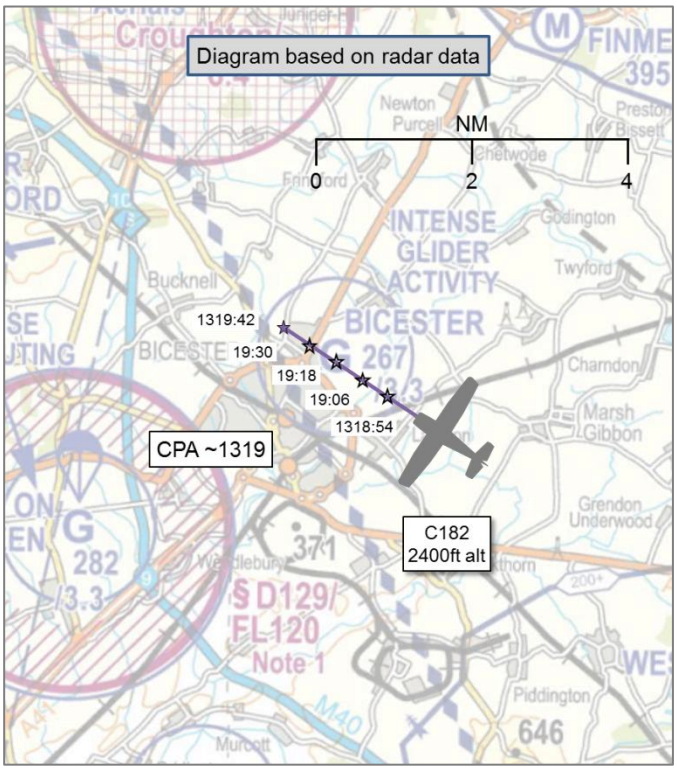
AIRPROX REPORT No 2014106

Date/Time: 14 May 2014 1319Z

Position: 5156N 00110W (Bicester gliding site)

Airspace: London FIR (*Class*: G)

	Aircraft 1	*Aircraft 2*
Type:	C182	Untraced glider
Operator:	Civ Pte	
Alt/FL:	2400ft QNH (NK hPa)	
Conditions:	VMC	
Visibility:	10km	
Reported Separation:	NK	
Recorded Separation:	NK	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE C182 PILOT reports conducting a transit flight in a white and grey aircraft. The lighting state was not reported; the SSR transponder was selected on with Modes A, C and S. The aircraft was not fitted with an ACAS or TAS. The pilot was operating under VFR, in VMC, in receipt of a Basic Service from Oxford Approach. When 1nm northeast of Bicester aerodrome, heading 295° at 120kt and 2400ft, he saw 2 white gliders ahead, about 200ft higher; he descended by about 100ft. The two glider pilots saw him he surmised; one went to the left, the other to the right. The C182 pilot commented that he had transited over the top of Bicester gliding site too low and that he should have been no lower than 3300ft (the maximum winch-launching altitude).

He did not make an assessment of the risk of collision.

THE GLIDER PILOTS: Regrettably, and despite extensive tracing action, the UKAB was unable to trace either of the glider pilots.

Factual Background

The weather at Brize Norton was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGVN 141350Z 32008KT CAVOK 17/05 Q1032 BLU NOSIG
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Analysis and Investigation

CAA ATSI

Notification of the Airprox was not received by CAA ATSI until almost two months after the incident and consequently no RTF recordings were available for the event. No Airprox report was received by the Oxford ATSU and, due to the elapsed time, the controller had no recollection of the circumstances.

Under a Basic Service, pilots should not expect any form of traffic information from a controller, as there is no such obligation placed on the controller and the pilot remains responsible for collision avoidance at all times[1].

The Bicester Gliding site is shown on the UK (1:250,000) Aeronautical chart as an area of 'intense glider activity' up to an altitude of 3300ft. At 1318:06, the C182 was 2.3nm southeast of Bicester airfield tracking northwest at an altitude of 2400ft. The C182 continued northwest and passed overhead Bicester airfield at 1319:22, indicating an altitude of 2400ft. No other radar contacts were shown.

At 1319:48, the C182 was 0.8nm northwest of Bicester at an altitude of 2400ft and an intermittent primary contact was shown 0.3nm northeast of Bicester tracking north.

UKAB Secretariat

The C182 and glider pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to fly into such proximity as to create a danger of collision[2]. If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the C182 pilot was required to give way to the gliders[3].

Comments

BGA

Effective lookout is of paramount importance. It appears that in this case lookout was effective, as it is most of the time; however, it was almost inevitable that the C182 pilot would fly close to gliders given his position in relation to Bicester airfield. Data analysed by the BGA and LAA and accepted by CAA demonstrates that most collisions in Class G occur close to airfields. Therefore, airfields are probably best avoided by en route aircraft.

Clear guidance has been published in AIC Y 083/2011[4] on sport gliding operations and where and when gliders are likely to be found.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Cessna 182 and two gliders flew into proximity at about 1319 on Wednesday 14th May 2014 at Bicester glider site. The pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, the Cessna 182 pilot in receipt of a Basic Service; it was not possible to determine if the glider pilots were in receipt of a service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the C182 pilot, radar photographs/video recordings and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

The Board first discussed the C182 pilot's actions. He had been in straight-and-level flight whilst transiting to his destination and had seen 2 gliders ahead of his aircraft. He took avoiding action by descending and perceived that the glider pilots had turned in opposite directions to avoid him. Notwithstanding his perception, the Board felt that the glider pilots may equally have just been thermaling over the airfield, especially at the reported altitude of 2400ft, and that their turns could therefore have been coincidental. In either case, the C182 pilot was faced with traffic which, by his own admission, he was very likely to encounter given that he was in the overhead of Bicester glider site and below its winch-launching maximum altitude. The Board members agreed with his assessment that he would have been better placed by remaining above the maximum winch-launch

[1] CAP774, Paragraph 2.5
[2] Rules of the Air 2007 (as amended), Rule 8 (Avoiding aerial collisions).
[3] ibid., Rule 9 (Converging).
[4] Aeronautical Information Circulars can be found on the NATS Ltd AIS website, www.nats-uk.ead-it.com

altitude of 3300ft, and added that his pre-flight planning should have allowed him to identify factors such as active airfields and to avoid them accordingly.

Notwithstanding, the Board were heartened by the C182 pilot's open and honest reporting and analysis of the event and commended him both for doing so and for self-identifying the appropriate lessons. On the other hand, the Board was disappointed that it had not been possible to trace either of 2 glider pilots despite the fact that they had been operating in the overhead of a well established glider site. This may have been because neither of the pilots were based at Bicester, but members felt that this was not likely.

Ultimately, the Board was faced with a dearth of information and, although it was clear that the cause was that the C182 pilot had flown through the overhead of a promulgated and active glider site and below the maximum winch-launch height, there was insufficient information to definitively establish the degree of risk.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The C182 pilot flew through the overhead of a promulgated and active glider site and below the maximum winch-launch height.

Degree of Risk: D

ERC Score[5]: N/S

[5] 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.