

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010116

Date/Time: 11 Aug 2010 1231Z

Position: 5203N 00228W (2¼nm NW of Ledbury)

Airspace: UK DLFS/FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Hawk T1 Untraced Glider

Operator: HQ Air (Trg) NK

Alt/FL: 500ft NR
RPS (1006mb)

Weather: VMC NR NR

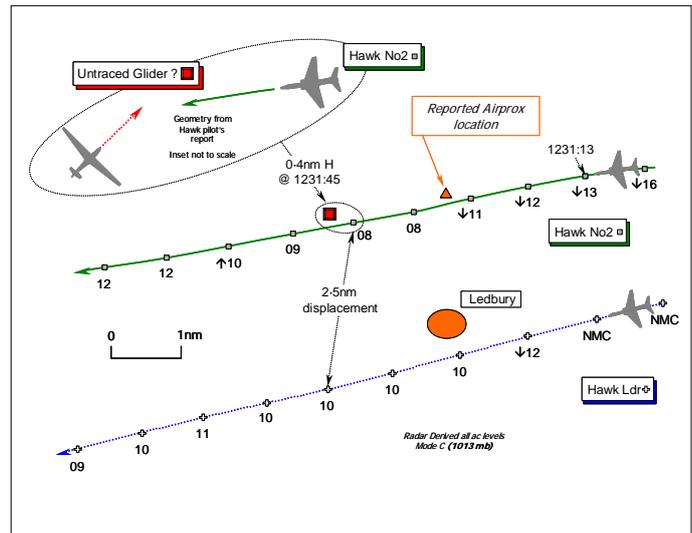
Visibility: 40km NR

Reported Separation:

Nil V/200m H NR

Recorded Separation:

Not recorded



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE BAe HAWK T1 PILOT, a QFI, reports he was the wingman of a pair of Hawks carrying out a dual instructional evasion sortie in LFA 4. They were not in receipt of an ATS but monitoring a discreet frequency. A squawk of A7001 was selected with Mode C on; neither TCAS nor Mode S is fitted. His ac has a black colour-scheme and the white HISLs were on.

Approaching a position 2nm N of Ledbury, heading 260° at an altitude of 500ft RPS (1006mb), a white glider was spotted ½nm directly ahead at 500ft agl crossing from L - R. To avoid the glider a breaking turn to the L was initiated, the glider passing 200m away at the same altitude with a 'medium' Risk of collision.

LATCC (Mil) RADAR ANALYSIS CELL reports that a single primary radar contact, without any supporting SSR, 'pops up' on radar 2¼nm NW of Ledbury, in the vicinity of the reported Airprox location [2nm N of Ledbury] but the absence of a continuous radar contact has inhibited tracing action of the reported glider. Despite contacting all glider sites in the area surrounding the Airprox, the identity of the glider remains unknown.

UKAB Note (1): This Airprox is not illustrated clearly on the LATCC (Mil) Clee Hill Radar recording. The Hawk formation is shown approaching the reported Airprox location at 1231:13, the No2 - the most northerly of the pair squawking A7001 - descending through 1300ft unverified Mode C (1013mb) – equating to about 1090ft RPS (1006mb). The Hawk pair maintained a continuous descent on a W'ly course in wide battle formation at a track displacement of about 2½nm. The reported glider is not evident at all until 1231:45, when a single primary contact that might or might not be the reported glider is shown for one sweep only in the No2's 1 o'clock at a range of 0.4nm, the latter indicating 800ft Mode C – about 590ft RPS. A climb is evident thereafter by the No2 that ascends to 1200ft Mode C, but the breaking L turn is not apparent. No further radar contacts which might be associated with the reported glider are evident at close quarters in this vicinity.

HQ AIR (TRG) comments that the No2 Hawk pilot took sensible avoiding action upon sighting a confliction in class G airspace. Whilst an earlier sighting, or a climb, might have produced a more comfortable miss distance, gliders are notoriously difficult to see at the best of times so this is a case where the see-and-avoid principle worked as well as could be expected. LFA 4 is a busy area which

demands the greatest care and vigilance to navigate and this report serves as a reminder of the importance of a rigorous lookout procedure.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included a report solely from the No 2 Hawk pilot, radar video recordings and comment from the appropriate operating authority.

The Board was briefed that a Y Series (LFS) NOTAM had been issued for LFA 4 located some 5nm to the E, but this warning referred to a para-gliding activity. The BGA Member suggested that during August, in the middle of the day, it is highly possible the reported ac was a motor glider on a cross country or a glider from a gliding site some distance away elsewhere. Such flights can roam far afield; however, when encountered at 500ft agl, especially in this terrain, it could be that it was a motor glider, or glider, executing a landing away from base, but it was an unusual height to encounter an unpowered ac. More probably at 500ft agl, it was a motor-glider or a microlight operating independently from local sites the Member added. It was unfortunate that the reported ac could not be traced and without the other pilot's account the Board could only assess this Airprox, rather unsatisfactorily, on the basis of the No2 Hawk pilot's report.

Whatever the other ac was, the No2 Hawk pilot saw it first from a range of ½nm, directly ahead. Certainly any ac is more difficult to see when approaching almost head-on, but white gliders with a small frontal cross-sectional area, possibly against a cloudscape, without any other additional aids such as HISLs to their improve their conspicuity, can be more challenging to spot. Nevertheless, the see-and-avoid principle appears to have worked as well as could be expected in these circumstances and, although the sighting range was not ideal, the other ac was seen in sufficient time to enable the No2 Hawk pilot to take effective avoiding action. Based on his account, the Hawk pilot was able to remain 200m clear of the other ac; moreover, the radar recording also evinced a climb in the vicinity. The Board could only conclude therefore, on the basis of the limited information available, that this Airprox was the result of a conflict in Class G airspace resolved by the No2 Hawk pilot and that the avoiding action taken was effective in ameliorating the Risk of a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Conflict in Class G airspace resolved by the No2 Hawk pilot.

Degree of Risk: C.