

## Pothecary Corner

### A Craftsman at Work



I recently acted as a courier (I saved them the postage) for some guys in Southampton who had ordered some Benson Deep Space

kites and wanted to be sure of getting them in time for the Christmas holidays. How pleased they were to get photos of Tim in the final stages of construction of the actual kites they now own.

Tim now very much enjoys life in Cornwall since moving from the Bradford area a few years ago and still hand-builds his kites in the purpose built workshop next to his house.

The Deep Space is currently one of Tim's best sellers – and so it should be after all the time he took getting the design just right. There have been only a couple of minor modifications since I reviewed the kite in this magazine one of which was that the spine is now in Skyshark instead of Structil. To be honest, at my level, you would be pushed to tell the difference but I suppose a spare would be easier to come by if ever I trod on it or something (well Skyshark do sponsor us).

We still have the Deep Space, among others, Tim gave us to review, so if you need to be convinced of how well it performs come over and give it a go. If you are on line you can find out more about Benson kites at [www.bensonkites.com](http://www.bensonkites.com)

### A prize worth £200.00?

Last year we ran a photo competition where people sent pictures of Marilyn and me to our website. We also advertised it around all the events that we attended and received around sixty or seventy entries, with the eventual winning photo by Ann Girling from Southampton, being picked out by Michael of [www.kiteworld.co.uk](http://www.kiteworld.co.uk) taking the prize - a Prism Hypnotist complete with lines and the Prism, "Freestyle Pilot" DVD.

This year we are going to do a different photo competition. If you want to join in the rules are simple. The photo must be taken by yourself, it must be taken after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, it has to be kite related with the theme of "Colour".

Why colour? – Well, this year, none other than twice World Champion, seven times European Champion and producer of some of the best of British kites leading the world in technology and design - Mr Carl Robertshaw [www.kiterelateddesign.com](http://www.kiterelateddesign.com) – will be joining our main sponsors, Kiteworld, in awarding a kite, worth £175.00, the FURY 85 of your own colour choice as the prize.

Yes – that's right send in your own kite related picture emphasizing **COLOUR** as the theme and you could win a Fury 85 in your very own colour scheme.

As well as helping with their share of the prize kite – Kiteworld will be boosting the total to around **£200.00** by including a set of quality lines so that the

winner will be properly set up. If you win, and are a novice or just want some help to improve your flying then you can always pop along to one of our practice sessions or "Better Flying Days" – but then you don't even have to enter the competition to do that – just contact us through our web-site.



Remember the colour theme is kite related, so it can be a single line kite, two, three, four or as many lines and kites as you like – it can be power kites or, it can even be a 'kitey person' doing something clever or even silly – not that any of us kite flyers do anything silly of course!

The top of the range fury 85 retails in all the good kite stores at around £175.00 and we hope to have one of the top European flyers, Chris Goff, joining us throughout the festival season, showing how to do some of the tricks and precision this amazing kite is easily capable of performing.

Full details will be on our web-site soon [www.closeencounterskites.co.uk](http://www.closeencounterskites.co.uk) so what are you waiting for, get that camera clicking and enter as many times as you like – It's free – and you could easily win a top of the range sport kite.

### Break down without breaking it

How many of us have a tale to tell about putting a rod through a sail on one of our kites or worse still – someone else's!! - I managed to do it to a North Shore Radical the first time it came out of the bag. Since we have so many kites to put up and down when we attend the various events up and down the country, I soon found myself coaching our helpers in

Pothecary Corner

the 'safer way' we prefer this task to be completed. There is a video of me (soon to be updated) at with a quick guide and lots of views of the top of my head – rather misleading I thought as it looks as if I am going bald!



It's less dangerous erecting the kite as long as you remember to hold the rods on the end, close to the leading edge or centre piece to which you are attempting to insert. We always fit the top spreader first to give

some rigidity to the kite and it's worth noting, at this point, that all of the rods and stand offs should always be pushed in as far as they will go. There are two reasons for this: (1) That the kite will stay together better (obviously) and (2) that the designer will have spent some time on getting the dimensions just right for optimal performance and a quarter inch at both ends plus a bit in the middle will make a difference to this. Most instruction manuals will advise you to lay the kite flat on the ground whilst you put it together but they forget to mention to keep your back and the nose of the kite pointing toward the wind.



I prefer to stand facing the wind. With the kite then being pushed back against me I lean over – not the best position for back posture (that's what's been doing it

then) and the reason you get the top of my head in the video.

The worst part is disassembling the kite with all that pulling and the spar suddenly jerking out of the end you are looking at only to pierce the sail at the other. Kiteworld.co.uk tell me they always get someone, every year, trying to convince them it was like that when they took it out of the bag – Oh come on now!

I go the same way taking the kite down, by facing the wind with it leaning against me but, whatever; the order would be the same with us. Standoffs out first then the top spreader, gripping the rod whilst pushing with your thumb release the end and hold it out, away



from the kite. Then, at the other end, consciously pulling it away from the danger zone. Next, if you are behind the kite, release the left bottom spreader. Holding the rod, fold back the leading edge all

the way to the centre "T". Now you can pull this one away as hard as you like with out any fears of trundling off to your favourite trader and buying some patching tape.



The reason I said to attend to the left hand side first is because we **always** assemble kites which have a ferrule that passes through the centre piece from the right hand side. You will notice the kite's frame is still preventing the kite

from flapping all over and we didn't have to guess which side it was in because we always do it the same way. Now it's time to remove the last bottom spreader using finger and thumb as before and again sliding the leading edge all the way to the middle so that you have good control and the end of the rod can't damage anything.

Sometimes, when the wind strength changes unexpectedly we have to swap kites quickly or T.C. will be giving us the 'hurry up' sign again before we have even finished our first ballet. It's therefore important that the kites are put away tidily so that the bridle doesn't become all tangled up with the standoffs – If you have a Benson Gemini you'll probably know what I mean. So we like to use a tip given us by Chris Matheson (remember him?) and either hook over or larch loop the tow point over the top leading edge connector. I know all this sounds a lot, but it's no more than you do anyway and a little forethought and self discipline means that you will enjoy your investment a lot longer.



**2 Kites tested from Airdynamics**

I'm going to leave it to you to visit the web-site for the tech data—[www.airdynamics.co.uk](http://www.airdynamics.co.uk). Marilyn and I tested two of the five kites in the new range. The designer and maker, Peter Taylor claims that you could get away with these two – the T4 V1 (vented) and the T4 UL (ultra light). I think if we were still competing I wouldn't feel too safe when the other guys were using standards in an ideal wind of 8 to 10 mph and we had to choose between kites that were close to either the top or the bottom of their limit. No, I would still have a standard as well – I've always liked to have the right tool for the job.

## Pothecary Corner

I found the kites to be well made (Peter's business partner Valerie makes the sails) and came with a good instruction book and spare bungee. Immediately you begin to feel as if this kite has been thought about, designed and made in a way that your money has been well invested. I am particularly interested in this kite because the Close Encounters Display Team (that's when there's more than me and the Mrs.) are in need of kites to use at both ends of the wind speeds.



We tried out the T4 UL first and found that it went lower than our ultra light Lithiums but not quite as low as the Skyshark super ultra light ProDancers. Therefore you will probably see us flying the Zero (SUL) in no wind conditions. Then why don't we just buy more ProDancers from the USA you may ask – especially as the pound is so strong? Well technology has moved on. The reason the American kite flies

in so little wind is because of the sail area to super light rod ratio and because it is so flat. The flatness of the kite means that you lose a lot on what you can do. The kite is twitchy and not easy to land to order and its range of tricks is minimal. All of these things have been designed out of the T4. I was amazed to be able to pull off a Jacobs Ladder in virtually no wind practically standing still. 540 degree flat spins were just that – a full 540 and flat. A nice expression from Peter – “This kite really hovers up the air”.

When I say a kite has to fly in no wind that's exactly what I mean – Just getting airborne is no good when you are in the arena you have to be able to do a routine worthy of people watching. We were able to power up the kite from launch easily and when there was only a slight breeze the wind window went out to almost 180 degrees. I can't comment on how it reacts in a team – we only had one of each – I can only suggest you watch the Airheads the five man team Peter has put together.

Peter says that It was with the help of his team that the T4 range developed so quickly. Knowing the guys (I include gals in this terminology) as I do, rail-track

precision had, without compromise, to go hand in hand with low pull. Peter built this in to the kite and with it the requirement to use only small arm movements to bring off really snappy turns. It is, however, the small movements that gave me problems with landing, especially in the higher winds. I am so used to the bigger movements required of most other kites I fly that muscle memory takes over and I overcompensate. This is why you should find a kite you like and stick with it if you intend competing. We both found the vented kite to be a lot faster than we expected in fact overall it does tend to fly more like a three quarter sized kite rather than the full size that it is but that's not a bad thing. After a short while of talking to him you realize that Peter really is a kite nut. He thinks about his passion a great deal and has now come up with a good addition to his kites in the shape of the Cruise Control as shown in the picture. It's a wah pad that you tie on so that it doesn't flap around giving different readings but the rest of the cord is bungee which you can adjust with an interesting type of speed clip which I have not seen before. You “dial up”, as Peter puts it, the effect you want it to have by tensioning the bungee – More slack = more brake. I tried it across a very turbulent window and found that it really did make a difference.

One other little trick I noticed was an idea Peter told me he had borrowed from Ray Bethel and that was not to larch loop the bridle and push the leading edge through it but instead to put it around the back and then around and over the connector. Just imagine how much time that saves if you want to change the bridle. Also this must be a great way to go about it when you are designing a kite. I wonder how long it will be before we go back to the days of the Matrix when that was supplied with two, different types of bridle but now, so much easier to change.

Overall I think Mr. Taylor could have a winner here I just hope the price tag which varies either side of £200.00 depending on which kite, is still in the affordable range and we see lots more of them in the sky. Unfortunately I don't get to keep the review kite this time so you won't be able to try before you buy unless you catch up with Peter at a festival – look out for those Airheads.

Allan and Marilyn Pothecary would like to thank the following who have contributed with help, support, equipment and sponsorship throughout a successful 2007:- Kiteworld.co.uk, HQ Invento, Tim Benson, Skyshark, Atelier, Inter-Active Kites (Skydancer). We look forward to having an even more successful 2008 with you. Also thanks to all those who have come over to chat and for your kind words and messages and all those visitors to our web-site.

Don't forget to checkout [www.closeencounters.co.uk](http://www.closeencounters.co.uk) from time to time as there is always something new being added. Happy New Year.