

AIRPROX REPORT No 2012089

Date/Time: 30 Jun 2012 1350Z (Saturday)

Position: 5210N 00007W
(O/H Gransden Lodge
Airfield - elev 254ft)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Puchacz Glider Piper Arrow

Operator: Civ Club Civ Trg

Alt/FL: 1800ft 2300ft
(QFE NR) Lon QNH
(1008hPa)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLBC

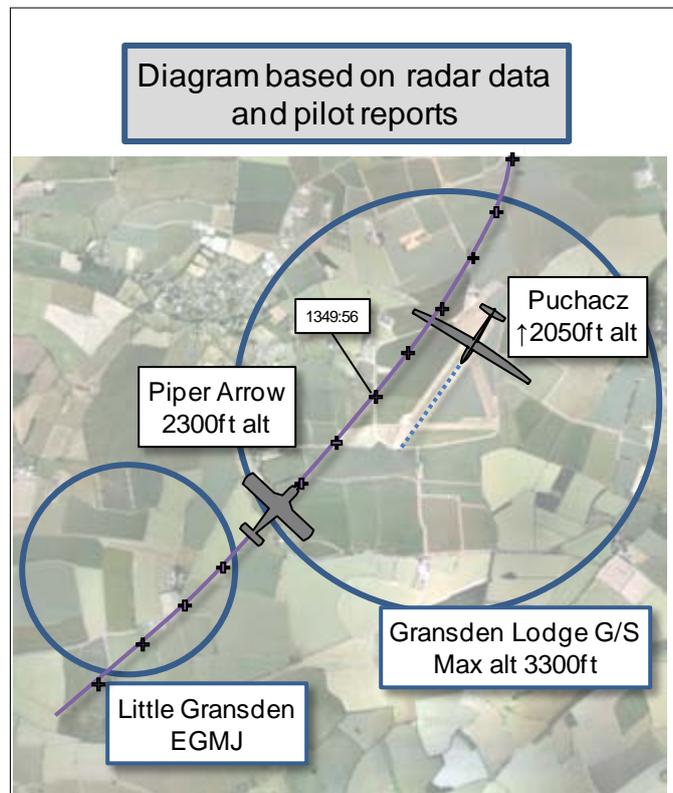
Visibility: >10km >10km

Reported Separation:

150ft V/100m H Not seen

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE PUCHACZ GLIDER PILOT reports carrying out a winch launch from Gransden Lodge G/S RW22 in a white glider with no external lighting. The ac was not fitted with a transponder or FLARM. He stated that about half way up the launch, heading 220° at 55kts, he saw a blue/grey low-wing single engine, propeller driven, light ac, on an exactly reciprocal heading, displaced slightly to the R and slightly above. At the top of the launch [height 1800ft, QFE NR] he assessed his separation as 100-200ft below and 100m horizontally displaced to the L of the conflicting ac, which did not deviate in heading or height.

[UKAB Note(1): Gransden Lodge is promulgated in the UK AIP (ENR 5-5-1-2) as a Glider Launching Site, operating during daylight hours, at which aero-tows take place and winch launches may be encountered up to 3000ft agl].

He also reported that the winch driver had seen the conflicting ac through the roof windscreen during the latter stages of the launch and had identified it as a low wing, single engine, propeller driven ac, possibly a red Piper, tracking NE, almost directly O/H, slightly NW of the RW22 C/L.

The Puchacz pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'Low', stating that he had seen the other ac early enough to have taken avoiding action should that have been necessary. However, he also stated that if the conflicting ac had been 100ft lower and not displaced to one side he probably would not have seen it behind the nose, as the glider has a pitch attitude of some 40° nose-up during winch launch.

THE PIPER ARROW PILOT reports carrying out an instructional navigation exercise in a white ac with a blue fuselage stripe. Navigation lights and strobes were selected on, as was the SSR transponder with modes 3/A and C. The ac was not fitted with Mode S or TCAS. The pilot (PNF) was sitting in the RHS with the student (PF) in the LHS and another student observing from the rear.

Approaching a planned TP at Little Gransden [approximately 2nm SW of Gransden Lodge G/S], heading 045° at 120kts, all three occupants were focused outside the ac in order to identify the TP and to maintain a visual scan for possible traffic from the gliding site at Gransden Lodge. The A/G Station at Little Gransden had also been informed of their presence.

Neither the instructor nor students recalled seeing an ac in the area of Little Gransden. The pilot expressed the opinion that as the reporting ac was below them, and they were flying a low wing ac, that may have contributed to the non-sighting.

[UKAB Note (2): The Cambridge METAR was reported as:

EGSC 301350Z 21013KT 160V240 9999 SCT030TCU 20/12 Q1007].

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

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

The Board established that both pilots had an equal and shared responsibility to see but that the Piper Arrow pilot had responsibility to avoid iaw Rule 9 of the RoA.

[UKAB Note (3): RoA 2007, Rule 9 'Converging' states:

- (1) Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3) and to rules 10 and 11, aircraft in the air shall give way to other, converging aircraft as follows—
 - (a) flying machines shall give way to airships, gliders and balloons;
 - (b) airships shall give way to gliders and balloons;
 - (c) gliders shall give way to balloons.
- (2) Mechanically driven aircraft shall give way to aircraft which are towing other aircraft or objects.
- (3) Subject to paragraphs (1) and (2), when two aircraft are converging in the air at approximately the same altitude, the aircraft which has the other on its right shall give way.]

Despite the glider pilot's confidence that he could have taken avoiding action, the Gliding Member opined that this is frequently not practical during the winch launch phase and could have resulted in substantially increased risk to the glider pilot, for example by releasing early.

Members agreed that Little Gransden A/D was a poor selection of TP by the Arrow pilot. Little Gransden A/D is a relatively insignificant ground feature when compared with Gransden Lodge G/S and it would appear from the radar recording that the Arrow pilot had indeed misidentified the TP and started the L turn on to W at Gransden Lodge G/S. Additionally, the selection of a cruising altitude of 2300ft was a poor choice by the Arrow pilot in that only a slightly late turn on the planned track would result in flight into a notified glider site with a maximum winch launch altitude of 3300ft.

Notwithstanding these factors, the Board were content that in this incident the glider was only ever going to attain a maximum height of 1800ft [altitude 2050ft] and as such there was no risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The Piper Arrow pilot flew overhead a promulgated and active glider site, below the vertical limit of the winch launch, and into conflict with the launching Puchacz glider, which he did not see.

Degree of Risk: C.