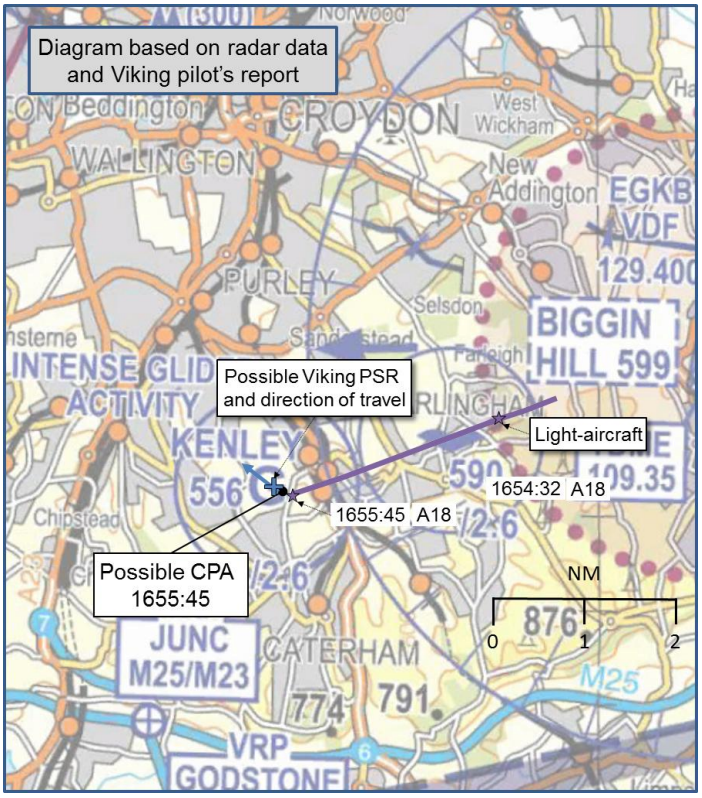
AIRPROX REPORT No 2013181

Date/Time:	29 Sep 2013 1655Z (Sunday)	
Position:	5118N 00005W (Overhead Kenley)	
Airspace:	London FIR	(*Class*: G)
	Aircraft 1	*Aircraft 2*
Type:	Viking Glider	Light Aircraft
Operator:	HQ Air (Trg)	Unknown
Alt/FL:	950ft QFE (997 hPa)	NK
Conditions:	VMC	NK
Visibility:	NK	NK
Reported Separation:	50ft V/200m H	NK V/NK H
Recorded Separation:	NK V/NK H	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE VIKING PILOT reports launching to around 950ft agl, heading 070°, in a predominantly white glider with no lights or transponder fitted. At the point of releasing the launch-cable, the pilot noticed a low-wing, single piston-engine, predominantly white aircraft with some dark markings and what appeared to be a faired, bubble-type canopy, in his one o'clock position, on a reciprocal heading, and marginally below his glider. He estimated the horizontal separation as 150-200m at the closest point, which was when the light-aircraft was in his 3 o'clock position. The glider's wing dihedral prevented the pilot from seeing light-aircraft's occupants. By that stage the aircraft were no longer on a collision course, so the glider pilot elected to fly straight ahead whilst monitoring the light-aircraft's relative position until it had passed out of his vision behind the glider. The other aircraft did not appear to alter course or altitude. The glider pilot assessed that, by the time he had spotted the light-aircraft, the risk of collision was nil.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

THE LIGHT-AIRCRAFT PILOT could not be traced. Due to administrative confusion regarding another similar incident at the same airfield that month, there was a significant delay in triggering tracing action on the light-aircraft. The delay, combined with difficulty in identifying the glider and light aircraft on radar meant that tracing action was unsuccessful and a report from the light-aircraft's pilot could not be obtained.

Factual Background

The weather at Biggin Hill was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGKB 291650Z 06011KT 9999 SCT015 BKN030 14/11 Q1007
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The relevant radar recording shows an SSR radar track appearing to the west of Biggin Hill, on a southwesterly track, indicating an altitude of 1800ft. The aircraft passes just to the southeast of Kenley glider site close to the time of the reported Airprox. A PSR[1] return can also be seen intermittently on the recording; it appears just to the northwest of the SSR return and tracks to the northwest; however, the track of this primary return is not commensurate with the Viking pilot's reported heading. The Mode C of the SSR track indicates 1800ft which, assuming the QNH of the time of 1007hPa, equates to 1530ft on the Kenley QFE of 997hPa (1hPa=27ft); this altitude also does not correspond with the Viking pilot's report. Whilst the occurrence seen on the radar recording matches the time off the Viking pilot's report, because the light-aircraft pilot could not be traced the anomalies could not be investigated further and it was therefore not possible to reconcile the differences.

The reported light-aircraft pilot was flying in the vicinity of a published and active glider site and was required to conform to the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome or keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern was formed.[2]

Summary

An Airprox was reported overhead Kenley glider site, in Class G airspace, between a Viking glider, which was just completing its winch-launch, and a light aircraft; the light aircraft could not be identified nor its pilot traced. By the time the Viking pilot saw the light-aircraft, he deemed that there was no longer any risk of collision and decided no avoiding action was necessary.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included a report from the Viking glider pilot and radar photographs/video recordings, with reports from the appropriate and operating authority.

With the limited data available, the Board agreed that the cause of the Airprox was that the light-aircraft had been flown over a promulgated and active glider site. Members who know the area well commented that Kenley is fairly easy to see from the air but they noted that, at that time of day during the Autumn, the light-aircraft was probably tracking towards a lowering setting sun and that this may have impacted on the pilot's ability to see the launching glider. However, with such limited radar data and no report from the light aircraft pilot, members decided that it was not possible to ascertain the degree of risk and therefore categorised the occurrence as risk category D, insufficient information.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The light-aircraft pilot flew over a promulgated and active glider site.

Degree of Risk: D

ERC Score[3]: N/A

[1] Primary Surveillance Radar
[2] Rules of the Air 2007, Rule 12, Flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome, and Regulatory Article 2307(1) Para 16
[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.