

Parachutists Over Phorty Society (POPS)

15th World POPS Meet and Championship

Netheravon Aug 2022

Well, it seems such a long time ago when we decided to put together, a bid for the 15th World POPS Meet and present it in Australia in 2018, out in Nagambie. Having a DZ behind us to host the event, it felt like, all we needed to do is get people here and it would all be sorted.

Who knew that a world pandemic would throw the biggest spanner in the works, regards to timing, but most of all costs. It ultimately cost us the Drop Zone hosting the event.

So, in 2021, all plans were out the window and a fresh start to arranging a world meet. Drop Zones were still recovering from COVID and so we went for the drop zone we knew best, that was our home Drop Zone of Netheravon.

Having advised the whole POPS network of the issue, we set about getting the Army Parachute Association (APA) on board to host the event. This included a meeting with Military leaders in charge of the camp and facilities. Hurdle one done, next was securing the people we needed for judging, having agreed the chief judge, getting others to judge took some doing.

No one ever told me that skydiving events, would take so much time of your life. The skydiving element was the easiest element to arrange, as the APA, was already a fantastic skydiving operation.

It was the little things that needed to be covered, like tee shirts, goodie bags, catering accommodation, trips, rules, websites and in particular power that caused you to doubt the event would be successful.

So, on the 19th of August 2022, at Netheravon, around 100 people, consisting of mainly competitors but with friends and family from 10 different countries, descended to Salisbury Plain, for a competition consisting of 4 Way Formation Skydiving Scrambles, 4 Way Formation Skydiving National's consisting of two categories for the first time in POPS history. Precision Accuracy, Sports Accuracy and Speed Star Seven's being the other events. The final event for pops, is the Hit and Rock.

It was not a great start to the event with the weather on the Friday being poor, this meant that's no training jumps were able to be completed and the intended opening ceremony did not go ahead.

Competition formally started on the Saturday morning with the 4 Way Formation Skydiving Scrambles. Teams were selected at random, and they were then asked to provide a team name. This created some interesting names for the 11 teams we had

for scrambles. We were able to do 3 rounds of the scrambles with an occasional lift with those who were competing in Precision Accuracy.

Sunday started to try and finish the scrambles event, with most teams completing their fourth round. We then moved on to Sport Accuracy, as well as continuing with the Precision Accuracy. Nearly every competitor in the sports accuracy completed all three rounds. As in both accuracy events the competitors are split into two groups after the results are in. They are split between POPS and Skydivers Over Sixty (SOS) competitors. Concentration then moved on to the newly split 4 Way Formation Skydiving National's events.

The first time in POPS history, the National 4 Way Formation Skydiving category now includes block formations from the A Class skydiving dive pool. Until now, POPS only did random formations from the skydiving dive pool. It was decided to try and increase our members and competitors to World Meets we had to introduce familiar skydiving categories levels.

4 Way Formation Skydiving National's stayed true to the existing rules that included all the randoms in the dive pool. 4 Way Formation Skydiving Open, included the A class blocks and the randoms dive Pool. There were four teams in the National category and there were three teams in the open category. However, there was one team across all the 4 Way Formation Skydiving teams, that had us all be in awe with their skydiving abilities. Team PARANDON from Germany stunned us with 31 points in the first round. This team consists of all members being over the age of sixty, making them a Skydivers Over Sixty (SOS) team. Just goes to show that age is not a barrier in our sport. They blew the other teams away to retain their winning position for a hat-trick of wins and holders of the SOS Crystal Plate. The Libellules Ladies, Germany POPS One and Swiss SOS teams were only fighting for Silver and Bronze, with the French taking the Silver and Germany POPS One securing the bronze.

The Open category was a bit closer than the Nationals, with only three teams. It started in unfortunate news, that one of the team members in the Australian Team, had to retire hurt before the event started and required a replacement. The team came overall third in the Open and were recognised with a certificate of competing due to the team not qualifying under the POPS rules. It left the two British teams to fight it out for the Gold and Silver. Team Vintage consisting of skydivers that have trained together before the event, also had a late replacement due to a team member injury but showed their quality in the sky to take the gold away from the scratch team of Apollo.

The British weather then gave us another twist with a whole day and a half of no jumping, which put a bit of stress on those needing to complete events. Spirits were not dampened with entertainment provided during the week by Ryan Mancey, singing and playing some tunes, and on Tuesday, local DJ Disco Dion, providing the tunes with a spontaneous glow stick party to entertain the night flying aircraft circling over Salisbury Plain.

We plodded on to complete events the weather would allow, completing the 4 Way Scrambles, National & Open Events, Precision and Sports Accuracy and fought to

get at least 1 round of the Speed Star to allow time to complete the Hit and Rock. However, the weather then struck again, with all those waiting to compete in the Hit and Rock and those wanting to complete rounds 2 & 3 of the Speed Star, it was not to be.

While all this was going on during the tight schedule of events, friends and family could visit the local area, with most taking the opportunity to see the World-Famous Stonehenge or a trip to Salisbury to see the Spire and the Magna Cater, even to Bath and London. Some even took the offer to visit the World-Famous Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery. POPS World Meets are not only a competition but also an opportunity to explore each country they hold a meet. Inviting friends and family to join them on the journey and be included in the POPS Society.

The World meet was concluded on Thursday 25th Aug with the medals being presented inside the hangar by Polly as the World TOP POP. This was followed by a fantastic 3 course dinner held at The Stones Hotel, High Post, Salisbury with many getting up on the dance floor, including a full-on conga around the room.

Prior to the DJ striking up the tunes, we awarded the POPS Personality Plate to the well deserving Marine Gaelle from France, SOS Crystal Plate to Team PARANODON, absolute winners in the nationals. The POPS Leather Jacket was awarded to John Bagwell of the UK, who was a very popular recipient.

The final award 'The Spirit of POPS' is normally awarded to the next World TOP POP for the next World Meet; however, they could not be with us to award it. It was firstly presented in its new form by Polly Chandler World TOP POP #12, after its travel from Australia did not fare well. Polly sort to continue the tradition and made the award a bit more travel friendly. She was delighted to present it to the new UK TOP POP Simon Donnelly to receive on behalf of Ivan Rios World TOP POP #13 of Chile.

Please get in contact with the UK branch of POPS for more information and details on the next world meet.

Thanks go to the APA and all the staff, Amanda Kenny, Liz Warner & Bob King for judging, Jeff Chandler for being the Meet Director. Polly Chandler World TOP POP and Simon Donnelly for all the admin.

So, the 16th World POPS Meet and Championship will be held at Villarrica, Chile around Feb/Mar 2024.

Written by

Simon Donnelly

UK TOP POP #12