

CHECK SHEET - CONCLUSION PROCESSING

FILE REF: 6.762.1515

ACTION	DATE	OFFICER
REVIEW COMPLETED	28.10.76	S. G. SPINKS SIG 4
CONCLUSIONS SUBMITTED		
CONCLUSIONS APPROVED		
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AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

SI/762/1515

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

	Height a.m.s.l.	Date	Time (Local)	Zone
500 metres north east of Stanwell Park N.S.W.	Sea Level	29.8.1976	1455	EST

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model	Registration
Rogallo type hang glider, Copen 195	

3. CONCLUSIONS

(i) At about 1455 hours Eastern Standard time on 29 August 1976 a hang glider dived steeply into the sea following a series of stalls. The pilot, who had self launched from adjoining Bald Hill, five hundred feet above sea level, freed himself from the glider wreckage and swam some distance towards the centre of the small bay into which he had descended. He remained afloat for approximately 10 minutes before disappearing in heavy swell.

(ii) The pilot, Ronald Graham Aarons, was aged 25 years. He was the owner of the hang glider, but was relatively inexperienced in the sport. Reliable evidence has shown that all his previous launches were from heights considerably lower than that of Bald Hill; in fact, his experience of hang gliding had apparently been confined solely to the high sandhills in the Kurnell area of Botany Bay. There is no evidence to indicate that he had received more than one hours informal training which was given on an occasion at Kurnell when he met an experienced hang glider pilot by chance.

(iii) He had applied for membership of the Australian Self Soar Association (TASSA) but at the time of the accident had not received an acknowledgement of his application. Thus he had not had a rating check by TASSA or any other organisation or person to establish his ability as a hang glider pilot.

(iv) There is evidence to show that about one month before the accident he had visited Bald Hill for the purpose of hang gliding, but his obvious lack of skill and proficiency in his preparation for flight had resulted in more experienced hang glider pilots at the scene dissuading him from launching.

(v) On 29 August, Aarons first attempt to self launch from Bald Hill, at a very low speed, failed when the left wing tip of his glider became entangled with another glider, the pilot of which was preparing for flight. There was no damage to either glider, but, because of this incident attention became focused by observers on the second attempt, which was successful. Because of the rocky foreshore below Bald Hill, the means for suitably terminating the flight were confined to either returning to Bald Hill, or gliding to Stanwell Park, 500 feet below and a short distance to the south west.

(vi) The watching hang glider pilots and some non participating witnesses have stated that as the glider left the ground and soared towards the sea, the pilots body went rigid and he made no apparent attempt to turn along the coastline until he had progressed some distance from the cliff and descended two to three hundred feet below the launch site. A turn to starboard was then made at a low forward speed following which the glider stalled three or four times. From the final stall, which culminated at an estimated 50 feet above the sea, the glider and pilot dived steeply into the water, close to a rocky promontory. The pilot was seen by the watchers on Bald Hill to free himself from the entangling glider structure and to swim towards the centre of the small bay. The occupants of a large motor launch had apparently witnessed the event and attempted to reverse into the relatively confined area in the heavy swell, but before the vessel was near enough to the swimmer to enable assistance to be given two successive large waves broke over him and he disappeared from view. He did not reappear and his body was later recovered from the sea bed. Three pieces of the gliders cross tube structure were also retrieved and examination of these has revealed no evidence of in-flight structural failure.

4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the pilot lacked both training and experience and did not effect the necessary recovery action when the glider stalled after entering a turn at a low speed.

Approved for
publication

Delegate of the Secretary

Date