



GRAPEVINE

JUNE 2001

THE SERVICES REGION FLIGHT SAFETY BULLETIN

EDITED BY PETE STRATTEN

COLLISIONS!!

Mid air collisions continue to be one of the greatest risks to glider pilots. In May this year, eight pilots got lucky....

- An ASW20 and an Astir collided in a thermal. The ASW pilot baled out and the Astir pilot landed safely.
- A Pawnee towrope cut through a K13 wing and smashed the canopy, injuring the handling pilot. Both aircraft landed safely.
- A K13 and a single seat glider collided at about 30 feet on finals. Both landed OK.

A German study (some years ago) concluded that in the event of a mid air collision where the glider is uncontrollable, it is unlikely that the pilot will survive an attempted abandonment unless he or she gets out above 1600'. We spend a lot of time above that height - in the event of a hit at cloudbase, we should be OK, shouldn't we?

Think about it. How long does it take to get out of the glider? How much of a problem is it getting rid of the canopy? Will all that kit you're carrying impede your exit? How will you know if the glider is controllable? Will you make the decision to jump quickly enough?

To quote an RAF Chief Tech who some years ago jumped out of an ASW19 at 900' after a winch launch with a disconnected elevator:

"The reason I got away with it was that I had made the decision on when and how to jump years before the event."

LOOKOUT & AIRMANSHIP

Two glider pilots were flying a motor glider at about 300' below cloudbase clear of controlled airspace. Engrossed in some instructor training, they were surprised to see a light twin with gear and flaps down suddenly appear out of the cloud above them. The twin continued on its way, clearly heading down some kind of radar controlled approach into an airfield about 10 miles away.

So who was at fault here? Clearly, the pilots of the twin were not thinking about anyone other than themselves. The motor glider and the twin were both flying legally, but was it wise for the glider pilots to be flying on what was the extended ILS approach of the distant airfield? And why fly so close to cloudbase if they were not soaring?

A visiting tug aircraft departed the airfield without a glider in tow. The pilot decided to climb steeply and carry out a climbing turn into the in use circuit, "keeping an eye on the two gliders". A local tug aircraft, heading along the downwind leg was forced to take hard avoiding action as the visitor suddenly appeared climbing up through the circuit.

The best way of avoiding collision is to lookout effectively. However, we can all do our bit to add to the principle of see and be seen, whatever we're flying. Following the soaring protocol should mean that you always try to keep yourself in sight of the other guys in the thermal, good airmanship practices should ensure that you don't surprise others by appearing from unusual places in the circuit (thermallng?) and planning ahead can reduce the risks associated with aircraft getting unnecessarily too close to each other...

If you're in a thermal 'on your own', carefully change your position in the circle occasionally - you may be surprised when another glider comes into view! If you're feeling a bit crowded in the thermal, leave and rejoin at a height that is less busy. Don't attempt to soar below 600' in the circuit - you'll be looking at the vario (be honest) and the other guy will be concentrating on his landing area and won't expect you to be there. Etc, etc!

STRAPS TIGHT AND, ER, ATTACHED?

A Discus pilot was strapping in when a lap strap half slid apart from it's adjustment buckle. The harness was incorrectly assembled to the harness mounting point.

A recent fatal accident investigation highlighted that the pilot's harness had been incorrectly assembled. Although the accident was not survivable, the point is that a much less severe impact may have resulted in serious injury because the harness would have slipped apart under very little load.

S&G has recently run a short piece on the correct assembly of glider harnesses. If in doubt, speak to your friendly BGA inspector.

SUPERVISION?

A low experienced pilot was converted to the Junior. The glider landed very heavily, causing minor injuries to the pilot. After a brief visit to hospital, the pilot was allowed home.

Yet another landing accident possibly not helped by the conditions - the run in use was known to suffer curlover in the strength of wind experienced at the time of the flight.

The reporting club considered that the pilot should have approached at a higher speed in those conditions.

Conversion to a new type can be very challenging to inexperienced pilots in terms of having spare capacity to deal with anything unusual that happens, in addition to thinking about operating a new type. Proactive supervision should include helping the pilot to make decisions on, say, the approach speed for the day, or even advising waiting until the conditions are more appropriate for the flight!

IT CAME OFF IN MY HAND - HONEST!

An SLMG pilot on a check flight was handling the motor glider during the take-off run. Just as the aircraft was about to get airborne, the instructor noticed that the tail was far too high. Concerned about a potential propeller strike, the instructor took control and climbed away normally. The student was left holding the port stick grip that had detached itself from the stick at a crucial moment, effectively losing control.

The instructor commented that he thought this incident highlighted the value of always guarding the controls during critical phases of flight. The stick grip 'stiction' is probably not checked during routine maintenance.

RELEASE IN TIME

An Astir accelerated away from the launch point behind a Pawnee. The glider dropped a wing, THE PILOT IMMEDIATELY RELEASED and the glider gently rotated around the wingtip to end up pointing back down the strip. No damage, no injury.

A K7 dropped a wing during a winch launch. The instructor could not get to the release in time. The glider was seriously damaged in a violent groundloop and the P2 suffered two broken ankles.

THE BEST ADVICE IS TO LAUNCH WITH YOUR HAND ON THE RELEASE. This is particularly important in gliders where the release is close to the stick - in some gliders, full left stick will cover the release knob! Instructors who haven't done so already may need to think about how and when to move from covering the release to guarding the airbrakes.

KNOW YOUR GLIDER (AND YOURSELF!)

A pilot lost control of a high performance glider in a thermal. In the subsequent recovery from a spiral dive, the glider broke up. The recovery action was incorrect.

A pilot attempted to jump out of his glider after a collision. The canopy jammed during an attempted jettison. He had tried to jettison the canopy incorrectly.

An experienced pilot attempted failed to get airborne in a Falke with wet wings and on wet grass. The motor glider was written off.

There have been a number of incidents and accidents, some fatal, over the years that have been directly linked with pilots being ignorant of the limitations and manufacturers advice when operating gliders. There is no excuse - READ THE FLIGHT MANUAL.

SPINNING ACCIDENTS - FEELING LUCKY?

It's been a while since we've had a spinning accident. However, in the cyclic nature of accidents, we're probably due one fairly soon. History shows that the guy having a bad day that recognises the spin departure coming before it's too late will live, but the poorly trained and unaware will not be so lucky. Make your own luck - get the practice you need.

D.I.Y ACCIDENT

A full rated instructor pulled the release at 100' during an aerotow, expecting the P2 to turn left 90 degrees and land on the airfield. The P2 turned right. At approximately 20', the P1 managed to roll wings level and 'arrived', travelling downwind in the 12kt surface wind. The nose wheel mounts were seriously damaged.

It is a basic rule of instructing that you don't deliberately put the glider into a situation that you, the instructor, cannot sort out if Bloggs makes a bad decision. A practice aerotow failure that low is probably not worthwhile when considered in the light of a pre-flight 'risk/training benefit' assessment.

FIELD LANDINGS

There was a rumour flying around during May that a couple of the glider repairers were getting the hump because the BGA cross country ban had reduced their supply of broken gliders to fix.

Eventually the ban will be binned. Most glider pilots are, for the time of year, unusually out of currency in cross-country flying and field selection. A session in a motor glider looking at fields and shooting a couple of circuits will pay dividends later in the year.

OOP'S...

A tractor was driven over a wingtip causing significant damage. At another site, a Range rover was driven over a wing, again causing serious damage.

Vehicles and gliders don't mix. Are your club members adequately trained for the job?