fortunate to be leading Gaz and Simon with Gaz's ASV. This is a very nice BMW powered homebuilt, a well mannered craft and two 'naturals' operating it, so we progressed up the field pretty quickly.

By late afternoon, the Trainees were all making sound progress, so we took a set of 'mugshots' for their licences - in anticipation of success. By 6, we were ready to adjourn to the Duckworth for a pint or several, some well earned grub and an evening of extreme hover-nerding. Fantastic!

Next morning each craft set off for a rendezvous on the River Lune. By 10:30 all craft had assembled and de-trailerred, all we had to do was wait for the tide to go through. We were going on a spring tide, not ideal but we had chosen to arrive just before the tide turns – the slack water being ideal for a quick novice cruise.

We watched the tide turn – at this point in the Lune estuary, the spring tide gives a mini-bore only an hour or so from high water, once this had calmed down we 'buddied up' and set off for the wier. This is an interesting if short cruise, and provides an interesting education into how fast an estuary can change. One moment we had 10 craft sitting high and dry on

a shingle bar, next we were scrambling aboard craft floating in 2 feet of water.

Returning to the slip, we assembled to see who would be making the longer run to the Morecombe. This entailed a six mile run to Sunderland Point, at the mouth of the Lune, and then an eight mile run down the coast. The plan was to land on Sunderland Point, check out the conditions and see who was set for the rest of the run.



Sunderland Point – of no return!

All ten craft made it to the first stop, but four sensibly decided to head back at that point. For the rest of us, the fun began as the open sea was challenging in the fresh wind. Despite this, safe passage was made, and in 30 minutes or so we drew up on the breach.

The way back was a little harder – especially the first mile. Scott had sensibly elected to eject his passenger to one of the larger craft – thereby demonstrating that he had been listening during the theory session – as he had noticed the wind direction and properly assessed its effect on his craft. As it was, I think he was probably glad of that decision!

Once we rounded to the harbour entrance, things calmed down a little and the only issue was Steve & myself missing the mouth of the Lune - which was embarrassing, considering the enormous lighthouse, and the fact that my GPS was quite clear as to the proper direction – but just to look at the shoreline, it seemed inconceivable that there was a river mouth and it was like the GPS was telling us to fly straight into a cliff! Still, once the mistake was realised and a return made, the proper course was easily determined.

Training Event

All in all the event was very successful – everyone made the 12 mile novice cruise and six craft then went on to complete the full 40 mile round trip in pretty challenging conditions.

In all we awarded 9 PQS 1's and 3 PQS 2's, congratulations go to:

	PQS
Kevin Fenn	1
Sadie Woodhouse	1
Callum Farquhar	1
Gary Firth	2
Stuart Moore	1
Kristo Schivachen	1
Simon Clarke	1
Gary Hannaford	1
Steve Holland	2
Tom Tilley	2
Scott Tilley	2
Nathan Brooks	1
Brian Reynolds	1

Along with two other licences issued this year, we have already issued 50% more licences this year than last year – which as to count as a success story. So thanks to all who contributed to the success of the event, which we hope will be an annual fixture from now on.

The Recreational Committee