

AIRPROX REPORT No 2014038

Date/Time: 14 Apr 2014 1610Z

Position: 5259N 00054W

(2nm S Syerston)

Airspace: London FIR (Class: G)

Aircraft 1 Aircraft 2

Type: Viking T1 Untraced Glider

Operator: HQ Air (Trg) Unknown

Alt/FL: 5500ft NK
QNH (1024hPa)

Conditions: VMC VMC

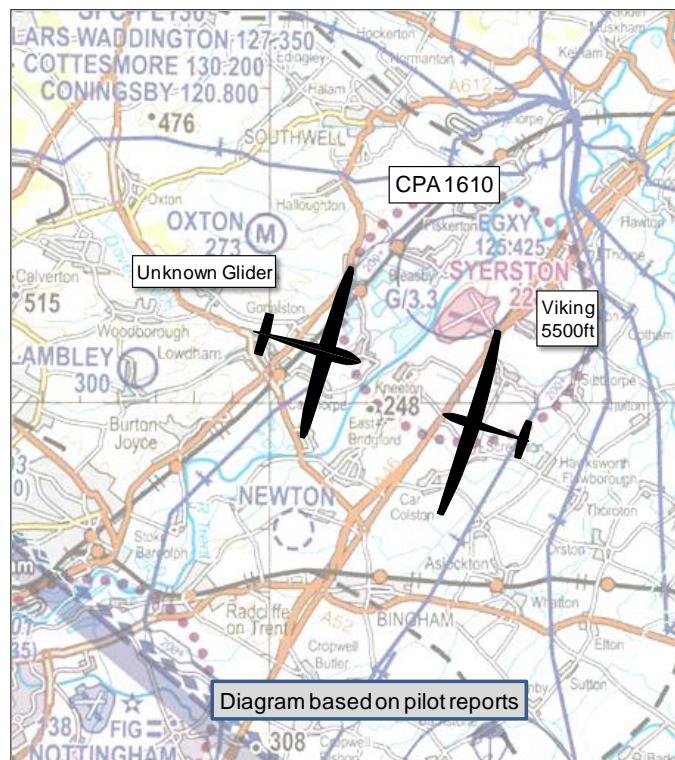
Visibility: 20k

Reported Separation:

50ft V/30m H NK

Recorded Separation:

NK



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE VIKING PILOT reports flying a white aircraft with day-glo patches, under VFR in VMC and in contact with Syerston on their A/G frequency. After climbing to 5000ft he instructed his student to fly into wind and towards a line of large cumulus clouds. Beneath the clouds strong lift was encountered and the aircraft was flown wings-level for 5 to 7 minutes whilst steadily gaining height. Throughout this time the student was in control and continuing with the lookout-attitude-instruments work-cycle whilst the instructor monitored and maintained his own lookout from the rear seat. At a very short range, a white glider with red tips on the nose and wings was spotted, first by the student, then the instructor. It appeared to have pulled up in strong lift and was visible just above the horizon at a range of 200m, just right of the nose of the Viking. Initially, it was hard to tell which direction it was heading, but after approximately 2 seconds of looking it was apparent that it was heading towards the Viking at high speed and the instructor took control and broke hard to the left. At the same time the other aircraft also manoeuvred away to their left. He estimated it passed 30m down their right-hand-side at a height difference of 50ft. The pilot opined that the incident would have been highly unlikely had the Viking T1 been fitted with FLARM.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE UNTRACED AIRCRAFT: The radar recordings were viewed from one hour before the reported incident to 30 minutes after, but unfortunately the incident could not be seen, and, despite contacting local operators, the other glider could not be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at RAF Cranwell was reported as:

METAR EGYD 141550Z 35012KT CAVOK 13/01 Q1025 BLU NOSIG

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance¹, if the geometry was considered to be converging, then the Viking pilot was required to give way to the other aircraft², which he did.

Comments

HQ Air Command

The late spot of the opposing traffic is understandable when one considers the small cross-section of a glider with head-on aspect, set against a background of cloud and therefore providing poor contrast. Due to the slightly offset tracks, the evasive turn to the left appears to have been the correct choice. Overall, this incident once again underlines the value of disciplined lookout.

Summary

An Airprox was reported on 14th April 2014 at 1610 when a Viking T1 and an untraced glider flew into proximity. The Viking was operating VFR in VMC and listening out on the Syerston A/G frequency. Unfortunately, despite extensive efforts the other glider could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilot and the appropriate operating authority.

In discussing the actions of the Viking pilot, the Board considered that the other aircraft had probably pulled up in front of him and would have initially presented a small target to acquire visually; they therefore praised the Viking pilot for his lookout and timely actions. Board members wondered whether the other pilot had cleared his path prior to the climb but, being unable to trace the other glider, this was only speculation. Notwithstanding, both pilots had an equal right to operate in that airspace, and the Viking pilot correctly undertook avoiding action once he had seen the other glider.

The Board noted the Viking pilot's comment about FLARM and wondered whether HQ Air Command had a programme to fit FLARM to the VGS fleet (especially since they were temporarily grounded and this provided an ideal opportunity for the work). It decided to make a recommendation to HQ Air Command to consider installing FLARM to the whole of the VGS fleet.

In looking at the cause, the Board decided that this was a conflict in Class G which was resolved by the Viking pilot. They categorised the risk as B, avoiding action had been taken but safety margins had been much reduced below the normal.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G, resolved by the Viking pilot.

Degree of Risk: B

ERC Score³: 20

Recommendation(s): HQ Air Command considers installation of FLARM on VGS fleets.

¹ Rules of the Air 2007(as amended) Rule 8 (Avoiding aerial collisions).

² Ibid., Rule 9 (Converging)

³ Although the Event Risk Classification (ERC) trial had been formally terminated for future development at the time of the Board, for data continuity and consistency purposes, Director UKAB and the UKAB Secretariat provided a shadow assessment of ERC.