



BKFA Update

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World Record Attempt

BKFA was in deepest rural Lincolnshire for the weekend of 22 and 23 July, when Dennis England and his team mounted the first serious challenge for several years on the UK altitude record for multiple kites. The record currently stands at 14,000' with SF Cody, although there is some question about the accuracy of the claim. Dennis has set himself the challenge of beating that height conclusively.

The project is known as KARA2, Kite Altitude Record Attempt, and follows MKF's KARA attempt in November 1979.

Dennis has been working with Great Ouse Kite Fliers and Midlands Kite Fliers to develop his challenge over the last two years or so. This weekend saw the team next to The Wash on a strip of farmland bordering the RAF range. They had height clearance of 23,000' for both days.

Saturday saw little action with gusty winds from the sea making a meaningful attempt impossible.

On Sunday, the wind was near perfect, blowing from the West out across The Wash and the military range at between 6 and 10 mph.

Dennis is using a series of Rhombox kites supplied by Paul Morgan of Skybums. The first to go up are 1m Rhomboxes with around 2 – 3,000' between each kite. Four were planned but an unfortunate ground accident reduced that to three. Subsequent kites, flying on carefully graded and rated lines, are 2m Rhomboxes.

Verification of height is with a sealed multipurpose instrument capable of recording barometric pressures (and therefore heights) at 10 sec intervals. The Sunnto X6HR is a marvel of modern miniaturisation and BKFA are using its output to certify the attempts.

The first flight started at 08:57 and finished at 13:50 when the instrument recorded a maximum altitude of 1,939', a long way to go but useful in terms of ironing out problems. Two Rhomboxes were used.

The second flight started around 14:30 and finished at 18:45. This time, three 1m Rhomboxes were used and the first of the 2m kites was added, although this only rose to around 150'. The attempt was curtailed because of concern that a key pulley was showing signs of severe overheating, a critical part that will need to be replaced before any further attempts. This time, a height of 3,566' was recorded. As air pressure had dropped 1 mB during the course of the flight this measurement could be low by 27'.

Although Dennis did not achieve his record, the team learnt a great deal and it is clear that whilst the kite train and lines work, along with the recording method, there has got to be some work on handling the lines to make flight up and down considerably slicker: failure in this area will mean the team run out of daylight.

The range is available again over the Bank Holiday weekend (August 26th, 27th and 28th) and then the weekend of September 9th and 10th; BKFA will be there to record the event.

Dennis is supported by a team from MKF and GOKF. Peter Musk has put an enormous amount into the project in terms of specialised engineering parts and reels etc. He also approached the staff at the bombing range on The Wash and surveyed accommodation for the attempt. Paul Morgan has been helping with the supply of kites whilst Manfred Kluge has supplied lines at reduced prices.

Air Attractions have supplied banners which will improve the public profile event on television: a documentary is being made by a freelance crew hoping to interest Sky or Channel 5.

Other sponsors include Peter Taylor, Mike Dady (photography, communications and flight testing), The Highwaymen (further line supplies), Scott Butler (winch and strain measuring equipment), David Montague-Smith (assistance with the costs of line) and Trevor Taylor for assistance through flight testing when he gave freely of his time.

Helping Dennis on the day were Peter Musk, Mick and Carole Beasley, Jon & Franchesca Caton, John and Matt Ryan all from MKF. Elsewhere on the field Steve Neal and his brother Derek (both of MKF) were taking advantage of the height clearance to fly their large deltas to considerable height.

From Great Ouse, Scott Butler worked hard all day on a very warm day and was joined for much of it by Simon Rogers. Chris Addicote, a lapsed GOKF member was also there to help.

International record keeping

Early stage discussions with AKA have started about keeping international kite records. There is a great deal of data on the Internet about kiting 'records', some official, some less so. The normal repository of such information is the Guinness Book of Records but they only hold about four records now and any new record requires payment, not always easy for a kite flier attempting a new world record.

The ideas being discussed consider an international forum of national bodies, pooling their resources to come up with the agreed world kiting records. This will start with UK records and we would welcome assistance with drawing up a list and validating it in the UK and elsewhere.

Please contact Jerry Swift if you would like to take this on.