

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010125

Date/Time: 2 Sep 2010 (Thursday) 1555Z

Position: 5404N 00102W (7nm E Linton on Ouse)

Airspace: Vale of York AIAA(Class: G)

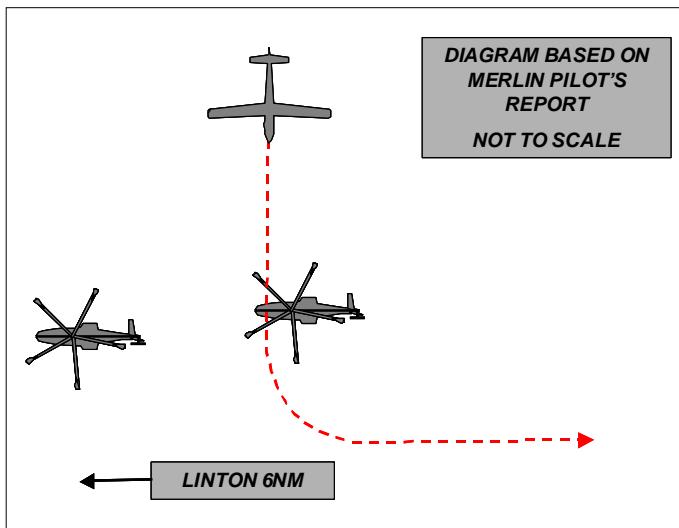
Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Merlin HC3 Glider

Operator: HQ JHC NK

Alt/FL: 2000ft NK
(QNH 1020mb)

Weather: VMC CLBC NK
Visibility: 50km NK



Reported Separation:

100ft V/150 m H NK

Recorded Separation:

NK

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE MERLIN HC3 PILOT reports that he was flying as No2 in a pair of green helicopters on recovery to Linton on Ouse, squawking 7000 with Mode C but, although the ac was fully lit, TCAS was not fitted. They were listening out on Linton APP, heading 270° at 2000ft agl and flying at 120kt, when the crewman observed a glider 100m away, pass approximately 100 ft above their ac and 150m to their right. The glider was tracking from N to S and turned onto E just after the ac crossed. They were unable to take any avoiding action as the ac had crossed before there was time to react but reported the incident immediately to Linton APP and their ac was recovered with no further incident.

They assessed the risk as being high.

Despite extensive procedural tracing action, the glider could not be traced.

MIL ACC reports that during a visual recovery to RAF Linton on Ouse, a formation of Merlin HC3s, declared an Airprox against an unknown glider operating 6nm to the E of Linton. The APP Controller reported that the glider was not displayed on the Watchman Radar and therefore he was unable to provide any TI. Consequently, there is no ATM aspect to this incident.

This is a further example of an ac operating without a transponder in busy airspace, which has negated the available safety measures.

UKAB Note (1): The Merlins show clearly on the radar recordings but the glider does not show at any time.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the Merlin pilot, a radar recording, reports from the air traffic controller involved and reports from the appropriate ATC authorities.

Members noted that both ac had been operating legitimately in Class G airspace where see and avoid is the principal method of collision avoidance; they agreed however, that gliders can be very hard to detect visually, especially when head-on, at a similar altitude and not manoeuvring.

An experienced Gliding Member opined that the glider pilot would have both seen and heard the helicopters but, he believed one possible explanation for his not reporting the incident might be that the miss-distance had been slightly larger than estimated by the Merlin crew and therefore he had not considered it to be abnormal for glider operations.

This incident provided another example that if gliders are not fitted with SSR they usually do not paint on radar and therefore controllers are not able to warn or vector other ac round them.

Without in any way doubting the accuracy of the Merlin crewman's estimate of the separation, without a report from the glider pilot about what he saw or radar verification, Members agreed that they could not positively determine the degree of risk.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Effectively a non-sighting by the Merlin crew and a possible non-sighting by the glider pilot.

Degree of Risk: D.