

UK History of the Boat Kill Cord & Propeller Safety Movement

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First Published: 2 June 2013

Current Version: 27 June 2013

INTRODUCTION

There is currently (late May 2013) a tremendous amount of interest in recreational boat kill cord / lanyard and propeller safety issues in the United Kingdom (UK). While the intensity reached new levels following the [Nicholas Milligan double fatality](#) accident near Padstow Harbor, it had been simmering in the background for decades. This paper sets the current movement in historical perspective.

Much of the action in this field (proposed regulations, new inventions, new products, media coverage, research studies, safety meetings, legal cases) is driven at least in part by propeller accidents. Therefore we added several of the more prominent boat propeller and kill cord related accidents to this timeline. Names of individuals injured or killed in those accidents are in bold italics.

We would greatly appreciate any comments you may have about this History and your efforts in helping us correct the existing document. If you see any errors, have suggestions for inclusions, or think something should be removed, please notify us via the Contact Us tab at PropellerSafety.com

Thank you for your assistance.

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Note - This is not meant to be a complete list of propeller accidents. We are just listing several of the more severe ones. Propeller accident dates and other dates may not be exactly correct.

EVENTS

8 March 1960 U.S. Design Patent D187,407 issued to Frank Charles Long of Quorn, England for a through transom boat drive (something vaguely like a stern drive). The drive included a duct around the propeller.

Mid to late 1960's the combination of a RIB (rigid hull boat with inflatable tubes) was invented and developed at Atlantic College in Wales.

1967/68 **Fred Titmus** was vice captain of England's Cricket team. His foot was caught in a boat propeller in the West Indies while on tour. He lost four toes and there was doubt if he would ever be able to play again. However, he beat the odds and was able to return to the team in just ten weeks.

22 August 1967 **Corporal Palmer** - on this date, the Queen recognized Corporal Peter Barrie Paskell and Major Ronald Emery, both of the Corps of Royal Engineers for a Commendation for Brave Conduct regarding a beach survey team in two Gemini boats. One hit a wave, Corporal Palmer fell overboard and was badly injured by the propeller in a very remote setting near the island of Socotra (off the eastern central side of Africa). They made it by boat to Mutayaf, Yemen. Paskell and Emery then journeyed by water in very challenging conditions to return Palmer to their base camp faster than the three days it would have taken by land. Once they arrived, Corporal Palmer was life flighted to medical assistance.

20 November 1972 George Horton of the U.S. applied for a U.S. Patent on his "Quick Kill" boat kill switch, generally recognized as the first commercially available kill switch designed specifically for recreational boats. U.S. Patent 3,786,892 for the kill switch issued 22 January 1974.

20 August 1989 **Jackie James**, 62 worked on the Marchioness passenger boat. It struck a dredger and sank. She made it into the water but was ran over by an oncoming police launch, rolled under the boat, and her "leg got chopped up by the propeller." She told police they probably struck others as well. 51 people died that night.

3 August 1993 **Leigh Krendel**, a 5 year old girl, fell from the Eclipse, a 50 foot canal barge (narrowboat), at Kennet and Avon Canal in Devizes, Wiltshire. Her family was on a boating holiday. Her father was trying to moor the narrowboat to a grassy bank when she fell overboard. Leigh was struck by the propeller in the head and chest and died from her injuries shortly after reaching the hospital.

8 August 1993 A young man, 19 years old from Wallsall, West Midlands, was with several adults and 2 children about 100 yards off Barmouth, Gwynedd. He fell or jumped from the twin outboard powered boat, suffered massive injuries from the propellers, and died.

mid August 1993 **Lee Mason**, 14, of Worthing, West Sussex was on holiday with his parents in a Costa del Sol, Spain. While diving with a friend off Calahonda Beach, he was struck by a boat and suffered fatal head and neck injuries believed to be from the boat's propellers. His friend tried to keep him from sinking while a couple passing by in another boat were able to pull them out and get them to the harbor. Lee was his parent's only child. A British accountant from Edgware, Middlesex was operating the boat that struck Lee. The accountant was released on bail while local authorities tried to determine if he was operating too close to the beach.

July 1994 **Kenny Campbell**, a Scottish musician from Glasgow, was struck by a boat propeller in Spain. He broke 2 ribs, punctured a lung, and seriously injured his right arm and hand. While still in intensive care, Kenny noted the prop was within 2 inches of his throat and said, "It could have cut off my head".

1995 **Karl Sacks** lost part of his leg in a diving accident in South Africa. He reappeared in the news in 2010.

1995 The UK 1995 Admiralty Manual of Seamanship included several pages of instructions for the Royal Navy's 4.9 meter RIB powered by a 2-stroke Mariner outboard. Instructions stated the outboard must be fitted with a guard except in certain described conditions. Sketches show a guard similar to the one designed by Dick Snyder at Mercury Marine.

14 May 1995 **Joan Whitehall**, 47 year old supervisor on a field trip with about 20 children fell into Grand Union Canal in Birmingham on a narrow boat named Chiltern. As the boat went through a tunnel in reverse, it hit the bank, she slipped, fell in from the stern, and screamed as she was sucked under and killed by the propellers.

5 June 1995 **Ann Hughes**, 44, and **Lain McDonald**, 36, from Aberdeen District Scotland's District Council were part of a delegation of 41 citizens visiting their sister city Gomel in what used to be Belarus, Russia. While swimming in the River Sosh they were hit by the propellers of the pleasure boat Bureveftnik they had just been aboard. Their bodies were found three days later. The skipper was released without charges.

1996 Tyler A. Cress of the U.S. presented "An Underwater Impact Biomechanics Study to Evaluate a Boat Motor Cage-Type Propeller Guard as a Protective Devices" at the International IRCOBI Conference on Biomechanics of Impact in Dublin Ireland.

1 September 1996 a man and a woman were on a dinghy on the River Conwy, North Wales. Another couple was water skiing with their daughter (their daughter, not the daughter of the couple in the dinghy). The ski boat lost control, hit the dinghy, the woman on the dinghy was severely injured by the propeller. She and the man on the dinghy were both life flighted to a hospital.

8 July 1997 **John Varney**, an assistant headmaster from Aberdeen Scotland's Westhill Academy, his wife, and sons were negotiating a lock on the Shropshire Union Canal in Cheshire in a 30 foot canal boat / narrowboat. John lost his balance when the lock opened quickly, fell overboard, and was fatally struck in the head by the propeller. Firefighters had to move the boat and drain the lock to find his body about an hour later.

10 August 1997 **Faye Grundy**, 17 of Benson Scotland, was riding behind her uncle on a jetski / PWC at her sister's birthday party at Queenford Lake Watersports Centre in Berinsfield, Oxfordshire. They hit a powerboat, Faye was thrown into the propeller, suffered massive injuries to her stomach, and lost a leg. She died in an ambulance en route to the hospital. This accident was in the news again in January 2000. Her death (after several other jetski accidents) significantly raised concerns about jetski / PWC safety issues in the UK.

17 August 1997 a 15 year old girl from Awliscombe, Devon was boating with a friend at Exmouth. The dinghy struck something, they were both ejected. She was struck by the propeller in the face and suffered horrific face injuries.

25 August 1997 The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and Her Majesty's Coast Guard both issued warnings addressing a recent rash of jetski / PWC accidents including the recent Faye Grundy accident. The Personal Watercraft Federation continues to describe riding a jetski as "about the safest motorsport there is."

7 November 1997 John Hibbert, Cheshire Coroner, held an inquest into the July 1997 narrowboat death of **John Varney**. Varney was found to have lost his balance when the boat started moving backward due to the sudden opening of the lock and the steering rudder swung to the side and knocked him over the stern. He drowned, but the the Coroner said that if he had not drowned, Varner would not have survived his injuries. While the death was ruled accidental, the Coroner "made a plea to British Waterways and boat builders to look at the possibility of fitting fenders around propellers and providing steering wheels to prevent similar tragedies" per a report in The Scotsman.

February 1998 **Thomas Abrey**, a backpacker from Norfolk, England was snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef in Australia off Keppel Island. The boat, Reef Cat, ran over him while it was on its way to pickup a tourist that had a cramp. His left forearm was severely injured when it was crushed between the outboard motor propeller and a metal guard to prevent coral damage. His arm was later amputated below the elbow. The accident resulted in a December 2000 court case. This accident was said to be partially responsible for the introduction of a new Industry Code of Practice for recreational diving in snorkeling in Australia.

7 August 1998 **Riku Motomura**, 2 year old boy, was on a narrowboat with his parents on the Oxford Canal near Rugby, Warwickshire. The boat hit the bank while traveling very slowly, the toddler fell overboard wearing a life jacket, and was fatally struck in the head by the propeller. He was life flighted to a hospital, but dead on arrival. His parents came from Japan in February for their employment.

20 June 1999 a 29 year old novice female diver was diving with her boyfriend and some friends from Wrexham Seals Aqua Club. She surfaced about a mile off Abersoch, North Wales and was struck in the head by the dive boat propeller. She was taken to an ambulance but was pronounced dead at the scene.

November 1999 **Michael Whitley**, 54 of Wombourne, South Staffordshire was diving with others at the Hurghadawhen Resort in Egypt. He was struck by the boat's propeller and died of massive head injuries. He also suffered a broken arm. Whitley was a well known naval history author.

18 January 2000 Two brothers running the jetski operation that rented to **Faye Grundy** and her uncle (see 10 August 1997) were ordered to pay Pounds 68,500 in cost and fines by Northampton Crown Court for insufficiently instructing them and not properly marking the separation of powerboats and jetski areas. The judge said they broke seven Health and Safety Laws and failed to protect people. The centre has closed. The brothers later appealed (see 21 July 2002).

22 January 2000 **Tristan Douglas-Johnson**, age 20, a boat dealer, and an 18 year old girl with Tristan were in an 18 foot RIB being demonstrated at the Southampton Boat Show. The inexperienced 18 year old girl was operating the boat without the kill cord attached. When she opened up the throttle, the boat veered to the right, the boat flipped up, and all three on board were ejected. Tristan was badly cut in his chest by the propeller of the circling boat and pronounced dead shortly later. In May 2013 Tristan's father, Heddon Johnson, launched a petition for mandating the use of boat kill cords.

22 April 2000 **Roy Harris**, 35, a known member of the gay community, was leaving a nearby pub and told his friends he was heading to the Birmingham Canal. His body was found 26 April snagged on the propellers of a canal boat near Farmer's Bridge Locks in Birmingham. A postmortem showed he drowned. Police are investigating his death.

2 June 2000 a 32 year old man was on a narrowboat on the Oxford Canal outside Rugby near Onley Prison. He had been standing on the narrowboat, but somehow became tangled in the propeller. He was taken to Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital where surgeons tried to save one of his legs.

August 2000 [Stef Reid](#), living in Great Britain in 2013, was tubing north of Toronto Canada in August 2000. She fell, the boat circled to pick her up but did not see her, she tried to dive below the oncoming boat but her life jacket kept her near the surface, and she was struck by the propeller. Stef was not expected to survive. She recovered but lost her lower right leg. Now, as a widely known paralympian she is an inspiration to many, as seen at [StefanieReid.co.uk](#). Among her many accomplishments are winning the long jump silver medal for Great Britain in the 2012 London Paralympics. Stef actually out jumped the winner, but the scoring system based on length and disability scores reeled her back to silver.

Early December 2000 **Thomas Abrey**, struck by a propeller in Australia in February 1998, sued the tourist company and the driver of the vessel that struck him. He recently received an out-of-court settlement of \$700,000 Australian. Abrey returned to England after the accident and says he will use the funds to purchase a prosthetic limb.

18 December 2000 [Kirsty McColl](#) British singer and songwriter was killed by a boat propeller while scuba diving with her sons in Mexico. She was struck while trying to shield one of her son's from a passing boat. The boat that struck her belonged to a prominent citizen in Mexico. Her mother fueled a quest for the truth, "Justice for Kirsty", for almost a decade. Among the questions were who was driving the boat, the prominent citizen or his hired hand.

10 March 2001 Ireland Patent IE20000233 for a Propeller Guard or Propeller Ring was published. The inventor, Padraic Costello of Ireland, refers to it as a Crab design or a Crab Propeller Ring.

20 August 2001 **Mark Ure**, a 22 year old sports student from Carluke, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and a camp counselor at Sloane YMCA camp in Lakeville, Connecticut USA, was teaching a teenager how to water ski. A lifeguard reversed the boat too close to him, his legs were sucked into the propeller, his kneecaps were shattered, one foot was almost cut off, and two toes were later amputated. Mark developed a fever from an infection in the water, and it was not known if he would be able to walk again. He was in the US with BUNAC, a firm that arranges North American jobs for thousands of UK students each year.

2002 RingProp PLC, a UK company, was formed to commercialize a "ringed" propeller invented in Australia prior to 1986. The company located at Gosport Haslar Marine Technology Park operated by Solent Enterprises Hub. RingProp issued stock to MarTek and Stealth Propulsion for their intellectual property rights.

30 January 2002 the **Tristan Douglas-Johnson** trial against the skipper of the boat (the boat dealer) collapsed in court. The prosecution was unable to prove who owed the boat being demonstrated at the 2000 Southampton Boat Show. The case was dismissed, the judge apologized to the family, and called the trial a disgrace.

6 July 2002 **Ross Morgan**, 6 year old Cornish boy from Playing Place near Truro, was on his dad's 18 foot lugger boat for a family fishing trip off. He fell overboard in the Fal Estuary off the Cornish Coast when his dad's boat swerved to avoid another boat. Ross was struck in the head by the propeller. He was treated at Loe Beach near Falmouth, then life flighted to Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro where he died shortly later.

21 July 2002 the two brothers that rented a jetski to Faye Grundy and her uncle back on 10 August 1997 had since been found guilty in Northampton Crown Court of providing insufficient training and other violations and fined. Today those rulings were overturned by the Court of Appeals in London. Evidence was used in the original case that should not have been used. The Judge said he could not justify sending the case back to a jury.

29 July 2002 The second day of an inquest into the January 2000 **Tristan Douglas-Johnson** accident found his death to be an accidental death. The official investigation found that if the kill cord had been in use, his death would have been avoided, and it was unclear why the kill cord was not in use. The boat owners had no clear policy to insure the safe operation of the boat. In order for the inquest to have found the boat owner or boat show guilty, they would have had to have found that one person (one individual, not one organization or company) was directing all the events leading up to his death. Some witnesses testified the RIB manufacturer, now out of business, had been building boats with a history of ejecting the occupants.

4 August 2002 **Ian Langan**, 45, was in a powerboat off Brighton. His brother, Cliff Langan, was operating another powerboat in the same area. The boat Cliff was operating crashed into the boat Ian was on and Ian was almost instantly killed by the propeller. The accident happened midway between Brighton Marina (their origin) and Palace Pier (their destination). The Harbour Assistant had warned both vessels earlier about their speed. The boat Ian was on crossed in front of the boat Cliff was operating with both boats at speed. The propeller strike may have occurred in the air as one boat rode up over the other.

15 August 2002 **Paul Gallagher**, a two year old UK boy from Orpington in Kent, was with his parents on holiday in the Bahamas. Paul was sleeping in a beach chair when an out of control boat ran upon the beach and struck him with its propeller. His mother was also struck by the boat. Paul died five days later. As is often the case in water tourism destinations around the world, the inquest went on for six years as the family struggled to find sort of justice while they felt the local government tried to quiet the incident to keep tourism dollars flowing.

26 August 2002 **Richard Croft**, 33 previously of Bridgend, but now of East Sussex, was off Brighton Marina in his boat celebrating his birthday along with his wife. With his encouragement, she took control of the boat after only operating it once before. He dropped the ski rope, she went back around to pick him up, he was struck by the propeller, and died quickly later. An inquest later ruled his death accidental.

31 September 2002 **Tim Maddran**, 41, and his girlfriend set off in his dinghy from the Brighton Piers to Shoreham Harbour. His girlfriend was at the controls at the side of boat as he sat on the side of the boat (on the tube) and was explaining how to operate it. He looked away a moment, fell over the side of his dinghy, and was struck by the propeller on his back and head. His girlfriend killed the engine and he was able to surface. Coastguards said it was a miracle escape from death.

November 2002 RingProp was admitted to AIM (the London Stock Exchange).

30 April 2003 Heddon Johnson, father of **Tristan Douglas-Johnson**, has joined with other families calling for legal reforms to allow corporations to be sued in wrongful death suits. Heddon Johnson handed the signed petition to Tony Blair.

June 2003 a Bahaman Inquest into the August 2002 death of **Paul Gallagher** recorded a verdict of accidental death. His family did not accept the verdict.

13 July 2003 **Wais Kakar**, 27 of south west London, was at a Bournemouth, Dorset resort with friends. About 6 pm he was swimming just east of the Bournemouth pier when he was struck and killed by a boat propeller. A postmortem examination found Kakar had received multiple serious injuries consistent with being struck by the large propeller blade of a boat and of drowning.

28 July 2003 **Andrew Lyons**, a 49 year old London based surgeon from Sevenoaks, Kent, was on a family holiday in Majorca, Spain with his wife. Andrew was in the water waiting to be towed when his wife lost her footing, fell, and was knocked out. The out of control boat circled quickly striking Andrew twice. Their 11 year old boy was able to turn the boat off to prevent further injuries. Andrew had been sliced in the left side by the propeller, severing part of his arm and torso, and he lost over 4 pints of blood. He also lost a large chunk of flesh above his left knee. Medical professionals were able to save his arm. The press followed his recovery to being able and qualified to operate again over the next two years.

11 August 2003 **Michael Murray**, 36 of Youghal, Cork County, Ireland was towing someone on an inflatable when his boat was struck by a 15 year old boy on a jetski / PWC. The boy on the jetski died shortly after the collision. Michael was thrown into the water and his legs were severely struck by the propeller. The person being towed was also thrown into the water. A fisherman and Irish Coast Guard volunteers were quickly on the scene trying to recover all three people from the water while the unmanned boat circled. Michael was not wearing the kill cord, but it was also found to be faulty. The Marine Casualty Investigation Board report called for speedboat operators to carry someone to act as a dedicated lookout for them when towing and for jetski operators to wear protective headgear (a helmet).

23 August 2003 **Joseph Downes**, 11 of Newcastle, was in a boat with his father. The boat collided with another boat carrying some family friends a few hundred yards off shore off Llanrhystud near Aberystwyth. The collision was described as one boat “literally almost climbed over” the other one. Joseph was critically injured by the propeller. He was taken to Bronglais Hospital, then life flighted to Morrison Hospital in Swansea, then later taken to University of Wales Hospital in Cardiff. He lost his arm and almost died, but he survived. Joseph was just starting to wake up a week later in the hospital. The news reports are not specific as to Joseph being struck by the prop of the boat that crossed over them in the air, or if he was ejected and struck in the water.

29 April 2004 a Thundercat Racer from Wirral was struck in the head by a boat propeller guard when another boat passed over his in the air. Mel Pengelly, a powerboat racer from Neston, was Thundercat Racing in the English Channel off the coast of St. Peter Port, Guernsey with his co-racer on board. During a heat, his boat and another boat collided. As Mel's boat went over the other boat, Mel was holding the tiller and could feel his propeller guard strike the other racer's head. Mel and his co-racer were thrown more than 25 feet into the air. After they surfaced they found the racer that had been struck by the guard was receiving aid. The injured racer was taken to a hospital and told he could not race for five weeks.

24 July 2004 **Joanna Stillwell**, 23 was from her family home was in Leeds, West Yorkshire. She was snorkeling, looking for turtles and reef sharks, off Pulau Redang, Malaysia with her brother on a family trip. She was struck by the propeller of a passing boat in the chest and legs, and died from her injuries. Joanna graduated from Sheffield University in 2002 with an honors degree in Geography and Politics Studies. She had been traveling the world after graduation. Joanna and her family met up in Malaysia. Some news reports drew parallels between this accident and that of Kirsty MacColl. In more recent times, Madaline Cole's May 2013 fatal propeller accident in Malaysia was compared to Joanna's.

26 October 2004 a UK Inquest into the August 2002 Bahama death of **Paul Gallagher** recorded an Open Verdict (meaning there were unanswered questions). This finding was in opposition to the Accidental Death finding of the June 2003 Bahaman Inquest. His parents and family were elated.

13 November 2004 a battle for control of RingProp broke out between Don Hault, largest shareholder and former CEO, and the rest of the board of directors.

10 January 2005 Gary Mullins was named as new CEO of RingProp.

13 March 2005 while not a propeller accident, this RIB accident has relevance to the current kill cord discussions. Angus Buchanan and his two young daughters were in his 6.4 meter RIB on Loch Lomond. While he was operating the boat at high speed without the kill cord attached, the boat lurched to port. Angus and his youngest daughter were ejected. His oldest daughter, still on board, was unable to pull them aboard. She drove the RIB for help, but her father and sister were never seen again. MAIB investigated and [reported](#).

April 2005 **Karl Wood** of South Yorkshire was snorkeling in Cypress. An Army boat swerved to miss him, but caught his leg in its propeller. In the confusion, there was a delay before responders were able to meet up with the boat, and he died.

21 June 2005 **Skipper Murdo MacLennan**, in his fifties, a Scottish Highlander had moved to Spain. He was trying to free a grounded 28 foot yacht, Siesta, from a North Sea sandbar. MacLennan had lowered himself to the water on a rope, but it became entangled in the propeller. Another man jumped overboard to try to cut MacLennan free from the propeller as MacLennan's son looked on. That man suffered multiple injuries to his abdomen and pelvis. MacLennan was life flighted to a hospital in Margate, Kent but died shortly later. The men had been delivering the yacht from the Mediterranean to Ipswich when the accident occurred near Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex.

About 25 June 2005 **John '00 Fleming**, famous DJ, was tubing near Brighton when he fell and was stuck by the propeller of the tow boat. He suffered a collapsed lung, four broken ribs, and a deep cut to his arm.

July 2005 **Steven Patient**, 32 of Rayleigh, was at sea in West Mersea, fell overboard, and was struck by the propeller. His femur was broken in half, kneecap was partially severed, and he had three severe wounds down his leg. Steven's leg appeared mostly attached by some hamstring and skin. A passing helicopter was able to quickly get him to a hospital and save his life.

6 July 2005 RingProp announced they had acquired a patent application from Saturn Marine Party Ltd and purchased tooling for their annual global market of stainless steel ringed propellers estimated at 400,000 units as part of the same transaction.

7 August 2005 three teenagers were in a 4.5 meter RIB approaching the beach in Abersoch, Lloen, North Wales. The operator slowed and started to turn left, the console and steering wheel detached from the deck, and the operator fell overboard. The RIB turned hard starboard, a passenger was thrown overboard and struck by the propeller receiving deep cuts to his chest and left side. He was hospitalized for 3 weeks. MAIB investigated and [reported](#). MAIB issued a [safety bulletin](#) on this accident in March 2005 and a safety flyer in February 2006 titled, [Almost a Deadman's Handle](#), see pages 72-74.

10 August 2005 **Alexandra Ciardi**, 48 year old female fund manager for GLC Partners from Chelsea, West London, was in Sardinia with her husband. She was swimming from one boat to the yacht her husband was on when she was struck in the head by the propeller of an 8 meter yacht tender accompanying another yacht. She died before life flight services arrived. Her husband was a financier originally from Italy. The other yacht owner and tender skipper were charged with negligence, but found not guilty five years later. The accident was covered by several major UK news outlets.

13 August 2005 **Michael Ward**, 29 of Loughborough in Leicestershire, was one of nine divers in the water at Blue Caps Reef near the Farne Islands off Northumberland. The skipper started the dive boat, Sovereign II, to move away from some rocks it was drifting toward. Ward was struck by the propeller as he returned to the vessel. His left leg was later amputated and his right leg was severely injured. When the criminal case against the diving company came to court in Newcastle Crown Court in 2007 Michael was still confined to an electric wheelchair.

20 August 2005 **Brian Bannister**, 40 of East Belfast, fell from a motor cruiser while out with three friends at Upper Lough Erne, near Carrybridge, Fermanagh County. The propeller struck him in the head and body. Bannister died from his wounds the next day.

16 October 2005 **Naomi La Monica**, 22 of Cambridge was in Australia on a year long trip around the world with a female friend when she and the skipper fell from a dinghy the skipper was steering in circles. The boat continued to circle and her head was fatally struck by the propeller. This accident received considerable press in both Australia and the UK as the charges and the case wore on. The skipper originally claimed Naomi was driving, but later recanted his story in court.

19 October 2005 British police have agreed to re-investigate two year old **Paul Gallagher's** August 2002 death in the Bahamas. The Bahaman inquest ruled the death accidental, but a Brumley Magistrates Court inquest last year ruled an open verdict. Since the accident, Sea and Ski Sports, the firm operating the boat, has been tied to a U.S. teenager losing their arm, and two more fatalities since 1999. The firm is now operating as Bahamian Water Sports. Two detectives from Scotland Yard are to fly to Nassau at the end of October to work with Bahama Police in reopening the case. Paul's family says their efforts are being blocked by Bahama's efforts to protect tourism dollars (hide the accident so people keep coming and spending money). They even returned Paul's body to the UK without his organs. Among the family's complaints are neither the boat owner or operator were licensed or insured to operate the boat plus no warning was given as the boat careened toward shore.

11 December 2005 a member of the Cardiff Diving Club was in Cardiff Marina at Harbor Three. As a trainee he was in a RIB used in a boat handling class for man overboard drills. The water was rough, the boat turned sharply, he was ejected and suffered deep propeller cuts to his left foot and up to his knee. He also had broken bones in his right foot. BSAC suggested his neoprene diving suit might have reduced his injuries.

13 December 2005 **Phillip George Hall**, 56 of Stone, was found with his trousers entangled in the propeller of the narrowboat he lived on. The boat was running with the doors open. Hall had been depressed, but police found no evidence he had intentionally entered the water. His boat was on the Trent and Mersey Canal. The coroner performing the inquest found it was unlikely to be an accident, but he was still not satisfied Hall intended to kill himself. The coroner said Hall may have been deluded and not known what he was doing. The inquest recored an open verdict.

April 2006 NASA Tech Briefs announced Graeme Scott-Dodd of Falkirk Scotland was among the winners of the Emhart Teknologies 2005 "Create the Future" design contest. He won second prize for a radio device worn around the wrist or ankle that activates in contact with salt water to sound an alarm and automatically deploy a life jacket or buoy.

11 April 2006 RingProp announced their supplier of aluminum propellers, J.L. French, went into administration (bankruptcy).

24 April 2006 an inquest into the death of **Brian Bannister** found he had been sunbathing on the deck when a friend spun the boat around twice to the left as a prank. Bannister fell off and was struck by the propeller in the chest and abdomen. His injuries were so bad his internal organs were showing. His friends wrapped him in a sleeping bag. Bannister died the next day in the hospital.

21 June 2006 RingProp suspended trading of their stock on AIM. Trading was never restarted.

10 July 2006 a forty year old man from Southampton was swimming from a PWC to the stern swim ladder of a boat at Hythe Marina when the powerboat's propellers sucked his legs in. He lost his right leg and part of his left leg.

22 July 2006 a 35 year old woman from east Africa fell from a boat near Llanddwyn Island, Anglesey, North Wales and suffered serious propeller injuries to her head. She was life flighted to a hospital in Bangor.

31 July 2006 longboat propeller fatality of a 59 year old man from Somerset on holiday near Lichfield. His family rounded a corner and approached a lock in a narrow boat / longboat. He reversed to get behind another longboat already in line to pass though the lock. The family's longboat struck the stern of the other longboat. A family member jumped in to secure their boat to shore with a line. Then their longboat stuck the shore and he fell overboard. The family member that had gone to shore with a line, reboarded and stopped the engine. The operator had been entrapped in the propeller and died at the scene. MAIB investigated and produced a 1 September 2006 [safety flyer](#) warning boaters of the dangers of boat propellers. An interesting discussion developed in [Canalworld Forum](#) mirroring discussions in the U.S. The UK was then (2006) using the Internet to discuss propeller injuries. It is a nice, mostly serious chat about the topic vs the hateful few word missives being fired in similar discussions in the U.S. in 2013.

2007 three men (the owners and operator of the boat that struck two year old **Paul Gallagher** in the Bahamas in August 2002) pled not guilty in the Bahamian Magistrates Court to manslaughter through negligence. The case will move to the Supreme Court in April 2008.

Early January 2007 **Steven Patient**, of Chelmsford and a July 2005 propeller victim, donated a Ford van through his employer, Dagenham Motors, to Essex Air Ambulance (EAA). Dagenham Motors will also cover future tax and maintenance costs on the van. EAA will use it in their fundraising efforts. The van will carry all EAA's promotional materials, donation boxes, tables, and banners. EAA's quick response to Steven's accident saved his life.

16 April 2007 The Director of Sovereign Divers Ltd pled guilty in Newcastle Crown Court to a breach of the Code of Practice for Small Commercial Vessels , known as the "Yellow Code" in the August 2005 **Michael Ward** accident. On April 24, 2007, Sovereign was fined Pound 5,000 and ordered to pay Pound 3,500 toward costs. The dive boat operator was fined Pound 500 and ordered to pay Pound 500 toward costs. The skipper did not hold the necessary certificate of competence to be operating the boat. Sovereign lost their previous skipper and just moved over a crew member from another boat. An MCA enforcement officer said MCA recommends propeller guards be fitted in diving operations and that a sufficient crew be onboard (this was a one man operation).

15 July 2007 **Alistair McLean**, 19, was critically injured in an RNLI training exercise with the lifeboat from Kinghorn Scotland. McLean fell overboard and was struck repeatedly in the head by the lifeboat propeller. The blades went right through his helmet. Many followed the news and prayed for his recovery. MAIB investigated and [reported](#).

24 April 2008 approximately six years after the death of two year old **Paul Gallagher** in the Bahamas, a Judge of the Supreme Court of the Bahamian Capital of Nassau dismissed the case against the boat driver and owners for lack of evidence. The boat operator said he saw a woman in the water after a wave knocked her from the banana boat (tube) he was towing with the 200 HP outboard powered 19 foot boat. She was panicking, as he went to help, another wave struck the boat, he slipped and became entangled in some ropes, and the out of control boat headed toward the beach where Paul was sleeping in a beach chair. The Gallagher family admitted that at one time they did demand a large sum of money from the defendants to settle the case and get on with their lives. The police told the Gallagher's that police photos taken of the accident scene had been stolen so they had to rely on those taken by the resort. The court never addressed why the fixed seats had been removed from the boat and replaced with cardboard boxes. The boat was never impounded or examined. The Judge ruled in front of the Jury and instructed them that as a matter of law they had to return not guilty verdicts on all counts. After the defendants were being removed some chaos broke out as Paul's family was frustrated and yelling at them.

21 June 2008 a man in his 40's fell from a fishing boat during a competition off Saltburn Beach in rough water. He suffered a severe head wound from the propeller, was rescued by RNLI, and life flighted to a hospital.

26 June 2008 International Patent WO 2008/074971 A2 invented by Robin Freeman, assigned to Vision Engineering, for a Marine Safety System was published. Individuals onboard wear a transmitter, if one or more of those signals become absent, the control systems is mechanically attached to the engine kill switch. The system is generally similar to the AutoTether system from the U.S..

13 July 2008 a 40 year old man fell into the canal and was stuck in leg by a canal boat propeller in Wheaton Aston. He was life flighted to New Cross Hospital in Wolverhampton.

23 August 2008 a charter diver off the Farne Islands in Northumberland surfaced into the stationary prop of the dive boat. He suffered deep lacerations to his head and hands.

29 April 2009 a 68 year old man from Moelfre fell from his dinghy in Red Wharf Bay on Anglesey. A nearby yacht came to rescue him, but the wind and tide pushed his right leg into the propeller. He was eventually able to swim about 50 meters to shore. Holyhead Coastguard coordinated his recovery and getting him to the hospital.

14 June 2009 **Pete Mills**, 24 of Whitleigh, an experienced watersports instructor, was diving for scallops in Plymouth Sound. An 18 foot boat powered by a 300 HP outboard ran over him. Among his injuries was an eight inch hole that had to be left open for several days to prevent infection.

30 July 2009 **Amanda Chappell**, 47 from Plymouth, was on holiday on a 50 foot narrowboat in Cropredy. While navigating a lock, the boat bumped the rear lock gate, she fell over the railing, and was fatally struck by the propeller. She died in front of her husband and two children. This accident has similarities to the 31 July 2006 narrowboat propeller fatality.

8 August 2009 **Alex Edmonds**, 41 from Lower Stoke on the Isle of Grain near Rochester in Kent, was co-piloting his boat (Harwich 2011) in the Dover Regatta. As he rounded a buoy beside a friend's boat (Sleepwalker) on the final lap, they hit side on, and his friend's boat rode up over his. The man suffered head and chest injuries from the propeller as the boat rode up in the air over him. His helmet was pulled off during the impact. He suffered severe fractures to his face and needed help keeping his airway open. Crews were afraid to move him due to the seriousness of his injuries so they towed his boat to shore to meet medical personnel. A large screen was held up to prevent the crowd from witnessing paramedics working on him as they awaited a life flight helicopter. He was declared dead before he could be airlifted. Edmond's parents were watching the race. MAIB investigated and [reported](#).

In June 2010 **Karl Sacks** (lost a leg to a prop in 1995) was a participant in a BBC adventure documentary (Beyond Boundaries) trekking across jungles and deserts. It was revealed he had cheated the Department of Work and Pensions out of over 40,000 British Pounds in benefits by claiming he was severely disabled and unable to perform normal tasks at the same time he was trekking the world on TV.

26 January 2010 an Oxford Coroner at the Inquest into the July 2009 canal boat death of Amanda Chapel as she navigated a lock said he viewed it as a tragic accident. "The boat collided with the rear gate with some force. She would have been sucked around the swell of the boat and suffered the injuries (from the propeller) causing her death."

7 August 2010 a 49 year old man fell from a towed inflatable ring on Aberdyfi / Aberdovey Estuary on the west coast of Wales. The boat circled back to pick him up and he was seriously struck in the lower back and legs by the propeller. RNLI towed them to Ynys Las Beach near Borth where they were met by an ambulance and he was life flighted to a hospital. A woman on board was treated for shock.

27 August 2010 **Ian Cope**, 41, and his nephew **Tyler Cope**, 15, were on a 17 foot dory that struck bottom near Pentewan Sands, near Mevagissey, Cornwall. They were both ejected and the boat began to circle. The boat struck both of them twice, and they were both injured by the propeller. Ian was struck in the face, knocked unconscious, and life flighted to Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro. Tyler was taken by ambulance to the same hospital with serious leg injuries. RNLI recovered the boat when it ran out of gas and said the kill cord was found wrapped around the steering column. Ian came forward in May 2013 citing the similarities of the Milligan accident to his.

11 September 2010 **Mari-Simon Cronje**, 11, was attending a birthday party for a friend at Princes Club in West London. She and other children were riding an inflatable banana towed by a ski boat. She fell and was fatally struck by the propeller of the ski boat when it turned. MAIB investigated and issued a [report](#). Her father was chief executive at USB Wealth Management in London, a leading financial firm. This accident received considerable press in the UK.

7 November 2010 **Scott Hughes**, 20, RAF Senior Aircraftman from Felinheli, North Wales was swimming in Cyprus to "decompress" with his unit after being in Afghanistan. Hughes was struck and killed by the propeller of a boat under control of the Military Training Wing, British Forces Cyprus and the Ministry of Defense.

13 April 2011 **Paul Nolan Miralles**, 36, originally from Ireland, was missing since very early April 13th in the Netherlands. His jacket and a bag with his t-shirt were found shredded in the propeller of an Amsterdam Canal tourist boat. They later found a shoulder examined to see if it was his. Authorities thought he may have fallen from a bicycle into the canal after a night out.

11 June 2011 **Clive Potter** was on a river boat in Eynesbury, St. Neots. The boat stopped quickly, he fell overboard, and his foot was struck by the propeller. He says he remembers laying back and resigning himself to death. When he came to, he learned doctors had amputated his foot.

1 July 2011 **Joel Eager**, 21 of Kings Walk, Shoreham was on a dinghy with 2 friends in Chichester Harbour. He fell overboard and died two days later from propeller injuries to his head.

3 July 2011 - **Patrick Beach**, 33 of Surrey, fell from a cruiser near Portsmouth Harbor. He suffered fatal propeller injuries to his head. His mother went on to raise funds for the RNLI to thank them for keeping him alive long enough for her to reach the hospital and be with him the last few hours of his life.

17 July 2011 **Scot Suzanne Cassidy**, 26 year old nursery worker from Cambuslang, near Glasgow Scotland, was tending bar on Ibiza, an island off Spain, for the summer. She took a day off and was riding a tube with friends as part of a friend's alcohol free birthday party. She slipped when she was climbing back onto the boat and the the captain started the propeller before she made it all the way onboard. Cassidy was severely struck by the propeller in her right knee and leg. She thought she was going to die.

3 August 2011 **Ben Woollacott**, 19 and a former Wildernesse School student, was a deckhand holding the mooring rope for a ferry (Ernest Bevin) on the River Thames when he fell overboard and was struck in the face and killed by the propeller. His family had worked boats on the River Thames for five generations. Some Thames boat services closed so their crews could attend his funeral. MAIB investigated and [reported](#) the rope had become entangled in the propeller and drug him in. This was a commercial vessel accident, but we went ahead and included it due to the amount of publicity given the accident.

3 August 2011 **Adam Rose** from Carsington Gardens, Wilmington was on holiday with five friends on the Greek island of Zante. They hired a boat to sail to nearby islands. During the trip Rose fell from the stern and was struck by the propeller. A friend jumped in to help him. Then Rose had to endure the thirty minute ride back to the main island with severe cuts to his tail bone, hands, feet, and groin. Rose was a student at North West Kent College in Gravesend. As a result of his experiences, he launched an awareness campaign with his mother on the hazards of young people traveling abroad on Facebook at Get Adam Home XX.

November 2011 - **Maurice Abrahams** an experienced diver was on holiday diving in Egypt with several friends from the Red Fins diving group. Another boat carrying divers and sunbathers arrived as Maurice's group was coming up. Maurice was just below the surface when the second boat started its propeller. He was severely struck by the propeller and just escaped being decapitated when the propeller hit his oxygen tank. Among his injuries were cuts to his legs, a broken hip and pelvis. Doctors had to request blood from guests in his resort to try to save him. Maurice Abrahams went on to become an advocate for boat propeller safety in the UK.

March 2012 Yamaha UK Pro released a stainless steel propeller guard.

28 March 2012 Yamaha Pro UK Press Release showcased their recent delivery of several flood rescue boats to Lincolnshire. The rescue boats are powered by Yamaha's new flood rescue outboard motors with stainless steel propeller guards.

9 April 2012 a 9 year old boy from Somerset was on holiday with his parents and grandparents on the Kennet and Avon Canal near Devizes on Easter Monday. He fell from the stern of a narrowboat on Wiltshire Canal. His parents reversed the boat to rescue him, he was struck by the propeller, and suffered severe lower leg injuries. It took a doctor with the life flight helicopter an hour to stabilize him before they could fly him to Frenchay Hospital in Bristol. His family now fears he will lose his leg. A boat manager of a trip boat said the shape of the boat tends to drag people into its propeller. He recommended shifting the boat to neutral and throwing a lifebelt to those who fall overboard.

9 June 2012 **Owen Corkery** fell from a boat in Cork Harbor, Ireland. The kill cord switch was not working and he did not wear the kill cord. The boat, a RIB powered by a 250 HP Evinrude, circled and repeatedly struck him with the propeller. He was injured in the back of his head, forehead, back, and his left arm was amputated above the elbow. Ireland Report No. MCIB/217 (No.3 of 2013) provides additional information. Corkery thinks the boat struck something before he was ejected.

20 July 2012 **Charlie Hutton**, a young boy with a very promising future, was on a RIB operated by his father along with another boy near the Needles of the Isle of Wight. The boat was struck by a large wave, both boys were swept off, Charlie was fatally struck by the propeller and his friend was also injured. Charlie's father, Simon Hutton, has become a boat propeller safety advocate in the UK. Simon Hutton has also repeatedly called attention to the limitations of many boat insurance policies. Charlie's older brothers have been raising funds for the RNLI to thank them for coming to rescue him.

31 July 2012 a 54 year old man from near Blacon fell from a boat on River Dee between Eccleston and Aldford and suffered horrific leg injuries from its propeller.

Approximately 8 August 2012 - a couple from Tiptree on holiday rescued a young boy struck by a boat propeller at Colchester.

11 August 2012 **Cian Williams**, 13, and some other boys hopped in for a ride to refuel a boat, but was backed over by the propeller when the boat stopped to let the boys swim. His right leg required over 600 stitches. Cian and his mother became UK propeller safety advocates and Cian founded the "Put Cages on Boat Propellers" group on Facebook (at facebook.com/groups/propellersafetyawareness).

29 August - 9 September 2012 **Stef Reid** won the silver medal for Great Britain at the 2012 London Paralympic Games.

31 August - 2 September 2012 **Michael "Mick" Ward** of Loughborough, an August 2005 dive boat propeller accident victim, represented Great Britain in the Para-Equestrian World Championships in Bred, Holland. Mick competes in carriage driving.

September 2012 Edmond Symmons announced RingProp intellectual property including patents, tooling, designs, and test results is now [for sale](#) by private treaty. It remains to be seen if this sale will bring the over twenty-five year history of this ringed safety propeller to a close or not.

September 2012 [Propeller Solutions](#) in Dorset launched a line of nylon coated stainless steel propeller guards said to be the same guards Yamaha put on the rescue boats at Lincolnshire back in March.

13,14,15 October 2012 We (PGIC) posted [three articles](#) on Yamaha UK Pro's new propeller guards and several claims they were making about them.

17 October 2012 Yamaha found our posts discussing their new propeller guards and the very favorable statements Yamaha made about them. Yamaha US and Yamaha Japan visited our site numerous times per our site logs. Yamaha Netherlands visited our site the morning of the 18th.

Late October / Early November 2012 Yamaha UK removed all online references to their new propeller guard. We noticed they were gone one day before a major Boating Safety Meeting in the U.S.. Since then, Yamaha has refused to respond to us.

3 January 2013 as Yamaha UK and Yamaha worldwide repeatedly refused to respond to our inquiries, we re-posted the [propeller guard statements Yamaha UK previously deleted](#) from multiple web pages.

15 January 2013 Heathrow Airport completed the acquisition of nearby Princes Club, the water sports park where **Mari-Simon Cronje** was killed in September 2010. Princes Club said they were selling due to financial difficulties.

31 January 2013 Caroline Sumeray, Coroner for the Isle of Wight, called upon the leisure boating industry to promote the use of propeller safety and awareness as part of her findings in the Inquest of Charlie Hutton's death. His death was ruled accidental.

31 January 2013 Crown Prosecution Service announced they will be charging Prince's Club with corporate manslaughter and a health and safety offense in the death of **Mari-Simon Cronje**. The club owner will also be charged under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

February 2013 Royal Yachting Association (RYA) issues [two new boat propeller guard position statements](#). One for boaters, the other for RYA Training Centres.

7 February 2013 BBC published an interview with Simon Hutton, father of **Charlie Hutton**, calling attention to boat insurance loopholes including not covering children and not covering people outside the boat.

28 February 2013 Westminster Magistrates Court held a short hearing on the **Mari-Simon Cronje** accident concerning the involvement of Prince's Club. The club owner has been ordered to appear on April 26th in Southwark Crown Court. The club itself will face a manslaughter charge and a health and safety charge.

1-5 April 2013 ITV Helimed, a popular television program, spent part of this week filming a reconstruction of the **Cian Williams** accident in North Wales for use in a future episode.

21 April 2013 **Charlie Hutton**'s older brothers Tom and Sam ran in the London Marathon as part of their ongoing efforts to raise money for RNLI in Charlie's memory and to thank them for coming to rescue him.

5 May 2013 [Nicholas Milligan](#), 51, and **Emily Milligan** his 8 year old daughter, his wife and other two children were in his RHIB powered by a large Yamaha outboard motor near Padstow Harbor. They were all ejected, the boat circled, Nicholas and Emily were killed, his wife lost part of a leg and his son had severe leg injuries. His other two daughters had minor injuries. The kill cord was not in use. As of late May, MAIB had not yet publicly identified which family member was operating the boat at the time of the accident.

5-11 May 2013 Google searches for "kill cord" significantly spiked in the UK and worldwide the week following the Milligan accident.

10 May 2013 a few days after the Milligan accident, Heddon Johnson (his son died in a propeller accident in 2000) launched a [petition](#) on change.org calling for the government to make kill cord use mandatory. His petition received considerable press the following week.

10 May 2013 Royal Yachting Association (RYA) launched a new web page featuring two posters, and a video devoted to kill cord use following the Milligan accident.

17 May 2013 MAIB issued a [kill cord safety bulletin](#) in the wake of the Milligan accident.

21 May 2013 [Cian Williams' interview in the Daily Post](#) supports Heddon Johnson's kill cord petition and calls attention the need to make propellers safer. The Maritime and Coastguard Chief Executive, Sir Alan Massey, says they will be looking at ways to guard propellers in their September meeting, especially those with an increased risk of people in the water. Among the approaches he mentioned were a moveable screen that could be lowered around the propeller. The Sea Advisory Group will also be looking at work done in the U.S.

21 May 2013 **Cian Williams** launched a petition to Sir Dafydd Ellis Thomas on Change.org to “Put cages on boat propellers.”

24 May 2013 The Nicholas Milligan family accident inquest convened, provided some information, then adjourned for further investigations.

27 May 2013 **Madaline Jayne / Cole**, 25 of Herefordshire England, was with friends snorkeling outside the safe zone (per local officials) off Shari-La Resort, Pulau Perhentian, Malaysia when a boat bringing in tourists struck her and one of her friends from Australia with its propeller. Jane was struck in the torso, buttocks, and both legs. She died en route to treatment. Her friend was rushed to one hospital then taken to a larger one. The Daily Mail noted Joanna Stillwell, another British female, was similarly killed snorkeling in Malaysia in July 2004.

27 May 2013 Powerboat & RIB (PBR) magazine announced their new kill cord warning stickers are now in stock. PBR will be including the stickers free of charge with their July 2013 issue. They are also mailing them to non-subscribers for a minimal postage fee.

27 May 2013 **Rico Dardis**, an aspiring rapper, was found dead on the beach near gryones at Seaway Avenue, Christchurch, Dorset. Police say his injuries appear to be caused by a propeller and are questioning two men. Later reports say they are treating his death as a murder.

27 May 2013 Daily Post reported over 60,000 people have signed Heddon Johnson's petition calling for mandatory use of kill cords. He plans on presenting the petition at Downing Street in the next two weeks.

2 June 2013 RIBnet, a leading RHIB website and forum has recorded over 325 messages and 40,000 views in its "Tragedy at Padstow" thread on the Milligan accident. A RIBnet poll on compulsory licensing and mandatory kill cords with fines for non compliance has received 130 votes for licensing and mandatory kill cords vs. 457 opposed.

2 June 2013 PGIC first published this history.

15 June 2013 Heddon Johnson's kill cord petition has amassed over 67,000 signatures.

25 June 2013 PGIC published an online interactive timeline of UK boat kill cord and propeller safety events primarily based on this publication.

REFERENCES

[UK Boat Propeller Safety Timeline](#). PGIC. 25 June 2013.

[A History of Lanyard Kill Switches for Recreational Boats](#). PGIC. 9 December 2011.

[History of Boat Propeller Safety Issues & the Propeller Safety Movement](#). PGIC. 28 January 2013.

British Newspaper Archive - contains reports of several boat propeller accidents prior to 1960.

COMMENTS

We welcome your comments on this history at:

<http://www.propellersafety.com/7608/history-propeller/uk-history-boat-kill-cord-propeller-safety/>