BGA accident/incident summaries

AIRCRAFT Ref	Type	Damage	Date, time	PILOT Injury	P1 hours
2023					
144	ASW 20	substantial	21/08/23, –	serious	350+

Competition field landing crash. The pilot started his final glide from 4,500ft amsl about 30km from the airfield. The flight computer indicated that this should have given an 800ft safety margin although the report questions whether this margin was above the airfield or the 3km radius finish circle. Setting off at high speed into the 16kt headwind soon eroded the safety margin so the pilot slowed down but continued to track towards the finish. With less than 7km to go to the airfield, the glider was down to 500ft agl and almost directly overhead a power airfield, although the pilot reports being unaware of this landing option. The pilot continued on, hoping to finish the task before landing in a field. There was a landable field immediately in front of the pilot just after crossing the finish line, but the pilot rejected this as seeming to be too rough. The pilot hoped the next field would be a better option so descended to accelerate into ground effect, abandoning any chance of landing in the field below him. His plan was to cross an A-road and fly under some high tension wires about 16ft agl before landing in the next field. The left wing caught on an unnoticed tree, yawing the glider through 180° before it crashed. The pilot suffered serious injuries and the glider was substantially damaged. The pilot had discussed final glide techniques with other pilots on the preceding days and had been given advice that more experienced competition pilots later dismissed as lacking a sound basis.
A search for ASW 20 accident 2023 on the BGA website will bring up the full text of the Senior Accident Investigator's report. Section 7.1 of the BGA competition rules lists the potential penalties for flight below 30ft agl outside the airfield perimeter.

2024

15	DG-100	minor	13/01/24, 15:45	none	not reported

Field landing accident. Descending after a wave flight above cloud, the pilot paused the descent to allow the landing area to clear. The pilot then realised that the only available gap was north of the airfield and, not having a cloud flying rating, had to descend to under the 1,000ft agl cloudbase some 5km from the club. After picking a field the pilot made a safe touchdown but on applying the wheel brake the glider skidded on the icy surface, making directional control difficult. As the glider slowed a wing dropped, removing the wingtip skid, and the glider came to a stop at the edge of the field where the underside of a wing was damaged by a fence post. The rudder had also been damaged by a chunk of ice.

16	EuroFOX	none	13/01/24, 15:20	–	500+

Partial power failure during take-off ground run. The first take-off attempt was abandoned as the rope released from the tug soon after all out. The CFI and the tug pilot inspected the release and the ring before re-attaching the rope and testing its security. During the second take-off, after the glider became airborne, the tug pilot became aware of the protracted take-off run and glanced down at the instruments to see that the boost pressure to the Rotax 914 was well below the expected value. The pilot was able to take off just before the end of the runway and the combination slowly climbed. After informing the glider pilots of the problem, the tug pilot intended to climb straight ahead before making a low circuit but at 300ft ato the rope again released at the tug end. Both the glider and tug were able to land safely on the airfield. The engine trouble was found to be due to a faulty turbo wastegate servo. Further testing of the rope and release could not reproduce the uncommanded release but it was assumed that the rings were worn. The club intends to make a gauge to identify worn rings in the future.

20	DG-505	minor	20/01/24, 15:20	none/none	110

Canopy opened during winch launch. The P1 was conducting a training flight in the DG for a new club member and, as such, spent extra care ensuring that the P2 was comfortable and familiar with the aircraft and the controls. The P1 flew the launch and when the canopy opened at about 900ft ato he released and was able to pull the canopy down. The retaining cord caught between the frame and the fuselage, preventing the P1 from closing and locking the canopy but he was able to fly the glider with his right hand and hold the canopy down with his left. The approach was flown without airbrake and the glider landed safely. The CFI commented that the canopy was closed early because of a gusty wind and this may have contributed to the P1's failure to lock it.

22	SF 25c	minor	03/02/24, 11:00	none/none	2000

Heavy landing. The wind speed at ground level was 10G15 knots. On approach the pilot added an extra 10 knots to the approach speed to allow for the wind gradient but at about 80ft agl, soon after opening the spoilers, the TMG encountered significant wind shear. The TMG descended rapidly and landed heavily, bending the tail wheel mount. The duty instructor later also encountered the same wind shear while gliding.

BGA accident/incident summaries *continued*

AIRCRAFT Ref	Type	Damage	Date, time	PILOT Injury	P1 hours
Incidents					
13	K-21	–	24/11/23, 13:40	–	1408

Broken winch cable drifted off site. The cable broke close to the winch with the glider at about 900ft agl, a height the P2 considered to be typical for the airfield. Both P1 and P2 assumed that the cable had back released at the top of the launch. The flight trace showed no sign of intentional flight to the upwind side of the runway during the launch. The cable drifted as it descended and came to rest draped over overhead electricity cables and some trees surrounding a private mobile home park bordering the airfield. Network technicians had to be called to shut off the power to the mobile home park for 15 minutes so that the cable could be removed. The winch driver describes the glider initially drifting downwind slightly before tracking parallel to the runway. He was also surprised at how far the cable drifted after the break. The winch master and safety officer both decribed the conditions as being unsuitable for winch launching. The safety officer pointed out that wind direction was 60° off the runway, outside of the limits for winching. The criteria for allowing winch launching were defined some years earlier but were not published anywhere, the safety officer recommends that they should be inserted into the club's operations manual.

14	DG-500	substantial	13/01/24, 13:30	–	–

While pushing a glider to the hangar, a wingtip struck the rudder of the DG-500 leaving a 3-inch puncture.

17	K-13	none	11/01/24. 15:00	none	286

Undershot approach ending in a hard landing. The glider flew a wider base leg than was ideal in the 10G15kt wind. The pilot initially thought he was too high so opened the airbrakes and this led to an undershoot developing. By the time the pilot closed the airbrakes the glider was too low for even a no-airbrake approach. The glider's airspeed decayed as the pilot tried to stretch the glide and the glider landed heavily just outside the airfield perimeter track. No damage was found during a hard landing check. The pilot's previous six flights over the winter had all been in a K-21.

18	Grob Astir	none	17/01/24, –	none	3116

Battery came loose during flight. During the winch launch strong rotor turbulence shook the glider and broke the weak link. Although gaining height the pilot could hear sounds behind him every time he flew through turbulence so returned to the airfield. After landing he saw that one battery was hanging by its cable and the other was lying on its side. The securing strap was unfastened. The pilot doing the DI remembers changing one of the batteries but cannot recall doing up the single strap that secured both. The club had recently purchased the glider and intends to move the batteries as their current position could be a hazard to the back of the pilot's head. The club intends to fit a headrest and use a more robust battery securing system.

19	Puchacz	none	07/01/24, 12:10	none/none	1486

Canopy opened in flight. The aim of the flight was to conduct stall and spin familiarisation exercises for an experienced but new to the glider P2. The final exercise was to be a spin off a thermalling turn and recovery. The P1 briefed that the spin could be stopped if nose down elevator was applied quickly enough. The P2 applied full left rudder to enter the spin and then recovered using the elevator alone. As full left rudder was still applied the glider recovered to a significant sideslip to the left. At this point the canopy opened. The pilots were able to close and secure the canopy and land without any further issue. Both pilots had locked the canopy shut before the flight, confirmed it with the launchpoint helper and again checked canopy security as part of their pre-spin HASSLL checks. A BGA inspector checked the latches and found them to be serviceable but noted that the force required to unlock was not high. He recommended that BGA mod 2003/11 be installed (adding a spring to hold the lever in the closed position) and also that the sealing strip be replaced to increase the closing force on the latch. The CFI pointed out that the non-standard recovery from a spin was also a factor.

21	Nimbus 2	minor	26/01/24, 11:40	–	370

The glider fuselage was pulled out of the trailer on its dolly in preparation for maintenance. A gust of wind blew the fuselage over, fracturing the canopy.

23	SHK-1	minor	18/02/24, 17:30	–	1202

A DG-300 on a castoring dolly was being being pushed into the unlit hangar in fading light at the end of the day. The pilot was holding the port wingtip to push the glider and dolly sideways when the starboard wingtip struck a tailplane of the SHK. The fabric was punctured and an internal frame dislodged.

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BGA accident/incident summaries *continued*

AIRCRAFT Ref	Type	Damage	Date, time	PILOT Injury	P1 hours
24	K-13	minor	24/02//24, 17:10	–	–

Ground handling incident. The glider was being towed back to the hangar with one member holding the tailskid off the runway using the handle at the rear of the fuselage. After a while, the member's arm tired so the tow stopped to allow the member to switch sides. When the tow car moved off again it lurched forward. The tailplane struck the back of the member's legs, knocking him back on to the tailplane. At some point his foot caught under the rear lower fuselage, leaving a 9-inch tear in the fabric.

25	K-21	none	11/02/24, 15:00	–	–

Broken cable drifted off airfield. The cable broke close to the winch when the glider was at over 1,100ft ato. The crosswind drifted the cable over the laid out cables of an unaffiliated gliding organisation that shared the airfield, as well as the corner of their hangar, with the drogue chute landing about 10m outside the airfield boundary. The pilot reports applying wing down to counteract crosswind drift but realises in hindsight that more was needed.

26	DG-505	none	09/03/24, 11:10	–	–

Elevator control restriction. The P1 noticed an intermittent restriction in control stick movement so the glider was taken offline for inspection. After removing the tailplane to look inside the roughly 2m-high fin a piece of red plastic could be seen. The plastic was removed and identified as an approx 50mm x 40mm x 10mm broken off part of the trailer fitting used to hold the fin in place in the trailer. The glider had been in and out of the trailer several times over the preceding weeks but had flown only one flight since being rigged. The height of the fin made internal inspection before rigging difficult and the broken fitting within the trailer was not easy to see. The report reiterates the importance of pre-flight checks and also suggests checking the fin for foreign objects before rigging the tailplane.

During BGA Club Safety Officer seminars it was proposed that, to further encourage reporting, it would be a good idea to remove site names from summaries. This has been reflected in the summaries on these pages. Edward Lockhart continues to provide a little extra detail, where available, in these listings. We would also like to publish (anonymously) your stories of particular flights that have taught you a valuable flying lesson. Please send details to *editor@sailplaneandgliding.co.uk* or by post to the address on p3.