

# Sir Lowry's DREAMS

Written by SHANE QUINNELL  
Photography by Neil Marx

At Moordenaarspeak looking back towards Gordansbay and launch.

The day started slowly. A light breeze blowing from the west, clear blue skies and the twinkling of the sun's rays on False Bay. Yet launch was still a buzz with many of the pilots in the area hanging around waiting to see what would happen. Barry from Birdmen spurred his foreign group into action and like colourful lemmings they all headed toward turkey. The day was not yet ripe.

As we watched, myself and our crew; Graham, Ben, Niel and Frank eyed the landscape and dreamed. We schemed of flying down the length of the Hottentots Holland ridge right to the back of the valley jumping into the Jonkershoek valley and flying out over Stellenbosch and beyond. Real adventure flying! In reality I am not sure if any of us expected it; many people flew here often and not many people had done it, I had never even flown the site. Then again, dreams can come true.

A yell awoke us from our day dream; "he's up!" One of Barry's group was up and more were following, it was game on!

Within minutes we were off the patch of grass considered the Sir Lowry's launch and into the air. The thermals were still light but slowly we gained height. Above the highway, above launch and then finally above the mountains... the view was breathtaking!

After gaining altitude above the ridge, Frank rounded the troops and we were off toward Moordenaarspeak (the turnaround point on most days). It wasn't long before we were at the peak. With no reason to stop we kept going. Pretty soon we were well past the peak. Again having no reason to stop we kept going.

As we headed North, the mountains got bigger, the valleys deeper and the walk out much, much longer. While Frank, Ben and Niel probably hadn't even considered the walk out, I was in a slightly different position. A mixture of not having a radio and knowing what was going on, plus flying slower meant I had fallen behind the group. In my vain attempt to keep up I had knowingly flown through numerous thermals and was now only about 30m above the ground while the others were above the peaks. The thought of the massive walkout (about 15k at that stage) was very well developed in my mind. Then again, I had light weight kit and there was no way I was going to give up without a shot, so decided to keep going.

The trend continued like this for a long while; my buddies specking out and me grovelling like a bottom feeder. In fact it continued all the way until we hit the end of the valley. Slowly I managed to find and work a thermal and soon I was at ridge height, then above the ridge. Suddenly it struck me... we were at the end of the valley, looking into the next; the Jonkershoek valley! We've made it!

I think that's when the whooping started, and it didn't stop for a while. I know it's cliché but the view from there was without a doubt one of the most beautiful I had seen. The magnitude and amount of mountains and ridge lines stretching in all directions was incredible. The fact that we were seeing a view only a handful of people had ever seen and got to share it with our mates, priceless.



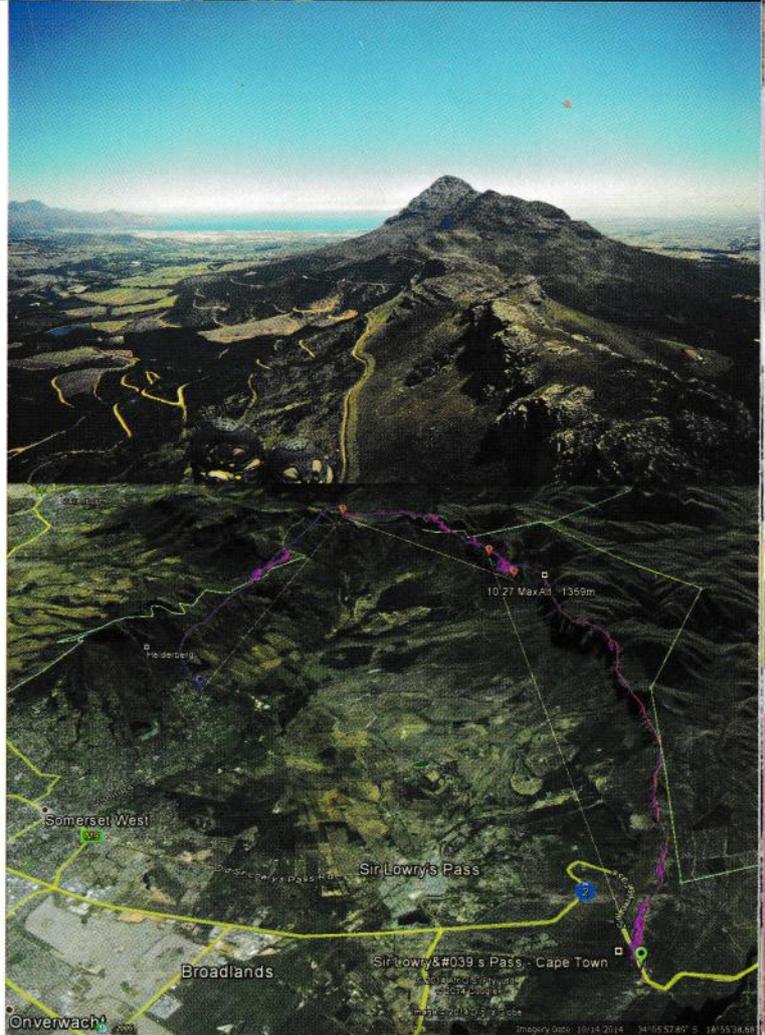
After gawking at the view for a long while all of us, including Graham who had now joined the party, stalked the ridge line looking over into the Jonkershoek all the while considering the plunge. We gained height, hit an inversion and stopped. Unfortunately, none of us were quite sure where the wind was coming from and quite how much rotor we would hit if we did make the jump.

My lack of radio meant I couldn't check anything with others other than on channel-shout and so cross checking ideas was difficult, moral of the story; buy a radio.

Eventually things started to happen. Niel pioneered a route down the opposite Western side of the valley, completing a U-shape flight track past the Helderberg and landing near the golf course. Frank and I followed suit. After getting a little too enthusiastic I jumped a gap early and found myself in a vineyard at the base of the Helderberg. The ever chilled Frank, somehow managed to land inside the golf course and after laughing at Niel for landing outside the huge electrified perimeter fence, proceeded to be offered a beer and lift on a golf cart back to the club house where he waited happily, for the rest of us, beer in hand. Graham in the meantime had flown all the way back to Gordons Bay and landed at a dump site... not even he is sure why.

The mystery was Ben, where was he? My phone rang. The sneaky bugger had managed to jump to Stellenbosch and was currently in his swimming pool with cold beer in hand! What a legend!

For all of us the experience was more than just flying, it was a flight which will be remembered for a lifetime for the sights, sounds and emotions along the way. It was an adventure with buddies who share the same dreams and proof that those dreams can come true! ☺



TOP: At the back of the valley looking towards Helderberg in the foreground.  
MIDDLE: Flying back on the opposite south facing ridge side, with Helderberg in sight.  
ABOVE: Track log of the flight.