

**REPORT INTO THE ACCIDENT INVOLVING SCLEICHER K13 G-DCMK AT
BLACK MOUNTAINS GLIDING CLUB TALGARTH ON 12 AUGUST 2022.
BGA reference 2022-132**

CIRCUMSTANCES

The glider was launched on a standard instructional sortie by means of an aerotow, that is the glider was pulled into the air by a powered aircraft in this case a Pawnee. The launch proceeded normally until a height variously estimated as between 20 and 60 ft when the tow rope was seen to separate from the glider. At this point in the launch process there was insufficient runway for the glider to land ahead and also insufficient height to execute a turn back to land from a modified circuit or downwind on the takeoff strip. The pilot was faced with a number of poor options and elected to attempt to land in the best available field. The aircraft crashed during this attempt and both the instructor and the student sustained serious injuries. The aircraft was destroyed.

The clubs disaster plan was put into operation and the emergency services responded exceptionally well to remove the pilots to hospital.

AIRCRAFT INSPECTION

The aircraft was destroyed during the attempted landing with severe damage to the wings and fuselage. This damage placed the aircraft beyond economic repair. Addition damage was done by the emergency services to extract the pilots from the wreckage for timely transport to hospital.

When interviewed after the accident neither pilot had any recollection of operating the release cable to intentionally release from the tow.

The release fitted to the aircraft was an overhauled unit serviced by an approved maintenance organisation and issued as serviceable with the appropriate documentation. Exhaustive tests of the release mechanism failed to identify a cause for the spontaneous release. The release fitted to the aircraft was virtually new having been installed some 72 launches prior to the accident flight.

An experienced BGA inspector was asked to visit the site so as to examine and test the release mechanism. This was to establish if any mechanical faults were present which could have contributed to the glider becoming detached from the tow plane. Despite the disruption to the forward fuselage from the impact and the additional damage caused by the emergency services to extricate the pilots the release worked correctly on all occasions.

A number of anomalies were discovered but none could be positively identified as causal.

1. The ring set in use were worn close to the manufacturers published limits but were nevertheless serviceable.
2. The gliders at Talgarth never launch by anything other than aerotow thus the belly hook was not fitted and a non-standard method of attaching the release operating cable to its anchorage had been installed.
3. An insert into a cable guide had disintegrate and been found in the cockpit floor. It was not possible to say whether this damage occurred during the accident sequence.

4. A poorly executed welded repair to a fuselage tube was present which was in the process of failing

CONCLUSION

The cause of the towrope becoming detached from the towing aircraft could not be positively identified. At the point that the rope detached the accident the handling pilot was unable to select a suitable site for a successful field landing.

A number of minor observations were raised as a result of this investigation and these are being addressed through the BGA inspector network.

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BGA Senior Accident Investigator