



British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association

Citation for Ben Philpott

Ben Philpot was involved in a mid-air with another hang glider pilot, Rob Greg, close to the take-off at Laragne-Monteglin in the British Nationals Competition 2016. Both pilots deployed their reserve parachutes and landed close to each other.

Rob Gregg was able to deploy his reserve quickly and as a result he drifted downwind such that he clipped the edge of the cliff. This had the effect of disrupting his canopy which then collapsed and in still shots from a Go Pro can be seen below Rob. Essentially Rob clipped the edge of the cliff and then slithered down the face of a cliff coming to rest at the foot of the cliff at the top of the scree slope.

Ben had to make several attempts before he was able to to deploy his reserve and by chance this meant that he was below the cliff top and a few metres away from the cliff face when he finally deployed. Remarkably he descended under his parachute to the top of the scree slope at the foot of the cliff. Moments later Rob crashed beside him.

Rob Greg was seriously injured but, because of their inaccessible situation on a steep scree slope at the foot of a 500m undercut cliff, although they could be seen clearly from the top of the ridge it took some considerable time for assistance to reach them.

Shortly after the accident Ben could be seen moving around and tending to Rob. Rob had suffered serious injuries during his slither down the cliff face, including being 'scalped' by a side wire which have passed across his head.

From the top of the cliff he was observed to be talking to Rob in order to ascertain his injuries and keep him awake as he was passing in and out of consciousness.

Approximately 1.5 hours passed like this, with constant talking and assistance from Ben to Rob, with regular updates and advice from the competition organisers and qualified Senior Nurse on the cliff above by mobile phone. No one else was able to reach them before the rescue helicopter arrived.

When it arrived, the helicopter lowered one man then flew a large circle and prepared to lower another. When lowering the second man the helicopter flew much closer than before and the downdraft started lifting the broken wings. Ben had been unable to support Rob and lift him enough to disconnect him from his glider, and as the gliders lifted Ben was observed bracing Rob to protect him as they both were tossed several meters across the scree slope.

For the next approximately 30 minutes, Ben remained at Rob's side talking to him while the rescuers treated Rob and prepared him for the journey to hospital.

Ben's actions assisting a fellow pilot in critical circumstances especially after himself having suffered a traumatic and physically battering experience show exceptional character and sportsmanship and we believe thoroughly deserving of our nomination for the Pepe Lopez Medal.

Bill Bell
On behalf of BHPA