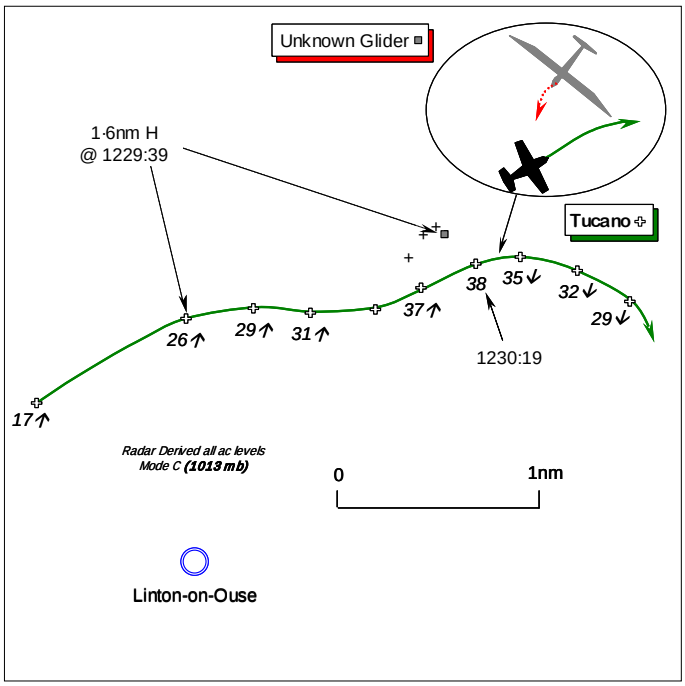
AIRPROX REPORT No 2010117

Date/Time: 27 Aug 2010 1230Z

Position: 5405N 00111W (2nm NE Linton-on-Ouse - elev 53ft)

Airspace: Vale of York AIAA (*Class: G*)

	Reporting Ac	*Reported Ac*
Type:	Tucano	Untraced Glider
Operator:	HQ Air (Trg)	NR
Alt/FL:	3000ft↑ QFE (1012mb)	NR
Weather:	VMC CLBC	NK NK
Visibility:	>10km	NK
Reported Separation:	400ft V/Nil H	NK
Recorded Separation:	Not recorded	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE TUCANO PILOT, a QFI, reports he was conducting an instructional sortie in the vicinity of Linton-on-Ouse. As the PF he was configuring his ac for a simulated stuck throttle exercise at a high power setting whilst in communication with Linton TOWER on 240·825MHz; he was not in receipt of an ATS. Wide downwind, climbing wings level through 3000ft QFE, heading E 3nm NE of the aerodrome, he became aware of a white glider orbiting near the cloudbase about 400ft above him. The glider was approaching from his 11o'clock in a shallow L turn and to avoid it he bunted his ac to 'negate their closure' as the glider passed about 400ft above with a 'medium' Risk of collision. No discernible avoiding action was taken by the glider pilot. He stressed that he was working under a reasonably high workload at this point of the sortie as care was needed not to overspeed the landing gear and flaps, which were set to full.

His aeroplane has a black colour-scheme; the HISLs and taxying lamp were on.

UKAB Note (1): The time of the Airprox was originally specified by the reporting pilot as 1420UTC. The Station and the Tucano pilot were aware of a gliding competition taking place and a competition was NOTAM'd from Pocklington on this day with 50 gliders participating. An Airprox report was also obtained from a Schleicher ASW 22 glider pilot who was identified in the vicinity at 1420UTC but had not seen the Tucano. However, examination of the radar recording for this time period subsequently revealed the reported Airprox timing was incorrect. The launch and recovery times for the subject Tucano were ascertained from Linton-on-Ouse as 1139UTC and 1239UTC respectively, the Schleicher ASW 22 glider discounted and no other identified, consequently, the reported glider pilot remains untraced.

At 1229:39, the Tucano is shown squawking A4501 passing 1·3nm N of the aerodrome whilst turning R downwind passing 2600ft Mode C (1013mb) in a steady climb. An unidentified primary contact, which might or might not be the reported glider, is shown manoeuvring in the Tucano's 12 o'clock at a range of 1·6nm. The Tucano steadies easterly at 1229:55, while climbing through 3100ft Mode C before the Mode C indication is lost for one sweep and the Tucano reverses L; at the same time the primary contact of the glider fades and is not evident at all thereafter. The Tucano ascends above the MATZ to a maximum indicated level of 3800ft Mode C – about 3710ft QFE (1010mb) – at 1230:19, in a position 2·1nm NE of the aerodrome which is perceived to be the point that the Airprox

occurred in Class G airspace. On the next sweep the Tucano indicates a descent through 3500ft Mode C, which is perhaps indicative of the reported avoiding action 'bunt', before descending steadily through 3200ft whilst turning R.

HQ 1GP BM SM reports that for a variety of reasons, no reports or tape transcripts have been provided by the ATSU, which has impacted on the ability of this Command to investigate this Airprox. A recent interview with the ADC about this Airprox has been unable to shed any light on the occurrence. The ADC is an experienced and reliable controller who states that no mention was made of the Airprox on the frequency, nor that there was anything untoward during the period.

It is possible that the reported glider did not appear on the Hi-Brite ATM, as there was another Airprox at Linton-on-Ouse 6 days later when the reported glider was not displayed on the ATM. Alternatively, with the glider operating at around 3400ft, it is more possible that the glider would have been lost in the radar overhead.

Whilst acknowledging that the Airprox occurred in Class G airspace, given the nature and volume of activity at Linton, planning to route over the MATZ in a non-transponding ac and without establishing RT contact with ATC peels away the barriers to an occurrence, leaving only 'see and avoid'.

HQ AIR (TRG) agrees with the observation of HQ 1GP BM SM on the actions, or rather the omissions of the glider in this case. The only additional mitigation for the Tucano pilot would have been to ask for a radar service outside of the MATZ but this would have been impractical for several reasons. Indeed, it is unlikely that this would have highlighted the presence of the glider in any case. This incident highlights again the hazards of non-transponding aircraft operating in the vicinity of known high concentrations of traffic without talking to appropriate agencies to warn of their presence. Despite the best efforts of the Board it has proved impossible to trace the glider operator to understand his side of the incident.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included a report solely from the Tucano pilot, radar video recordings, and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The investigation of this Airprox had proven somewhat problematic and the Board noted the unavailability of the ATC RT recording and controller's report, upon which HQ 1Gp BM SM had commented. Moreover, the absence of a report from the glider pilot, who remained untraced, naturally led to an incomplete analysis of the Airprox, which the Board could only assess on the basis of the Tucano pilot's report and the extremely limited recorded radar data.

The Station and the Tucano pilot were aware of a gliding competition taking place and Controller Members noted the comment by HQ 1 Gp BM SM about the lack of RT contact with gliders flying in the vicinity of military aerodromes. Good airmanship would suggest that it was desirable for glider pilots operating nearby to establish RT contact with an aerodrome's ATSU to notify them of their presence and to advise their intentions, which might thereby facilitate mutual warnings about military ac operating from the aerodrome and the glider itself. However, when competitions involving 40-60 gliders were involved controller Members were concerned at the potential to overload RT channels and the controller himself, who might have other higher priority tasks, so a balance had to be struck between information useful to controllers/other pilots and overloading ATC. Whilst acknowledging that any information was better than none, the Board recognised there was no compunction on glider pilots to call ATC when operating VFR under see and avoid and not all glider pilots have RT licences. In the absence of any recorded RT or input from Linton ATC, it was not evident if any glider pilots had called Linton APPROACH (APP). The Tucano pilot was not in receipt of a radar service whilst operating above the MATZ up to 3700ft aal more than 2nm away from the aerodrome, however, it was likely that TOWER would have liaised with APP beforehand. Thus if any glider pilots were in contact with APP on RT or evident on radar it could well have prompted a warning through TOWER

to the Tucano pilot, but gliders are notoriously difficult to detect on primary radar and the lack of an SSR transponder makes them even less conspicuous to the controller.

A civilian controller Member emphasised, and the Board recognised, that both pilots were operating in Class G airspace above the Linton MATZ and embedded ATZ where see and avoid prevails and freedom of operation in accordance with the Rules of the Air is entirely axiomatic. Some suggested that this was a late sighting by the Tucano pilot, but then other Members contended that he had probably seen the glider as early as he could reasonably have been expected to do so. The HQ Air pilot Member concurred that the glider had been seen in sufficient time for the Tucano pilot to avoid the glider and, in his view, this was not a close encounter. The Tucano pilot reports he was able to clear 400ft below the glider after he had bunted his ac in avoidance. Moreover, the radar recording also confirmed the rapid descent in the vicinity of where the Airprox occurred. On the basis of the limited information available, the Board could only conclude that this Airprox was the result of a Sighting Report by the Tucano pilot and that the prompt avoiding action taken was entirely effective in removing any Risk of a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Sighting Report.

Degree of Risk: C.