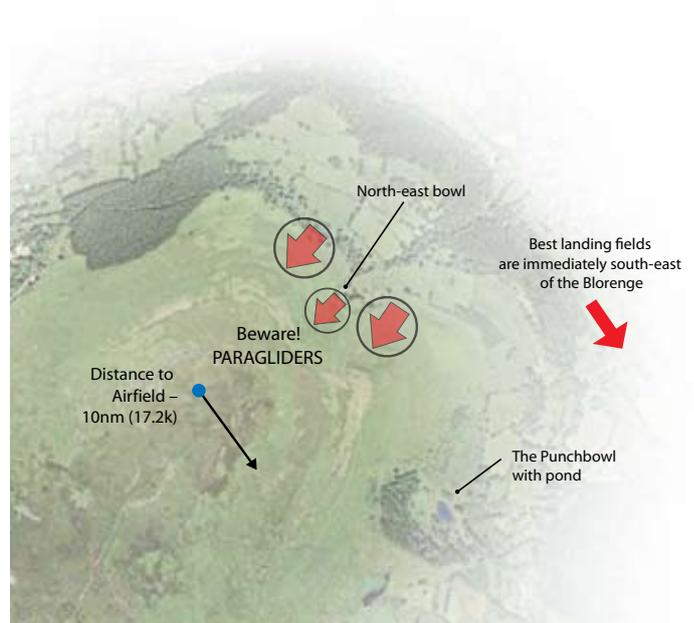


# Usk Ridge Soaring

A guide to local soaring opportunities for the aspiring pilots of tomorrow

## The Blorenges

### North-Westerly to North-Easterly



#### North-westerly

This hill during a north-westerly wind is one of the most reliable and safe hills around.

Coming from Usk via aerotow the sailplane first has to work its way past the north-east bowl above Abergavenny, probably below hill top level, and swing around to the long slope facing north-west with the main road to Blaenavon climbing up below. Keeping well close to the hill if low (1,400ft) or the wind light, lift will be encountered all along right into the dark bowl below Pen-ffordd-goch pond (easily visible and a good wind indicator), in fact this often works very well.

On most north-west days, the hill usually tops out at around 2,300ft depending upon your wing-loading. Easily enough to get home considering the tail wind component. The generally accepted minimum safe requirement would be 2,000ft. Never cross the hill to get back nor go too close to the NE bowl as the 'clutching hands' will remove all your valuable height. Instead, to avoid the downwash, fly out into the valley over Abergavenny where the air is good and line up for home there. Remember to fly at a speed that will maximise the tailwind component.

The hill works well and the surrounding air is often 'good' as the airmass is directed down the Crickhowell valley and is squeezed between the Blorenges jutting out from the south and the lower shoulders of the Sugar Loaf to the north. This condition is always conducive to good thermal generation.

The Blorenges can get a bit boring soaring just this short ridge. It is mainly a good starting place for exploring further afield, or as a 'rescue' point when in need of height in the mountains. In this wind the Brecon Beacons beckon.

In a north-westerly the paragliders and hang-gliders do not use this ridge. So there is not a safety issue *other* than with other gliders.

#### North-easterly

The bowl together with its two forward spurs facing north-east overlooking Abergavenny work well. However if you are low then a turn has to be made right into the bowl which can be quite exciting as the turn of the glider is close to the circumference of the hill. In most north-easterly days the conditions provide thermals off the hill and there is little use in remaining low on the hill. Pushing forward in-to-wind picks up the new thermals being triggered over Abergavenny by the huge bulk of air trying to by-pass the hill. The highest point of the Blorenges is 1,800ft.

Once above the top, there is nearly always a good thermal to take you higher and if you are lucky, into wave. Once again, this hill is used as a jumping off point for the Hatterrall Hill ridge or the Brecon Beacons. Getting home from here should not present problems but remember you are going cross-wind and have to fly further through the air than the distance on the ground.

**By far the biggest problem encountered is that if the wind is not too strong, you will be sharing the hill with paragliders and this inhibits one from using the best bits. Keep a good lookout as they will be from hill top up to cloudbase.**

#### Easterly and south-easterly

A very rare event, but the south-east slopes of the Blorenges do work in true hill-lift but the thermals help a lot more. The potential of the direction is marred by the outlier hills which break up the airflow, resulting in a rather weak lift. The ridges further towards Pontypool will be better.

