

The Worst of Times or the Best of Times?

Have you ever wondered whether a parachute jump is the worst experience in the whole world, or the best experience imaginable? It's probably not something you have spent much time thinking about!

White-out and Witless

I decided to do a 10,000 feet tandem jump in aid of the National Deaf Children's Society before

I got too old for such antics. I climbed into a very small aeroplane, and was strapped to my instructor. The plane struggled up to 10,000 feet and as the door opened it was completely white outside. My instructor said, "goggles down, move into the doorway" and suddenly there I was, hanging outside the plane, with him sitting on the edge. Before I could gather my wits, we were falling head down into the whiteness. We seemed to rock about a bit and twiddle around and as we reached 120mph, I felt a terrific stinging on my face. The instructor said when we had landed that we had gone through ice. Whether it was ice or rain, it was excruciating. I couldn't see the ground at all, the air pressure battered my body, and the pain of all that stinging meant that it was a sheer



endurance test. Definitely the worst experience in the world.

However...

Not Again!

Much to my surprise, instead of being completely put off parachuting, I found I wanted to experience one in good conditions. I just had such a strong feeling that it wasn't meant to be like that. Fortunately my instructor was the boss of the place, so when I got in

touch, he offered me a second jump at cost price. So just six days later I was back at the airfield (actually just a farmer's field). We took off and climbed to 10,000 feet and were held there for 10 minutes by air traffic control. That was glorious, looking down on the patchwork of fields two miles down. When the door opened I was totally prepared. I felt the thrill of launching towards the ground that I could see this time, remembered to adopt the correct position, and admired the scenery the whole way down. The parachute opened gently, and we swung around underneath as my instructor showed off some of his manoeuvres. The landing was perfect. The whole thing was absolutely outstanding - quite the best experience imaginable!

Fiona Walthall

Gail's Plant Sale: Editor's Correction

The **correct** email address for Gail is jeremyandgailh@gmail.com (Don't forget the 'h'!) Gail would love to hear from you by email or on: 01993 831140, if you can help with propagating plants for the **Plant Sale next May 2012** to raise much-needed funds for St Mary's Church, Shipton -under-Wychwood.