

AIRPROX REPORT No 2012011

Date/Time: 1 Feb 2012 1134Z

Position: 5318N 00144W (O/H Camphill
G/S - elev 1350ft)

Airspace: LFIR (Class: G)
Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: ASK13 A109

Operator: Civ Club Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 100ft↑ 500ft
QFE agl

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC NR

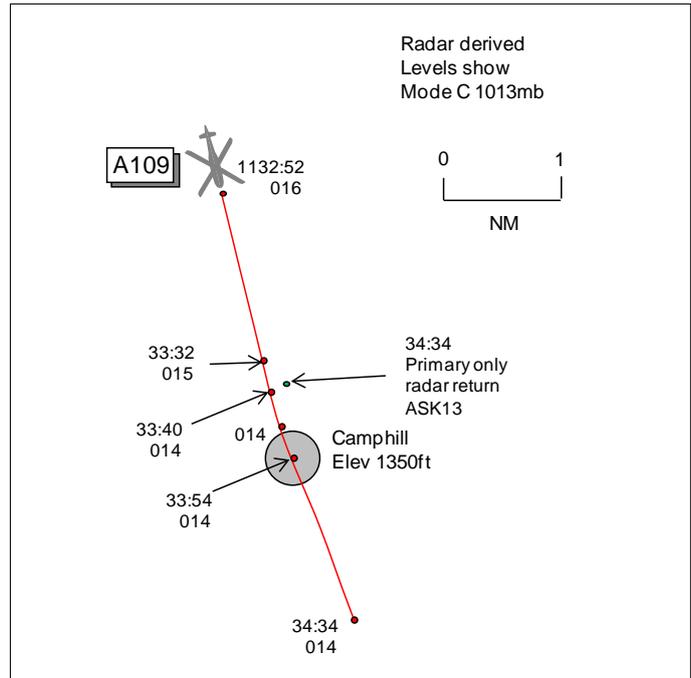
Visibility: >50km 10km

Reported Separation:

400ft V Not seen

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE ASK13 PILOT reports flying a dual training sortie from Camphill and in communication with Camphill Radio on 129.975MHz; no transponder was fitted. The visibility was >50km below 4-5/8 cloud base of 1500ft with a moderate/fresh E'ly wind and the ac was coloured white/orange. He was the Duty Instructor seated in the front seat and about to take-off to the N to carry out some instructor training when they heard and saw a helicopter ahead. The red coloured helicopter was fairly large with a single main rotor with a flat underside and retractable undercarriage. It flew S along the W facing slope at the W edge of the airfield at an estimated height of 500ft. As it passed the windsock the helicopter turned 15°L and flew directly O/H the winch launch point. At the time, they had just commenced a launch heading 360°, which they chose to continue since the helicopter was passing 400ft O/H just as they left the ground climbing through 100ft QFE at 55kt. They did have the option of releasing the cable and abandoning the launch if they were going to climb into the path of the helicopter. They felt some turbulence from the wake during the launch but nothing excessive. He assessed the risk as low. If they had launched 30sec to 1min earlier then the helicopter would almost certainly have flown into the winch cable (about 4mm diameter and thus invisible to passing ac) with catastrophic consequences.

THE A109 PILOT reports en-route to Shoreham from a private site near Skipton and was not in communication with any ATSU, he thought, [see ATSI report] squawking with Modes S and C. The visibility was 10km in VMC and the helicopter was coloured burgundy with nav lights switched on. Cruising at 500ft at 140kt, he was heading S flying into sun on a route he flew regularly. He did not see the glider reported to him by RAC Mil and considered that he may have unintentionally flown close to Camphill glider site. He noted how difficult gliders are to see and opined that there are so many sites around and they are poorly marked on the UK 1:500000 maps. In future he intended highlighting all glider sites on his regular routes. He normally flies high or low past glider sites and avoids the cloud base level where gliders can often be found.

ATSI reports the Airprox occurred at 1133:45, O/H Camphill Gliding Site, within Class G airspace, between a Schleicher ASK13 glider and an Augusta A109 helicopter.

The ASK13 flight was commencing a winch-cable launch from Camphill Gliding Site and in communication with Camphill Radio (A/G), but not in receipt of an Air Traffic Control (ATC) Service.

The A109 flight was operating VFR, on a flight from Skipton (private site) to Shoreham and, having just called East Midlands Radar, was in the process of being identified, prior to the agreement of a BS.

Camphill Gliding Site is marked clearly on UK Topographical Air Charts and is listed in the UK AIP ENR 5-5-1-1 (5 May 11) as a Glider Launching Site, centred on 531818N 0014353W, by winch/ground Tow with a vertical limit of 2000ft agl (elevation 1350ft), operating from sunrise to sunset.

CAA ATSI had access to RT from East Midlands Radar and area radar recordings together with written reports from both pilots. The weather provided is for Birmingham and East Midlands Airport.

METAR EGBB 011120Z 04011KT CAVOK 01/M03 Q1035=
METAR EGNX 011120Z 05013KT 9999 FEW020 02/M03 Q1036=

At 1132:50 the A109 pilot contacted East Midlands Radar, reporting 30nm NW of East Midlands, squawking 7000, at 2000ft on QNH 1036. The radar recording shows the A109, squawking 7000, 2.3nm NNW of Camphill, tracking 170° towards the O/H and indicating FL016 (2220ft QNH 1036hPa, 1hPa = 27ft). At 1133:20 the A109 pilot is asked to squawk 4555 and, at 1133:40, the radar recording shows the A109 transponder code change to 4555 with the helicopter 0.6nm NNW Camphill, indicating FL014 (2020ft QNH 1036hPa). Sixteen seconds later the A109 passes O/H Camphill, now tracking 160° and still showing FL014 (2020ft QNH) approximately 650ft aal.

At 1134:34, the radar recording shows the A109, 1.5nm SSE of Camphill and also shows a primary contact appear 0.6nm N of Camphill. This is believed to be the ASK13 glider departing after the winch-launch.

At 1136.40, the controller identified the A109 25nm NW of East Midlands and a BS was agreed. The A109 pilot was asked to report approaching Derby. The East Midlands controller was not aware of the Airprox and no RT reports were received from the A109 pilot regarding gliding activity.

The A109 pilot contacted East Midlands Radar as it approached Camphill Gliding site. It was only after the Airprox had occurred that the controller was able to identify the A109 and agree a BS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC authorities.

Members were clear that this incident could have been averted through thorough pre-flight planning by the A109 pilot. Route planning using the 1:500000 topographical chart should reveal any airspace hazard that may affect transit through an area, including glider sites. Camphill is marked clearly on the 1:250000 and 1:500000 charts with the site elevation and maximum altitude to which gliders can be encountered on the winch cable. It was unclear whether the A109 pilot was using an on-board navigation system/moving map in flight, the database of which may not show glider launching sites. Pilot Members opined that in transiting at low level, the A109 pilot was not giving himself much time to visually identify ground features, there being high ground to the NW of Camphill with the site situated on the edge of a W facing escarpment and valley. It is the responsibility of pilots to take due regard of airspace hazards and to ensure that any avoidance is taken by a suitable margin. In this case, the A109 pilot flew O/H the promulgated and active Camphill glider launching site below the maximum height of the winch cable and into conflict with the ASK13 which he did not see, causing the Airprox. Because of the helicopter's speed, the GA/gliding Member thought that it would have been difficult for the launch party to have detected the approaching A109 in time before the winch launch sequence had commenced. Fortunately the ASK13 pilot had heard and seen the approaching A109 and had quickly assessed that the launch could continue as there was the option

to abort if circumstances changed. As it was, the A109 passed an estimated 400ft above the ASK13 as it climbed through 100ft just after take-off. Members agreed with the ASK13 pilot that there was the potential for a more serious incident if the helicopter had arrived O/H slightly later with the possibility of encountering the glider towards the top of its launch attached to the winch cable. However, in this case, although the ASK13 passed unsighted to the A109 pilot, the early sighting of the helicopter and subsequent actions taken by the glider pilot were enough to persuade the Board that any risk of collision had been effectively removed.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The A109 pilot flew O/H a promulgated and active glider launching site below the maximum height of the winch cable and into conflict with the ASK13, which he did not see.

Degree of Risk: C.