

From Stuart Ormerod

20th October 2008

Dear Members of GWOCGB,

I have made a decision not to appeal through the National Committee against my expulsion from GWOCGB. There would be no point. I have at last been told what I am supposed to have done wrong but I have also learned that the Committee have interpreted (or rather have deliberately misinterpreted) the Constitution in a way which guarantees the outcome they want. I am allowed appeal against only *some* of their allegations against me; presumably therefore I still get expelled for the ones I *can't* appeal against. Just to make sure they get rid of me, they have also decided that the Constitution does not prevent the Committee Members who have already voted unanimously to expel me being involved in the appeal hearing either. Nice and impartial it would be then. Oh, and they get to choose who else sits on the appeal panel with them too. Bit of a foregone conclusion? I think so.

All this would be staggeringly manipulative if they hadn't been doing that sort of thing to me and to Lancs & Lakes all year long. Sorry to have to tell you guys, but your National Committee, or at least some of them, have been behaving like a bunch of self-serving crooks this past year and more. No price is too high for the Club or its Members to pay as long as they get to stay in control, shut me up and get me out.

The allegations against me are also things they have cobbled together retrospectively and are really nothing more than puffed up nonsense. For example: if I had sued the Club and succeeded (and the Club would therefore have been judged to have published a libel) then I would have brought the Club into disrepute by taking that action. (It wouldn't have been the Committee who brought the Club into disrepute by publishing the libel on the Forum in the first place.) So while I didn't actually sue, I would have brought the Club into disrepute if I had, so therefore I did. Bit of nonsense in there somewhere? (That's one of the allegations I am not allowed to appeal against.)

I am also alleged to have brought the Club into disrepute by offering a "GWOCGB politics-free weekend" at the Blackpool Light Parade on its website. This is deemed to imply to non-GWOCGB members that GWOCGB politics is somehow not entirely good and wholesome and therefore defames the Club. The fact that I took it off promptly when the Chairman asked (well actually he demanded, and threatened to shut the Light Parade website down) is said to *prove* that it was defamatory. I can't appeal against that one either. Of course implied criticism of GWOCGB politics appears on other websites too, including the public area of its own Forum and the Steve Saunders Forum, and on some Regional websites. People often say they would rather be riding their bikes than having to put up with all this politics. Are those websites also to be threatened with a shut down to preserve this illusion that GWOCGB politics are what would really turn people on at the Blackpool Light Parade? And are all those critics to be expelled too? Will there be anyone left?

Mike Pearce called me a liar again (four times) at the (private) Borders Meeting; I got angry and told him that if he stood up at a public meeting and called me a liar again, as he had done in February, I

would sue him and bankrupt him. I am deemed by the Committee to have committed an act of violence against Mike by saying this; words can hurt you see. Mike calling me a liar repeatedly wasn't hurtful or violent, just me threatening to bring him to account for it; that was really violent.

And by explaining that I never intended to sue the Club for money back in January, just to use the law if necessary in order to force the Committee to start moderating the Forum according to their own Forum Rules, I was allegedly being disruptive. Presumably it wouldn't have been disruptive if I had wanted money instead, that would have been OK. Or was it *explaining* that I hadn't wanted any money that was so disruptive?

The reason for bringing violence and disruptiveness into the allegations is so that the Committee can invoke Rule 7(b) which authorises, indeed *requires*, them to deal promptly with violent or disruptive behaviour at recognised events. The Committee have claimed a dubious right under this Rule to settle the matter themselves (without a disciplinary hearing) and so justify their decision to expel me. Of course this Rule is really about punch ups at WingDings and Treffens and is really about obliging them to act promptly to deal with such incidents. But by labelling what I am supposed to have done as *violent and disruptive* some four months after it allegedly took place, they have justified using (some would *abusing*) this Rule to bypass a disciplinary hearing and get me out of the Club. This Rule has also been abused to justify their decision to deny me an impartial appeal.

It took 35 days after the decision to expel me was made to let me know what I was supposed to have done wrong, not least because all Committee Members had to agree to its contents before the email could be sent to me. Clearly the allegations were cobbled together after they expelled me in order to try to justify what they did.

Why did they suddenly decide to expel me anyway? And why did they then *insist* to the Lancs & Lakes Reps that I could not be allowed to attend the already-arranged Lancs & Lakes EGM, at which my side of the story was at last to be heard? And why, when the this EGM was therefore rebadged as a "Meeting of L&L Friends" so that I could still be heard, did they write to all L&L Members saying the EGM had been *cancelled* and set up a meeting of their own the day before, which I could still be prevented from attending? And when the "Meeting of Friends" did take place anyway and I was heard, Lancs & Lakes Members immediately asked to be able to sign a petition to the Committee to get my expulsion reversed. This all links together; the National Committee *really* don't want my side of the story to be heard, do they?

So I am afraid I have given up on GWOCGB's National Committee. They are a bunch of rogues who will stop at nothing to get rid of me and stop me telling my side of the story, blowing their scams. And they are wrecking the Club in the process. If you think the National Committee can be made to stop wrecking the Club and start helping its Members to run events instead of obstructing them, you have a go. I've given it up as hopeless. I think they have to go; it's the only way.

Think of this letter as an appeal to Club Members to get the National Committee to start doing right for a change and stop expelling members on trumped up allegations by tying the Constitution in knots. If enough of you speak up they might even start listening. The Membership did overrule them about refusing to allow Lancs & Lakes to advertise the 2008 Light Parade in Wingspan. Do it again!

So, if you would like to hear the other side to the hot story of the GWOCGB year from an ex-Member, here it is. It's gone on for over a year, so even the bones of it make a bit of a long story. Sorry about that but if you want to know what really happened there can be no short version.

The past twelve months or so have been extremely damaging for the Club. Although the 2008 Blackpool Light Parade was a great success and very fulfilling for me for that reason, this certainly has not been a fun GoldWing year for me at all. Becoming the Club Pariah had knock on effects for other Lancs & Lakes Members too, because in some people's eyes they got tarred by my brush and that really wasn't fair. The events of 2008 have at the very least taken the edge off a lot of people's fun. No one regrets all this more than I do. If I could turn the clock back and handle things differently in order to avoid what has happened then of course I would do it like a shot.

So what was I trying to achieve at the turn of last year and did I really do that unthinkable and unforgivable thing, threaten to sue my own Club and therefore sue all my fellow Members?

Just before Christmas 2007, having taken over from Bob Summers as Lead Organiser, I launched the 2008 Light Parade on the Public Area of the Club's Forum. I had planned for an ambitious expansion for 2008, with the aim of making the Light Parade a real showcase Event for the Club, attractive to Members and non-Members alike, not least as a way of trying to reverse the Club's declining numbers. I had already convinced HondaUK to support it, the first time they had agreed to attend a GWOCGB Event for many years, and I was very enthusiastic and upbeat about the whole thing. We were planning to bring a Drill Team over from America to display their skills too and HondaUK had agreed to lend us four new GL1800s for their use. It was going to be quite an Event.

One of the many new features I listed in the Forum Launch was that the Parade itself would have much better marshalling and it would be for GoldWings only. Almost immediately a lady Member posted asking, politely enough at first, whether this would mean she couldn't ride her non-GoldWing in the Parade this year. I replied, also politely, that yes it would mean that and I explained why, including that we had been instructed by the National Committee that the Event *must* be for GoldWings only. She reacted with an outspoken and colourful posting expressing her outrage. Actually, to call a spade a spade, she threw a selfish tantrum. Other Members posted in her support, claiming a right, as Members, to demand that she, as of right, be allowed to ride her non-GoldWing in the GoldWing Light Parade. I tried to calm the situation in various ways, especially by offering to check again with the National Committee, to see if we could be more flexible. But the row continued to build and turned into personal criticism of me, especially by Clive Nicholson (aka Black Bart, also Webmaster) who said the Committee would have made no such ruling and that I was lying to cover up my own error.

What I had hoped would be a well received launch of our new and ambitiously expanded 2008 Light Parade had become a PR disaster. In my eyes this was projecting the worst possible image of the Club on its public Forum: selfish demands, aggressive argument and personal abuse. This was completely trashing the BLP launch. Whatever I tried there was no stopping it. I had asked the Events Secretary and the Acting Chairman for help by phone and email but it was Christmas; they were out of touch.

I had been called a liar by Black Bart on the Forum and his nastiness was neither welcome nor pleasant, but I wasn't so thin skinned as to be unduly concerned about that; his postings are habitually and self-evidently arrogant and destructive, so I felt that Forum viewers would mostly see his personal attack on me for what it was. But I was seriously concerned about the trashing of the Light Parade launch. This was a public disgrace for the Club, the very opposite of the image we should be trying to project to Wingers who could be attracted to the Light Parade and might become, or become again, Members of the Club.

Things got even worse on Boxing Day when the Acting Chairman, Colin Topley, started a new Thread (thankfully in the Members Area) posting that he had been watching the thread with interest (why hadn't he rung or emailed me back?) and was concerned about the criticism of the National Committee (not about the trashing of the Light Parade launch?) and how could anyone even *think* the Committee would specify GoldWings only, which they hadn't. Black Bart posted again saying told-you-so (although rather more nastily than that) and I felt I had no alternative to posting a copy of the letter from the National Committee instructing us that the "Event must be for GoldWings only" and therefore proving the Acting Chairman wrong.

It didn't help much, especially with Black Bart who simply switched to another line of personal attack on me. By New Years Eve I decided that the only thing to be done was to get both Threads taken off the Forum altogether, in the hope we could somehow start the Light Parade's launch again.

I had little hope of getting any support for the removal of the two Threads just because they were destructive or abusive, because this sort of thing, although thankfully not usually on this scale, was not uncommon on the Forum. And it was already clear from the difficulties we had getting Recognition that the National Committee were not the least supportive of the 2008 Light Parade. But Black Bart's postings were libellous, and this was therefore leverage I could use if necessary to force removal. I had previous experience of the National Committee refusing to do what they should be doing. It shouldn't be necessary to force their hand but it almost certainly would be.

So when Debbie refused point blank to do anything when I complained to her, I threatened to go to the Club's webhosting company (following a tip from an expert friend, who had told me this was also powerful leverage) and if necessary to take legal action to force removal. At no stage did I express any interest in compensation or anything like that – my only interest, and the only demand I made, was for removal of the offending Threads and a statement apologising for releasing information about a complaint which should have been kept private and poor Forum moderation which also committed the Club to better moderation in future. I did not seek a personal apology, indeed I was trying quite hard to keep my own name out of it. I issued an ultimatum about going to the webhosting company unless the Threads were removed but I also made it clear that I had only taken legal advice informally from my own daughter.

During our exchange of emails Debbie asked me to spell out what I meant by a threat to the Club's funds, which was the indirect way I had been implying legal action and therefore lawyer's fees. Rather naively I did so, giving Debbie the quotes she used selectively, and so devastatingly, at the February Open Meeting. Debbie read out extracts of my emails (choosing the juicy bits of course, and overlooking the bits in which I had wound the legal threat right down and suggested how to

achieve closure) and she used the pretext of seeking approval for the Committee's decision to spend £1,360 plus VAT on a lawyer's advice, which of course added to the sense of outrage. She didn't mention that the Club is entitled to free legal expenses under its PLI cover, or that the Committee hadn't approached the Lawyer until over a week after the problem had been substantially resolved and just needed finishing off. From start to finish, my exchanges with Debbie had lasted only six days.

And the rest, as they say, is history. As far as I was concerned I was only ever threatening to use the law to force Debbie to do what she should have been doing anyway, for the benefit of the Light Parade and the Club, not for any personal reason at all. But as far as the Members of the Club had been led to believe I was suing the Club – and I was therefore making an attack upon all Members for selfish reasons – and I was demanding a *personal* apology. I think I can be forgiven for suspecting that I had been deliberately stitched up by people who didn't care tuppence about the Light Parade.

As the year went on I was subjected to more and more in the way of personal attacks on the Forum and also at Open Meetings. Everything I did or said was taken or seen in the worst possible light. I never quite got accused of casting spells from afar over someone's pet budgerigar, but this was probably only because no one's budgerigar died this year.

Ironically a few days before the Light Parade the Club's Chairman emailed the Organisers claiming that the Light Parade website was defaming the Club (by promising a weekend of enjoyment which would be free from GWOCGB politics) and threatening to go to our webhosting company (and therefore get our website shut down) unless the item was removed immediately. No friendly phone call then, just a bald demand and a threat by email. Although it didn't seem remotely libellous to me, I nevertheless promptly removed the item as I couldn't risk the website being shut down so close to the event. So it was OK for the Club to threaten one of its Regions because of an alleged libel, but not the other way around.

This whole mess on the Forum and elsewhere – of arguments, personal attacks and attempts to obstruct, boycott and even to wreck Lancs & Lakes's Light Parade – started because the National Committee told the Organisers it "must be for GoldWings only" in an officious and misleading way. They should have also told us, in a helpful way, about the sensitive issue of exceptions for Members' spouses and partners; this unwritten rule about whether non-GoldWings are allowed on camping fields, which people got so hot under the collar about and none of us Organisers even knew about. That is of course a weakness of unwritten rules; some feel very passionately about them and want to apply them to anything and everything when it suits them, but not everyone knows about them.

Mike Pearce's formal letter instructing us "For and on behalf of GWOCGB" that our Event must be for GoldWings only was officious, pompous and restrictive when it should have been friendly, supportive and informative. There are no excuses either for Events Secretary Chris Hinds' failure to contact us or to advise us to make an exception for spouses and partners. He should have been welcoming and helpful to our ambitious expansion of the Light Parade for the Club's benefit instead of silent and distinctly unhelpful. If Debbie Major had stepped in promptly to moderate the Forum when things were getting argumentative and personal in the Public Area, the problems could also have been nipped in the bud. So if Chris Hinds, Mike Pearce, Colin Topley (Acting Chairman) and

Debbie Major had done their jobs even half decently around the turn of the year and had acted in the Club's interests rather than the National Committee's or their own, none of the unfriendliness which has been so destructive to the Club during 2008 would have happened.

My colleagues on the Lancs & Lakes Committee have been unhesitatingly and unstintingly supportive throughout the year and we have stayed friends in the best sense of what the Club is about; none of them jumped to any conclusions, in spite of what must have been some temptation, and they tolerated my mistakes, of which there have been quite a few. With some exceptions, Lancs & Lakes as a whole also remained supportive of its Committee and me throughout a difficult year too, and I was enormously grateful for their patience and open-mindedness – and of course for their spontaneous offer at that Meeting to sign a petition to get my expulsion lifted.

And I also owe thanks to the many Members of GWOCGB from other Regions who came along to the Light Parade in spite of all the nasty "politics" during the year and helped to make it the happy, successful and politics-free weekend that it turned out to be.

So for those of you who have an interest in fairness as well as friendship among Wingers, and of course that other vital ingredient, an open mind, I have written this letter. I have also appended some questions which I hope the National Committee will answer about their activities during 2008. These take the lid off what the Light Parade Organisers have had to put up with during the past year. I would have tried to put these questions to the National Committee myself if they had turned up for the Lancs & Lakes EGM, to which they were invited and at which Lancs & Lakes Committee was hoping to start looking forward again after a year of hard graft, coping with adversity and keeping schtum. Maybe some of you would like these questions answered by the National Committee too and would consider putting them at the AGM, from which of course I have been excluded.

After this very difficult year I very much hope that Lancs & Lakes can stay intact as a group, enjoying GoldWings together, as we have done for the past two or three years under the excellent leadership of Bob, Frank and Pete. Likewise I hope that your own local groups continue to thrive, especially Yorkshire Wings, which I never did intend to offend. It is only ever the individuals who behaved so nastily and destructively on the Forum and elsewhere for whom I developed any ill feelings – never any Regional or other group of Wingers with which any of them might be associated.

Nor of course was my reference to Grimsby Fishwife at the Borders Meeting intended to offend anyone; it was just a way of getting across how powerful and pivotal the impact of a particular posting had been on the sequence of events. I didn't mention a name. The offensiveness arose when someone else decided to leak the NC's minutes – maliciously of course. Yet another opportunity was being taken to stir up trouble, even though it was bound to hurt someone in the process. There was never supposed to be any release of those Border minutes, which Chris Hinds wanted taken purely for his own purposes; he gave his word about that as the Borders Meeting began, and again as it finished. And GWOCGB is supposed to be a friendly Club.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Ormerod

These questions for the National Committee are a long read too but please persevere; they are quite revealing about what has gone on and they should cover most of what you might want to know.

Questions for Chris Hinds:

1. Members of the National Committee have a duty to support events which are being run for the benefit of Members – the Committee isn't just here to exercise a veto or chuck spanners in the works. Do you accept that?
2. Could you tell us about anything which you did, either as Events Secretary or Chairman, to help Lancs & Lakes make a success of the 2008 Light Parade?
3. You were sent copies of all the Light Parade Planning Progress Summaries, starting before the 2007 AGM. Did you read or respond to any of them in any way, for example with suggestions or words of caution?
4. The Planning Summaries raised issues like the need for the National Committee to get involved in organising future Blackpool Light Parades because the event was becoming a major feature of the GWOCGB calendar and there was a danger that it would outgrow L&L's capacity to run it alone. Would it not have been a good idea to at least respond to this?

Recognition for the 2008 Light Parade – and the Club's unwritten rules

5. At the Reps Meeting before the 2007 AGM, when Bob and Frank, our Reps at the time, sought to get the date for the 2008 BLP into the Club calendar, you gave no indication that there were going to be any special difficulties over Recognition for the 2008 BLP and it was only when you were reading out the list of future events at the AGM itself that you excluded the 2008 BLP on the grounds that it had not yet been granted Recognition. You were Events Coordinator – why didn't you tell us there was a problem this year instead of letting us find out that way?
6. When the Committee discussed Recognition for the BLP at its December 2007 Meeting, you were aware that Mike Pearce had written to us officially "For and on behalf of GWOCGB" telling us that the Event "must be for GoldWings only". Is that correct?
7. What did you understand "must be for GoldWings only" in that letter to mean – and if it didn't mean what it says, why did you, as Events Secretary, not tell us?

The row on the Forum

8. When all the fuss kicked off on the Forum about the 'GoldWings-only' issue you were away on holiday somewhere and out of touch. I left phone messages and sent you an email explaining our difficulty sticking to what the National Committee had told us we had to do, because Members were quoting unwritten rules at us, and asking you to tell us what these rules were. Shouldn't you have responded to that request for help as soon as you could?
9. But you didn't respond to my email or phone calls at all. Isn't that correct?
10. Instead you posted on the Forum on New Years Eve explaining that you had not logged on to emails since December 20th and promised to get in touch with me as soon as you got home. You never did get in touch with me, did you?
11. Five days later, on January 5th, you posted your decision that spouses and partners are entitled to ride non-GoldWings in the Blackpool Light Parade. You hadn't made any contact with me or anyone else involved with the Light Parade. Instead you decided to apply the unwritten rule for access to camping events to the Light Parade. Is that correct?
12. The Light Parade, along crowded streets in the dark with lots of lights and noise as distractions, presents different safety and other considerations from those of a weekend camping event with a daytime ride out – so wouldn't it have been sensible (or at the very least courteous) to talk to us before posting your decision?
13. Would it be fair to say that in posting your decision you were solving *your* problem of keeping on the right side of the baying crowd on the Forum, rather than helping us to solve *our* problem of the trashing of the Light Parade launch?

The Border Wing Ding Meeting

14. The meeting between Lancs & Lakes Committee and the National Committee at the Border Wing Ding was held at the request of the Lancs & Lakes Reps. It was aimed at building bridges because of the suspicions and distrust which had developed between the two Committees. It was to be private and informal in the hope that problems could be discussed openly and bridges could be built. The Lancs & Lakes people travelled to Darlington because the National Committee would be there anyway for the Border Wing Ding so it would save the Club money. Is that correct?
15. As we arrived, you introduced a lady who was to take minutes for you, explaining that these were to be for your own purposes and not for release to anyone. Is that correct?

16. And as the meeting concluded four hours or so later, I asked you to confirm that the minutes would not be released to anyone without agreement and you did so. Is that correct?
17. Towards the end of July a set of typed-up minutes were sent by email to one of the Lancs & Lakes Joint Reps without any indication that they were intended for release. Nor was any request made for them to be checked and agreed. Indeed the file containing them was password protected so that it could not be altered. Is that correct?
18. The Lancs & Lakes Joint Rep, Pete, was subsequently asked and then *instructed* to release these minutes to L&L Members shortly afterwards – but he refused, on the grounds that they were not agreed minutes, nor accurate, and there was never supposed to be any release of minutes anyway. Someone on the National Committee then put it about to L&L members that the L&L Committee were hiding things. They invited some Lancs & Lakes Members to read them at the Treffen behind their Reps' backs. Isn't that correct?
19. At the meeting which the National Committee convened on October 11th at the Preston Marriott Hotel, I am told that in response to specific challenges it was acknowledged that the National Committee's minutes of the Border Meeting were not accurate or complete. Is that correct?
20. You gave us your personal assurance at the Borders Meeting that minutes were being taken purely for your own purposes and you confirmed to me personally at the end of the Meeting that they would not be released without agreement. Why did you break your word?
21. At the Borders Meeting, Pete Rodgers said he had recorded the February Open Meeting on his mobile phone by accident while it was in his pocket – and there was a comical interval while we all ostentatiously switched off our phone and assured each other that we were not recording *this* meeting. In fact Pete had done no recording at all, as we in Lancs & Lakes all knew, so we were just as taken aback by what he said as everyone else. The truth emerged as we drove home; he had become so mistrustful of the National Committee that he decided to put temptation in their way to see if they would leak this potentially damaging, but actually completely false, information. Sure enough, at the next opportunity – the Open Meeting in early July – Mike Pearce announced that someone had recorded the previous Open Meeting. So we had discovered, or rather confirmed yet again, that the Club's General Secretary cannot be trusted to keep private things private. Was the decision to leak private information purely Mike's or was the whole Committee aware that he was going to do it?
22. Would it be fair to say that you and your colleagues thought we were coming to you cap in hand at the Borders Meeting because the Light Parade was in trouble?

23. And so you offered help, without specifying how you might help, providing we re-adopted Recognition (and so came back under your thumb) and of course providing Lancs & Lakes accepted that one way or another I would have to be disowned and leave the Club. Is that correct?
24. And you were dumbfounded when Pete Rodgers phoned you two days later to tell you that our Region had voted unanimously in support of the Organising Committee's recommendation, to continue running the Light Parade independently. Is that correct?
25. From our viewpoint there had been no meeting of minds at all at the Borders Meeting – we could not rely on you for any worthwhile help, even if we re-adopted Recognition. Nor could we trust you to keep a private Meeting private. And we were right, weren't we?

Casting doubt on the Light Parade's PLI cover

26. Two or three weeks before the Light Parade you emailed one of the L&L Reps expressing concern that the PLI which we had arranged (the same as the Club's, through BMF) did not provide adequate cover and that additional insurance was required but without explaining why or what sort. I checked and re-checked with BMF and they confirmed the standard cover as perfectly adequate. I emailed you saying so and asking you to explain precisely why you thought there was a problem and what sort of extra cover was necessary but you didn't reply. Was there really a problem or were you just chucking a last minute spanner in the works?

Threatening to take down the BLP Website

27. During the final week before the Light Parade you emailed the Organisers objecting to an item on the BLP website promising a GWOCGB politics-free zone for the weekend. This item was clearly written in a light hearted spirit but you saw it as defamatory to the Club and you threatened to contact our webhosting company (and therefore shut the BLP website down) unless the offending item was removed. Wasn't that a bit over-sensitive of you, compared with what the Club tolerates on its own Forum and wasn't this a rather heavy-handed way of going about asking for it to be removed – and couldn't you have simply rung up the L&L Rep to ask him to have it taken off?
28. There were many opportunities for you to make a phone call to the L&L Reps during 2008 to offer information or advice or to nip a problem in the bud. Why did you never once do so?

Questions for Duncan Mitchell:

29. Members of the National Committee have a duty to support events which are being run for the benefit of Members – the Committee isn't just here to exercise a veto or chuck spanners in the works. Do you accept that?
30. I sent you an email asking for help to promote the BLP internationally late last year and you replied saying that you would reply to the Regional Reps . Why wouldn't you reply to me as the BLP's Lead Organiser? Was that a way of putting me in my place?
31. And you didn't contact the Reps as you promised, did you?
32. When I asked you why not at the Borders Meeting, you said it was because the BLP dates clashed with an event already on the GWEF calendar. Is that correct?
33. And when I emailed you later, having checked, to point out that there never had been a clash with any GWEF dates, you apologised for misleading me and explained that there had originally been a clash, before the 2008 BLP dates were changed to three weeks later. But the 2008 BLP dates hadn't ever been moved – they were three weeks later than 2007 right from the outset and the email asking for your help was sent well after the 2008 BLP dates had been declared. You never contacted our Reps as you promised because you had no interest in helping to promote the BLP internationally, had you?

Questions for Mike Pearce:

34. Members of the National Committee have a duty to support events which are being run for the benefit of Members – the Committee isn't just here to exercise a veto or chuck spanners in the works. Do you accept that?

Recognition for the 2008 Light Parade

35. After the 2007 AGM you wrote to me explaining the Committee's concerns and spelling out certain requirements for Recognition, the first one of which was "The application would need to conform with GWOCGB Constitution item (5) (B) (ii)." I looked this up to discover that it requires the application to be submitted in writing and by the Regional Rep. But the application had already been made well before the AGM in the same informal way as in previous years. Was this your way of putting me in my place or were you just being awkward for awkwardness's sake?

36. You also wrote “we feel that it must be a GoldWing only event” and the letter was signed formally “For and on behalf of GWOCGB”, which we took to mean that this was a definite instruction from the National Committee. Is that not a reasonable thing for us to have done?
37. In retrospect do you think that the overall tone and content of your letter could have been less officious, pompous and unhelpful and more encouraging, supportive and informative?
38. In my reply, I pointed out that everything you had raised in your letter had already been covered in the Planning Progress Summaries which I had sent you. Did you ever read them?

Declaring your intention to discipline me

39. At the Open Meeting in February, you stood up and announced that I had upset your partner Dorothy, I had lied to the National Committee and to my own Organising Committee (by denying that I had threatened to sue the Club) and you declared your intention to discipline me for it. Isn't there a fundamental requirement in the Club's Constitution that if a disciplinary hearing is to be held, the complaint must be made privately and in writing, so as not to compromise fairness to the person being complained about?
40. And wouldn't you, as General Secretary, be expected to be the one person in the Club who should certainly know this?
41. So by having your tantrum and blurting out your intentions in an Open Meeting at which all the Committee and Reps were likely to be present, weren't you compromising any prospects of a fair disciplinary hearing from the word go?
42. And after that Open Meeting, you sent an email to all Regional Reps announcing that you had tried, but failed, to find a way of disciplining me – adding that I had escaped on a technicality by having myself named at the Meeting. But wouldn't I have had to know what you were planning to do in advance to have achieved this, and since you didn't even know yourself that you were going to do it until your temper took control, wasn't this a rather ridiculous claim to be making?
43. And wasn't your email really just a way of increasing the impact of what you had already done at an Open Meeting, by spreading your personal attack upon me across the whole Club?
44. And wasn't emailing all Regions to make a personal smearing attack on another Member an abuse of the Club's Regional emailing system?
45. Was this appropriate behaviour for the General Secretary and therefore the guardian and administrator of the Club's rules and procedures?

Blocking my Forum Access

46. You have been quoted as saying that it was the Webmaster, Clive Nicholson (aka Black Bart), who wanted to block my Forum access in March and that he threatened to quit as Webmaster unless the Committee went along with this – which you described as blackmail. Is that true?

Minutes of the Border Meeting

47. At the Borders Meeting, I told you all that after we abandoned Recognition I had been worried about having to tell HondaUK that we were now running the BLP independently of our National Club, fearing they would withdraw support. But that much to my surprise they promptly offered more support – personal appearances by their BSB Riders Leon Haslam and Cal Crutchlow, and Leon's famous father Ron Haslam, and TT Rider John McGuinness – I could hardly believe my ears. HondaUK were clearly not in the least put out. I was told that HondaUK had given up trying to have any dealings with GWOCGB's National Committee after years of failed attempts. A conversation between a Member of the National Committee and a Honda Manager at the NEC Show in late 2007 was apparently "the last nail in the coffin". This story must have taken two or three minutes for me to relate and it was followed by a stunned silence when you all looked at each other trying to work out who had done the dirty deed. This would have given the Minutes Secretary plenty of time to make notes. Yet there is no mention of it at all in your minutes of the Borders Meeting. Was this edited out because it was so damning of the National Committee?
48. The subject of a fraud which occurred in the Club and which the National Committee of the time covered up was raised, and Chris and Debbie immediately challenged me to prove that there ever was a fraud. "What fraud, prove it" they said in unison. When I outlined (or rather reminded you all) what happened (pocketing money from the sale of overprinted drink vouchers, which swallowed up the whole of the profit margin on drinks at more than one Treffen) they suggested it could simply have been people serving behind the bar who had dispensed drinks without charging for them or taking free drinks themselves. That was the end of that discussion. But your minutes of the Borders Meeting includes a much more elaborate and articulate denial of the fraud which was clearly written into the record afterwards. The minutes were edited in order to boost the National Committee's argument against the idea that there had ever been a fraud weren't they?
49. The subject of my membership renewal being in doubt is related in your minutes as if I had spontaneously asked for confirmation that my membership would be renewed. But why on

earth would I suddenly do that out of the blue? What really happened is that Chris and Debbie suddenly felt goaded into revealing their cunning plan to get rid of me this way. Then I pressed them to give a straight answer, which they refused to do. Why is this exchange reflected so completely differently in your minutes?

50. Debbie Major said repeatedly that she didn't want me in "her Club" during the Meeting but that doesn't appear anywhere in your minutes, does it?
51. And Debbie also said that if she could find a way of doing it, she would expel me now. But that doesn't appear in the minutes either, does it?
52. So the items which are missing or misrepresented in your minutes are those which would be unfavourable to the National Committee if reported on truthfully. Isn't that correct?
53. When I used a metaphor about Grimsby Fishwife popping up with her selfish tantrum and then all hell breaking loose, Debbie said with a smile "I can't think of her name but I know who you mean". The Grimsby Fishwife bit appeared in your minutes but Debbie's acknowledgement of its appropriateness as a metaphor disappeared. That isn't surprising either, is it?
54. Long delays in the release of Committee Minutes, a frequent bone of contention at AGMs, have been excused by you by the need for all present to see and approve draft minutes before they can be released. Why, if you wanted your minutes of the Border Meeting to be released, did you send them to only one of the four L&L members who had attended, without any request for checking and in a password-protected file which could not be edited? You never intended to allow L&L's Committee any opportunity to check and correct these minutes before you sprung your demand that they be released to L&L Members, did you?
55. Your minutes of the Border meeting were only sent to Lancs & Lakes in late July, ten weeks after the Meeting and five or six weeks after I emailed asking for confirmation of certain things which had been said by National Committee Members. Was there always a sneaky plan to publish a biased set of minutes of the Border Meeting, despite agreeing that minutes would not be released without agreement, or was it only cooked up when you realised you might have some awkward questions to answer, so you needed to rewrite history?
56. And when you announced at the July Open Meeting that someone had secretly recorded the February Meeting, did it not occur to you that you had been fed false information as a test of your trustworthiness to keep information from a private meeting private – which you therefore failed?

PLI Cover & Legal Expenses Cover

57. Could you confirm that the Club's PLI cover is a benefit of its Affiliation with BMF and that it includes the full cost of legal expenses if the Club or any of its Officers is accused of libel or negligence?
58. Did the Members of the Committee who decided to go to a solicitor independently in January all know about this entitlement to legal expenses cover when they made the decision?
59. Club Members were not told about the entitlement to legal expenses cover when the Committee sought approval of its decision to spend £1,360 plus VAT on a solicitor at the February Open Meeting. Wasn't that a bit underhand and dishonest, or at the very least a bit economical with the truth?
60. As we all know from our own policies, insurers invariably require that, if anything happens which raises any possibility of a claim on a policy, they want to be told straight away and they also want to handle the matter their way – and this applies to the Club's PLI cover in the same way as any other policy. Isn't that correct?
61. In your reply to a Member's question about free legal expenses cover on the Forum, you said that you made the "necessary phone calls" to the Club's PLI Insurer. Did this include checking whether going to your own solicitor would in any way compromise the Club's entitlement to legal expenses, should a claim subsequently materialise?
62. I have an email from BMF, the Club's PLI Insurer, confirming that the only call made to them (or rather directly to the PLI Insurance Broker) on behalf of the Club was in early September, asking if legal fees already incurred by the Club could be reclaimed retrospectively – to which the answer was of course "no". Could you explain why only one phone call was made, and only nine months after the event?
63. I have another email from BMF confirming that, because the matter has already been partly settled (i.e. the Club had taken its own legal advice and acted upon it), no claim would now be considered by the Insurer under the PLI policy, should litigation begin. In other words if the Club actually does get sued – as you said at the time was a serious prospect – by starting the ball rolling with its own solicitor, the Club would have had to pay all legal expenses itself. The legal expenses cover in the PLI policy had been compromised. Were you aware that going to a solicitor independently placed the Club at additional risk in this way when you did it?

64. Would you accept that by exaggerating the number of phone calls you made and implying that you had made a phone call to the Insurer before contacting your own solicitor to set things right (which you hadn't) you were deliberately lying to the Member in your reply on the Forum?
65. Have you also misled the Committee about having secured the free legal expenses cover before deciding to go it alone to a solicitor?
66. You said on the Forum "I hope that most other people who are members of our club have enough faith in their National Committee to realise that we would not waste the club's money for no reason and, therefore, had already asked the question." Now that we know you hadn't made that crucial early phone call to the PLI Insurer and you hadn't received any assurance about PLI cover kicking in later if necessary, aren't you damned by your own words as having seriously failed the Club – as well as lied?

The Club's Legal Advice about the Forum

67. In your letter to me in February rejecting my complaint about the Forum, you wrote "our solicitor, after careful examination of all the relevant documents, states that he is unable to identify, exactly, the comments to which you have taken particular exception or any comments which meet the criteria of defamation of character, as determined in law". You therefore implied that your lawyer dismissed any idea that an actionable defamation had been made altogether. In other words, as it was subsequently put about on the Forum, there is no case to answer. Is that still your interpretation of the legal advice?
68. What your Lawyer actually gets around to saying *as the bottom line*, having gone round the houses a bit, is "the Court might well take the view that such a publication on a public forum might place the writer of that message and the club as owners or publishers of the site at risk." In other words he is saying there probably has been a libel and the Club can be held liable, wouldn't you agree?
69. Likewise *the bottom line* about Clive Nicholson is "... may well have a cause of action against the member known as Black Bart but that is a separate matter." That is also very different from the impression you were trying to create, is it not?
70. The other striking thing about the Lawyer's letter is that he clearly didn't think you had given him the whole story. He asks you to send him the complete composite Thread. And about Black Bart he says: "I am not sure where that gentleman fits into the overall club structure and it may well be that he has overstepped the mark." So you hadn't told your Lawyer that Black Bart is Clive

Nicholson, the Webmaster, i.e. a Club Official, and one of the Forum's Moderators. Isn't this information highly relevant, and doesn't it have substantial implications for the extent of the Club's potential liability?

71. The Lawyer also wrote: "I am aware that the clubs constitution does seek to police by way of rules the message forum and I therefore question how that is actually activated in real terms." Isn't that a polite way of saying, having already pointed out to you that there was at the very least abusive material on the Forum, that the Club is not moderating its Forum properly?
72. Your lawyer also wrote: "the parties should seek to resolve their disputes and it may well be appropriate to write to Mr. Ormerod to seek to obtain detail of his complaints and then to deal with that as a separate non forum based issue. It is conceivable that if the Thread is damaging as maybe alleged that a Statement will need to be published." So he is suggesting that you should try to make contact and to resolve the complaint, correct?
73. What you actually did was to write to me rejecting my complaint entirely and inviting me, on behalf of the Committee, to consider leaving the Club. Do you think this was a sensible way of following your own Lawyer's advice to try to resolve the dispute by agreement, having been told there was a case against you?
74. And at the February Open Meeting, Debbie – presumably having discussed her intentions with the rest of the Committee – decided to read extracts from my private emails to her (which were part of a complaint I was making to her about the conduct of another Member and therefore should have remained private) which revealed that I had threatened legal action. Do you think this was a sensible way to try to resolve the matter, as your lawyer had suggested?
75. Later on during that Open Meeting, you stood up and accused me of lying and announced your determination to discipline me for it. You subsequently emailed every Region announcing your regret that you hadn't been able to find a way of doing so. Do you think this was a sensible way to try to resolve the matter, as your lawyer had suggested?
76. Following the February Open Meeting, another Thread started on the Forum on which I was heavily criticised for threatening to sue the Club and calls were made for me to be to be voted out of the Club and much worse. Hanging was mentioned. You posted on this Thread yourself, thereby condoning the extreme form of personal criticism and abuse which was going on. Do you deny any of this?

Getting rid of me at any price

77. As you look back on the events of late 2007 and 2008, isn't it obvious that the Committee – or at least you and Debbie – had decided by early January at the latest that you wanted me out of the Club and were determined to find a way of doing so?
78. So was Debbie's request for approval for spending money on your Lawyer at the February Open Meeting contrived to that end, and the same for the rush to spend money on legal advice in the first place, so you would then have something nice and juicy to accuse me of?
79. And didn't the pair of you get so obsessed with getting rid of me at any price that you would stop at nothing in the way of wasting the Club's money, damaging the Light Parade, alienating Lancers & Lakes, abusing the Constitution and even risking breaking up the Club?

Questions for Debbie Major:

80. Members of the National Committee have a duty to support events which are being run for the benefit of Members – the Committee isn't just here to exercise a veto or chuck spanners in the works. Do you accept that?
81. Prior to the 2007 AGM you told me that there was far too much deadwood on the National Committee, which was holding back progress. You said that it did not help that one Committee Member in particular was "administratively incompetent". You asked me to consider standing for Events Co-ordinator to follow Chris Hinds, to help with this problem. So you were not above disparaging your Committee colleagues to Club Members and touting around to get your sort of people on to the Committee. Do you deny any of that?

My complaint about Forum Moderation

82. I contacted you by email and subsequently by telephone at the turn of the year to complain about the trashing of the BLP's launch on the Forum and the personal criticism I was being subjected to, especially from Black Bart. It was clear beyond doubt that I was making a complaint about inadequate forum moderation and in particular about Black Bart's conduct on the Forum and asking you to do something about it. Is that correct?
83. But you refused to do anything. You said the "the Forum is the Forum" and you explained that you would only get attacked yourself for censoring it if you took anything off. So your principal

concern from the outset was avoiding being criticised yourself for moderating the Forum. Is that correct?

Your plan to discredit me

84. During our exchange of emails in early January, you asked me to spell out what I meant by the situation presenting a threat to the Club's finances – and then in your subsequent email told me that you hadn't misunderstood me in the first place? Do you deny that?

85. Once you had got a reply in the type of words you were fishing for, you broke off email correspondence and subsequently read out extracts of mine with the specific aim of discrediting me as someone who was threatening to sue the Club. Do you deny that?

86. You stated on the Forum that you removed the Light Parade Threads because someone was threatening to sue the Club. Later, at the Borders Meeting, you admitted that you did this in order to deflect criticism from yourself and onto me. Do you deny that?

87. And at the February Open Meeting, you achieved your aim of bringing criticism down upon me by reading out extracts of private emails which had been sent to you as part of a formal complaint process. Do you deny that?

88. Following the February Open Meeting, another Thread started on the Forum on which I was heavily criticised for threatening to sue the Club and calls were made for me to be voted out of the Club. You made no attempt at any moderation of the extreme ideas and abuse being put forward on this Thread and indeed posted on it yourself, as if this form of personal attack and abuse was acceptable on the Forum of a friendly Club. Do you deny any of this?

89. Forum Moderation is your responsibility and, despite the advice you got from the Lawyer that the arrangements were inadequate, all you did was make everyone re-register. No moderation of the Forum seems to have taken place at all during 2008, apart from the Threads which I forced you to remove. Is that correct?

Black Bart

90. Despite the advice you received from the Lawyer that Black Bart had gone over the top and that there was a cause for action for defamation against him, you allowed him to continue to be a Forum Moderator. Is that correct?

91. A posting by Black Bart on 14th September 2007 which was still viewable on the Forum over a year later – and may still be there even now – reads: "I'm not a f u c k i n Valkyrie rider". All forum software incorporates automatic censorship which weeds out swear words, but Black Bart

has used his special knowledge to bypass this, by spelling phonetically and adding spaces between the letters. Does the existence and persistence of this posting not suggest to you that Black Bart is not a suitable person to be a Forum Moderator – or even to be allowed Forum access at all?

92. At the Border Meeting you read out the following post of Black Bart's and expressed the view that I should not take exception to it, because "if anything" it was critical of someone else, not me: *"Aye Kevin you were very quick to believe Ormerod and slag the committee off in the general open area. Maybe one day you will put your brain in gear before putting your mouth in motion? But somehow I doubt it"*. Quite apart from being gratuitously abusive to Kevin (therefore breaking Forum rules) it also reflects Black Bart's earlier assertion that I had been lying and is therefore defamatory. Does the fact that you regard this sort of post as acceptable not bring into question your own ability to moderate the Forum adequately?
93. At the Border Meeting, when I asked you whether anyone else had complained about Black Bart's postings on the Forum, you said there had been no one else. And when I told you that I knew that wasn't true and that at least one Member had left the Club for that reason after you refused to do anything about the problem, you didn't say you had forgotten him or overlooked him, you said that the Member concerned always pulled everything to pieces and was still active in his Region anyway. In other words you lied, then tried to excuse yourself by saying he didn't count or matter. Do you deny that?
94. In an internet blog of April 2008, another ex-Member wrote about the Club's Forum: "It's lovely though that for every derogatory, ignorant, smart arse, pointless, snide message someone posted against me, I got more emails from the decent members apologising, wishing like me the idiots didn't exist and expressing a desire to stay as friends." Do you accept that your failure to moderate the Forum is a substantial factor in the Club's declining reputation and membership?

Advertising in Wingspan

95. After Recognition was abandoned and prior to the February Open Meeting, you refused a request by Bob Summers to allow Lancs & Lakes to advertise the Light Parade in Wingspan even though he offered to pay for it. Do you deny that?
96. Despite being overruled by the Membership about allowing Lancs & Lakes to advertise the Light Parade in Wingspan, at the Border Meeting you said that would still block Lancs & Lakes from

making use of any of the Club's ways of promoting its Event to Members if you could do so. Do you deny that?

97. So you wanted to actively obstruct the promotion of the Light Parade, a Lancs & Lakes Regional Event, as well as get me out of the Club for crossing you. Do you deny that?

Blocking my Forum Access

98. Everyone who used the Club's Forum was required to re-register in March but my attempts to re-register were mysteriously unsuccessful. Emails which I sent to you asking what the problem was were ignored, as were email enquiries by my Regional Rep on my behalf. Only at the Borders Meeting, ten weeks later, was it revealed to us that my access had been *deliberately* blocked and that it would not be restored. Was this ten week silence a reasonable way for the Committee to behave towards a Club Member and a Regional Rep, even if blocking my Forum access was considered justified?

99. At the Borders Meeting, the only explanation I was offered for the decision to block my Forum access was that I had complained about the Forum – so I was to be denied the use of it. It was also suggested that this was for my own good, since if I did post anything else it would inevitably attract personal criticism. Is that correct?

100. So instead of dealing with the attackers on the Forum, your solution was to dispose of the victim. Is that correct?

101. In the National Committee's minutes of the Borders Meeting, it gives a different version; my Forum access was blocked because I had broken the Forum rules. Which Forum rules had I broken?

102. However, the real reason for blocking my Forum access had nothing to do with any of this, had it? Because Clive Nicholson, Webmaster (aka Black Bart, perpetrator of the libel), took the initiative to throw me off – and he threatened to quit as unpaid Webmaster unless the Committee went along with it. And you submitted to this blackmail, didn't you?

Non-Members of GWOCGB but still Members of a Region

103. A few weeks after the Borders Meeting, I wrote to the Committee asking "before memories start to fade" for confirmation of some of the things which had been said, including confirmation of what you personally had said about the ex-Member who was still active in his Region – so would it be OK for me to leave GWOCGB, as the Committee wanted me to do, yet continue in

Lancs & Lakes? I got a reply six weeks later saying the Committee felt my questions had already been answered at the Meeting and that it did not wish to engage in any further correspondence with me. The opportunity to correct or contradict anything in my letter was not taken. So is it still OK for an individual to leave GWOCGB but remain active in his or her Region?

104. Shortly after this you took the initiative (according to Committee Minutes) to start something of a witch hunt to flush out non-GWOCGB members. This was directed towards a particular Region in which the other ex-Member who complained about Black Bart is still active. You asked the General Secretary to instruct the Regional Rep that ex-Members could not be actively involved in running his Region and ordered him to remove from office those who were. Is that correct?

105. Following this effort to dictate to that Region what they can and cannot do, the GWOCGB logo has disappeared from its website and its Regional Rep is now referred to as their Chairman. Do you accept that this has happened as a direct result of the Committee's attempts to dictate to them?

106. And you were faced with the fact that many Regions allow non-GWOCGB members to be involved in their local meetings and activities, so it is simply not realistic for the Committee to try to stop it. The best you can do is what you tried to do in this case: insist that non-Members of GWOCGB must not be allowed to run a Region. Is that correct?

107. So when you realised that simply declining to renew my membership would not prevent me from remaining active in my Region, especially if I wasn't identified as a Regional Office Holder of any kind, you could no longer rely on refusing to renew my membership – it became necessary to expel me in order to achieve your objective of getting me out of "your Club". Is that correct?

A question for the whole National Committee

108. In the October edition of Wingspan there is a letter from Peter Ware, a former Chairman of GWEF and a former National Committee Member of this Club, which describes the trend in Europe away from centrally-controlled national clubs towards federations of independent local or special interest GoldWing clubs. Both France and Germany have done this.

He invites club committees to face up to the inevitable and to a need for major restructuring. And he suggests that people of vision are needed, people who are prepared to place the needs of all above the needs of the few or their own self interest. He seems to be suggesting that GWOCGB would be much better off without a National Committee which tries to control

everything and that it should be disbanded, in favour of a federation of independent regional clubs.

Do any of you on the National Committee have the vision and selflessness to help the Club to make such a transition?