



### **3 DAYS, 200 KS!**

8 down, 500 ft, 400 ft, 300 ft, 200 ft... the combine harvester ahead is steadily trundling across the field and I'm praying its going to do its job. 100 ft... we accelerate across the field, drawn into rising air. I'm just over the trees at the far end when I spot a kestrel circling 50 m to my left. I point towards it and climb steadily at 2 up back into wind, find a bubble, and lean in. This is like Piedrahita, not England. Hay blows up into my face as the warm air releases from the corn and a huge surge of energy carries me up, pulses of 8 up coming through. At last, the inversions have broken, and it's like the whole of England is lifting off. I corkscrew up to 3,800 ft and marvel at the beautiful cu's popping all the way down Pewsey Vale.

This is the second in a three-day, all you can eat, stuff-my-face XC banquet in the south of England. On Friday 9 August, Mark Watts, Claire Burlington and I drove up from Brighton to Combe Gibbet to try and fly home. My Sigma 7 isn't quite up to the job of gliding with his Mercury, so he leant me a Venus 2. We both got just beyond the south Downs that day, him to Arundel, me to Goodwood –about 80 km I think. The next day – Saturday – I took off from Wesbury again trying to get as far home as possible. After the low save, I had the most amazing five hours flying under and through solid cu's all the way to Liss (92 km). And then on the Sunday I met up with Mark at High and Over, possibly the most horrible easterly site in the south of England. We got gifted a climb by the seabreeze and grovelled low all the way to Brighton, and I eventually made it to Henfield (40 km – but this is a guess, I forgot to mark waypoints). All in all, I've flown around 200 ks in the last 3 days – a great end of summer fix after only flying one other XC this year because I just can't get out as much as I used to.

So what do I make of the glider? Well I'm doing quite a lot of work with Advance at the moment, but while I'm waiting for the Omega 8 they've kindly said its fine for me to fly whatever I like. They're nice like that. So the Venus 2. Well I hate to use the word co-ordinated, its one of those words that I kind of know what it means, but it gives no real feeling. But it's the word that if pushed I'd use to describe the Venus 2.



It's one of a very rare few gliders I've ever flown that feels really intuitive. It loves to thermal (and that's another trite expression I hate to use). A very few gliders just help you find lift, like they want to go up – and most don't. They might have lovely handling, beautiful in roll and all the rest, but they don't have that magic co-ordinated roll, pitch and brake and riser feedback that really lets you know what's going on with the thermal and helps you connect with it. They either dive too much, or sit back too much, or just don't turn fast enough.

I'm not doing very well here am I. OK, imagine a jet of water blasting up, say out of a hosepipe. Rest your hand on the jet so your palm is sitting on top of it. Got it? Now imagine the jet is really powerful, and you have to cup your hand a certain way to keep it balanced on the jet of water, just resting there easily. This is how the Venus feels. It wants to ride the energy. Now change the position of your hand. Flatten your palm out, lift up your fingers, and you'll slip off the jet of water. That's how some other gliders feel. The Venus 2 is pitched forward enough to let you carve into the core, it doesn't spiral or lose efficiency by being too pitched forward though, and nor does it hang back or get buffeted out of the core by not being punchy or powerful enough.

Anyhow, I might not be able to explain what it is I love so much about the wing, but what I do know is I've just had some food with Mark Watts and he said if I wrote something up for the Axis website he'd lend me his demo for another few days. Job done!

Hugh Miller