



GRAPEVINE

The Services Region Flight Safety Bulletin

April 2000 Edited by Pete Stratten 01280 709788

The content of 'Grapevine' consists exclusively of real incidents and accidents that have been recently reported through BGA incident/accident forms, or have been passed on verbally to the editor. There is no intention at any time to identify clubs, pilots or individual aircraft.

SPLASHDOWN!

An experienced tug pilot self briefed for a short flight to land at a local private strip. He did not phone the owner. As the pilot joined overhead the strip, the passenger in the aircraft, another experienced tug and glider pilot, pointed out that the strip looked a bit waterlogged. The pilot decided to press on regardless.

As the aircraft touched down from an immaculate flare, there was a very marked deceleration (no brake selected) and the aircraft stopped, sinking into the waterlogged surface. The pilot was now faced with a dilemma – stop and take a look at the situation and risk getting stuck for good, or full power ahead and get off in the remaining 2/3 of the runway available? He took the latter, staggering airborne as the strip dropped away in front.

This confident pilot was lucky – a wetter surface may have resulted in a tug tip up, or worse. Perhaps a phone call (most strips are PPR) would have alerted the pilot to the waterlogging problem. Perhaps listening to the advice of the other experienced pilot should have reawakened a sense of caution.

Most incidents and accidents occur because of the decisions made by pilots. Read on...

“NUTHIN’ BUT BLUE SKIES.....?”

After a fun wave soaring flight in Yorkshire (*aren't they all?*), a pilot found himself faced with a descent through cloud to return to his base airfield. Unfortunately, in his view, the GPS was not matching his estimation of where the airfield should be, so he plunged into the gloom on what he thought was about the correct heading.

The glider broke cloud at 800' asl, and was suddenly faced with a landing on a field at 600' asl ! Needless to say, the field was not in the Vale of York. Both the pilot and glider got away, somehow, without a scratch.

Wow – this pilot is lucky to be in one piece. If you choose to fly above total cloud cover, you must be a practised and competent DR navigator, constantly referring the DR navigation to the GPS and vice versa. The best advice, however, is to plan to NEVER rely on GPS in gliders – always have a ground feature reference available.

Put yourself in this theoretical situation: climbing in winter wave over the UK above 8/8 cloud, happily navigating on GPS, surrounded by gorgeous blue sky. You know where you popped up through a closing gap, your ½ mil chart shows where the high ground, airways

and bits of class D airspace are, and you are aware of a 40 – 50 kt wind at height. All of a sudden, your GPS screen turns a very permanent and boring shade of uniform grey, followed by the variometer moving gently down towards some serious sink rate. You amble around, thinking that you may have moved too far forward but are unsuccessful in trying to re-establish yourself in lift. The vario is indicating ten down. Now what?

NEARLY ANOTHER UNEXPLAINED SPIN-IN....

After another winter of glider maintenance, this pilot was pleased to get a bit of ridge soaring under his belt. The wind was dying down, and the Astir was only just about holding its height at the top of the ridge when flown at the minimum sink speed. The pilot decided that enough was enough, and turned towards the airfield from his last 'beat' along the ridge.

As the glider rolled into the turn, it entered a spin. The surprised pilot managed to recover, his wing clipping the ridge, as he made a hurried, wheel up landing into a sloping field.

Why did the glider spin? If you need to ask, have a chat with your CFI or friendly Full Cat. This pilot was very, very lucky. Gently cruising around in straight lines marginally above the stall is one thing, but loading the wing, particularly while flying dangerously slow near the ground, and probably staring at the vario, is no way to live a long and happy life.

Further stalling and spin training aren't just 'ticks in the box' – they're lifesavers.

STRIPPED SCREW

An early solo pilot had a nasty moment when the ballast weight screwed onto the floor of the K13 cockpit came adrift and jammed the stick. He managed to clear the obstruction and landed safely.

The retaining bolts had stripped threads. It's not possible to say how long these bolts had been in this condition. Either way, perhaps it's an area that gets overlooked during the DI...?

MAKE YOUR OWN LUCK

An experienced Ventus pilot was hooked up to a cable ready to launch with flap 1 selected. There was a slight bow in the cable from the right and a slight crosswind from the left. As the Skylaunch accelerated the glider forward and the wingtip holder let go of the wing, the glider rolled right and the wingtip hit the ground. The pilot released immediately and the glider skidded to a halt pointing 90 degrees to the right. No damage or injury occurred.

This pilot was very lucky - he consciously launches in this type of glider with his hand on the release. He has stated that in his view, had he not been holding the release knob, he would have been unable to release in time. In the past, some pilots have reported difficulty in reaching the release with full left/forward stick – an instinctive reaction to a right wing-drop on the ground situation.

Another Ventus-type 'top tip' – in rough/strong wind conditions it may be wise to fly the complete winch launch and approach in 0 flap. The extra roll authority can help.