

Safety Bulletin 8

September 2016

Welcome to the latest Safety Bulletin which covers August 2016. As ever the purpose of the Bulletin is to provide the means by which all pilots can benefit from the experiences of others. Whilst the principal source of information is the Club forum other sources include the incidents@cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk line, various free flight publications and gossip, we know that not all incidents and accidents are reported but it is encouraging to observe the openness and integrity of so many pilots.

It is worth reiterating that Inclusion in this Bulletin does not signify closure and any conclusions drawn or lessons learnt are emphatically not definitive or final. As an example, the great boot versus red sling-back debate continued on the club forum to reach a final indecision. (see below) The two highly significant events during the period were a reserve deployment by Chris Little which turned out well and a serious accident involving a visiting speed flyer which turned out much less well.

Reserve Deployment - 5 August 2016

Chris Little

(Warning: Not to be read by pilots of a delicate disposition or before the 9pm watershed)

Forum thread at <http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=4039>

Summary

The pilot launched on Clough Head. No one else present. Flew down ridge to Brown Trousers Cove, wind backed from W to WSW/SW. Landed then relaunched into good thermals with top end wind conditions requiring full bar to return towards Clough. Got back to Castle Rock about 200-300ft above. Big blow-out > asymmetric > cascade > asymmetric > rapid spiral and with 150ft to spare > reserve deployment > reserve oscillations as glider made contact spinning pilot into the reserve > attempted 'A' Line collapse of wing, failed > brake line collapse successful just before impact with sufficient time to exit pod and adopt PLF position. (All this in about the same time it's taken you to read this paragraph) The reserve remained inflated dragging the pilot into Mill Gill. Pilot managed to extricate himself from the reserve/glider just in time to avert a 10-15 ft drop into the rocky stream bed.



Equipment

Chris is flying a Cayenne 5 having recently decided to 'come down a notch from his Ozone M6. Skywalk web site states that *"the Cayenne 5 redefines the sport class: our XC sportster combines true comp wing feeling with the genes of the cayenne series. We intentionally made the Cayenne 5 more of a comp wing than its predecessor. Positioned at the upper end of its class, our year-long development efforts produced a new concept with a higher aspect ratio, more cells and a profile optimized to reduce drag."*

This incident re-kindled the discussions on wing safety which expanded to include a discussion on appropriate choice of wings, particularly in the crowded ENB class. Anyone wishing to visit or revisit the discussion will find it at: <http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=3686> .

There is also a lot of very useful information available in the Knowledge Base.

http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/kb/CSC_kbindex.php .

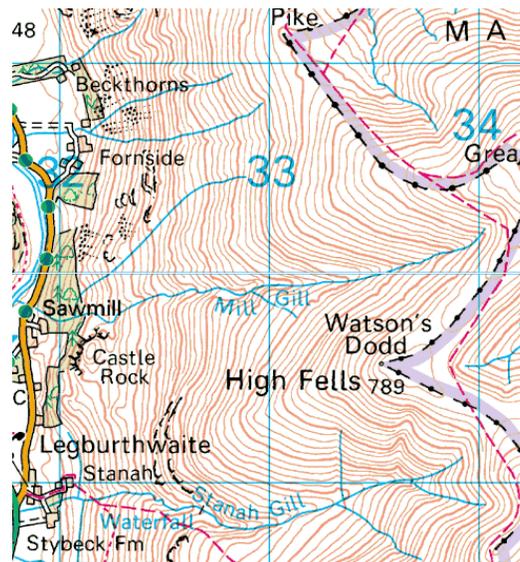
As Chris stated on the forum: *"I think over confidence played a big part in this incident This wing (Cayenne 5) feels very stable, and safe in comparison to the last two wings I've flown (less feedback, lower aspect ratio, lower classification etc) I haven't had any collapses what so ever whilst flying it and I'd regained the confidence I'd lost following my last incident !*

I think it's worth highlighting that whatever category of wing, they can still collapse, and that pilots should not rely on their wing to keep them safe !!"

And later in the thread: *" Be aware of strong winds and flying in the mountains. I see people flying in 'top end' conditions all the time (often flying EN B's because they think they are safer (?) and they've developed a level of complacency they've got away with it up to now - Don't let the choice of wing allow you to 'push-it' Whether you're on an EN-D or EN-B) I think it's good to question whether you're pushing*

it AND assess the conditions for the places you're flying in on the day (Thinking about height above the ground and wind strength/thermal activity). On the day I threw my reserve the wind was strong and I think there was rough mixing air low down around Castle Rock, Great How and St Johns in the Vale. On another day in lighter winds this would be ok but in strong winds and thermic conditions be wary and gain plenty of height before heading back to Clough Head”.

The discussion raises the more general issue of confidence -> complacency -> false sense of security -> reserve deployment! This may well be even more relevant to pilots flying ‘rock solid,’ ‘bomb proof’ safety class gliders. Strong wind, rough air and rotor exist whatever glider a pilot is flying, the key is having the knowledge and judgement to keep out of it. There is another related issue here. Modern EN Bs and even As have (by standards of only a few years ago) phenomenal performance. Immediately on qualifying the new pilot has the means (glide and penetration) to get to places and situations that a few years ago only the top rated pilots on hot wings would aspire to. Conditions change. New pilots have not necessarily built up the knowledge and skills required to extricate themselves from the conditions they might meet.



As one experienced XC pilot commented; key to this is not assuming that a particular ridge will behave in the same way every day, it can change from moment to moment. Wind speed, direction, ground shadow and air pressure are all variables that can affect the flying conditions on any particular hill and these variable can change within minutes. We need to constantly assess conditions, especially when low. Moreover, be prepared to act upon your observations and not become too engrossed in plan 'A'. Changing your mind and deviating from your original plan is a skill not a weakness. As Chris says; “I take the blame for this one not gaining enough height before reaching Castle Crag. I could have topped up but was trying to get to Clough Head to meet up with a new pilot who was flying the site for the first time. I was also flying on speed bar for most of the time in strong wind and thermals I was below ridge height and ended up in turbulent air coming over the top of St Johns in the Vale and Castle Crag in a WSW-W direction

Rescue

This is included as a heading not because there was a rescue, but because Chris's situation raises issues that are relevant to every pilot who leaves the ridge or flies alone. Use a bloody tracker! Ali Westle sums it up.

"I will no longer fly with my Delorme tracker in my deck but turned off. I will no longer be happy to fly alone and I will tell at least one person where I 'intend' to fly (and hopefully inform them of any change of plan once on take-off)"

A tracker won't prevent an accident but in the event it can speed up the rescue and recovery process which could well mean the difference between an injury and a fatality. It requires little effort to imagine the worst case scenario had Chris disappeared into Mill Gill. Tracker technology is moving rapidly and there is a tendency for the less techie pilot (me) to be put off by the sheer quantity and variety of systems however as a user of livetrack24 for the last 6 months I'd like to reassure pilots that it is straightforward, reliable (although some pilots disagree due to its need for a cell phone signal) and virtually free. There is a recent article linked on the Knowledge Base <http://en.free.aero/contentsHTML/instruments-e/?page=15>.

Ideally, as Brian Doub strongly suggests:

1. Tell someone (who's not flying?) where you're going!
2. If you go to a different site than planned, tell someone where you're going!
3. Use a tracker of some sort! Preferably one that is not dependent on cell phone signals! But even one that does is better than none at all.
4. fly with buddies! Don't fly alone.
5. Report back when landed as soon as possible.

Speed Flyer Injured on Blencathra 7 August

Initial reports of an accident involving an unidentified speed flyer were posted on the Club forum. <http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=4036> The accident has not been reported or discussed within the CSC safety system but has been discussed on social media. In outline, as reported by Gordy Oliver: *Sadly a speedflyer had a serious crash up here on Saturday, reports from the scene were: He was a non-rated speedflyer flying with another. Friend had completed his flight, he was flying behind. He was seen to be swooping low whilst shouting excitedly as he passed some walkers. Swooping down through the bracken he impacted a hidden boulder at speed and continued to tumble down the fellside for some distance. He sustained fractures to his ankle, tib & fib, femur and arm. It was touch and go for a while to stabilize him at the scene. Currently I [Gordy] am filling in the incident report form for the BHPA as we are tasked to do by the CAA, if anyone has further info please PM me if appropriate. Our thoughts are with the pilot and his family and friends for a full recovery.*

Some years ago Gordy gave a club night presentation on speed flying. As you'd expect it was full of brilliant video, great slides and sound advice. In particular, it highlighted the differences between conventional paragliding and speed flying and more significantly the different mind sets appropriate to

each activity. Clearly, the desire to contour the ground at high speed under a highly dynamic wing is diametrically opposite to conventional paragliding whereby we try to get as far away from the hard stuff as soon as possible after launching. This is not to suggest the two activities are mutually exclusive, they're not. One of the great things about our sport is freedom of choice. There are many rules and conventions and lots of sound advice but not a great deal of compulsion. It was interesting to observe the discussion surrounding this accident on social media some of which challenged the notion of getting a BHPA rating – 'how would that have helped him'. Without wishing to pontificate, I'd suggest that whilst a BHPA rating might not have helped, the associated training course could have included some relevant stuff.

Here is the BHPA line on Speed Flying.

Speed flying and BHPA

The BHPA Flying Safety Committee (FSC) has developed a Club Pilot training syllabus specifically for people who want to learn to make hill descent flights on speed wings. Certain BHPA schools have been authorised to deliver the new speed flying syllabus as a trial course to ab-initio pilots and experienced flyers from other disciplines. The Speed Flying Club Pilot rating (non-soaring: max wind speed 20mph) can be issued following successful completion of the Speed Flying Club Pilot course. This includes a written exam covering practical aspects of speed flying as well as air law, theory of flight and meteorology. The speed flying syllabus and its associated rating is for speed flying hill descents - it does not involve ridge soaring. The FSC deems it necessary to hold a Club Pilot (Hill) rating to undertake this activity, and the paragliding Club Pilot hill syllabus covers ridge soaring and the rules of the air associated with soaring and sustained flight.

Air Ventures is specifically mentioned as an accredited training centre. So, if any pilots or indeed non-pilots wish to ramp up their adrenalin dosage, a text to Air Ventures could be a sensible first step.

Boots

It is interesting how many pilots have strong and contradictory views on footwear. The forum discussion <http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=4010> proving inconclusive, in Safety Bulletin 7 I requested empirical evidence. For those who don't visit the forum here's a piece from Anthony Braidford that will make your eyes water.

"5 weeks ago today I was in Ager, Spain. It was the final day of a week's flying holiday - It was an awesome week with great people. It was the morning flight, things just warming up, I decided to launch first as I just fancied a boat around the ridges of Ager. I was having a great time soaring the ridges but was ultimately going down, so I decided it was time to head over to the landing field, which I'd landed in 8 times that week. I made my final approach and was hanging out of the harness, It was reasonably thermic around with a moderate breeze to land into. I had only enough pressure on the brakes to keep control and was coming in with a pace that would require a run to land. As I put my right leg out to start the run I clipped the toe of my trail running shoe on a piece of uneven ground which was probably only 2

or 3 inches higher than the surrounding earth. It's a field in Spain with stones and ruts etc. I then rolled the remaining energy out of the landing. I'd heard my foot snap and could clearly see that it was damaged.

I have many breaks/fractures in my foot, all of the metatarsals are smashed and where these bones join your ankle, your Lisfranc joint, this is badly damaged. So I have a severe Lisfranc injury. I didn't have any other scrapes or bruises anywhere even though I was wearing shorts and T-shirt. The excellent Spanish surgeons operated a few hrs after the accident. I flew home the next day and am now getting treatment here. If I can start to walk 3 months after the accident, I'll be really happy. Even then the long term issues are unknown.

Basically I will never ever fly again without the correct footwear, HanWag boots or the like. I've spoken with a few people about how it may be possible to just transfer the injury further up the body by wearing sturdy boots.

I think -

1. Your feet are incredibly complex bits of kit, I personally would rather snap my leg than smash my foot again. Obviously leg injuries can be bad too.

2. In the case of my accident, all of the damage was done to a fairly small fragile part of my foot, made up of lots of little bones etc I'm absolutely convinced that if I'd been wearing proper boots, I would have just had an uncomfortable landing, maybe with a few scrapes/bruises and more than likely would have enjoyed lunch, had a siesta and flown later in the day unaware of the nightmare I'd avoided".

So, just I was about to chuck my Walsh PBs (circa 1992) in the bin this post arrived from Jackie Knights.

"To pick up on the point about transfer of possible injury to the higher up leg bones, my experience is this: ground handling at the Hole Of Horcum, Yorkshire some years ago in winds which had picked up and which should have seen me pack away rather than continue to play with my wing.

I was wearing Crispi boots with the additional plastic ankle supports. Because they were new, their tread was pretty deep and well defined. I was standing in heather.

My ham-fisted wing control saw me being pulled around and I twisted to follow my wing. It turned out that my right foot was pretty embedded in the heather and couldn't follow the turn. My ankle was probably well protected, but the next weakest point was not a leg bone but my anterior cruciate ligament (knee) which snapped with a resounding crack.

Now it may be that a snapped ACL is actually preferable to a broken ankle... probably an arguable point. I am convinced that the combination of surface and substantial boots, particularly the good deep tread contributed to this outcome and since then my knee hurts if I even look at a pair of heavy walking or paragliding boots!

Both before and after my reconstruction op (which was about 3 years after the incident as the Yorkshire surgeon thought middle aged women should make 'light shopping' their main sport!) I tried on both my Crispi's and my leather walking boots. Both made me very nervous as they felt like really heavy weights

on the end of my leg with my knee as a fulcrum. In all other respects I've made a full recovery.

My compromise is Keen walking boots which have some ankle support but are very light weight.

The point I'm really trying to make is that the "transfer upwards" is not necessarily to a broken upper leg bone, but in my case was to the knee joint, which can also be a pretty tricky repair job.

So there we have it, who knows! I've decided to hedge my bets, boots at the weekend, fell-running shoes during the week and save the slingbacks for clubbing.



That's it for this month,

Fly lots, fly safe!

CSO