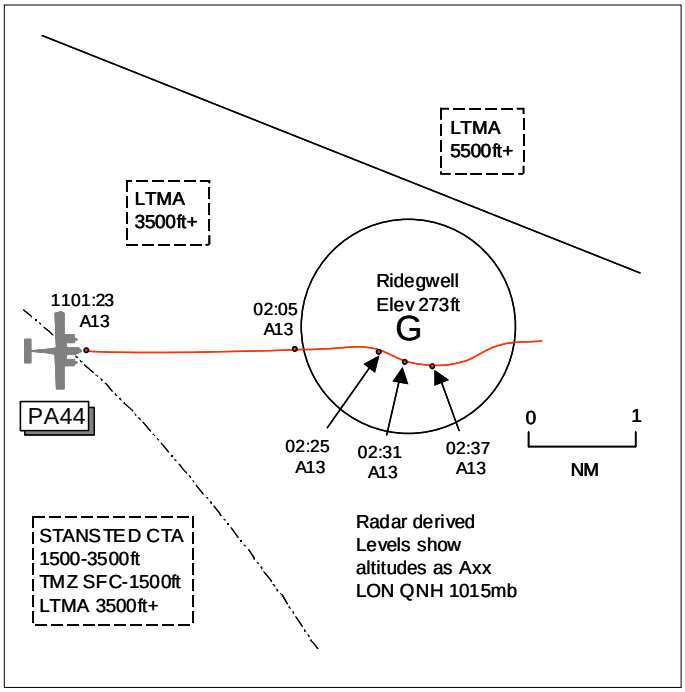
AIRPROX REPORT No 2010087

Date/Time:	11 Jul 2010 1102Z (Sunday)	
Position:	5203N 00033E (0·25nm SW Ridgewell G/S - elev 273ft)	
Airspace:	LFIR	(*Class: G*)
	Reporting Ac	*Reported Ac*
Type:	ASK21	PA44
Operator:	Civ Club	Civ Pte
Alt/FL:	1000ft↑ (QFE)	1400ft (QNH)
Weather:	VMC CLBC	VMC CLBC
Visibility:	NR	>10km
Reported Separation:	Nil V/100ft H	100ft V/900m H
Recorded Separation:	NR	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE ASK21 PILOT reports flying a dual 'trial lesson' sortie from Ridgewell seated in the rear seat. The Wx was VMC with about a 5000ft cloud base and his ac was coloured white; no radio, lighting or transponder was fitted. When close to the top of the winch launch on RW23, as the glider was levelled-off prior to release at 1000ft QFE a maroon/black coloured twin-engine ac was first seen by the front seat pilot before it passed very close in front of his ac, about 100ft away at the same level, from R to L. The passenger in the front seat commented that the other ac had had to deviate to avoid a collision before it was seen to turn onto an E'ly heading to their L once passed.

THE PA44 PILOT reports en-route to Germany VFR and in communication with London Information on 124.6MHz squawking 7000 with Modes S and C. The visibility was >10km flying below cloud although in turbulent air in VMC and the ac was coloured white/blue with strobe lights switched on. Cruising at 1400ft QNH heading 100° at 140kt he had opened his flight plan with London Information and was monitoring the frequency. He was on course from the S edge of the Duxford ATZ direct to Felixstowe and planning to route S of Ridgewell glider site [pilot's chart shows planned track passing 1·5nm S of Ridgewell]. Whilst scanning the airspace and watching out for the glider site he spotted an ac more or less head-on, therefore with a small silhouette, in his 11 o'clock at range 2.5km and well below. Shortly afterwards he realised that it could be a climbing glider on a winch launch and it was obvious to him that the glider would stay on his LHS of his flightpath. He turned R about 50° with significant bank to stay clear and increase separation, estimating he passed 100ft above and 900m distant. He assessed the risk as low.

UKAB Note (1): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-1-5 promulgates Ridgewell as a Glider Launching Site centred on 520253N 0003330E where aerotow launches take place and winch launches may be encountered up to 2000ft agl during daylight hours, site elevation 273ft amsl.

UKAB Note (2): The radar recording does not capture the Airprox as the ASK21 glider does not show at all, but the PA44's track can be verified. At 1101:23 the PA44 is seen 3nm W of Ridgewell tracking 090° indicating unverified altitude 1300ft QNH 1015mb. This track is maintained until 1102:25 when the PA44 is seen to commence a R turn when 0·3nm SW of Ridgewell still indicating 1300ft. Six seconds later at 1102:31 the PA44 passes just under 0·4nm S abeam before it then turns L to regain its original track about 1nm E of Ridgewell.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac and radar video recordings.

Although the PA44 pilot had intended to fly S of the glider site, the radar recording clearly shows the ac tracking towards the Ridgewell O/H at altitude 1300ft. Although the ASK21 does not show on the recording, the PA44's R turn away from the glider, as reported, is seen as it passes almost O/H. The PA44's track through the O/H at an altitude below the promulgated winch cable release height placed it into conflict with the launching glider, and this had caused the Airprox. Members could not reconcile the disparate separation distances reported by both pilots. The ASK21 pilot only saw the PA44 as he levelled out towards the top of the launch, estimating it passed 100ft in front from R to L at the same level. Although the PA44 pilot saw the ASK21 at a reasonable distance well below, it was only when he realised that it was on a winch launch that he made a R turn away to increase separation, estimating it passed 100ft below and 900m clear to his L. From the limited information available Members believed that, on the balance of probability, the PA44's sighting and avoidance of the ASK21 had resulted in a separation somewhere between the 2 pilot's estimates; as such, his actions had been effective in removing any risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The PA44 pilot flew over a notified and active glider launching site below the promulgated winch cable release height and into conflict with the ASK21 glider.

Degree of Risk: C.