

habit of breaking things!" the future, Sandra has big plans. We to go back to Russia for the e added. at advice she would give to open-water swimmer, Sandra do it on your own. thing I watch is my time in the ally heading towards winter." mation, visit the website at swimmingclub.co.uk

KINS

and beyond is something Phil s all about.

keep his feet on the ground, can usually be found gliding an eagles and buzzards in the Cairngorms.

member of the Cairngorm Phil is quite literally flying life, with no plans to stay

when you're up in the air, you s like flying alongside a golden d or an osprey," said Phil.

ht lasts for quite a while re still reliving it several days you a high that lasts for quite

arating first flight in his mid- Phil's lifelong love affair with es.

get your first flight," he said. ub where I learned they drag a steel cable e field behind a tractor you up in the sky against bit like flying a kite.

s a steel cable, I got into the adently; it's a very abrupt e take-off speed is around

n amazing experience. orm Gliding Club where I nch by plane tow, which is so you get off the ground a

s after that first flight, Phil flying expeditions.

y a novel experience to be birds instead of looking up

years flying over the flat rdshire, Phil and his wife Newtonmore and he hasn't e joining the Cairngorm

e of flying around the you get lift from the wind es, called mountain waves, opportunities for extended

one who can drive a car

ke an aircraft without an y sliding down a slope," ke free-wheeling a bike

an keep going down that ntain speed and you're herever you like, as long

ng the mountain ridges walkers. Sometimes the pictures."

er 4, 2021



Phil Hawkins has no plans to stay grounded now he's a pensioner, preferring to fly over the Cairngorms alongside golden eagles.

Soaring through the sky, Phil can reach dizzying heights and even has an emergency bottle of oxygen in his glider in case he goes too high.

"On a good day, you can be anywhere between 5,000 and 6,000 feet high, which is more than a mile high," he said.

"Flying over the mountains is a different kind of flying because you're always hoping to contact mountain waves which take you higher. I've been up to about 18,000 feet and the club altitude record is something like 28,000 feet.

"You need oxygen at that height, of course."

It's clear that gliding not only keeps Phil mentally fit but physically fit too.

"The amount of time that you spend in the air is quite small compared to the amount of time you spend on the ground doing daily inspections, aircraft maintenance and driving the vehicles up and down the airfield," explained Phil.

"There's always a job to do to help somebody else fly - until it's your turn to fly and they help you.

"It's a very sociable sport and it does keep you fit."

Phil plans to continue taking to the skies in his two-seated glider, especially as his wife also enjoys regular trips in the clouds.

"I would just like to go on doing it as long as I can," he insisted.

He hopes his story will inspire younger people to take up gliding as a sport.

"The average age of the club is over 50,

I MISSED AND SLID DOWN A WET STONY SLAB, RIGHT TO THE EDGE. MY FEET WERE DANGLING RIGHT DOWN THE GAP. I WAS ONLY SAVED BY MY RUCKSACK, WHICH JAMMED IN THE GAP AND STOPPED ME FALLING

so we're always looking around for young members to keep the club going in future years," he added.

● For more information about Cairngorm Gliding Club, visit www.gliding.org

ROD CAMPBELL HILL RUNNER/ROCK CLIMBER

They may say that everything goes downhill after you reach a certain age, but for Rod Campbell, there's no better feeling than going downhill.

Body buzzing with a mixture of adrenalin and endorphins, the 75-year-old from Alford feels fitter and stronger than ever as he reaches the bottom of the steep hill he's just run up and back down.

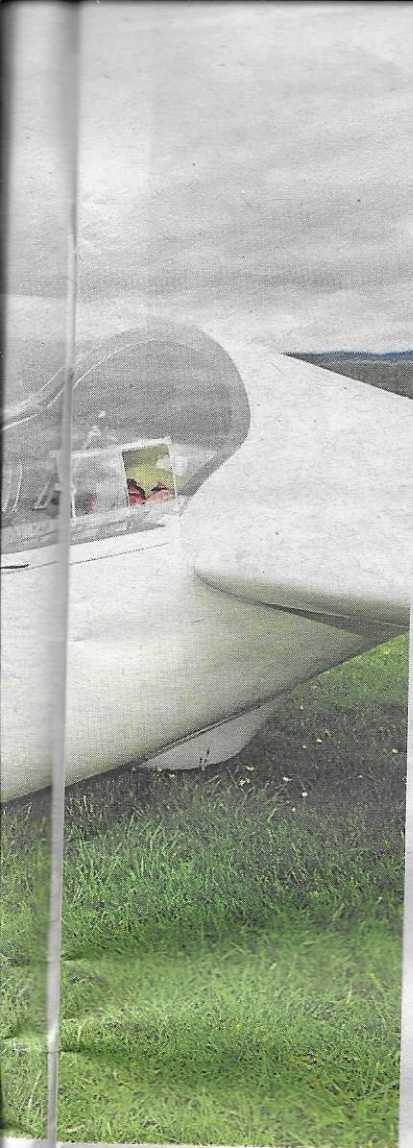
As a keen hill runner and rock climber, things are certainly looking up for Rod as he approaches his late 70s.

"I don't think you live any longer, but I do think you die happier," joked Rod, when asked if he thinks his passion for heights keeps him young. "I always feel better at the end of a run than before it."

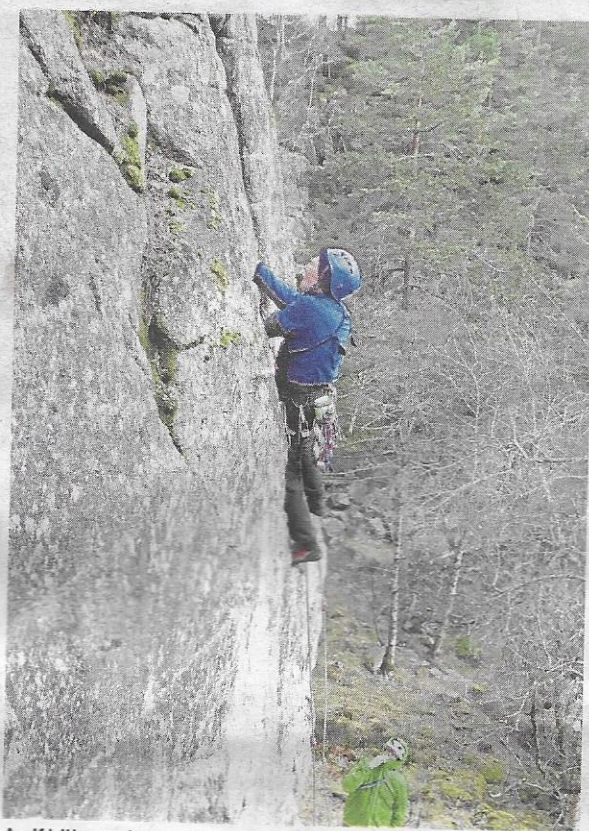
For more than 40 years, Rod has been scaling the mountains both on foot and dangling from a rope.

Growing up near Manchester, his adventurous spirit was evident in some of the exploits he used to get up to with his friends.

"I wasn't at the front of the daredevil antics but I could be cajoled into joining them,"



Mountain air currents help the gliders soar even higher.



As if hill running isn't enough, Rod also still climbs rocks.



Now aged 75, Rod is the oldest member of the Cosmic Hillbashes.



...but never assume that means he's going to take things easy on

said Rod. "I can remember the daredevil boys used to do much riskier things and I would follow.

"It was things like crossing ravines by tiptoeing across waste pipes."

With hills on his doorstep, Rod started rock climbing in the mid 1970s before trying out hill running for the first time in 1980.

And his love for heights has only grown after retiring to Alford in Aberdeenshire seven years ago with his partner Sue Taylor, where they are both members of the Cosmic Hillbashes, a hill-running club based in Aberdeen.

"My forte is running downhill because it's quite technical," said Rod.

"You have to use a lot of different faculties - your eyesight, your proprioception [your body's ability to sense movement, action, and location] while also judging the ground and the route.

"I really enjoy that."

Rod is not only the oldest member at the Cosmic Hillbashes but he's also the oldest member of the Cairngorm Club's rock-climbing section.

"I recently climbed the Mitre Ridge at Beinn a' Bhùird in the Cairngorms," said Rod. "It's a 200-metre rock climb on to the ridges.

"It was a 12-hour day, but I managed it OK thanks to support from my younger colleagues."

Rod's head for heights has led him to some of the most dangerous peaks in the world.

On one particular trip to the Argentièr

Glacier in the French Alps, Rod had a near-death experience when he almost fell down a crevasse.

"We had climbed to the top of the glacier and had a cup of tea," he explained.

"We were heading back down the glacier on what appeared to be a path.

"I'd seen professional guides jumping 20 to 30 feet down different sections on to snow.

"But when I tried, I missed and slid down a wet stony slab, right to the edge where the ice meets the rock.

"My feet were dangling right down the gap.

"I was only saved by my rucksack, which jammed in the gap and stopped me falling."

Rod has also climbed the Chulu Far East Peak Climb in the Himalayas.

"It's the highest hill I've climbed," he said.

"It was a fairly technically easy climb."

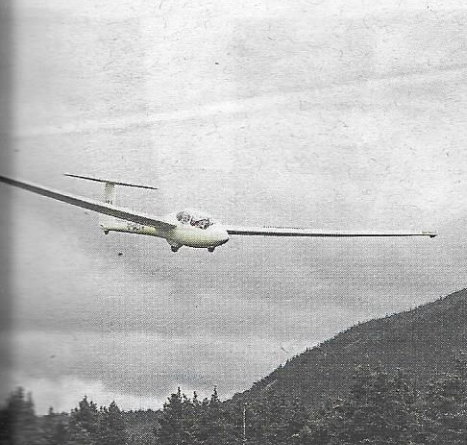
Rod, who used to compete in ski marathons, says climbing or running up mountains gives him a different perspective on life.

"If you've done some death-defying route in the Himalayas or the Alps and you're lucky to escape with your life, then everyday stresses are not so bad in comparison," he said.

Together with his sporting endeavours, Rod also has a secret weapon. "I have at least half a butterfly every day!" he said.

And asked if he'll keep going as he gets older, Rod replied: "My motto is rock till you drop!"

● To find out more visit www.cairngormclub.org.uk and www.cosmics.org.uk



... currents help the gliders soar even higher.



...ing isn't enough, Rod also still climbs rocks.

Glacier in the French Alps, Rod had a near-death experience when he almost fell down a crevasse.

"We had climbed to the top of the glacier and had a cup of tea," he explained.

"We were heading back down the glacier on what appeared to be a path.

"I'd seen professional guides jumping 20 to 30 feet down different sections on to snow.

"But when I tried, I missed and slid down a wet stony slab, right to the edge where the ice meets the rock.

"My feet were dangling right down the gap.

"I was only saved by my rucksack, which jammed in the gap and stopped me falling."

Rod has also climbed the Chulu Far East Peak Climb in the Himalayas.

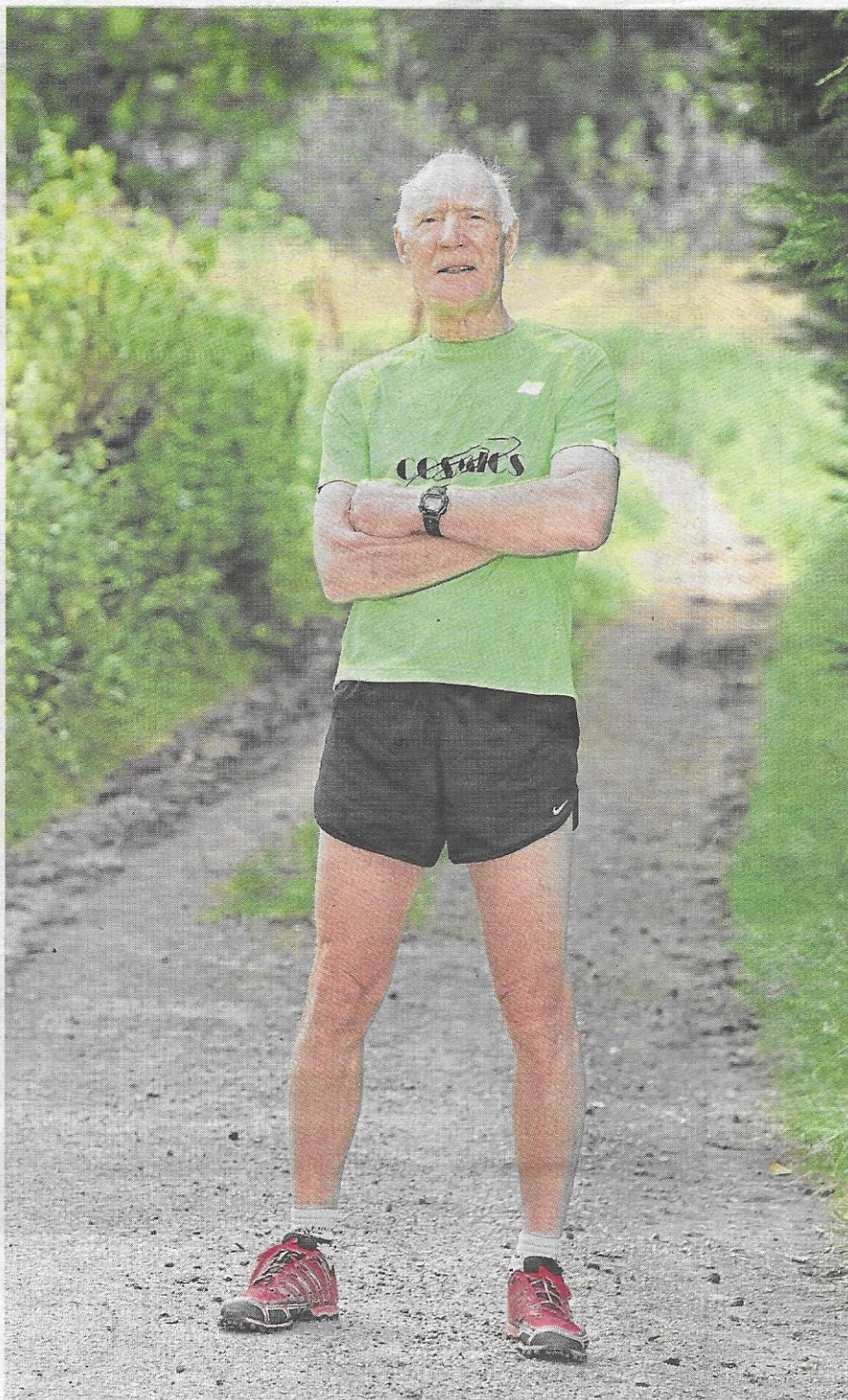
"It's the highest hill I've climbed," he said.

"It was a fairly technically easy climb."

Rod, who used to compete in ski marathons, says climbing or running up mountains gives him a different perspective on life.

"If you've done some death-defying route in the Himalayas or the Alps and you're lucky to escape with your life, then everyday stresses are not so bad in comparison," he said.

Together with his sporting endeavours, Rod also has a secret weapon. "I have at least half a buttery every day!" he said.



Now aged 75, Rod is the oldest member of the Cosmic Hillbashers running club...

