

Here are a few thoughts to help newcomers to Snowdonia to avoid getting caught out by some of the peculiar flying conditions we get around here. These notes focus on sites that are flown most frequently and where accidents have occurred in the past.

Moel y Ci

When soaring on the WSW side of the hill watch out for the sea breeze sneaking in from the NNE or N (yes that means over the back). If you are thermalling with good height in front of the hill on the SW side, you can get caught out when coming back down to the hill to top land. Don't find yourself in lee and rotor at ridge top height or just below because the sea breeze has sneaked in! When thermal soaring watch out for the obvious sea breeze signs like convergence cloud and use stuff like smoking chimneys as indicators of the wind direction in the distance esp over the back.

Glyder

A big hill with lots of rocks...most hazards are obvious. It is worth noting that the ridge to the E of take off is flat topped generally grassy and broad. To the W of take off the top of the mountain is almost completely rock covered with irregular boulders. The extreme W of the ridge top is narrow and drops precipitously into Cwn Idwal.

When there is a dynamic soarable breeze low down (and especially in winter) it can be very windy over the top of the ridge. On thermic days that start off light, sea breeze coming up the Gwynant valley can make it windier down in the valley than over the ridge. Often Siabod gives some shelter to the valley in front of the Glyder (where it is locally less windy than expected). Be aware that winds may be stronger outside of this zone if you go down wind.

Berfedd

Thermal days

A small rounded hill in the axis of a Y shaped valley system. Berfedd works when there is East in the wind. More often than not on thermic days sea breeze will come up the Gwynant valley or the Llanberis pass. Get ready for a remarkably quick change in conditions. Typically an E breeze will switch to S or NW depending on which way the sea breeze comes in. Don't hang around on this site if the wind is dropping! Fly while you can and take the minimum you need to soar. Scratching when the sea breeze is just behind the hill is risky. If you suspect the sea breeze is nearing the hill you can try for the convergence ahead of it. Fly out (to the SE of the nose is often a good place to look for a climb) and don't scratch close. You will be rewarded with a very strong climb if you catch it right.

Soaring days

When it is easy to soar Berfedd it is often much more windy in the mountains outside of this Berfedd shelter zone. If you venture into the Snowdon horse-shoe

on such days you may well get stuck in a venturi in the gap between Snowdon and Llewlydd and between Carnedd Ugain and Crib Goch. Pilots have had accidents and lucky escapes after being blown back through these gaps in the ridge-line.

Elio

The sea breeze affects this hill a lot, but at least it comes onto, (or thereabouts) the face of the hill. If soaring early in the day expect the wind to strengthen a lot and quite suddenly as the sea breezes start to work. The ridge top is narrow on the NW facing rib extending from the TO to the summit of Elio.

To sum up... In my opinion there are two main factors that are rather typical of this area that might not be obvious to someone new to flying here. Taking account of these will probably make your flying safer and give you a better flight.

Sea Breezes.

Take account of these. Try to decide and ask locals opinions on If when and up which valley the sea breeze is likely to come on a given day.

Shelter zones

The area around Befedd and Glyder is often subject to some degree of sheltering from the prevailing wind. If your flight starts here and goes XC take account that you are starting in the shelter. This is particularly important if you are using dynamic lift of the ridges to start your journey.

Happy flying!

Brad