

## SAFETY BULLETIN No 5

Welcome to Bulletin 5.

It contains a summary of the safety incidents and issues reported over the last month. It seems to be longer than I intended or expected but in my defence, it is a reflection of the activity not my creativity.

The purpose of the bulletins is threefold:

- To provide a summary of safety incidents and issues which have arisen over the preceding month.
- To ensure that members who are not avid readers of the forum are kept informed of those issues being aired on the forum. The appropriate links to the forum threads are provided.
- To provide a regular record of CSC incidents, accidents and safety issues for the archive.

I have tried to strike a balance between tedious repetition of what has already been covered in the forum and sufficient information to convey the essentials of what is at issue. No doubt pilots who wish to dig deeper are capable of visiting the links provided and probably finding additional sources. As a sort of disclaimer combined with request for assistance I must make the point that the information contained in the Bulletins is neither definitive nor authoritative. Whilst I try to convey the combined wisdom of a particular thread there is usually some degree of non-consensus. My suggestion is to look at the thread and make up your own mind. I would also make the point that all these discussions remain open. If any pilot disagrees, wishes to add something or requires more information on a matter they should do so, either by visiting the forum or contacting me. All feedback is appreciated, however negative, honestly!

More generally, I have a very positive feeling about the way the safety culture is evolving in the club. I have some numbers to support this assertion. In the first 4 months of 2015 there were 3 posts and 19 responses under Safety and Accidents. In the same period this year there have been 25 posts and 285 responses. I think much of this new found openness is due to the manner in which forum discussions are being conducted. Long may it last.

### **Crash Landing - Dave Eva 1 Apr 2016**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3824>

Dave Eva, along with a sizeable gathering of pilots, flew from Tailbridge. Reports describe fairly classic Spring conditions, cold clear and sunny with an increasing wind and wintry showers in the neighbourhood. Having had a successful flight Dave lost height and made the decision to land.

*"I got low after a very long glide and flew to sunny ground by the tarn that is visible from Tailbridge. I got some lift but not enough to get back up. In any case I'd already had two Tornados pass underneath me in the valley and a chinook pass not so far away so wasn't keen on getting blown back into the valley. I took*

*the photo as I was picking a place to land. I'm looking roughly north towards Kirkby Stephen, wind roughly in direction shown. The pic doesn't show the many sheep and young lambs in the fields but one was empty so I aimed to land on the yellow cross on the brow of a hill. My flight path in red. I flew behind the ridge then turned into wind beyond the trees. I was just behind the stone wall about 100 feet up and could see that my landing field slopes away quite steeply towards the road beyond the brow. At that point I started to descend vertically, and didn't penetrate over the wall. The wall was too close - I could easily hit it if the wind eased, so I did a small S turn to get some distance. I then realised I was dropping fast and fell backwards onto the airbag harness then onto my left shoulder and rolled backwards. I think I got a bit of whiplash as there was a definite 'crunch' from my neck. Fortunately, no bones broken but am stiff today, especially the muscles at the front of my neck!"*

Dave's accident stirred up a great deal of interest with 45 replies and 500 views following two principal lines of discussion; landing out as part of an XC flight and the importance of communication in the event of an injury.

### **Landing Out.**



Some of the Club's most experienced pilots have contributed to the discussion providing both general advice and suggestions specific to this situation. The challenge involved in summarizing such a debate is that some of it is contradictory, and there is a high degree of subjectivity. After all, only the pilot was actually there experiencing the conditions. All of it, though, is informative and as a whole forms a valuable case study in landing out in difficult conditions. All XC (and aspirant XC pilots) should benefit from reading the discussion.

### **Communications**

The secondary theme under discussion was communications introduced by the question addressed to Dave Eva, 'When a pilot has a potentially disastrous accident but walks away with mild bruising and torn trousers we give a collective phew and perhaps a sigh of *schadenfreude*. Had Dave's accident been more

*akin to Patty's disaster it would be a different discussion. Had this been the case how do you (Dave) see the incident/rescue panning out? I understand that Jackie Knights was in radio contact, how long a silence before she would have raised an alarm. Would anyone else have been alert to a potential problem?'*

*Dave's response was, 'I had my phone and radio. If I was out of sight and no-one had seen me but I was conscious I would have radioed for help. If no response, I would phone people out flying whose numbers I have. Failing that it would be anyone I know and failing that 999....and that would be difficult if I didn't know where I was! If I was unconscious as I don't have any form of tracker I would be up s\*\*t creek without a paddle...*

*The tracking idea is great but I'm not tech-savvy and to be honest the (excellent) technological discussions are way over my head.*

*The suggestion of phoning someone before you fly, telling them your plan and then calling them when you land is a great idea. But if there is no signal at take-off or landing point this breaks down. Being out in the sticks with no signal, knowing that you have to phone to prevent a call out would exacerbate your situation.'*

This response contains most of the elements of communication that we should be concerned with:

- Alerting third parties to an emergency.
- Establishing the location of the casualty (in a communicable form).
- Calling out the emergency services if necessary.

... and, of course, the casualty may be unconscious or simply injured and unable to access his emergency communication equipment.

So, what to do?

The availability and use of communication technology is regularly raised in the CSC and other forums. The problem has been the ephemeral nature of forum discussions and the tendency to fly off on tangents. You end up with a hotchpot of individual's opinions and ideas which may be understood by the heavily involved but many of the less techy, less committed are baffled. The information is plastered around the ether with little objective assessment. The thread in question was littered with references to Whatsapp, Telegram, Livetrack 24, Glympse, XC Retrieve, SPOT, InReach. The technology is further complicated by the speed of development. Whilst the eager XC pilot will already have invested money and effort in acquiring and mastering the multiplicity of systems in pursuit of performance the less committed are left behind. The reality is that there are some cheap, simple solutions out there which if used sensibly will add significantly to our safety. There are also, I suspect some pricy complex solutions which would do little to enhance safety.

Observant readers of past Safety Bulletins will beware that this is the point where I state that what I intend to do is to collate info on the most suitable technology (hardware and software) and best safety practice. Having done that, we will organize a 'safety gadget' evening where the hard/software can be demonstrated. It will happen, honestly!

**Mike Cav - Mid Air.**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3860>

*There I was minding my own business at about 3000' over the Borderlands when I was joined rather rudely, I thought, by one of my flying buddies!*

*The thermals were quite broken, but large and there were three of us working this one. As such our turns were wide and not in synch as we worked different pockets of lift. I hit a particularly lofty pocket, just as the DJ on Barney FM hit sink. I looked up to see Barney alarmingly descending towards the top left half of my wing. ... Unfortunately, he kept dropping and next thing he had pushed down through my trailing edge and now his harness/pod was well pushed into my lines.*

*Barney applied brake as I dabbed a bit of speed bar to add to my hands up speed. I was mindful when I dabbed some speed that I was going to let off if I could see any of my lines were going with Barney. But all was good, and we separated with no tangles.*

*Could we have prevented it? Probably, as we may have got a bit too relaxed having flown close regularly for years, but perhaps we were not quite switched on as we should have been. Although I was below and in front, I like to think I'm quite aware of other pilots whether above or below. I was surprised to find Barney suddenly there. Barney said he thought he could turn inside of me, but did not expect I would keep drifting that way.*

*Luckily we both did the right thing once the situation became serious. Him slowing and me speeding up to get a separation. And both keeping the same direction. But I think we were slightly fortunate his harness did not snag properly on any lines. It was soon forgotten as we carried on to the next turn point, but both knew we had been very lucky!*

### **Lessons?**

Well for a start it's good to know that even the best pilots can get into a mid-air but we have to recognise the exemplary airmanship and coolness that enabled them to recover from that potentially disastrous situation.

The situation is most likely to occur in strong broken thermals. (Like now!). In these conditions it is necessary to allow a great deal more vertical and horizontal separation.

### **Lines Caught in Helmet – Jacquie Campbell.**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3858>

In brief, Jacquie Campbell was taking part in a Saturday coaching session when the lines snagged in her helmet as she was turning as part of her reverse launch. This had the effect of turning her glider as well as pulling the helmet over her eyes before it was eventually prized off her head (fortunately it turns out). In her words; *'The helmet was a good snug fit and my chin strap was fastened but not snug to my chin with enough room to get my fingers in so it wasn't choking me. I didn't know what was happening*

*at the time but the helmet getting lobbed off fully helped me then to slope land rather than continue turning in to face the slope. It was forgiving because the launch site was a soft and grassy slope, it would have been disastrous on, say, a rocky ledge with no slope.'* It transpired that the lines caught in the goggle clip on the back of the helmet.

The Safety Panel enjoyed discussing this incident, not just because Jacquie came out of a potentially nasty accident unscathed (except for the loss of a helmet) but it seems she was saved from a worse fate by a failure in the piece of equipment was part cause of the incident.

Starting with main cause of the event, the lines becoming snagged in the goggle clip. Firstly, there was consensus in the Panel that sticky out bits on helmets are a bad thing. The clip in question is designed to retain goggles, mainly for snow boarders/skiers but also a few paraglider pilots. The photograph shows just how effective a line-trap it can be! Once in, the lines won't get out! Fortunately, a 20 second modification removes the problem. If you have this type of helmet and aren't going to use goggles, take the clip off!



More generally, it is worth checking your helmet for potential line traps. The fashion for helmet mounted GoPros after a number of well recorded incidents seems to have peaked. Any new pilot thinking of going down this route is recommended to research the subject and at the very least be aware of the additional risks of lines catching, not just on launch. The other likely line trap feature has been fairly widely discussed, visor mounts which allow a sufficient gap between mount and helmet for lines (particularly micro-lines) to snag. Again, anyone making this choice needs to make allowances when launching. The risk from protuberances can be mitigated by removal (as in Jacquie's case) or if this is not feasible the judicious application of duct tape.

The second, and to some of us, more alarming feature of the incident was the removal of the helmet by the trapped lines. Some members of the Safety Panel had an enjoyable few minutes in the Sick and the Wrong trying to replicate the forced removal of an identical helmet. Can't be done! In spite of some suspiciously brutal efforts by the proprietor, a **correctly fitted** helmet could not be removed by pulling from the rear. Pilots' can have confidence in this model of helmet but must ensure (as with any helmet) they get the right size and adjust it properly.

### **Pre-flight checks.**

There have been a surprisingly high number of reports of failure to carry out effective pre-flight checks over the last four months. I thought it was just me. Each time such a failure is reported it refreshes and

reinforces the importance of the routine. So please, it may seem insignificant, it may not have resulted in injury, but the accumulated effect of the reports is to raise awareness.

### **Rhett Harrison - Burnbank**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3856>

Rhett Harrison's incident on Burnbank provides more evidence for the issue of self-induced pressure, physical and/or mental, as a common cause of rushed pre-flight checks leading to potentially disastrous situations. In this instance the pressure was induced by a mad dash up the fell to beat the setting sun. The problems, spotted after launch were a speed bar line passing through the stirrup and knotted lines.

We are probably all guilty of succumbing to this sort of pressure. The solution – take deep breaths, calm down and do an orderly pre-flight check. The advisability of leaving the glider connected to the harness was raised. This does simplify and speed up the setting up on launch process which should reduce the pressure.

### **Jon Bennett also reported a pre-flight check issue:**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3884>

*'Flew from the Langdales this afternoon and had a shock while preparing for my second flight. Had laid out etc and was about to clip in when a) I realised that I had failed to check the reserve handle and b) found that the handle had come loose and the flaps concealing the reserve were open. This made me question myself as to whether I had properly checked the reserve prior to my first flight, which, apart from the fact that there was no reserve deployment, I cannot now answer.'*

Jon's incident highlights the following:

Always check your reserve. Some reserves can only be checked before clipping in to the harness.

The harness was relatively new, Jon commented that his pre-flight routine was based on his old harness. New kit may necessitate a change to your routine.

Steve Giles commented that the eyelets on this model of harness can stretch reducing the holding friction. If you are concerned you should call in to the shop for a check.

Jon suggests you carry some spare cord to repack the reserve container and connect the reserve handle.

An additional point, not raised in either of these threads, is do not distract a pilot who is setting up to launch. (unless of course it is to point out knots in his lines or a dangling reserve flap!)

### **Hook Knives Bite Back!**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3859>

I have never been fascinated by hook knives, until now. Tim Oliver describes his negative encounter with, what some pilots consider to be, an essential safety item

*'I was getting a bit hot and bothered. I am sure in the back of my mind I was also thinking that the main gaggle was now leaving the hill and heading over the back. During the struggle to lay out I noticed that my hook knife (which I have velcroed to my deck for SAFETY and which has a lanyard attached for SAFETY, all nicely folded and held tight with rubber bands) had become dislodged and was dangling at my feet. Snagged in the narrow gate of the blade cover and in contact with the blade was one of my unsheathed lines!!!! I gingerly separated line and blade. No damage done to the line thank goodness. To avoid that happening again and to not waste time wrapping up the lanyard (.....time again) I quickly zipped the knife, with lanyard attached, into the battery pocket under the flight deck. Finally I took off. Despite having practised to master the art, I could not get my feet into the pod. It did not seem to be in the right place. I eventually had to reach down and struggle in. If I had been familiar with the pod harness I would have known that all was not well.*

*After a minute or so, I tested the speed bar as I usually do. But found it really hard to push on. I checked the alignment of the Brummel hooks (as I was wisely advised by Steve Giles) to see if the speed system was one sided. Yes, they were not aligned. I attempted to align them but could not move them - something definitely wrong here. It was then that I noticed a complete cats cradle of lines crossing under the deck inside the pod. The lanyard for my bloody hook knife (which I carry for SAFETY remember) was entangled with the speed bar system, locking it up and partially on. It was held taught with one end of the lanyard attached to a loop on the deck (with a small screw threaded ring faster) and the other attached to the knife, which was zipped inside a pocket. I flew well away from the hill and then set about releasing the lanyard by unscrewing the threaded fastener and then unwinding the cats cradle.*

*In my haste to get the knife secured away, I had not noticed that it had passed through the speedbar lines several times as it dangled from the deck while I laid out the wing a second time. When I picked it up and zipped it away I had set the trap!*

**My lessons learned:**

*I will make sure items on the deck stay in place by better velco fixings - and check they are in place each pre-flight check.*

*If an item attached by lanyard such as camera, knife, or instrument does become loose and dangling - I will assume it may have become entangled. Need to check and double check before re-securing it.*

*I must take time to repeat a full pre-flight check after an aborted launch attempt.*

*If something does not feel quite right with my kit ( in this case getting into the pod) then it probably isn't all right. Check it'.*

The following discussion revealed that Tim's experience was not unique and there are mixed opinions in the flying community over the advisability of carrying a hook knife, where it should be secured and what

sort of knife is the most suitable. Dangerous Dave ( pro- hook knife) provided a succinct summary of his approach:

*'I fly with a bridle knife and only used it once in anger. I also have one fastened in my flying suit (for winter flying) at chest height, slightly protruding, but not snaggable. In the summer I have one in a slim pouch just under my karabiner (visible). This one has a cord attached, but that is in the pouch too. I would recommend the knife to be accessible by one hand. Putting tape over the blade might choke up the opposing blades when the line or webbing goes in. If anything snags when you flunk launch, then see if you can prevent or rethink its location. These lightweight harnesses are complicated and have lots of cords to fasten. As soon as you realise you are going to land in water, you might run out of time undoing the fairing etc and opt for the 'knife'. Floating upside down is very likely and not good for your health. Also, if you do end up taking off knotted up, cutting cords or lines that aren't imperative might be the quick and safest option, though a little upsetting at the time. I've cut my speed bar before now'.*

### **Rules of the Air – Lowca**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3886>

Rick Livingstone kicked off a short debate on collision avoidance specifically when flying in a relatively narrow lift band at Lowca. Much of the discussion centres round the application of the recognised rules combined with pragmatism and commonsense. Dave Eva, who has considerable experience of coastal flying in a place called The East describes a set of local rules introduced by that flying community. The response from CSC pilots was unenthusiastic with Paul Gannon making the point that, '*Whilst I appreciate that some local arrangements may appear to make sense they are of dubious use unless they are actually incorporated into the Rules of the Air and taught as such*'.

### **Airprox at Barton Fell 24 Apr 2016**

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3881>

*Dave Armstrong and I (Chris Field) were flying on Barton. Conditions had dropped off to barely soarable. We noticed a drone being flown on the north end of the ridge about 150m from where we were standing in our harnesses. Dave, having failed to maintain in the light conditions decided to head north along the ridge to a landing area. There was clear visibility and line of sight between us and the drone operator. Dave made the assumption, as did I, that the operator would land the drone when he saw the glider approach. In fact, as Dave approached the drone was flown upwards into his path. Dave shouted down for him to get the drone out of the way to which he responded \*\*\*\* off, you get out of the way. Dave landed beyond the drone operator. Estimated separation at closest point, 20ft. The drone operator fled the scene.*

With hindsight the sensible course of action would have been to have spoken to the drone operator before flying along the ridge and come to an accommodation. This is certainly the recommended action in the future. Given the popularity and ease of access of these potential lethal toys combined with the absence of regulation and control it seems unlikely that this will be the last such incident. The CAA and

the Cumbria Airspace Users Forum are focusing on drone activity. All pilots witnessing possible paraglider/drone are asked to report to the CSO or if appropriate complete a BHPA incident report or Airprox report.

And even as I am about to click on 'send' a forum notification arrives in my inbox. So, what's Tim been up to now?

*Fly lots- fly safe!*

*CSO*