

An accident occurred during a trip abroad which resulted in a water landing; the pilot was extremely lucky to survive. The sequence of events leading up to it shows how surprisingly easily things can go wrong. The list of errors does not highlight any new lessons to be learned ... but does indicate the need to repeat existing warnings.

The low-hour Club Pilot was on a guided trip to Turkey, his first trip abroad. At take-off his briefing explained that he would be given approach and landing instructions over the radio when he arrived near the landing site, i.e. the beach. After launch, he realised that he had just committed Error Number One!

For the first time in his flying career he needed to put all his spare kit in the back of his harness as he couldn't leave anything at take-off. He immediately discovered that he could not sit back in his harness; not an acceptable situation with several thousand feet of descent in front of him.

A voice over his radio said to let go of the brakes and adjust the harness! This was followed by an instruction to maintain his current heading. He discovered later that, by a strange coincidence, neither transmission was intended for him. No method of identification was used but the

pilot made the assumption that he had received a clear instruction. He thought it was meant for him and he did what he thought he had been told to do. Error Number Two!

After some minutes with no further contact he realised that his heading would take him out to sea. As he was level with the beach he decided to alter course along the beach, but a voice over the radio said, 'Do not alter course, you are fine, keep your heading.' He again assumed the message was intended for him and resumed his previous course, now heading out to sea! Error Number Three!

At this stage, although he was by now quite concerned that he might not reach the landing site, he continued; a decision he felt must have been correct as he heard a message saying, 'Continue as you are.' Error Number Four!

By now all that remained of his flight was a steady descent into the sea, followed by almost an hour's immersion and subsequent rescue by a local fisherman, who luckily spotted his canopy in the water. Fortunately the pilot had received his training in a school well versed in water landings and knew exactly how best to survive the situation.

He says, 'It transpired that nobody knew where I was. Inadvertently I had listened to, and followed, instructions which were not intended for me.'

What lessons do we need to repeat as a result?

- Do not introduce more than one change to your routine at a time
- Learn and use correct radio procedure
- Ensure the flight plan includes your intended actions in the event of loss of radio contact
- Don't fly into the sea just because the Coach didn't tell you not to! In other words, *remember that you are the pilot and must take responsibility for your own actions.* This pilot could have landed on the beach without difficulty had he decided to do so.
- When you go abroad on group trips, ensure that the person running the activity has the proper experience and ability so that the errors highlighted here cannot happen.

It is very fortunate that this accident did not result in a fatality. The words 'Duty of Care' also spring to mind!



Fig. 1. Area of failed stitching



Fig. 2. This area is often completely obscured by a neoprene cover

## Safety Advisory: Paraglider speed systems and risers

ALL PARAGLIDER PILOTS SHOULD READ, DIGEST AND TAKE ACTION ON THE CONTENTS OF THIS NOTICE AND KEEP IT FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

The BHPA have received reports of two cases where a speed system has failed in flight. Both gliders (a Gin Carrera and a U-Turn Lightning) have suffered from one of the speed system pulleys coming away from the riser. The integrity of the riser itself is not affected.

Like many other models, both these wings use 'skinny' risers, which means there is a relatively small area of stitching where the speed system pulleys are attached. This area (Fig. 1) is put under considerable stress when the speed bar is applied and requires regular checking. A contributory

factor is that the pulleys and stitching on many gliders is concealed beneath a neoprene sheath or cover (Fig. 2).

Both Gin and U-turn have taken steps to reinforce this area, but it is very likely that other models may also be liable to similar stresses. The FSC strongly recommends that all pilots inspect their speed systems regularly, including peeling back any protective covers, carefully inspecting the stitching and checking the webbing tabs for wear.

*Issued by Ian Currer, BHPA Assistant Technical Officer, April 14th 2015*

## Safety Advisory footnote

Since the 'Paraglider speed systems and risers' Advisory above was published online we have heard of several very similar incidents that the pilots concerned had not previously reported. This illustrates the value of reporting something, even if you think it might only have affected you. Fortunately there do not appear to have been any injuries as a result of these incidents, but this may have been merely a matter of good luck. The lack of reporting has definitely exposed pilots to avoidable risks.

## Drone awareness

There has been a considerable increase in First Person View (FPV) unmanned aircraft (drone) flying. This is where the pilot of the drone is wearing a device so that they can see the view as if they were in the drone. Therefore they have an extremely limited view when it comes to avoiding other aircraft. These drones can be of a multi-copter, helicopter or of fixed wing design, both powered and unpowered.

There have been a number of incidents where FPV drone flying has caused the pilots of other aircraft – from a 747 to a paraglider – concern for their safety. To

cater for this and to protect third parties on the ground the CAA has drawn up a set of rules for the drone pilots to follow. These can be found in CAA Official Record Series 4, Number 1108, available at [www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?catid=33&pagetype=65&appid=11&mode=detail&id=6746](http://www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?catid=33&pagetype=65&appid=11&mode=detail&id=6746).

If you become aware of FPV activity on or near where you are flying, the best thing to do is to talk to the pilot to establish safe operating procedures. It should be possible to do this without over-limiting anybody's flying. Due to the readily available equipment, limited training facilities, and/or a lack of aviation law awareness they may not know about the CAA document.