

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010126

Date/Time: 1 Sep 2010 1701Z

Position: 5221N 00001W
(3nm E Wyton)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: MD902 Beagle Pup

Operator: Civ Com Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 1300ft 1700ft
(QFE 1014mb) (QNH)

Weather: VMC CAVOK VMC CAVOK

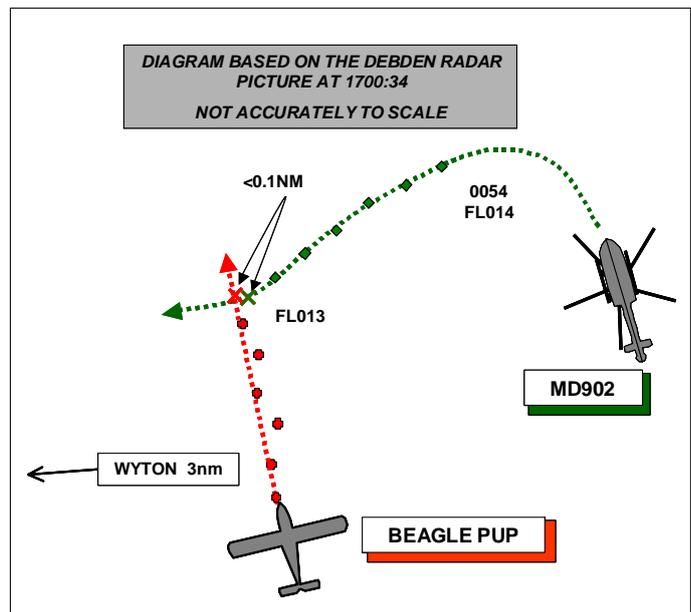
Visibility: NR Good

Reported Separation:

300ft V 400-500ft V/O H

Recorded Separation:

NR V/ <0.1nm H



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE MD902 PILOT reports flying a blue and yellow helicopter with all lights switched on, on a training flight with the PF in the right seat conducting IF training and the captain in the left seat responsible for the lookout. They were squawking 0054 [county police] with Mode C, in receipt of a BS from Wyton APP and he had been head-in briefly to change frequency. They were heading 260° at 100kt, at about 1300ft QFE passing 3nm on the final descent of a GPS letdown into RAF Wyton when he saw a low-wing, dark-coloured, single-engine ac ½nm away and 300ft above crossing from left to right. He advised the PF who descended the helicopter rapidly to increase separation but they could not assess the separation or risk. TCAS was fitted but no alert was displayed.

THE BEAGLE PUP PILOT reports he is an experienced GA pilot and was informed of the incident 8 weeks after the event, but did not consider that there had been any danger and therefore did not report it; as a result his recollection of events is not clear.

He was flying alone in a black ac with nav-lights switched on in good weather and was not using GPS but was squawking 7000 with Mode C. He left Popham at 1650 en-route to Fenland via Booker, BNN, BPK, BKY and from there routed to a point just to the W of Fowlmere, which gave him a straight course to Fenland avoiding any controlled airspace, restricted areas or airfields. He thought that the incident had occurred at about 1700, just after passing abeam Cambridge, at 1700ft, heading 355° at 85kt and that the reporting MD902 had been flying at about 1700ft amsl. At that time he was listening out with London Info and there was little other aerial activity. He saw something to his right a few miles ahead and as he closed he recognised it as a black helicopter, he thought, circling. When the ac was in his 2 o'clock position it took up a South Westerly track towards him, passing he estimated 400-500ft below. Once it had passed he gave the matter no further thought until the chairman of his flying group contacted him well after the flight.

He kept the helicopter visual for the entire period ensuring that there was no risk/danger whatsoever and there had been no need for him to take avoiding action; he thought that the other pilot had also seen his ac.

At the time of the 'incident', the visibility to the E was good, to the N fair and to the W poor due to the setting sun.

UKAB Note (1): The incident shows on the recording of the Debden radar. The MD902 is squawking 0054 with Mode C and the Beagle 7000, but with no Mode C. At the start of the recording at 1658:40 both ac are tracking 355°, the MD902 indicating FL014, is in the Beagle's 0130 at 2nm. At 1659:30 the MD902, still at FL014, turns left onto a track of 260° to cross the Beagle's track, from L to R, as it intercepts the centreline of RW26 at about 5nm; it flies slightly through the centreline and closes it from the N as the Beagle continues on 355°. It continues to close with the Beagle and at 1700:38 passes less than 0.1nm behind it having descended by 100ft; the ac then diverge.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

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

The Board noted that both ac were operating legitimately in Class G airspace where the pilots shared an equal responsibility to see and avoid other ac. Under the Rules of the Air the Beagle Pup should have given way to the MD902 since, at least initially, it was on his right but the (Beagle Pup) pilot considered that no avoidance was required due to the significant altitude difference between the two ac. Although Members accepted this, they observed that the MD902 crew had no way of knowing that the Pup pilot had seen their ac and was content with the vertical separation extant; the Board agreed that a wing waggle or ac manoeuvre by the Pup pilot would have reassured the helicopter crew that they had been seen. Members agreed that by maintaining visual contact with the helicopter throughout, the Beagle Pup pilot had ensured that there was no risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Pilot perceived conflict.

Degree of Risk: C.