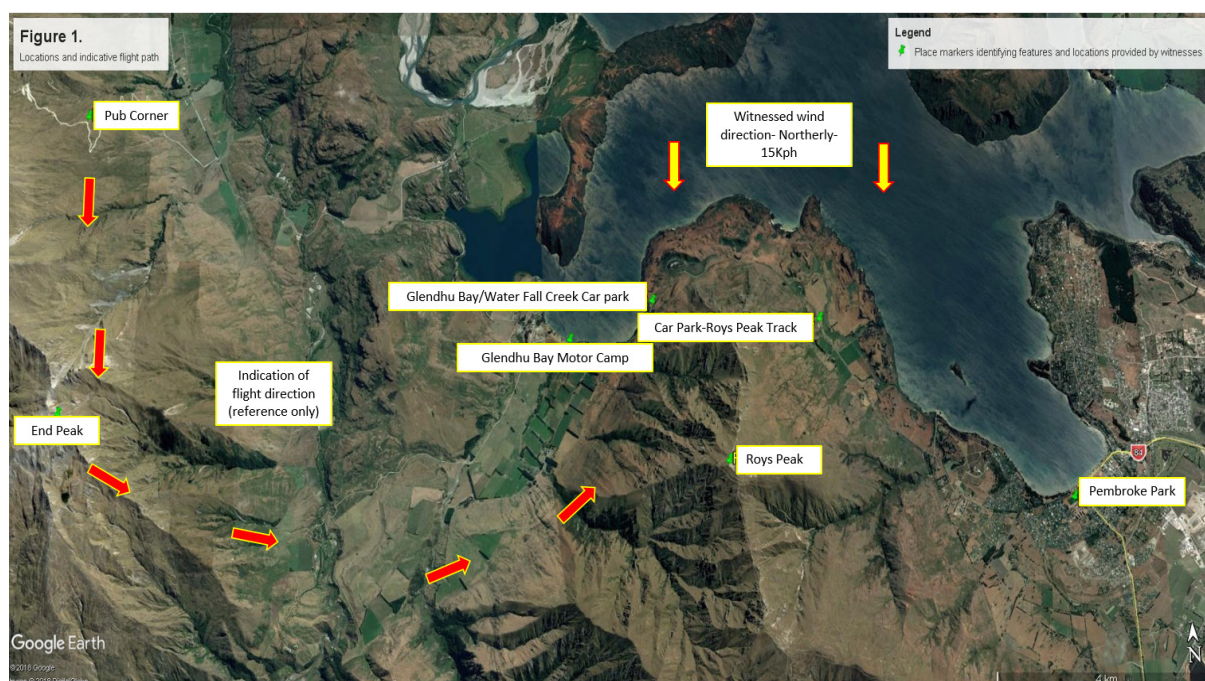


Safety Investigation Brief

Paraglider accident, Mount Roy near Wanaka, 2 January 2018

At approximately 1345 hours on 2 January 2018, a paraglider pilot (Pilot 1) departed from Pub Corner, Treble Cone on a flight toward Wanaka or Glendhu Bay (Figure 1). In the company of another paragliding friend (Pilot 2), Pilot 1 flew in a south-easterly direction and then in a northerly direction toward Roys Peak area. It was in this area that Pilot 1's paraglider wing was witnessed to collapse on one end, with subsequent loss of aerodynamic lift, at a height which was unrecoverable. Pilot 1 struck the ground suffering fatal injuries.



Accompanying pilot's observations

Both pilots held pilot certificates [PG2¹] with New Zealand Hang Gliding and Parachute Association (NZHGPA), and had flown regularly together and had similar experience. Pilot 2 had been flying above Pilot 1 from End Peak toward Roys Peak, and was experiencing acceptable flying conditions. Pilot 1 had indicated his intentions to "...get more height..." and then follow.

As Pilot 2 was flying along the ridge from 'middle pyramid' [sic] (possibly Middle Peak) he noted '...reasonable lift...more turbulent (wind) with reasonably strong gusts.' Deciding not to continue toward Roys Peak, Pilot 2 could see Pilot 1 still below him travelling in the same northerly direction. Whilst managing the changing wind conditions, Pilot 2's attention was drawn away from Pilot 1 below until he noted Pilot 1's wing on the ground. Attempts to contact Pilot 1 were unsuccessful and with the terrain being steep, Pilot 2 elected to land and contact emergency services.

¹ Paraglider 2 (PG2) Certificate is the second level pilot certificate, graduating from PG1 to PG Instructor.
<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=bnpoZ3BhLm9yZy5uenxuemhncGF8Z3q6MzMxMmVinJhNzQxMzFmMg>

Experienced paragliders commented on changing conditions prior to the accident

Information provided from experienced paragliders in the area at the time, indicated changing and challenging turbulent conditions. Northerly winds being effected by the terrain were creating varying levels of lift and downdrafts requiring constant adjustment. One experienced paraglider had chosen to land shortly before Pilot 1's accident, due to changing conditions, and witnessed the accident occur.

Commercial training operations in the Cardrona area had ceased a couple of hours earlier, due to the prevailing and forecast increased wind conditions.

Collapse of the paraglider wing likely due to wind conditions

Paraglider flying is reliant on the integrity of the wing remaining in a functioning condition. Experienced pilots on the ground who witnessed the accident sequence described the wing partially collapsing asymmetrically², and then turning into the cliff. A wing collapse in this form is not an unknown phenomena, especially in turbulent conditions, and can be managed with correct techniques and sufficient height and distance above the ground.

Paraglider flying is an extreme sport that comes with high levels of risk especially in turbulent conditions or in close proximity to the ground.

It is considered that further in-depth CAA safety investigation will not provide any significant safety benefit. The current Civil Aviation Rules, coupled with the NZHGPA requirements for paraglider flying are considered suitable for the activity.

² The collapsed wing creates drag, inducing a turn. The loss of support from the collapsed wing causes the pilot to tilt, which worsens the turn towards the collapsed wing. The acceleration due to higher wing loading (and possible turn or dive) can help to re-inflate the collapse.