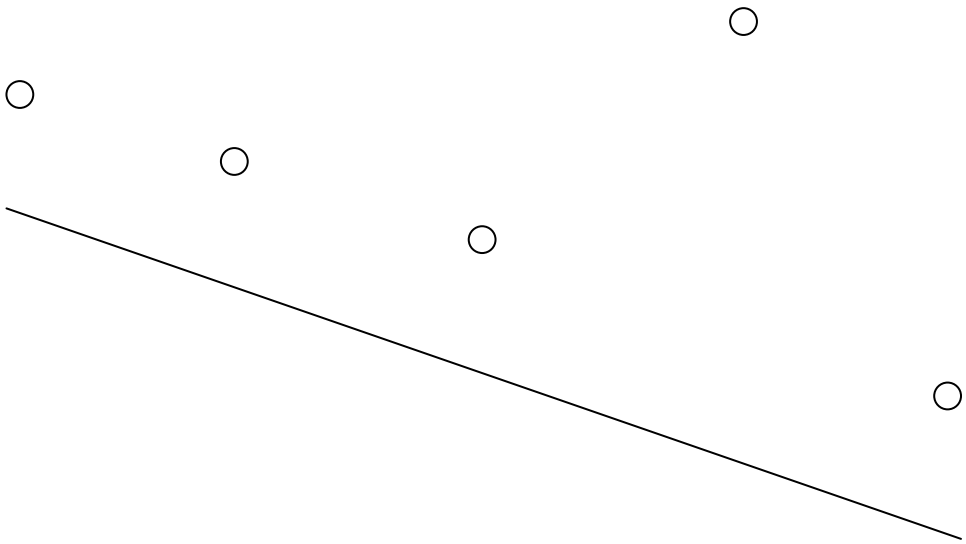
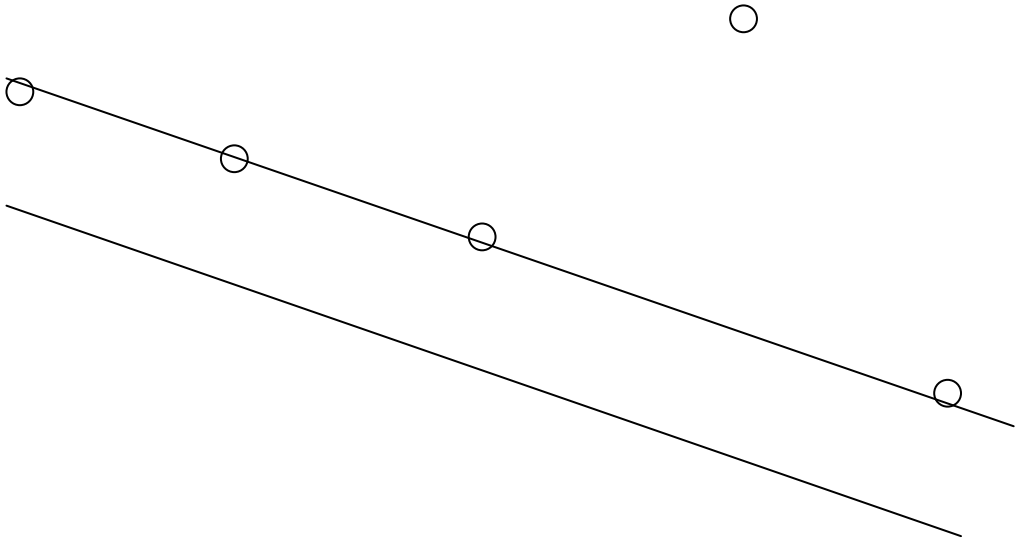
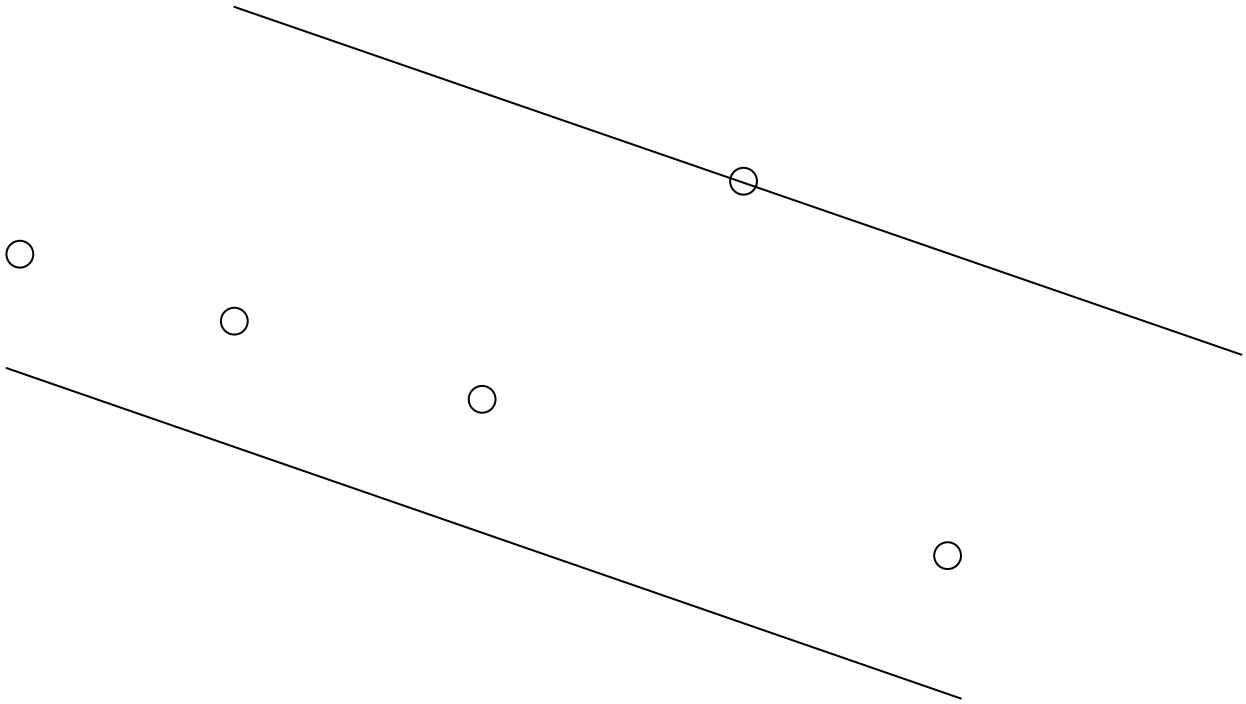
Geoffrey, you've plotted your 5 sights and found they form this pattern, with the calculated (=true) slope below:



Your task is to choose the line of best fit. Here is alternative 1, which I've described as the 'obvious' choice, a word to which you profess to have taken strong exception:

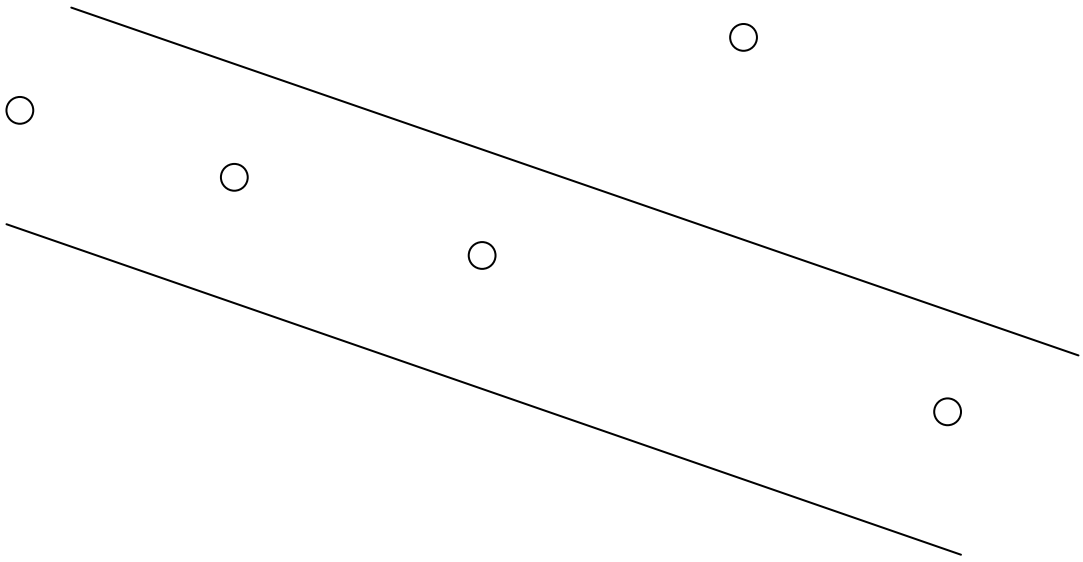


Below is choice 2:



Nah...

And then there is what I described as " a third way, that of averaging" which results in a line, although hardly meeting the objective of best fit, somewhere between alternatives 1 and 2:



Please don't tell me you've calculated that the averaged line should be closer to the bottom row of sights, that apparent outlier could easily be further above the others.

Now, how can your objections quoted below be accommodated, given that these are your sights, and that is the calculated slope?

"What I do have a major problem with is your readiness to reject certain data points because they "obviously" do not fit neatly on or near the line with the rest of the data. For you it seems, keeping those data points would quite ruin the whole look of the thing. So your solution? Rub them out. Problem solved."

Well, ya gotta put that line of best fit somewhere...

And:

"You seem far too ready to follow the line of reasoning that a separated data point -> error -> rejection of data point, without attempting to identify what that error might be. If you can identify what the "error" was, fine, reject the data point. But if you cannot identify the mistake or problem that gave rise to that separated data point, then you have no justification to reject it."

That's a bit rich, to claim "without attempting to identify what that error might be " when its only thanks to the slope methodology that the outlier has been identified. Sometimes, as even George H has acknowledged recently, it is possible to identify why the outlier exists - could be, for example, a mis-recording of time or altitude. In those cases the corrected outlier (this is why I prefer to call them 'apparent outliers') may join its brothers in a more regular pattern.

On the other hand, sometimes stuff just happens, and you'll never know why that outlier was there. I still can't believe that you can seriously suggest that having got this far, the whole investment in observation and plotting should be then abandoned. Makes more sense to me to fit that line of best fit in the best, most obvious place.

" Well, no Peter. You just can't deal with outlier data points 'as you like' on a whim." Well, ya gotta put that line of best fit somewhere...

And:

" If the data as a whole are to have value, it must be treated systematically. That is what you seem to fail to grasp." Whether I grasp it or not, ya gotta put that line of best fit somewhere...

Now for the comic relief (Brendan, for one, tells us he finds all this quite entertaining). You've even objected to: " *Pourquoi faire simple lorsque, avec tellement peu plus d'effort, l'on peut faire compliquer...*"

with a query: "Why this passion for writing in French on an English language forum Peter?"

I'm a man of many passions. No, its because this phrase keeps intruding unbidden into my consciousness during many NavList discussions, and for once I've not resisted its allure, or the temptation to share it with you.

"... writing it in English would have taken up less space..."

Well, let's see. *Why do things in a simple way, when with such little extra effort they can be rendered infinitely more complicated...*

Nah. 13 words in the original, 20 in the translation. Which has somewhat lost its punch along the way, which is why such things should be appreciated in the original if possible.

And a Happy New Year to you too, Geoffrey, and to youse all.