

BRITISH PARACHUTE ASSOCIATION
RIGGERS COMMITTEE MEETING
BPA OFFICES, 5 WHARF WAY, GLEN PARVA, LEICESTER
THURSDAY 29 MARCH 2007

Present: John Hitchen - Chairman STC
Rick Boardman
Pat Walters
Steve Thomas
Dave Major
John Curtis
Phill Elston
Kim Newton

Apologies: Paul Applegate, Pete Sizer, Bernadette Whitaker

In Attendance: Tony Butler - Technical Officer
Trudy Kemp - Assistant to NCSO/TO

Observers: Phil Cavanagh, John Page, Kieran Brady, Colin Fitzmaurice, Nigel Allen,
Alex Wilson, Mark Bayada.

ITEM

The Chairman of STC stated that Paul Applegate was not able to be present to attend the meeting and had requested that John Hitchen chair it on his behalf.

1. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE RIGGERS MEETING OF THE 1 FEBRUARY 2007**

Page 4, Item 7 – Advanced Packer Course Reports. At the previous meeting a question had been raised about the possibility of setting a minimum number of repacks that are packed under supervision, between the AP training course and the actual AP test. The Chairman of STC advised those present that correspondence had been received from Bill Sharp on this matter, a copy of which had been previously circulated with the Agenda.

Page 6, Item 12 – AOB (ii) – Approved BPA Tandem Modification Website. At the previous meeting, Bill Sharp had reported that he may not be able to continue to host the Approved BPA Tandem Modifications website due to a change in Internet Provider. The Committee was advised that Bill Sharp had since found out, that he could continue using his old AOL account for a small nominal fee per month, which Bill had stated he would be willing to pay.

The Committee thanked Bill Sharp for the continued service that he provided in maintaining this website.

There being no further matters arising, it was proposed by Kim Newton and seconded by Pat Walters that the Minutes of the Riggers meeting of the 1 February 2007, be accepted as a true record.

Carried Unanimously

The Chairman of STC advised those present that Bill Sharp also had asked the Committee for a number of clarifications from previous meetings:

- i) Bill had asked for clarification on an equipment clearance issue from the Riggers Committee Meeting of the 23 November 06. At this meeting the Committee had accepted a modification to the Performance Variable TD400 Tandem Parachute system.

Bill had asked that in order for the accuracy of the BPA Approved Tandem Modification Website, for the Committee to confirm that the main and reserve combination presented with this Tandem container, was still as published in the original Form 258 (Contrail 390 main, Quick 400 reserve). This information was required so that any modifications to this original setup could be accurately recorded for the future.

The Committee was advised that the above combination of equipment as quoted by Bill Sharp was correct.

- ii) Bill Sharp's second issue concerned an item from the Riggers Committee Meeting Minutes of 28 September 2006.

This item concerned Item 6 of the meeting: 'To discuss the packing method of Tandem reserves'. The second and third paragraphs of this item as reported in the Minutes stated:

"A good deal of discussion ensued on this issue. It was generally felt by those present that as the subject of pro-packing is being taught on Advanced Packing Courses and some manufactures state that pro-packing is permitted, then the BPA should permit the pro-packing of Tandem reserves.

Following further discussion, it was proposed by Pete Sizer and seconded by Ray Armstrong that Tandem reserves can be packed as per the manufacturers instruction."

This proposal had carried Unanimously.

The clarification Bill had requested for the website was, what exactly was meant by part of the last paragraph 'as per the manufacturers instructions'.

Bill stated that he believed this should mean that the Tandem reserve has to be packed as per the manufacturer's instructions as shown in their manual, (according to SI 1/05, Packing Manuals).

Bill was concerned that the wording in the Minutes was a little vague as to what exactly a manufacturer's instruction could be. He asked if an unsubstantiated phone call or unsubstantiated face-to-face conversation with the owner or an employee of the company, constituted a manufacturer's instruction, thereby supposedly giving a reserve packer their 'authority' to Pro-Pack?

Following some discussion on this matter, it was proposed by Phill Elston and seconded by Rick Boardman that the wording relating the packing of Tandem reserves, be amended to read: "Tandem reserves can be packed as per the manufacturers written instructions".

Carried Unanimously

The Chairman of STC advised those present that Bill Sharp had also asked for clarification with regard to the pro-packing of Tandem reserves. Bill had asked that if pro-packing was not stipulated in the particular Tandem Reserve manual, could Tandem reserves still be pro-packed.

Following some discussion on this matter, the Committee agreed that unless the manufacturer stipulated in their particular Tandem Reserve Manual that Tandem reserves can be pro-packed, then the pro-packing of Tandem reserves was **not** permitted.

2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE STC MEETING OF THE 1 FEBRUARY 2007**

There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes.

3. **TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL BY PHILL ELSTON CONCERNING ROUND PARACHUTES**

A proposal had been received from Phill Elston, a copy of which had been circulated with the Agenda.

Phil had proposed that round parachutes (Main and Reserve) be withdrawn from 'general' use in sport parachuting by the 31st December 2010. The Chairman of STC advised the Committee that correspondence on this matter had been received from Andrew Hilton, Ian Robertson and Bill Sharp, copies of which had been circulated to those present.

Phill Elson stated that the subject of 'round' reserves had been the topic for discussion at many Rigger Committee meetings and post Rigging course "wash-ups". He stated that the round parachute was used less and less frequently in sport parachuting and he believed the skill base for packing "sport" round reserves was going to decrease over the next few years with the requirement to hold "AP(R)" prior to Rigger training now removed. He stated that many round reserve canopies currently in service were reaching or had possibly even reached the end of their serviceable life. He stated that GQ canopies were 'lifed' *by the manufacturer* at 15 years.

The Committee were advised that Bill Sharp had stated in his correspondence that he did not believe there was anything wrong with 'rounds' in themselves and that they had served (and still serve) the parachuting world very well for many years especially in their early days. Bill believed they were not unsafe provided they were used within their limits. He stated that he believed rounds would die out by themselves and just to 'ban' a line of equipment because many of them were old was wrong. He stated that many round parachutes currently in use today had probably passed their 'sell by' date because of their age and jump numbers, but he felt this was not the fault of the round parachute itself, rather the users. Bill stated that they still need replacing like any other 'in use' parachutes.

Bill Sharp had also commented that round canopies were on the decrease and Rigger Examiners had been trying to remove the AP (R) as a pre BR course requirement, but he did not believe it was for the Riggers Committee to get involved with 'withdrawing' them from general use. This was a view shared by other Committee members present, as ultimately they believed, this was an issue for STC to consider.

Following a lively discussion on this issue, the majority of those present believed that the issue with 'round' reserves would solve itself in due course. The Committee felt that the BPA already had a lifing policy on reserve parachutes by way of the 6 monthly re-pack cycle.

Following further discussion, this proposal failed to find a seconder.

4. **TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL BY PHILL ELSTON TO AMEND THE BASIC RIGGER**

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The Chairman of STC advised those present that Phill's second proposal concerning the Basic Rigger Training Requirements had also been circulated with the Agenda. He stated that correspondence had also been received from Andrew Hilton, Ian Robertson and Bill Sharp on this item, copies of which had been circulated to those present.

Phill advised the Committee that it was no longer a requirement that potential Riggers qualify as AP(R) prior to training and stated that most Parachute Centres these days operate more Tandem parachute systems than round canopy equipped systems.

Phill had therefore proposed that it be a requirement for potential Rigger candidates to hold both AP(S) and AP(T) certificates prior to the commencement of Rigger training as they were more likely to encounter these systems within their sphere of practice.

Following some discussion on this matter, it was generally felt by the Committee that as they had only changed the requirements to attend a BR Course at the last meeting, they felt it was a little soon to be changing the requirements again. The Committee felt it was unhelpful at this time to add another qualification that someone had got to acquire to enable them to attend a BR Course. They believed this would only discourage people from rigging. Although they felt it was good to have Riggers as qualified as possible, there had to be a limit to how much pre-course knowledge that a PR candidate required before getting his foot on the rigging ladder.

Some discussion then ensued with regard to existing BRs/PRs. The Committee felt that if this proposal was accepted, they would also need to upgrade their ratings to include an AP(T) otherwise we would be creating a two tier system.

Following further discussion on this matter, Phill's proposal failed to find a Secunder.

5. TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FROM RICK BOARDMAN CONCERNING ADVANCED PACKING CERTIFICATE HOLDERS

A proposal had been received from Rick Boardman, a copy of which had been circulated with the Agenda. Correspondence had also been received from Ian Robertson and Bill Sharp on this matter, copies of which had been circulated to those present.

Rick had proposed that: "All Advanced Packing Certificate Holders who wish to upgrade to Advanced Packer status, may do so by taking the appropriate exam (Round, Square and Tandem) only. On the 1st April 2009, the old Advanced Packing Certificate will cease to exist. Any holders of these certificates have until then to upgrade. After 1st April 2009, former holders of the Advanced Packing Certificate will have to do a full Advanced Packers Course and exam".

Rick Boardman gave the meeting details of his proposal and stated that the Advanced Packing system had been in existence for about a decade now. The original intention was that it should ultimately replace the old reserve packing certificate, for a variety of reasons. He stated that over the years, the feeling among riggers was that natural 'wastage' would gradually allow the old certificates to be phased out. Whilst this had proved to be true to a certain extent, the fact remained that after more than ten years, there was still a two tier system in operation

Tony Butler informed those present he had seen a number of packing certificates where new types of equipment had been added to, which was against the rules. He asked that the following points below be re-iterated in the Minutes in order to clarify the rules governing Advanced Packing Certificate Holders:

- As from the 1st April 2004 holders of Advanced Packing Certificates are not able to have new

equipment types to their Packing Certificates.

- Owners of rigs packed by Advanced Packing Certificate holders may be asked for evidence that the packer is qualified to pack that particular equipment. A photocopy of the packer's Certificate with relevant endorsement will suffice.
- Advanced Riggers should be aware of what they are signing for at BPA rating renewal time and look closely at the rigging tickets that they are signing up.
- An Advanced Instructor signing up a reserve Packing Certificate for someone packing under the grandfather clause system must be qualified to pack that item themselves.

Rick Boardman stated that he believed DZs must be finding it virtually impossible to keep track of whether or not a reserve had been legally packed or not. The majority of those present were in agreement on this point.

The Committee was advised that Bill Sharp had commented in his correspondence that overall, he did not believe there was any merit at all in pursuing this proposal. He stated that Rick had raised some good general points, but if the letter of the law was being followed about existing Advanced Packing Certificate (APC) holders, they should be attaching their Advanced Packing Certificate to the reserve packing card, and as long as the parachute system in question was on their Certificate, he did not see the problem and just to want to get rid of it because we had a two tier system was wrong.

Some concern was expressed by those present that in some instances Advanced Packer Certificate holders were getting signed up by Advanced Riggers or Advanced Instructors who were not qualified to do so. The Committee felt that if this was the case they themselves are failing in their responsibilities and they need to be quite sure what they are signing for.

Kieran Brady stated that he did not believe that we should change a system because of others who had done wrong.

John Curtis also stated that he believed that we cannot take grandfather rights away from Packing Certificate Holders. He felt that the old system was gradually phasing itself out and that if someone was not doing the job correctly then it would come to the attention of the Committee.

Following further discussion, it was proposed by Rick Boardman and seconded by Kim Newton that the above proposal be accepted.

For:6 Against: 3 (John Curtis & incl 2 by proxy) Abstentions: 0

Carried

6. TO CONSIDER A PROPOSAL FROM RICK BOARDMAN CONCERNING RAF PACKERS AT BOSCOMBE DOWN

A proposal has been received from Rick Boardman, a copy of which was circulated with the Agenda.

Rick had requested a permission from the requirement that the following named BPA members must have been in the BPA for 18 months before attending an Advanced Packers course:

Phillip Gunton	818393
Mark Piper	974852
Michelle Johnson	974853

Following some discussion, it was proposed by Rick Boardman and seconded by Steve Thomas that the above request be accepted.

Carried Unanimously

7. TO CONSIDER A STUDENT PARACHUTIST EQUIPMENT CHANGE PROPOSAL FROM PHILL ELSTON

A Student Parachutist Equipment Change Proposal had been received from Phill Elston, together with the associated paperwork, copies of which had been circulated with the Agenda.

Phill had asked to clear usage of the factory fitted shock-cord loops on the rear of Javelin leg straps on the Student system. This was in order to prevent leg straps from riding down during RAPS and AFF progression.

The Chairman of STC advised those present that there had been a number of incidents reported whereby Students had nearly come out of the harness on opening due to either the leg strap not been fitted correctly or the leg strap riding down on them.

Some discussion then ensued with regard to the diameter of shock cord and type of knot as had been specified in Phill's proposal and whether these measurements need to be as specific. The Committee felt that a suitable length and size of shock cord and suitable knot could possibly be used.

Following some discussion, it was proposed by Phill Elston and seconded by Dave Major to clear usage of the factory fitted shock-cord loops on the rear of Javelin leg straps on the Student system (static line and free fall RAPSs) and that a suitable length and size of shock cord and suitable knot may be used.

Carried Unanimously

The Committee asked that the minutes state that this was not a mandatory modification.

8. ADVANCED PACKER COURSE REPORTS

- i) An Advanced Packers Training Course had taken place at the Headcorn Parachute Club from the 5 – 9 February 2007. Pete Sizer had submitted a Course Report, a copy of which had been circulated to those present.

Peter Brown, Louise Drummond and Simon McConnell had attended the Course all of whom had been advised to practice packing under supervision and to return for evaluation after logging 20 – 30 repacks.

- ii) An Advanced Packers Training Course had been held at RAPA starting on the 5 Feb 2007. The Course was attended by Constant Daniel De Wit. Following practice under supervision, Mr De Wit then attended the Examination phase of the Course, which was held at RAPA starting on the 6 March 2007. Mr De Wit successfully completed the Course and had been awarded Advanced Packer (Grade S) status.

Bill Sharp had submitted a Course Report, a copy of which had been circulated to those present.

- iii) An Advanced Packer Tandem Course had been held at Netheravon from the 20 – 22

February 2007. The Examiner running the Course was David Gould.

Craig Bonnar who already held AP(Grade R & S) successfully completed the Course and had been upgraded to include AP (Grade T).

There was some concern that paperwork (form 175) did not specify the equipment that Craig Bonnar had worked on during training. Although it showed the equipment worked on during the reserve packing examination.

Following some discussion the Committee agreed that David Gould should be contacted and asked to provide this information and to forward it to the office asap.

During the discussion on this item, it was noted that David Gould had written on Form (175 that he had submitted that this was a Tandem conversion Course. The Committee felt that that the Advanced Packer (Tandem) Course was not a conversion Course and should not be confused with the Advanced Packer (Grade S & R) conversion Courses.

The Committee felt that the format of Form 175 needed to be looked at, as the section relating to Course types could be misleading.

- iv) An Advanced Packers Training Course had been held UK Parachuting from the 19 – 22 March 2007. Andy Page had submitted a Course Report, a copy of which had been circulated to those present.

Warren Favish and Simon Powell had attended the Course and were advised to return for the final examination phase at a future date.

9. BPA SAFETY NOTICES/INFORMATION BULLETINS

There had been no BPA Safety Notices/Information Bulletins issued since the last meeting.

10. MANUFACTURER'S SAFETY NOTICES/INFORMATION BULLETINS

- i) A Service Bulletin had been circulated from Paratec concerning cutter relocation on harness/container systems, a copy of which had been previously circulated.
- ii) A Service Bulletin had been circulated from Vigil concerning Vigil Cutters with Plastic Insert, a copy of which had been previously circulated.
- iii) A service Bulletin had also been circulated concerning the cutter location on the harness-containers manufactured by Aerazur (label: Parachutes de France).

The Chairman of STC advised the Committee that various other correspondence had also been received regarding this Bulletin, copies of which had been circulated to those present.

It was noted that the compliancy dates stated on the Safety Bulletin was 120 days from the last repack. The Chairman of STC advised those present that Paul Applegate had contacted the manufacturers to ask if the 120 days could be extended to six months to bring it in line with the BPA re-pack cycle. The manufactures had stated that the 120 days as quoted in the Service Bulletin needs to be respected.

The Chairman of STC also confirmed that an Advanced Rigger must perform the above work.

Rick Boardman referred to correspondence received on this matter, which had stated that Firebird had also issued a Safety Bulletin concerning cutter location. He asked if the office had received any communication from Firebird concerning this issue.

It was confirmed that no correspondence had been received from Firebird. Therefore, Rick stated he would contact them regarding this matter.

- iv) The Chairman of STC reported that a letter had been previously circulated from Sunpath Products Inc regarding Reserve Static Line (RSL) and the Javelin/Javelin Odyssey, a copy of which had been previously circulated. The letter had concerned the removal of the RSL. Correspondence had been received from Bill Sharp on this matter, a copy of which had also been circulated to those present.

The letter from Sunpath generated a great deal of discussion. There appeared to be a great deal of confusion amongst the Committee and the membership in general in regard to the contents of this letter.

Following further discussion, it was agreed by those present that the Committee should acknowledge receipt of Sunpath's letter concerning RSLs and had noted its contents. However, the Committee wished to clarify that RSLs were not a mandatory requirement for experienced parachutists in the UK.

11. **A.O.B**

- i) Rick Boardman asked a question regarding the interchangeability of Tandem Student harnesses. It was confirmed that at this time there was no general clearance for any Tandem Student harness with any Tandem container except for those which were listed on the BPA Approved Tandem Modifications website.

Dates of next Meeting: Thursday 31 May 2007
 BPA Offices, Glen Parva, Leicester
 at 7.00 p.m

11 April 2007

Distribution:

Chairperson Riggers Committee, All CCI's, All Riggers, Advanced Packers, Council
D. Beaven (CAA), Lesley Gale, File

PAPERWORK REQUIRING CIRCULATION WITH THE NEXT AGENDA MUST REACH THE BPA OFFICE NO LATER THAN MONDAY 21 MAY 2007