

Safety Bulletin 13

It has been a long time since Bulletin 12. It was the original intention to issue bulletins on a time (monthly) rather than a need (something worth reporting) basis. However, after the initial enthusiasm for the airing of safety incidents and issues the forum discussions have gone quiet. It would be nice to ascribe this to a successful safety campaign and if that was the case then my work here would be over and I can retire happy. It's more likely a combination of less flying (hence fewer incidents) due to the disappointing weather and a loss of enthusiasm for reporting accidents. The incidents most likely to be reported are those involving helicopters as it's more difficult to keep them secret. I was alerted to Jez Wiltshire's accident (see below) by the Air Ambulance flying low over my garden towards Matterdale.

In this Bulletin both incidents discussed involved MRT and Air Ambulance. That's great and we should all be grateful to the two pilots (Jez and Andrew Maltby) for enabling us to benefit from their misfortune. I am aware of at least two other incidents on our patch, both potentially serious, which were not reported. This is a pity as, from the small amount I know, there are some extremely useful lessons to be drawn. I fully understand why some pilots do not wish to air their misfortunes. In the past I've taken the same approach limiting my dissemination to a quiet chat on the fellside, in the pub or in Aerofix whilst arranging repairs, benefitting a tiny few. This is exactly the reason we instigated a more open approach.

Incident reporting and discussion can be completely anonymized. There are a number of ways in which an incident can be raised; via the forum Safety section, by email or simply in conversation. The important lessons can often be drawn without reference to any identifying information; glider, date or even place. Please bear this in mind next time you are involved in an incident from which others might benefit, even if it doesn't involve a helicopter.

Once upon a time on Wolf Crag

By Jez Wiltshire

It was forecast to be quite a nice day for Wolf Crag with conditions good enough to convince me to take my hang glider out. I arrived at the bottom of take-off (East end of the hill) about 10:30 and had a quick jaunt to take off to check conditions. Within ten minutes observing the wind and direction reassured me the carry up would be worthwhile. I should note at this point I was the only person on Wolf that I could see or get a radio response from.

Cutting to the chase I was rigged and clipping into my harness at 12:00ish with a disconcerting feeling that the wind was easing. Trying to ignore this voice in my head I turned the glider into

wind to assess conditions and yes, the wind had dropped off but was cycling through well enough.



I took off with no particular drama and turned left along to the Craggs, it soon became apparent that I was struggling to maintain. Added to this was the fact that I hadn't flown this particular glider in a while and was keeping a cautious distance from the hill. I scraped onto the crags themselves hoping that I'd get something here. I didn't. I ended up doing one beat the of the Craggs before deciding to set myself up for an approach and landing directly in front of the crags which is a large flat open area very slightly wind shaded by the comparably elevated section of the Old Coach road.

I'd successfully unzipped and rotated out of my harness and transferred my hands from the base/control bar to the uprights. I flew into what felt like still air so pulled on a tad more speed. On final approach I was coming in and moments from flaring and landing I noticed that running across in front of me was a shallow ditch, moss and water filled exactly where I wanted to flare and land. Here's where I made a poor decision ... I decided to leave the flare until after the ditch and so land on drier and firmer ground. The glider ran out of energy and when I did flare it did not result in a braked stall but mushed in. This is, in itself, not the end of the world. In a normal hard landing area, you just run off the excess speed. What happened next highlighted the second poor decision (the landing area). It is effectively a bog and with all the recent rain was exhibiting very bog-like features i.e. lots of water held in deep moss.

I touched down still going forward and attempted to run off the excess speed. My feet sank into the sponge, I fell forward, my feet locked in the mire. The base bar connected with the ground and my face was stuffed into wet moss and blinding pain shot through my right arm. I pulled myself to my feet and immediately felt my arm and knew all was not right as there were things sticking out where there shouldn't be. A quick check of everything else revealed it seemed only to be my arm that was a problem.

There's a sort of rule in hang gliding; if you know you are going to pile in you should pull your arms in from the metal uprights so all of you swings through the frame. Leaving your hands on the uprights results your arms being left behind, broken!

So in much pain I managed to undo the karabiner and disconnect my harness from the glider. I also realized I really was standing in a bog. Fortunately a lone walker (Martin from Rochdale) appeared on the Coach Road, helped me out of my harness and found a nice flat rock for me to pass out on. I managed to call the emergency services getting through quickly (luckily a good signal) requesting mountain rescue. I was put through to the police who in turn contacted Patterdale MRT after I gave details of who I was, what had happened and current location. They assured me they could access (providing there was a decent signal) an accurate location by my phone. I was told to stay by my phone as someone would be in contact with an update.

While I was waiting I thought it best to try and notify any potential other fliers on Wolf what was transpiring and that a helicopter was in-bound, So I radioed and sent a message via the S*W Whatsapp message group. Within a few minutes Patterdale MRT got in contact and informed me that the MRT were still on their way back from another call-out and that the Helimed had been called. As it turned out the Helimed got there first by about 10mins. The paramedics on board gave me some pain relief and with some more swearing got my arm into a vacuum splint. With the help of the MRT we all walked to the helicopter where they whisked me off to Carlisle.

So the result of all this was a dislocated elbow (see below), Morphine/Ketamine hangover (also see below) and a slightly bent upright on the glider.



Ah! That's what hurts.

Points to ponder:

1. Flying on your own carries its risks, I accepted that risk and took off.
2. The decision to flare late was driven by not wanting to get wet rather than flaring when the aerodynamics said 'flare!'
3. I didn't know the landing area as well as I thought (how much water was present).
4. Ketamine is a very strange drug indeed



I Feel greeeaatt!!!

My thanks go out big time to all those involved in my rescue/treatment, Martin the passer-by for the water, chocolate, coffee and suitably bemused look; The Helimed and Patterdale MRT crew for assistance, piss taking and drugs and finally Steve and Stuart for coming to my aid and entering the Clegg/Horse Fly infested bog to rescue my hang glider.

Tree Landing

Harry Postill has contributed an interesting letter to the latest edition of Skywings, August 2017 page 24; String Theory. It was discussed on the forum.

<http://www.cumbriasoaringclub.co.uk/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=4583>

Here are the key bits:

On a recent trip to Annecy, a pilot was dumped in the trees and ended up securely lodged about 90 feet above the ground. Rescue was summoned and arrived by helicopter in the form of a team of a gendarme and sapeur-pompier, fully experienced and equipped for such a rescue. The pilot (Richard Sewell, for it was he) was fully prepared for such an eventuality. He was able to access the emergency cord he was carrying. This he weighted with a vario and lowered the 90 feet to pull up the necessary rescue gear which he assembled and was safely lowered. As a bonus, the rescuers were able to provide a contact for a paraglider recovery expert who successfully retrieved the glider.

Harry highlights the importance of carrying a length of line, he suggests at least a 100 feet, and making sure it is accessible in the event of a tree landing. He usefully suggests making a loop in one end to prevent accidentally dropping it.

Whilst tree landings seem to be less frequent in our neck of the woods there have been at least two recent incidents of pilots landing amongst if not actually up trees. (Unreported). Harry Postill noted in his article that in the course of his ten day trip they observed 3 gliders abandoned in trees and two heli-rescues. Pilots frequenting more forested areas presumably will carry rescue kit. I learnt to fly in New South Wales where rescue line was almost mandatory (longer than 100 feet!) but I have lost the habit. Dental floss was the favoured material but I have read of incidents where the line snapped.

Brian Doub observed that in Russia they are all trained for tree landings and all carry saws with them. I think this might also be the case in Japan as I once observed a Japanese pilot in Australia choose to land in the only tree in a one square mile flat pasture. The explanation was that the tree option was preferable to a downwind landing. Weird, turning into wind sounds better!

Andy Elliot reported that when in Annecy he carried 20m thin cord to pull up a rope with, some thicker cord and a couple of climbing slings for securing self to tree, and a karabiner or two from the climbing kit.

Noel Holland choses to cover all bases suggesting a:

“Paracord bracelet with metal shackle on right wrist - enough to secure myself to a decent branch or the trunk while waiting for rescue. I don't want to land in a tree uninjured only to fall to the ground while waiting for rescue.

A very long length of light string and a Leatherman tool which can double as a line weight. The pliers part of the leatherman is important as the easiest way to remove a glider from over a tree is to disconnect the maillons on one set of riser lines

A plastic storm whistle - if you land in dense forest the rescue team might have a rough idea where you are but not be able to see you through the tree canopy, the whistle may help them locate you faster.

The last two items live in my radio chest harness which is always on me not the flying harness. That way if for any reason I have to get out of the harness in a hurry (water landing or pylon landing) I always have my radio, PLB and a basic rescue kit with me.”

A more comprehensive article on tree landing, including how best to land in a tree as well as extrication is available in the Knowledge Base.

https://issuu.com/cumbriasoaringclub/docs/tree_landings_-_free.aero_extract_m?ff=true



And it's not just trees

First Aid Training

Jonathan Butler drew our attention to a St John Ambulance first aid app.

<http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid-advice/free-mobile-first-aid-app.aspx>

It is in everyone's interest to get trained in first aid, obviously. The problem for many is that, even having taken the time and trouble to get trained, without practice the skills and knowledge tend to fade. Whilst not a substitute for proper training this app will go a long way towards preparing for the eventuality of having to deal with a casualty. It is certainly impressive, comprehensive, clear and concise and extremely easy to navigate. It will be great as an aide memoire at the scene and as a refresher to click through during those quiet periods of parawaiting. It covers a far wider range of medical situations than we are likely to meet in a paragliding accident which actually makes it even more useful. (Test: How does the acronym F A S T relate to a suspected stroke victim? Don't know? Download the app today!)

Wether Fell 10 May 2017

Andrew Maltby was victim of an accident whilst launching at Wether Fell. The incident provides some valuable lessons particularly in the areas of incident management, and rescue.

Andrew reports:

I arrived at Wether Fell in a group of 4 to find light winds and gliders just managing to stay airborne, regularly taking off and side landing. We set up our gliders ready for launch. After a short while an obvious thermal cycle was approaching the hill with two gliders climbing rapidly in front. I pulled up my glider and made a normal take off. At less than 30' I encountered strong lift and then an immediate large asymmetric deflation of the right wing. Due to the low height and suddenness of the collapse there was insufficient time to react before ground impact. I was fully in my harness with hands on the brakes. Witnesses report that the collapse seemed irrecoverable in the height available (time 1220 approx.)

I was immediately attended by Ali Westle and Jan Little who took control of the situation. Ali elected to press my SPOT SOS button. I have since learned that this alerted the SPOT GEO rescue centre in Montgomery, Texas who alerted the U.K. emergency services and contacted my nominated emergency contact (my wife). They gave her my coordinates which she passed on to another PG friend who also alerted the emergency services.

Meanwhile on Wether Fell no phone signal was available until Gordon Coulthard walked a short distance down the hill and was also able to alert the emergency services at 1228. A first responder arrived at 1256 followed in time by mountain rescue, military mountain rescue and

ultimately the coastguard helicopter at 1430 approx. I was recovered to James Cook hospital by 1500. Spot GEO centre called my wife at 1530 to say recovery complete.

Pilots flying later on the hill reported strong changes in wind strength and direction with thermal passage and once in the air "sharp edged thermals". This certainly seems to be the primary cause of the accident.

Comment:

Cause of the Accident. The consensus from Andrew and witnesses was that the accident resulted from the strong conditions on the day, typically Spring thermals. Andrew felt that a possible secondary contributory factor could have been tension in the harness speed system bungee. The speed system was not engaged, but sometimes when initially getting into this type of harness it is easy to snag or induce additional tension over normal in the retaining bungee with excessive pressure on the footboard. This might interfere with immediate recovery of the leading edge. The glider was subsequently checked by Aerofix who found no problems.

As to the potential for snagging the speed system on entry, it is a risk 'pod' pilots need to be aware of. Practice, practice, practice makes perfect.

Accident Management. Not for the first time in recent history, an accident victim had cause to be grateful that Ali Westle was on hand. SPOT certainly proved its worth and all SPOT users and potential users will be grateful to Andrew for this confidence building demonstration. It did highlight a weakness; the SPOT system does not send a confirmatory message.

On the day there was no phone signal on the top of the hill. A pilot was dispatched to find a signal and contact the emergency services. However, having returned to the site of the incident there was no means for the emergency services to re-contact the incident. In hindsight a pilot could have remained in phone contact whilst using radio to relay information to the accident site.

Multiple Radio Frequencies. It was reported that on the day pilots were operating on 4 different frequencies. Whilst it was possible to contact all airborne pilots it would have been more straightforward if pilots were all on one frequency. This led to a great deal of discussion both within and between clubs. The recommendation is that pilots flying other clubs' sites should operate on those clubs' frequencies. This proposal, along with wider recommendations on radio use, including a list of our neighboring club frequencies will be published shortly.

That's it for this Bulletin.

Fly lots, fly safe!

CSO