



# GRAPEVINE

THE SERVICES REGION FLIGHT SAFETY BULLETIN - OCTOBER 2000

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No apologies for this double sized bulletin of some the more recent incidents and accidents reported across the British Gliding Association...

## "IT'LL BE OK..."

A glider pilot prepared himself for an imminent aerotow. The tug pilot attempted to align himself with the glider and completed his checks. (Hang on a minute, you say - attempted to align himself?).

As the tug roared off, the glider pilot found his glider was being significantly yawed by the rope and 'dropped' a wing. The subsequent ground loop damaged the glider.

*The cause of the accident was that the glider pilot accepted a launch despite the fact that a hump in the airfield meant that the tug was not visible from the glider cockpit. Having then dropped a wing because of the yaw induced by the misalignment between the two aircraft, he was unable to release in time to avoid a ground loop.*

*The actual problem that led up to the accident may be more complex. Does this type of 'fingers crossed and hope for the best' attitude regularly appear on your site?*

## BALLOONING

A 'switched on' club pilot was sent solo after just twenty-five or so launches. His first few solo flights went well. A week later, the instructor who had been asked to check out the new solo pilot noticed a recent comment on his record card indicating that some 'work was required on landings'. However, the solo pilot completed the check ride successfully and the instructor climbed out of the glider.

The solo pilot launched, flew a reasonable approach, but then ballooned during the landing and flew onto the ground - hard. The nose wheel assembly was damaged in the impact.

*There's nothing wrong with making good progress - we could argue that more people would be gliding today if the training wasn't so painfully slow at most clubs. However, part of the training must include trying to find an apparently 'model' trainee's weaknesses and also how to deal with situations not otherwise experienced during a fairly trouble free whiz through the syllabus. Recognition of and recovery from ballooned landings should be briefed and safely demonstrated by the instructor at some point in the training prior to solo.*

## NEVER ASSUME....

A tug aircraft was parked on the airfield, rope attached and apparently ready to go having flown already that day. A relief tug pilot was tasked with some towing, and so he jumped in the tug and got on with the job in hand.

A few minutes later, the original tug pilot turned up at the airfield and was shocked to see that the tug had moved – he had the port undercarriage mounting bolts in his hand! The airborne tug pilot was recalled and carried out a 'dead stick' touch down with no problems at all. The undercarriage leg stayed slotted into a recess in the fuselage.

*The original pilot/engineer was in the middle of carrying out a running repair and had just popped off site to get some replacement parts. Working on the theory 'if it can go wrong, it will', it would have been wise for him to disconnect the tug's battery and leave a note in the cockpit. In the seven minutes per take-off world of glider towing, the tech log only gets looked at during the check 'A' – keep people informed if an aircraft is unserviceable.*

## STALL & SPIN....AGAIN

An ASW 20 attempted a winch launch. The winch was a fully serviceable 'Skylaunch' and the conditions were fairly benign. The glider was seen to pitch up very steeply and then strike the ground rolling and yawing to the left. The pilot was seriously injured.

*The pilot noted that the trim lever in this glider frequently sprung back during the launch. He had also intended to get the glider airborne quickly to avoid some bumps on the airfield. It appears as if the glider stalled and departed, leading to the eventual crash. The CFI's comments on the accident report are clear: "...this type of accident can be prevented by hammering home the point that pilots should not allow the glider to climb too steeply early on in a winch launch..."*

## MID AIR COLLISION.... 1

Not too long ago, a tug aircraft, climbing after take-off, collided with a glider on finals at 100'. Both aircraft landed safely, one with a damaged prop, one with a demolished wing and three people were shaken but not injured. The pilot of the high wing tug did not see the glider despite a look up the approach.

*This lucky escape reinforces the point for all of us that powered aircraft must be turned through at least 90 degrees (more for the high winged varieties?) to enable the pilot to check the approach prior to take-off. We wouldn't dream of whizzing up a winch launch without an effective all clear above and behind check – why should a self-powered launch be any different?*

## MID AIR COLLISION.... 2

Mid September. Two single seat gliders collided in a thermal at 3000'. Both gliders were seriously damaged but both pilots 'landed' and lived to tell the tale. Neither pilot was wearing a parachute....

## WING DROP & CARTWHEEL

A K7 with instructor as P1 attempted a winch launch. The wing dropped at the all out phase and the glider cartwheeled. The P2 was seriously injured and trapped in the wreckage.

*Once again somebody has re-learned the need to carry out the first part of any launch with the P1 touching the release knob, ready to release as soon as the wing goes down. Fumbling for the release half way around a violent groundloop is just leaving it far too late.*

*FAQ's regarding position of hands during the launch:*

***Q. What should the pilot do in an aerotow situation in a flapped glider?***

*A. Start the launch with his or her left hand touching the release. Once you've got roll authority, move your left hand on to the flap lever if that's what you need to do.*

***Q. Shouldn't an instructor's left hand be guarding the airbrake and/or flap lever?***

*A. Yes, absolutely. But only after the glider has accelerated through that initial ground roll phase when the wing drop scenario is critical. Guarding the airbrakes is the key issue when airborne. Being prepared to release if the wing drops is the priority on the ground.*

***Q. Ah, but if we teach the student to hold the release, surely we'll end with low level launch failures triggered by students releasing by accident?***

*A. Very likely. So teach the student to touch the release knob during the wing drop critical phase, and as soon as the glider is airborne reposition his or her hand as appropriate.*

## A CLOSE SHAVE

A very experienced instructor recently described how he very nearly crashed a glider after some 30 years of accident free gliding.

He was carrying out a launch failure check on a near Silver C pilot who had just dropped out of that particular clubs currency requirement (about three weeks). Other than the recent time away, the pilot in question was a fairly regular operator and usually launched on the winch.

The glider whizzed up the winch launch (in a very light breeze) and the instructor pulled the release at his pre planned height. The student decided to land ahead even though there was not enough room to do so, then changed his mind and turned sharply to execute a mini circuit. Unfortunately, he had failed to check that the glider had accelerated to a safe speed and the glider 'waffled' through the turn. The instructor, now very alert, took control, and by his own admission, found himself stretched to recover the situation to a safe conclusion but pulled off a safe landing.

*First of all, this was a very honest report from one of the countries more senior instructors. After some thought, he has concluded that weekends spent instructing in gliders and motor gliders, towing or supervising has stretched his skills too thinly and eaten*

*into the limited opportunities to build valuable solo gliding time - solo flying time that maintains flying skills and keeps us sharp. He is unlikely to be the only instructor around who is in that situation.*

## **A VERY FINAL GLIDE...**

A full rated instructor took a launch in a K13 with a 14 year-old lad as P2. The P2 wished to experience a 'final glide'.

Allegedly, the glider was flown downwind at high speed, and very low, towards the launch point. By the time the glider reached the launch point, the speed had reduced (presumably as the glider had been flying level with the ground), and the instructor 'pulled up' to carry out a climbing turn. The glider sank behind some trees, still turning and was destroyed on impact with the ground. Both occupants of the glider were seriously injured.

*Try describing that as either 'instructive' or 'fun' to the parents and lawyers....*

## **AUTUMN SKIES**

Some (but not that many) years ago, an inexperienced pilot was winch launched into a murky, grey overcast sky – there was doubt about the cloudbase height.

The pilot unexpectedly flew into cloud at about 600', lowered the nose and released. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, the parachute, still powering through the sky under tension from the cable, inflated and 'flew'. The glider, by now pitched down beyond the normal gliding attitude tangled with the 'chute and the whole combination was dragged into the ground. The pilot was blinded in the crash when the stick hit him in the face.

*How does your club deal with the very real training requirement of teaching pilots to abandon the launch when approaching cloud? Are your club supervisors thinking about who gets attached to a winch cable when the weather is doubtful?*

*The key point here is that the pilot in question was not, it seems, taught how to deal with the situation he found himself in. He should, of course, have **released the cable still under tension and then lowered the nose**. The natural pause between the two actions is enough to ensure a flying parachute continues to accelerate safely clear of the recovering glider.*

<b>CLUB SAFETY REVIEWS (or spotting the wood for the trees)</b>
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All flying operations should be subjected to a periodic review of safety. It's probably bordering on being complacent to suggest that there just because there hasn't been an accident on your site recently, that everything is in order!

With that in mind, the BGA Office holds copies of the latest 'BGA Club Safety Review aide memoir'. It is strongly recommended that all BGA Safety Officers obtain a copy and take an objective view of their own club operation.

Feedback so far is that if you don't find any problems, you're probably not trying that hard!