



BKFA Update

No 9 April 2009

Chairman's message

We have never before managed to send out two newsletters in such quick succession! It probably won't happen again, but we wanted to get news out of the "Edwardian Kite Competition" at this year's Wirral Kite Festival. We would like as many people as possible to take part so can we please ask clubs to forward the information on to their members, by whatever means possible.

In this newsletter we are also launching the accident report form now available on the BKFA website, where you will also find an application for individual affiliation for kite fliers who want to support the BKFA directly.

*Jon Caton
Chairman*

Competition

The Wirral Kite Festival is running a Victorian Trial of Merit this year. The idea grew from some thoughts by George Webster adapted by Ernest Barton.

In Edwardian times there seem to have been two main types of competition.

A. The highest kite, flying for an hour and carrying a 2lb weight suspended within 100ft of the kite.

At the famous Findon Competition in 1903 the aim was for flight 'above 3,000 feet.' No one could achieve that on the day, but Brogden won with his giant modified Malay, also called a Burmah or Aeroplane kite - 18ft 8inches long by 17ft wide which attained a measured altitude of 1,816ft.

These rules were designed to test the ability of kites to fly at altitude, important given their contemporary use in meteorology. Large size gave advantages in ability to lift the line and the 2 lb weight.

B. Flying a kite for 1 hour – on a predetermined length of line.

Marks were awarded for:

Angle line angle in degrees (max 90°)	x2
Stability a percentile estimate (max 100%)	x1
Strength a percentile estimate (max 100%)	x1
Portability subjective out of fifty	x1

Total marks possible = 180+100+100+50 = 430.

These Rules were certainly in use in 1909 for an Aeroclub Challenge Cup won by Mr W Barton with his own design of winged box. Second was the Brookite double-conyne type 'Master Kite' flown by Brooke and its designer Gilman, which would probably have won but for its noted inferior stability to the winged box.

This competition resulted in a long letter of complaint by the aggrieved Major Fink of Margate who claimed that the rules had not been fairly applied to his kite, principally because it had been marked low for portability although it was only 1ft 6inches square. This was clearly an Indian fighter branded by him as 'The Vakata' and sold under that name by Gamages.

The Type B competitions attracted a wider range of size and style. While most were commercial variants on Conynes / French signals / Brookite war kites, there was the winged Barton box already mentioned and a keeled diamond kite – the 'Finbat War Kite', produced in a number of sizes. Semi-elastic bridles were popular – I suspect to cope with possible wind variation over 1 hour.

The Modern Trial of Merit

The Wirral competition will use 'Type B' regulations. This competition is open to any kite, of any era, modern or historic.

1. Everyone flies on their choice of line (no Kevlar or monofilament) but the line will be measured before the competition commences. Line length will be 200', 300' or 400' depending on site conditions on the day. Flyers must let all line out and timing will not commence until the full line is out.
2. Angle of flight will be measured twice during the flight – all kites in the competition will have the angle measured as quickly as possible one after the other. Other marking will be necessarily subjective but open to scrutiny. A panel of three judges will mark independent of each other. The lowest of the three marks under each marking will be ignored, and an average produced of the other two.
3. For each time the kite touches the ground within the measured hour, 20 marks will be deducted from the stability measure. Thus, if the kite touches the ground five times it will score no marks under this heading.
4. The competition is open to all flyers who may enter any kite, self built, built by another kite maker or commercial. There are no limits on size or type, but the judges will reserve the right to ask a competitor to withdraw if the stability of the kite is such that there is a significant risk of bringing down other kites in the competition or a risk to people or property at the event.
5. The decision of the judges will be final.

Entries will be accepted on the day. Any questions in advance should be addressed to Jerry Swift at jerry56.swift@btopenworld.com

We hope to get this competition recognized by the Royal Aero Club

Accident reporting

We have now placed a report form on the website to be used in the event of an accident or near miss. The form is based on a CAA form.

Reporting of accidents involving kites under 2 kg in weight (mass to be absolutely accurate) is not mandatory. For kites above that mass, the Air Navigation Order (article 142 and 143) is open to debate.

If we are to continue to self-regulate, which is what all other airsports do and which is clearly preferable, we feel that to start to gather accident data on a voluntary basis from all clubs will reduce any likelihood of the CAA deciding it needs to formally bring us within scope.

We are happy to receive feedback on the form itself. Let's hope no-one needs to use it, but if you do, comprehensive information will demonstrate that we take safety seriously and that we want to learn when accidents do happen.

Individual 'membership'

Also new to the website is an electronic form to request information on joining BKFA's individual affiliation scheme. It is targeted at kite fliers who want to support our work but whose clubs do not currently belong to BKFA.

Are there any benefits, like insurance? Sorry, but no. The reason for joining is to help us do what we can to improve the lot of British kite fliers and to show that as a responsible sport, we can regulate ourselves without CAA having to place rules (other than the Air Navigation Order) on us.

Jerry Swift
9 April 2009