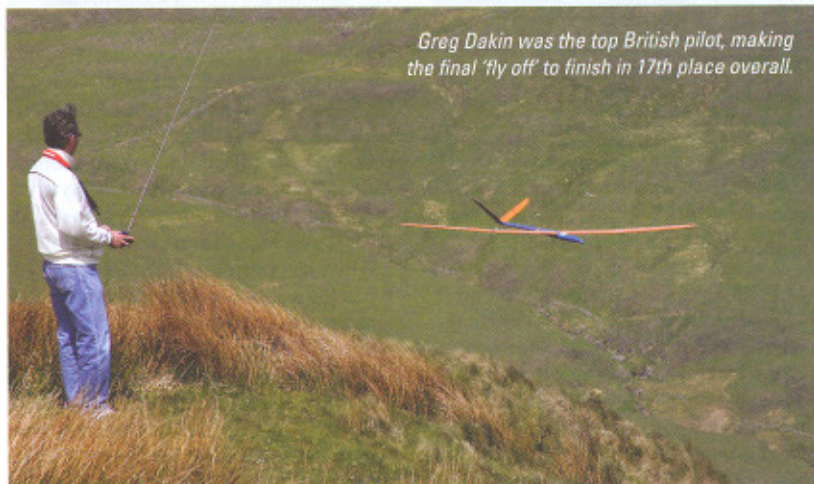


# Tweet and Twitter

ANDY ELLISON RIDES THE WAVE OF MODERN COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
WITH ANOTHER HELPING OF SLOPESIDE NEWS

**B**y my reckoning this is the 40th edition of *On The Edge* I've penned since the first one back in the December 2003 issue; I've lost count of the huge array of topics we've covered and models we've discussed since then. This affinity for hanging around on hillsides twiddling sticks with like-minded individuals is currently enjoying somewhat of resurgence in popularity I feel, and that's reflected in the (often large) postbag I receive from fellow glider guiders who read my stuff. Correspondence is always a pleasure to receive - even the occasional unfriendly stuff from my grumpy old whingersaurus mates and stalkers! Long may it continue, I say, and I welcome any feedback on the content of the column.

Back around the time of that first article, fellow sloper Chas Gardiner was also regularly contributing to this magazine with his *From Up Here* column, so I stayed away from the stuff he covered and concentrated on the high performance and the unusual. For the same reason you'll rarely have read about scale or PSS gliders in my column. Truth is, I don't do that sort of flying and don't own those sorts of models. Of course, Simon Cocker and Phil Cooke pop up occasionally to give us all a bit of an insight into that side of soaring, however it leaves me acutely aware that since Chas has now stopped writing, now might be a good



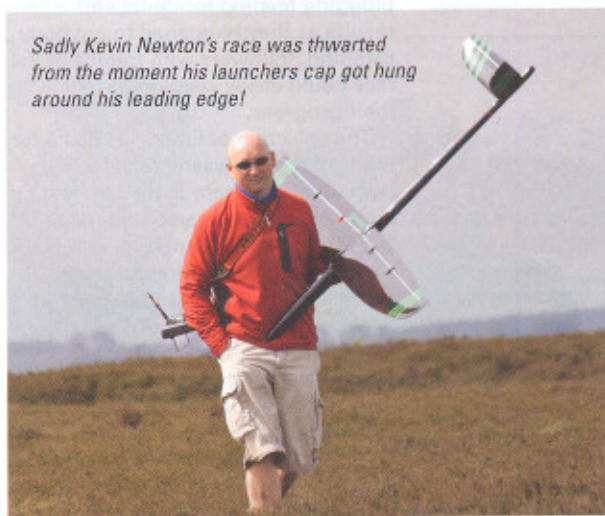
Greg Dakin was the top British pilot, making the final 'fly off' to finish in 17th place overall.

The simply awesome French team dominated this year's F3F Viking Race. Do the Brits have something to learn from the experience? (Pierre Rondel photo).

time to broaden the horizons of OTE and let a bit of the more general soaring stuff in.

So, I'm after your opinion. In the 'Gliders and Gliding' forum of RCM&E's website [www.modelflying.co.uk](http://www.modelflying.co.uk) there's a thread where you can go and vent your spleen on the content of the column. Please feel free. You'll also note in there that my contact details have changed, with a new email address to take note of - [slopetrashuk@gmail.com](mailto:slopetrashuk@gmail.com) - and in a sort of weird social experiment (which is rapidly becoming rather more popular than initially envisaged) you can follow my actual slopeside exploits in real time as they happen on this Twitter thing. We'll give it a go for a

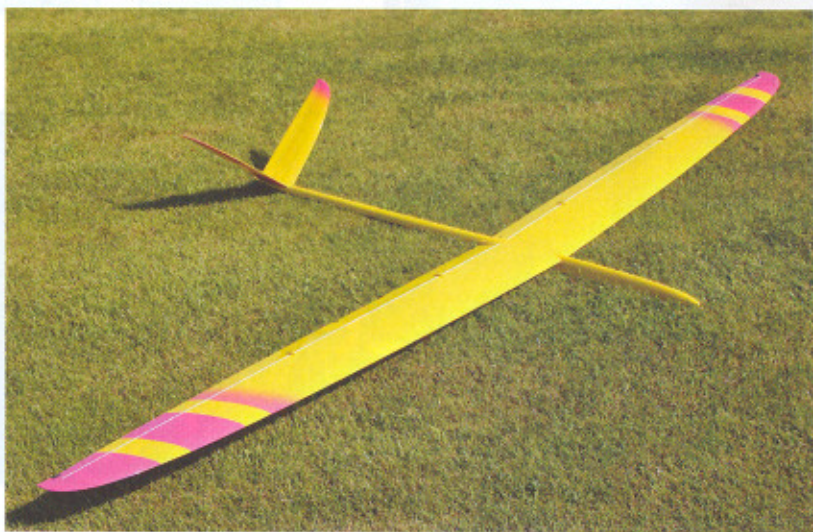
Sadly Kevin Newton's race was thwarted from the moment his launchers cap got hung around his leading edge!





*My beloved Freestyler 3 did the 'Dance of the Rotor' and is off to see the Fu-meister for some TLC. First time I ever did it in all my years flying.*

*Do we cut our young F3F prospects loose too soon. Certainly Graham Reed's tutoring seemed to stop once he could get himself around to the events and started to win a few.*



*The Aeromod Alliaj was clearly the model to beat and had been honed for the flying styles and the hills in use at the VR this year. (Pierre Rondel photo).*

*The slope racing scene in the UK has morphed into a massive series of races across the year, but should the focus be a little less on winning and a little more on experimentation, training and improvement?*

while... Find me at @slopetrashuk if you want to follow along.

### F3F VIKING EN FRANCE

Live feeding of information from the slopeside was used to good effect at the very recent F3F Viking Race in the French Pyrenees near Limoux, Laurac and St. Ferriol. With live webcams, smart phone applications and on-site blogging feeding incidents and results as they happened to anybody listening, followers with friends in the race could easily keep up-to-date with their progress.

The selection of France as hosts for the Viking Race wasn't really a popular choice here in the UK. Not for the choice of hosts, you understand, but for the sites planned for use, which have a reputation for poor flying conditions and tough landing zones. As a result, I think it's fair to say that many of the top pilots weren't really up for it. This presented a marvellous opportunity for that band of UK F3F pilots bubbling under the top ten, and following a qualifying event on the famous Bwlch in South Wales the team of nine selected to

represent the UK was a mix of vast experience and relative newbie.

Off to France, then, where practice started out in light conditions with a number of land-outs and some model attrition before the air began to show signs of its potential, and ballast started to appear. The French had taken a decision before the race to simultaneously fly the event across two different courses, and had two different hills set aside to cater for all conditions. This 'twin course' arrangement wasn't a popular choice with the pilots; it meant a lot of movement throughout the week-long race and some long days, making it difficult to find time for simple tasks like getting some food shopping in!

The local farmer's decision to plough the landing area just before the event - revealing rocks galore - also meant that what free time there was available was often spent repairing the more fragile moulded racers.

Timing gear problems when the racing started further extended the days, with over 20 re-flights being

taken during day one alone. Sadly, one of them wasn't Kevin Newton, who in a bizarre launching incident was forced to try and fly a round with a hat wrapped neatly (but steadfastly) around his l.e. This contributed nothing to the clean aerodynamics of his Baudis Ceres and sent him to the bottom of the hill before he'd even entered the course.

Conditions picked up for the second day, with five rounds completed. The fast times had started to come with some in the low 30s, but the advanced preparation of the French was evident and they began to dominate. It was obvious that they'd learned from the devastating performance at the German Rugen Island Viking Race some years earlier and had gone away, had a long talk and prepared new models (the Aeromod Alliaj HM) and new flying styles to specifically suit their own hillside conditions. Notable were the improvements to the 'pumping' energy gaining manoeuvre I'd witnessed in Rugen, where height gain isn't the prime objective after







Kevin Newton (left) recounts the tale of Pierre's nude sunbathers experience to Jon Phillips as he awaits his turn at the Bilbao F3F Euro tour event.

launch, and also a new 'dynamic' turn which looks more like a novice flying the event for the first time rather than the 'bank and yank' of the experienced F3F racer. Both methods obviously worked, and it wasn't long before everybody was trying it for themselves just in order to keep the French teams within reach.

Conditions improved later in the week, which coincided with a move to the favoured hill at St. Ferriol, where the British team began a slog back up the scoreboard.

## FLY-OFF

With 20 rounds completed it was time to enter a fly-off, which is also a fairly new experience for F3F pilots and was met with mixed feelings. Greg Dakin was the only British flier to qualify for the four-round event but showed his form with some exceptional racing to earn his final placing of 17th overall. A late flurry is never going to cut it in F3F, though. Consistency is the key in this class, and when the shouting was all over, French Champion (many times over) Pierre Rondel took the Viking Race horn for himself flying the Alliaj. Pierre took the overall lead for the second time in round eight and never lost it, winning the fly-off at round twenty-four. That's some going, you have to admit. From a team of nine, the lowest-placed French pilot finished 28th, with six of the team in the top 10 alone! Aeromod designer Alexis Marachel took 2nd place for France flying his Alliaj, and team-mate Thibaud Ringenbach finished 3rd with a Herrig Freestyler 3. French teams finished 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The Brits fared as follows:

Pos.	Pilot	Model
17	Greg Dakin	Alliaj HM
23	Martin Newnham	Extreme



There's a smattering of kids on the slope racing circuit but they're usually only there with dad to avoid the shopping trip with mum. Maybe we could do more to encourage them and make the UK racing scene a force to be reckoned with once again?

The majesty of the Bilbao cliff faces made for some interesting races and was the only time I've ever flown over nudists!

25	Simon Thornton	Ceres
32	Joel West	Kyriel
33	Kevin Newton	Ceres
44	Peter Gunning	Kyriel
52	Mick Walsh	Ceres
62	Jonathan Sage	Ceres
66	Vic Eldridge	Viking

## ON THE HOP

Speaking with top Brit' Greg Dakin after the event, it was obvious that the French had done their homework following Rugen. Alexis Marachel had clearly designed the new hollow-moulded Alliaj for these very hills, and the approach to ballasting and flying styles was in stark contrast to everything the British pilots believe makes a perfect F3F run. The Alliaj uses a total of 19 different aerofoils along its wing, and rather than following the trend for blending these throughout the span the wing is clearly set in distinct sections, which gives the appearance of wing ribs when you look along the span. Also notable was that the French ballast for wind speed and not lift, providing clear instructions to Alliaj owners of what ballast to use for what wind speed. This tips on its head the practices you'll generally find at any

given British F3F comp', where confusion often reigns supreme over what ballast to use on any given round on any given hillside!

British F3F pilots really need to step back and have a good think about how competitions are run in the UK - we seem to focus on winning instead of experimentation and long term gain. Certainly, all of the events are focused on this. We also don't do enough to teach prospective UK team members and juniors by passing on

Fastest man in the world with a model aeroplane. That's a title John Buxton is going to revel in for a time following his 445mph record breaking flight. (John Buxton photo).







*I'm expecting big things from the new Lesky Pace VX series.*

*Beautiful hills, beautiful skies and beautiful models. Summer soaring is here at last. Big thermals, fast speeds and wide grins. Don't you just love it?*

experience, the top pilots keeping the secrets of their success closely guarded. Only once can I remember when Graham Reed was brought on by older, more experienced fliers, and that stopped quickly when he started beating them and could make his own way to the competitions. Euro juniors at the VR were clearly under the wings of the top pilots. Where are all the old F3F training days we used to have here? Why is there a growing divide between the 60" foamie class and F3F on the UK scene instead of the old 'feeder class' encouragement?

F3F slope racing transitions to a fully recognised FAI world championship class in 2012; that'll mean team trials, three man teams and a team manager. We need to get better on the international scene if the trophies are going to come back over here once in a while. Quite how we quite achieve it is going to take some thinking about. We'd better start now, lads, or get caught on the hop again.

### WHOOPS!

Whilst scanning the results of the Viking Race I discovered that the most popular model at the event by far was the Freestyler 3, with 12 examples in the top 22 places. This pleases me no end, as I have one as my own main race machine. That said, I did just do the dance of the rotor on a new (and very fast) hill we recently tried out. You know the Rotor Dance? Flick your model inverted under full crow braking, wrestle to get it back upright, dig in a wing tip and perform a quick pirouette before slamming to the floor inverted and snapping off the V-tails. No? Well I do now, and a few of its bits are off to Mr Fu for a good talking to. It's the first time I've done that in all my years of flying mouldies. Still, as I always say, you can't get emotionally attached to something you're going to chuck off a

dirty great cliff! Pity it was the Freestyler, though.

### MOTM

Pierre Rondel's achievement at the Viking Race was remarkable and obviously well deserved, but as a consolation for the ailing British pilots who are licking their fresh VR wounds and mourning the loss of their top models, I'll recount a tale from when I first met Pierre and he became what we like to know here at OTE as Muppet Of The Month.

Back in 2003 I attended a series of international F3F races around Europe, one of which was on the northern coast of Spain where we were required to fly off the high cliffs surrounding the coastal town of Bilbao. As almost every slope racing competitor around the world will do when arriving at a new competition venue, there was a quick excursion from the pit area to the slope edge to view the terrain of the course. It was apparent that these cliffs were very high, with no chance of land-out until the boulder shelf beneath that passed for a beach. Not too far away from our standpoint on the cliff top was the French team, who were giggling like naughty schoolboys whilst waiting for Pierre to arrive at the scene with his zoom lens equipped camera. As we made our way over to Pierre to say hello (some of my companions knew him well already), it was obvious that in fulfilling their dodgy ethnic stereotyping, Pierre and his fellow French males were ogling the naked sunbathers dotted around on top of the large boulders below. They were clearly enjoying the unexpected titillation so early in the morning, and as the camera was passed around between them they spied us approaching and called over to UK pilot Kevin Newton to come and have a sneaky look. Now, Kevin



himself is some photographer, and famed for the impressive specification of the equipment he carries around to feed his own website and blog ([www.knewt.com](http://www.knewt.com)). Declining the offer of a look through Pierre's much smaller zoom lens, Kevin swung his own portable 'Hubble Space Telescope' into position, taking his time to eye up the nubile bodies below before passing his camera to Pierre so he could get a 'proper' look. I'll never forget the look on Pierre's face when he realised the lovely ladies he was spying on from way above were in fact naked men.

### DS RECORD UPDATE

Okay, change of subject. I've just enough space left to tell you of yet another update to the world dynamic soaring record, which has now been pushed to a massive 445mph. As if out of nowhere it's also gone to a new person, namely Californian John Buxton, flying a Spencer Lisenby-designed Kinetic 100 DP at the Lake Isabella site, a hill that's held the record a number of times before. John's grateful for the help both Spencer and fellow world DS record campaigner Joe Manor have provided, developing the models and techniques to achieve this speed. With Joe's new 110 lb (50kg) monster Dynamic 160 still to fly in good conditions and Spencer working on new model designs, the records are sure to keep coming.

The incredible 445mph at the radar gun plus the 55mph wind speed over the top of the ridge when John flew a neat 500mph airspeed (or 0.674349846135 Mach at sea level). Oh how we laughed when we saw the originator Joe Wurts proclaiming on *Lift Ticket* that DS would reach 0.6 Mach! A resourceful lot, aeromodellers - you can't afford to take your eye off 'em for a minute.