

You are - probably going to read somewhere else in this magazine about two events we will be attending before the festival season starts.

Winter League

The first is the Solent Kite Flyer's Winter League. This event is usually held on the nearest Sunday to Armistice Day in November on the same site as is held the Southampton Kite Festival every year on the 3rd weekend of June. Unfortunately the heavy rains that we had for several days leading up to the event meant that council wisely forebode any sporting activities due to the very boggy nature of the ground. Rumour has it that our reserve site down at Stokes Bay was also affected by the weather and someone was giving canoe demonstrations on it.

Quad Judge

Marilyn and I will be doing most of the judging accompanied by Doug Manners but we would be grateful for one or two experienced four line judges to give a hand. The event will be at Lordshill in Southampton on Sunday 21st February and will kick off at 11.00 hrs prompt(ish). Best to get there early though as we have to get the running order sorted and we like to take time out to help the first timers along a bit.

Low Key

We pride ourselves on making this a low key event so that any beginners can come and have a go at a competition without having to worry about lots of rules – safety is all we worry about! We get some of the experienced guys too and we make sure that they still get the challenge they are looking for in readiness for the new serious competition season. It's all free, there's usually a tea urn on the go and afterward there's plenty of field space for everyone to get out and fly for as long as they like. If you just want to watch – that's OK too! Just type in "Close Encounters Kites" to Google, or your favourite search engine, and you should easily find full details including animations of how to do the figures, courtesy of Roy Reed's amazing computer skills.

Better Flying

If you want to come and have a fly with Marilyn and me, want some tips or free lessons on kite flying or just fancy spending a quiet day or two with like minded people away from it all then look up the details about Roy's "Jolly Up" just outside of Basingstoke on April 24th and 25th. We will be there on the Sunday only. We won't be running a ballet competition there this year because we will need to fit in a bit of final practice in ourselves – it's Weymouth the weekend after!

It's Free!

We have a few weekends before then when we will be pleased to help with some free coaching (it's free as long as you come to us!) if you would like to make contact through our web-site in the first instance. We always appreciate people coming over for a chat at festivals and will always try to help with some, 'one to one' coaching if that's wanted too, providing there is space and time but it is always best to keep an eye on our diary and pop along to these types of events or make arrangements for the weekends in between. Please don't be afraid to ask, this is our hobby, we are not doing it to make a profit, anything we charge for the events we attend is quickly swallowed up by travel, accommodation, food, breakages and new equipment – although those trademark, yellow Crocs are still good for at least one more year. The way we see it is that the more people we encourage to take up the sport the better it will be! There is a real buzz in seeing the smile on someone's face when they suddenly acquire a new skill.

Crib Sheet

One final request. I find more and more that I am being asked to provide commentary at events we attend – I like doing it but some of you will have noticed my knowledge is not limitless. I can chat for a long time about the people we have had the privilege to fly with over the years and what they do, but some info sheets on the kites would be great for any of the other guys on the PA at events as well!