

British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association

REPORT

**Investigation of a Hang Gliding accident
which occurred at Teba near Algonodales, Spain,
on 21st March 2012
in which the student pilot suffered fatal injury.**

Introduction

On Wednesday 21st March 2012 the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA) received reports of an air accident at Teba near Algonodales, Spain that had resulted in the death of the pilot. The BHPA tasked Mr David Thompson, BHPA Senior Technical Officer, to investigate the accident and submit a report to the Flying and Safety Committee (FSC) of the BHPA for ratification.

BHPA investigation serial number: IR 12/014

Summary

On Wednesday 21st March 2012, a male BHPA pilot aged 59 was fatally injured while flying a hang glider at a site called Teba in Algonodales, Spain. The experienced paraglider pilot was flying an Aeros Target hang glider whilst undertaking a hang gliding conversion course run by a BHPA school. At approximately 14.30 the pilot was seen to turn left as planned shortly after take-off and then continue on this course until impacting with the hillside. Despite instruction over the radio telling the pilot to turn away from the hill, no corrective inputs were witnessed. The pilot died two days later on 23rd March 2012 from the injuries he sustained.

This document is confidential until ratified.

Date ratified by the BHPA Flying and Safety Committee: 13th February 2013

THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The structure of this report conforms to that recommended in the BHPA Technical Manual and is intended to follow the principles pertaining to AAIB reports. It is divided into four sections.

Section 1 - Factual information

Section 2 - Analysis

Section 3 - Conclusion

Section 4 - Recommendations

SECTION 1 - FACTUAL INFORMATION

1.1 History of the flight

At the time of the incident the pilot was undergoing hang gliding training with a BHPA registered hang gliding school. School records show that on 19th March he carried out some simulator familiarisation training before heading to a site known as Teba. Here he carried out two basic top to bottom flights from the south easterly take off. Then on the 20th March he carried out a further flight from Teba from the north west take off. Records state that the pilot was making good progress and flying well. On the 21st March the pilot made two further flights from the Teba north west take off. The first flight went well with the pilot demonstrating a good take off, turns and landing. The brief for the second flight was the same as the first though the pilot was told he could extend the flight by maximising any available lift, should the conditions allow. At approximately 14.30, having confirmed the briefing and carried out a radio check, the pilot took off, making an initial beat to the right before turning back left along the ridge. The instructor states that, on his command, the pilot had made a controlled turn back to the left and on a good track but was flying 'a little fast'. At this point the instructor prompted the pilot via the radio to turn out as he considered the pilot to be getting too close to the hill. The instructor continued asking the pilot to turn away from the hill but with no response. The pilot continued on his course until after approximately 250 metres he collided with the hillside. Witnesses stated that they saw no attempt by the pilot to turn away from the hill despite instruction to do so by the instructor. The pilot was quickly attended by the instructor, who administered first aid and called the emergency services. The pilot was taken to Carlos de Haya hospital. He died on 23rd March from the injuries sustained.

1.2 Injuries to persons

Injuries	Crew	Passengers	Others
Fatal	1	-	-
Serious	-	-	-
Minor / None	-	-	-

1.3 Damage to the aircraft

There was significant damage to the aircraft caused by the impact with the hillside. There is no evidence of glider failure prior to the impact.

1.4 Personnel information

The Pilot was a 59 year old male. He held a BHPA PG hill Pilot rating, attained in February 2012, and had approximately 300 hours of paragliding experience. The pilot had completed six days of hang gliding training in August 2011 with a BHPA hang gliding school based in the South of England. The school records show that the pilot made good progress, achieving his elementary pilot level on 14th August. During the course of the six days the pilot completed the required exercises for Elementary Pilot (EP) and some of those required for Club Pilot (CP). The CP exercises included no. 26, Higher Flights; no. 27, 180 Degree Turns; no. 28, Planned Approaches; no. 30, Nil wind take offs and no. 31, Advanced equipment theory. The Chief Flying Instructor of the school confirmed that the pilot had performed well under training.

At the time of the incident the pilot was undergoing further hang gliding training with a BHPA registered hang gliding school. School records show that between the 19th and 21st of March, he

completed a further five flights (including the incident flight) and a simulator flight. The Pilot completed two simple top-to-bottom flights on the 19th from the south east side of Teba where it was noted by the instructor that his second flight was “more relaxed”. On the 20th the Pilot successfully completed an extended top to bottom from the north west side of Teba. On the 21st, the day of the incident, the Pilot successfully completed a top-to-bottom flight, again from the north west side of Teba, demonstrating good turns with a good approach and landing.

1.5 Aircraft information

The glider was an Aeros Target (size 16m) with approximately 100 hours airtime. It had not been modified. It was of a type and size suitable for this level of pilot.

1.6 Meteorological information

Conditions were light with a gentle northwesterly breeze and some light thermic activity.

1.7 Communications

The pilot was in radio contact with the instructor. The radio was checked prior to take off and the instructor could hear the radio functioning correctly in the air while the pilot was in close proximity. There is no evidence to suggest radio failure.

1.8 Aerodrome and approved facilities

The diagram below shows the Teba northwest take off with the approximate crash site.



1.9 Wreckage and impact information

The pilot crashed amongst rocks on the side of the hill.

1.10 Medical and pathological information

An autopsy was carried out by the Spanish authorities. Cause of death was given as head injuries due to violent trauma. There was some evidence of heart disease present though this was not listed by the Spanish pathologist as a causal factor.

SECTION 2 – ANALYSIS

The investigation considered the incident as a whole. The pilot was an experienced and current paraglider pilot. As such he would be familiar with the concepts and principles required for safe, soaring flight. He had shown good levels of progress while learning to hang glide in August 2011, having completed a number of the CP exercises as well as those required for EP. He continued to show similar aptitude while continuing his training in March 2012. The investigation could find no omissions in training that would explain the incident. The pilot had flown the glider on at least four previous occasions and was familiar with the site and conditions. The task set was also of an appropriate nature. In short, it would appear that the right pilot was on the correct glider, engaged on an appropriate task with the correct level of instructor input. With the limited evidence available the Investigation was unable to provide an explanation for the occurrence of this incident.

SECTION 3 – CONCLUSION

The Investigation concluded that the incident occurred because the Pilot failed to correct his course, for reasons unknown, resulting in him colliding with a rocky area of the hillside.

SECTION 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS

The Investigation makes no recommendations.