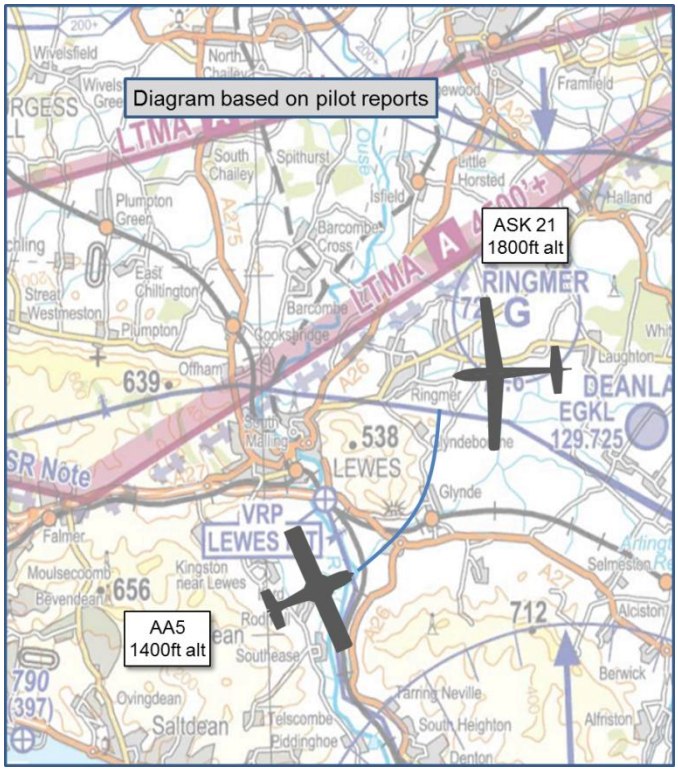
AIRPROX REPORT No 2014107

Date/Time:	6 Jul 2014 1145Z (Sunday)	
Position:	5054N 00006E (IVO Ringmer)	
Airspace:	Lon FIR	(*Class*: G)
	Aircraft 1	*Aircraft 2*
Type:	ASK 21	Grumman AA5
Operator:	Civ Pte	Civ Trg
Alt/FL:	1800ft QFE	1400ft QNH (1009hPa)
Conditions:	VMC	VMC
Visibility:	30K	25K
Reported Separation:	50ft V/20m H	20ft V/0m H
Recorded Separation:	NK	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE ASK21 PILOT reports flying a white glider without lights or SSR. He was conducting a trial lesson, flying straight-and-level into sun, when he saw a low-winged aircraft on a northerly heading. He could see that it's flight path would intersect with his own, so he immediately lowered the nose; the powered aircraft passed 20m in front, crossing from left to right. No evasive action or manoeuvre was noticed from the other aircraft. The pilot reported that although he believed his lookout to be good, the angle that the aircraft approached from was obscured by the canopy frame and the sun.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE AA5 PILOT reports flying a white and red aircraft with all lights illuminated and transponder Modes 3A and C selected. The aircraft was not fitted with TCAS. He reported flying an instructional sortie, with the student wearing "foggles" to simulate IMC. They were initially flying at 2000ft to remain below airspace between Shoreham and Gatwick. His student contacted Gatwick to ask for a zone transit and initially remained on track to Biggin in anticipation of receiving a clearance; however, the Gatwick controller was extremely busy with arrivals and advised the student to track direct to Mayfield and descend to 1400ft to remain clear of Gatwick airspace. Not being familiar with the area, and worried about violating controlled airspace, the instructor then spent some time double-checking the route on the chart. When he looked up, he saw a glider on a bearing of 090°, about 20ft below, pass beneath him. There was no time to react.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

Factual Background

The weather at Gatwick was reported as:

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METAR EGKK 061020Z 23004KT CAVOK 16/10 Q1005
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Analysis and Investigation

CAA ATSI

As the AA5 approached a position 9nm southwest of Ringmer gliding site the SSR code of the AA5 changed from 3763 (Shoreham VFR conspicuity) to 7000. At 1141:41 the AA5 contacted Gatwick Approach requesting Zone transit. The Gatwick controller was very busy and advised the pilot to remain clear of controlled airspace (CAS). The pilot's written report indicated that he decided to route towards MAY(VOR) in the descent to 1400ft in order to remain clear of Gatwick CAS.

At 1144:18 the AA5 was 3.9nm southwest of Ringmer at an altitude of 1900ft. A radar return was shown just to the north of Ringmer but then faded from radar (figure 1). At 1146:02 the AA5 reached the reported position of the Airprox (MAY 192/7.25nm) and was shown passing 1nm southwest of Ringmer at 1700ft. No other radar returns were observed and it was not possible to show the geometry of the encounter. The AA5 continued to track north.

The Glider pilot indicated that the AA5 passed 20m ahead from left to right and he immediately lowered the nose of the Glider to avoid. The AA5 pilot indicated that after checking a chart he looked up and saw the glider pass 20ft below from right to left. Although the AA5 pilot had contacted Gatwick Approach, a service had not been agreed at the time of the Airprox and no report was made to ATC.

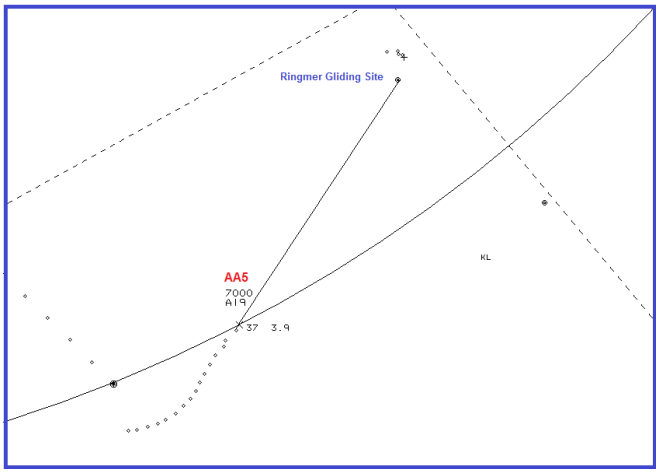

Figure 1 – Swanwick MRT at 1144:18

At 1146:02 the AA5 passed 1nm southwest of Ringmer gliding site (the reported position of the Airprox), indicating an altitude of 1700ft. No other radar contacts are shown in the vicinity – Figure 2.

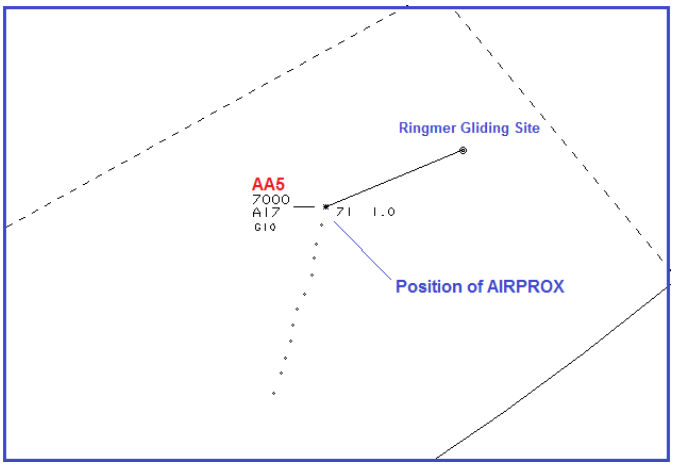

Figure 2 – Swanwick MRT at 1146:02

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots shared an equal responsibility to avoid a collision, and to not fly into such proximity as to create a danger of collision[1], additionally, the AA5 pilot was required to give way to the glider[2].

BGA Comments

Effective lookout albeit with a late sighting appears to have narrowly averted a collision in this case. Pilots transiting close to promulgated gliding sites need to be aware of the likelihood of gliders operating in the local area and maintain a particularly good lookout. AIC Y 083/2011 contains valuable information for all pilots about where and when gliders may be encountered.

Summary

An Airprox was reported on 6th July at 1145 between a ASK 21 glider and a Grumman AA5. The AA5 pilot was speaking to Gatwick in the hope of a crossing clearance, but not in receipt of a service. The ASK21 pilots saw the other aircraft and took avoiding action; the AA5 pilot saw the glider too late to take action.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both aircraft, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, and radar photographs/video recordings.

The Board first discussed the actions of the ASK 21 pilot. He was flying into sun, with the other aircraft on a constant relative bearing, and the Board opined that it was perhaps understandable that he didn't see the AA5 until the last minute. Notwithstanding, it was agreed that his avoiding action, albeit late, probably saved the situation from being much worse.

The Board then turned to the AA5 pilot. They commended the pilot for using "foggles" and not IF screens for his IF practice since this allowed the instructor unrestricted lookout. Unfortunately, with the instructor becoming task-focused on map-reading due to their change of routing, this meant that no-one was looking out at the critical juncture: this was particularly relevant with their being close to a gliding site, although the Board acknowledged that, as he orientated himself, the instructor might not have initially been aware that they were. The pilot members of the Board opined that pilots should never count on getting a clearance through such a busy piece of controlled airspace and should therefore always have a back-up plan ready to hand. It was thought that this lack of pre-planning, and specifically a lack of a "plan B", led to the need for lengthy consultation of the maps, thus compromising effective look-out and ultimately flying into close proximity with another aircraft.

In determining the cause, the Board agreed that it was a late sighting by the ASK21 pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the AA5 pilot. The risk was categorized as A, stopping just short of an actual collision, where separation was reduced to a minimum and chance had played a major part in the outcome.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the ASK21 pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the AA5 pilot.

Degree of Risk: A.

ERC Score[3]: 100.

[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.