

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010110

Date/Time: 19 Aug 2010 1507Z

Position: 5239N 00008W (12nm
E RAF WITTERING)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class:G)
Reporting Ac Reporting Ac

Type: HARRIER T12 PA28

Operator: HQ AIR (OPS) Civ Club

Alt/FL: 2000ft NK
RPS (1006mb) QNH (NK)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC NK

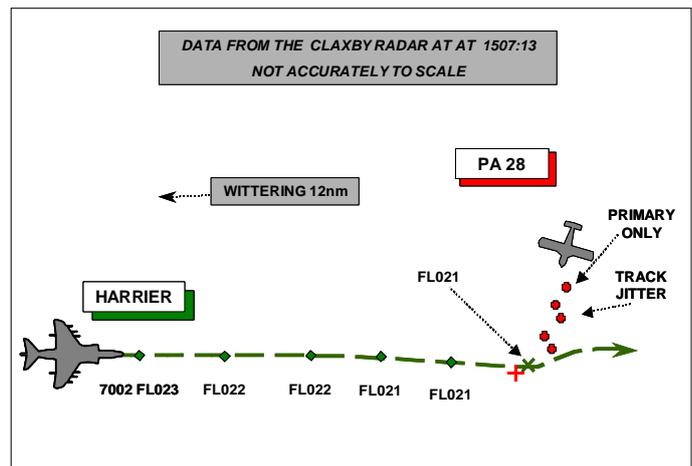
Visibility: 20km NK

Reported Separation:

50ft V/O H Not Seen

Recorded Separation:

NR V/ 0.1nm H (subject to severe track jitter)



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE HARRIER PILOT reports flying a standard transit from RAF Wittering to Holbeach Air Weapons Range with an instructor in the rear seat. On exiting the MATZ heading 091° at 2000ft and 360kt he called "en-route", Cottesmore Departures acknowledged but did not call any conflicting traffic so they switched to the Range frequency but did not check in at that stage. They then accelerated to 420kt, selected a Squawk of 7002 and shortly after had a very close encounter with low-wing civil light ac passing from their left to right at the same alt. The ac was white with a dark lower half, the registration was painted in white and it was first seen 300ft away. He took avoiding action by performing a break manoeuvre up and to the left [behind it] into the clear airspace. The civil ac continued on its previous course throughout, the pilot having apparently not seen them. He assessed the risk as being Medium.

THE PA28 PILOT reports that she was advised by telephone and then email on 6th Oct that she had been involved in an Airprox while on a of a private flight on 19th August. She no longer had the Log for the route, but took the details from her logbook. She took off at 1450 and landed at 1600. She was not given any detail of the flight other than that an incident had occurred as she was departing from Fenland; that being the case she was the handling pilot for that leg of the flight. She has 200 hours flying time and her front-seat passenger has 14000 hrs and rear seat passenger, also a pilot has over 200hrs. The front seat passenger was acting as mentor and was conducting the lookout and monitoring the radio; the rear seat passenger was also looking out.

Prior to leaving Fenland she called Fenland Radio to advise of their departure and continued with them until they transferred to Conington for an overhead transit at 2000ft. The wind was 090/25 and the outbound track from Fenland was planned as 206°. The flight was under VFR in Class G airspace and no other ac was seen or heard. All three POB were unaware of an Airprox or any conflicting traffic. This was a private flight and although the Log was fully completed, it was not retained; hence she cannot be more precise.

UKAB Note (1): The delay in contacting the pilot flying was caused by late and incorrect information being passed to RAC by the registered owners of the ac who lease it to the flying club concerned;

they, in turn, hire it to other users. When she was eventually traced and contacted, the handling pilot responded without delay.

UKAB Note (2): The recording of the Claxby Radar shows the incident. The Harrier can be seen getting airborne from Wittering at about 1504, squawking 3743 with Mode C. At that time a primary only contact, presumed to be the PA28, can be seen just to the SW of Fenland tracking about 220°. After TO the Harrier rolls out on a track of 065° before turning right onto 090° at FL021, changing Squawk to 7002 and tracking directly towards the PA28. The CPA is at 1507:13 when the PA28 is in the Harrier's 11 o'clock at 0.1nm but it suffers from significant track jitter; the Harrier is at FL021 but the PA28 is not squawking. On the next 2 sweeps the Harrier can be seen to have turned hard left and climbing to FL025 before reversing back onto track and descending.

HQ AIR (OPS) comments that it is incumbent on all operating in Class G airspace to maintain a good lookout, especially in congested airspace. It is unclear from the above if the PA28 was equipped with a transponder, the use of which could have prevented this Airprox, as it would have made the PA28 more visible to Cottesmore Departures.

UKAB Note (3): The PA28 pilot reported that she was transponder equipped and was squawking 7000 with Mode C. This cannot be seen on any of the radar recordings available, the ac showing only as a primary contact.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, radar recordings and a report from the Harrier operating authority.

In light of no transponder data from the PA28 being displayed on the radar recording, a Member asked if any had shown on the outbound leg; the radar data, however, does not cover that period so it could not be determined whether or not the PA28's transponder was unserviceable or not switched on.

Members were briefed on the circumstances that led to the lengthy time taken to locate the PA28 pilot.

Both ac had been operating legitimately in Class G airspace and, at the incident time, neither pilot was in receipt of an ATC service to assist them with their 'see and avoid' responsibility. Members were surprised that the PA28 pilot or her passengers had not seen or heard the Harrier, bearing in mind its close proximity when the ac crossed.

Since the incident took place while the PA28 was not squawking and some time after the Harrier left the Wittering APP frequency, Members thought it reasonable that the that the controller did not warn the Harrier crew of the primary contact (the PA28) on leaving the frequency for Holbeach Range. A military pilot Member also suggested that at the time the crew might have been engaged in pre-range checks or instruction and allowed their lookout to have become degraded. The crew did, however, see the PA28, albeit at a distance they estimated as 100m. Had it actually been 100m away and the closing speed was, as reported, 420kt (215 m/sec) the Board agreed that the avoidance 'break' would not have had time to take effect before the ac crossed, as shown on the radar recording. That being the case, Members agreed unanimously that there had been a degradation of normally accepted safety standards.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Non-sighting by the PA28 pilot and a late sighting by the Harrier crew.

Degree of Risk: B.