

BGA SENIOR REGIONAL EXAMINER NE REGION NOTES – 04/09

A fine June weekend recently brought a crop of memorable cross country flights that included a number of 750 km tasks, and some much needed flying income to help balance the treasurers' books! The downside of the weekend was a fatal collision between a RAF Grob Tutor and a glider near Didcot, a field landing crash near Banbury that killed the glider pilot, and an aeroplane accident in Northern Ireland (no details but fatal nonetheless). The usual rumours and speculation have now done the rounds, but despite this there are lessons to learn and safety messages that need to be reiterated.

LOOKOUT AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The way we teach **lookout** and continuously check pilots' ability to see other aircraft and gliders is effective. Having detected a **threat** what we have to do to avoid a near miss or collision is less clearly taught or not taught at all. The other area that is often neglected is pilots' overall **situational awareness (SA)** of the flying environment that is 'happening' around them.

- **SA** is achieved by **looking out**, observing and remembering what has been observed so that events in the near future can be **anticipated**. **SA** can also be enhanced by listening out on the radio for information that could influence events in the near future. Simple examples of 'gathering' **SA** are observing the windsock prior to landing so that adjustments to the approach path and speed may be **anticipated** and made in advance of actually flying the approach; and hearing a "downwind" radio call from a glider as yet unsighted, so that a possible adjustment to your circuit can be worked out well in advance.
- Having established good **SA** and maintained good **lookout**, a possible **threat** to safety is identified. The Rules of the Air tell us that (for instance) "head-on go right" or we may remember that NOTAM about a "Spitfire fly-past at Trumpton-on-Swale" so eyes-out and extra vigilance would be a good idea (**anticipation**), but this **threat** is close and getting closer! A collision/near miss can usually be avoided (even if the **threat** is spotted very late) by immediately turning to 'point' the nose of your glider behind the tail of the **threat** – most soaring pilots are familiar with this when gaggle flying. Even if the **threat** is seen just prior to impact a collision could be avoided by unloading the glider (stick forward) completely and letting gravity take control; this could be a better option than pulling up hard the with risk of stalling or spinning the glider into the **threat!**

"LOOKOUT – LISTEN OUT – MAINTAIN SA – ANTICIPATE – AVOID THREATS"

PLAN AND BRIEF EVERY FLIGHT CAREFULLY

WINCHING

The BGA is rightly proud of the safety improvements that have taken place in the winching operation, and the video simulations on the BGA web site ram the safety message home most effectively. Another fatal accident during a winch take off recently, raises the possibility that there **may** be a number of glider pilots around the UK that have not got that message. Worse still is the impression (right or wrong) that some pilots may have relaxed their attitude to safe winch launching because our winch safety record has improved; indeed, if you ask around any Club whether pilots have watched the wing down crash and the spin off the wire simulations the answer is often **no!**

Winch launching demands a high level of skill and understanding from both pilots and winch drivers. Pilots and winch drivers who are out of current practice are most vulnerable to accidents when the launch goes wrong. The following list is not exhaustive, but should help us keep our eye on the 'safety' ball, and keep our pilots alert to the hazards involved:

- Rebrief winch launching procedures and techniques regularly to as wide an audience as possible. Show the BGA web site video clips as part of your Club daily briefs as well as formal safety briefings.
- Emphasise the importance of consistent launching technique. This applies equally to both pilots and winch drivers.
- Check that your launch point team is 'doing it' properly. Are they running with the wing? Do they watch the cable during that critical transition from Take-up-slack to All-out for over-runs and possible snarl-ups?
- Do not allow winch launches to start with bowed cables. Align the glider in the direction of cable pull, keep the grass cut short, and (pilots) **KEEP YOUR HAND ON THE RELEASE** during the initial part of the take-off.
- As with aerotowing, controls are used 'individually' on the ground because adverse yaw is negligible until the glider is airborne. With the wheel in contact with the ground, any rudder input will tend to roll the glider in the opposite direction.
- Any rolling tendency caused by cable pull and/or inappropriate rudder input on the ground is impossible to stop with aileron (at low speed). If the wing goes down during the take-off run **RELEASE THE CABLE IMMEDIATELY** if it touches the ground.

INSTRUCTOR HOURS

There are only 3 months until the end of the 'instructor year'. For the past 2 years several instructors and examiners have failed to log the 10 hours solo flying required to revalidate their ratings. This leads to all sorts of problems, excuses and some bad feeling. Unfortunately, the rules are there for good reason (avoidable crashes!) and failure to meet the hours' requirement can only be sorted out by carrying out refresher training and a check session with a RE.

It may be a good idea to encourage your instructors to do some solo flying now while the weather is soarable, rather than panicking to get it all done in the last 2 weeks of September. As Instructors, our flying techniques should be good as we can make them, and solo flying (particularly cross-country and basic aerobatics) really does sharpen up your Airmanship and flying skills. Flying can be very unforgiving so "we should not examine what we cannot teach, and we should not teach what we cannot fly". If you do not fly solo regularly and stretch your own ability a little, you are probably not as good an instructor/examiner as you could be.