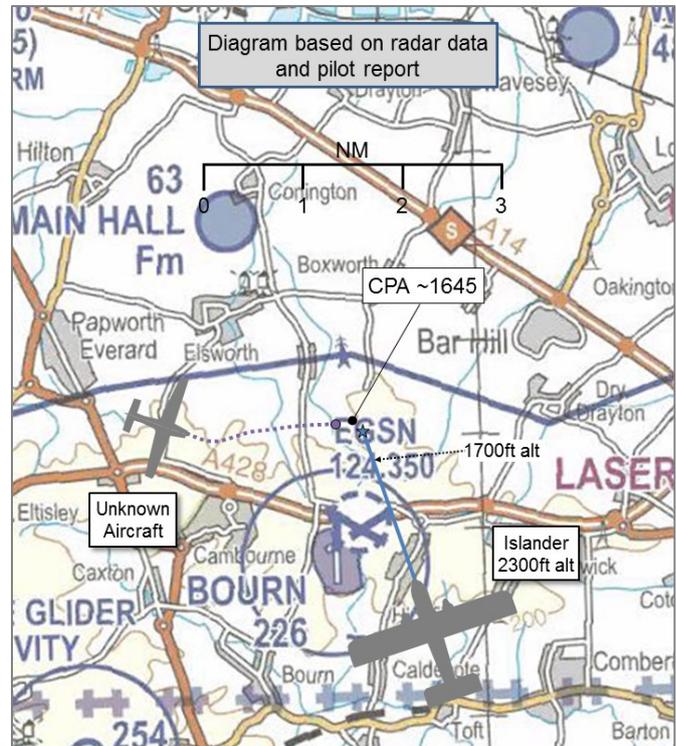


AIRPROX REPORT No 2016148

Date: 25 Jul 2016 Time: 1645Z Position: 5214N 00002W Location: 2nm NNE Bourn

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Islander	Light Aircraft
Operator	HQ JHC	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	NK
Service	Traffic	
Provider	Lakenheath	
Altitude/FL	2300ft alt	
Transponder	C, S	State/Modes
Reported		
Colours	Grey	Silver, Red
Lighting	Nav, Strobe	Not Reported
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	40km	
Altitude/FL	2400ft	
Altimeter	RPS (1016hPa)	
Heading	330°	
Speed	120kt	
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	
Alert	N/A	
Separation		
Reported	50m V/0m H	
Recorded		NK



THE ISLANDER PILOT reports that he was transiting at 2400' just North of Bourn under a traffic service from Lakenheath Radar, Lakenheath reported that there was 'pop up traffic 11 o'clock half a mile no height information'. Immediately upon acknowledging this message, the aircraft was sighted to be in his 10-11 o'clock position, same level, on a converging heading from the left; it was considered to be less than 100 meters away and close enough for the tail writing to be sharp/readable. The handling pilot closed both power levers and simultaneously put the aircraft into a steep descent/dive in order to avoid a collision. The aircraft lost 600ft before recovering to straight and level flight. The Airprox was reported to Lakenheath. If it were not for the prompt and deliberate actions of the handling pilot this would almost certainly have been a catastrophic event as the civilian aircraft was not seen to have manoeuvred until they were clear.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE UNKNOWN AIRCRAFT PILOT could not be traced.

THE LAKENHEATH CONTROLLER reports that the Islander was handed over from an adjacent ATC facility under a Traffic Service. The Islander was approximately 10nm West of Cambridge. There were numerous low-level transponder-equipped targets and Traffic Information was passed. After other aircraft arriving and transiting the Lakenheath MATZ had received similar information, a target popped up with no altitude information; Traffic Information was passed to the Islander who stated that he was 'searching' for the traffic, and then that he had the traffic in sight. A few minutes later the Islander pilot reported that he had had an Airprox with the previously called traffic. The Islander pilot said he thought it was a Bi-Plane and he had made a rapid descent to avoid a collision.

THE LAKENHEATH SUPERVISOR reports that he was the watch supervisor when the Islander was handed over. There were numerous unidentified targets near the position of the Islander that

required the controller to pass multiple Traffic Information. A target was noticed less than one mile from the Islander and Traffic Information was passed to the Islander as 'pop up traffic, type and altitude unknown'. The Islander pilot acknowledged the Traffic Information and that he was looking for the traffic. Shortly after the Islander pilot reported the traffic in sight. The Islander pilot later reported that he would be filing an Airprox with that traffic because he had been forced to make a rapid descent.

Factual Background

The weather at Cambridge was recorded as follows:

METAR EGSC 251620Z 28010KT 9999 SCT045 21/10 Q1018

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The Islander and light aircraft pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the light aircraft pilot was required to give way to the Islander².

The light aircraft was seen on the radar recording as a primary contact only, it fades from radar prior to the Airprox and therefore the exact location, time and separation of the Airprox at CPA cannot be ascertained.

Comments

JHC Command

It was very fortunate that the Islander crew identified the Unknown aircraft and then reacted very swiftly to avoid a possible catastrophic incident. As the Unknown aircraft was only an intermittent primary contact, ATC could not have provided any further information for the Islander and, due to the lack of squawk, TCAS would not have provided any better separation information; however, JHC are still progressing with programs to provide better traffic awareness. This is a good example of the necessity of good lookout whilst operating within busy airspace, even if you are being provided with a suitable ATS.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an Islander and a light aircraft flew into proximity at 1645 on Monday 25th July 2016. The Islander pilot was operating under VFR in VMC and in receipt of a Traffic Service from Lakenheath. The light aircraft could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilot of the Islander, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar photographs/video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The Board firstly heard from a military member who explained that lookout can sometimes be hindered in the Islander through blind spots that, in some circumstances, hamper early sighting of other aircraft; he opined that this may have been the case in this situation. Board members noted this information and quickly agreed that the Traffic Information from Lakenheath had alerted the

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

Islander pilot to the light aircraft and that this had enabled him to sight the other aircraft just in time to conduct a manoeuvre to avoid; although this was a late sighting on the Islander pilot's behalf, it had been his rapid action in descending the Islander as quickly as possible that had prevented this from becoming a more serious incident.

The Board were disappointed that the other aircraft could not be traced, and reiterated that the Airprox process is greatly enhanced by having reports from both sides of an incident to ensure the full facts can be ascertained. Although the Board were thus not able to determine the level of equipment fitted to the other aircraft, GA members commented that it is always prudent for aircraft to squawk both Mode A and Mode C/Alt (if fitted) such that both ATC and other aircraft fitted with appropriate systems have the opportunity to enhance their situational awareness and take action to avoid in plenty of time. The Board also agreed that, although not a requirement in Class G airspace, it is also best practice to contact local ATC units to alert them to your flight whenever possible, thereby similarly increasing the situational awareness of other airspace users, even if only through their being able to note the information and intentions exchanged when establishing a Basic Service.

The Board then looked at the cause and risk of the Airprox. They determined that, due to the fact he had not manoeuvred even when in such close quarters, the light aircraft pilot had probably not seen the Islander. This and the late sighting by the Islander pilot were considered to have been the key factors in this Airprox, and the Board agreed that the cause of the incident had been a late sighting by the Islander pilot and probably a non-sighting by the light aircraft pilot. Turning to the risk, members were mindful of the quick reactions of the Islander pilot in descending 600ft to avoid the other aircraft, had agreed that this action had prevented a more serious incident. Agreeing that safety had been much reduced, they therefore determined that the risk was Category B.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the Islander pilot and probably a non-sighting by the light aircraft pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.