

AIRPROX REPORT No 2012171

Date/Time: 6 Dec 2012 1417Z

Position: 5226N 00009W
(Upwood G/S - elev 75ft)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporter: Duty Instructor

1st Ac ASK13
2nd Ac Hughes MD500

Operator: Civ Club Civ Trg

Alt/FL: 700ft↑ 800-1000ft
QFE (NR) QNH (NR)

Weather: VMC CAVOK VMC NR

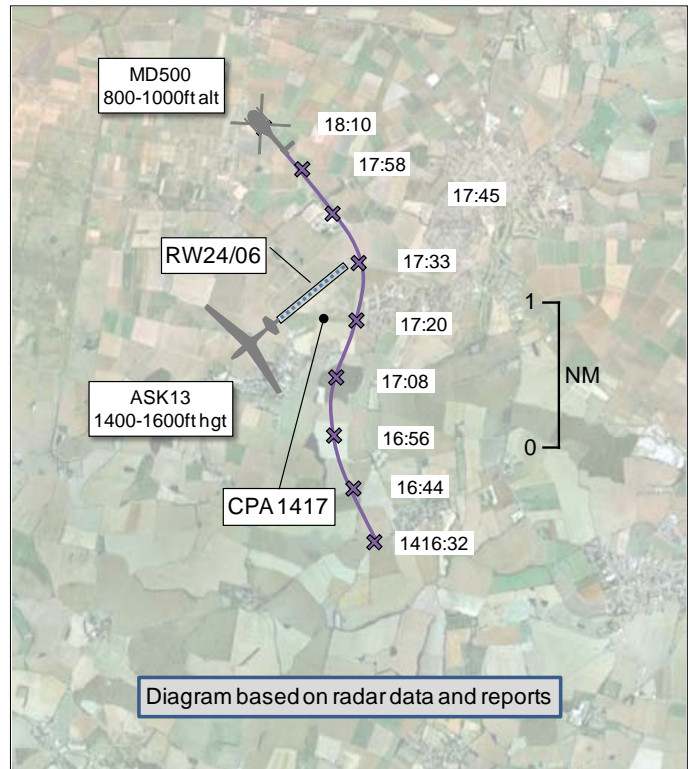
Visibility: 25km 10km

Reported Separation:

500ft V/0.5nm H NR

Recorded Separation:

NR



GLIDER LAUNCH PARTY REPORTED

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE GLIDER CLUB DUTY INSTRUCTOR reports that an Airprox occurred during an ASK13 glider winch launch. The glider pilot was operating under VFR in VMC from RW24 at Upwood. The red and silver glider was not fitted with external lights, an SSR transponder an ACAS or RT equipment. As the glider reached a height of around 700ft, a helicopter was observed at a range of 2nm, converging from the S, straight and level at about 800-1000ft and heading approximately 350°. The helicopter intruded upon the 'restricted airspace', cut across the NE and N of the Upwood A/D boundary and passed within 0.5nm of the glider, as it climbed from 1400ft to 1600ft. The glider pilot did not see the helicopter, due to the steep climbing attitude during winch launch, and was unaware of the Airprox until after he had landed.

The Duty Instructor assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE MD500 PILOT reports transiting from a private helipad just S of RAF Wyton, returning to his operating base. He was operating under VFR in VMC with a BS from Wyton APP [134.050MHz]. The black helicopter had strobe and navigation lights selected on, as was the SSR transponder with Modes A and C. The ac was not fitted with an ACAS. In a level climb at 100kt and altitude 800-1000ft [QNH NR], he was visual with Upwood G/S and at 2nm range could see a glider which was 'ready to launch' from the W'ly RWY. Consequently, he changed track to the E to avoid the 'ATZ'. He watched the glider launch and continued his transit.

He assessed that there was no risk of collision.

ATSI reports an Airprox was filed by the gliding club Duty Instructor when, during the winch launch of a Schleicher AS-K 13 (ASK13) glider, a Hughes 369HE (MD500) helicopter was observed to converge with the ASK13 in the vicinity of Upwood.

Background

The ASK13 pilot was not in receipt of an ATS and was in the process of being launched from RW24 at Upwood. The MD500 had departed from a private site S of RAF Wyton for a VFR flight and was in receipt of a BS from Wyton APP [134.050MHz].

ATSI had access to the glider club duty instructor and helicopter pilot reports, recorded area surveillance and transcription of Wyton APP frequency. Meteorological information for Wyton was recorded as follows:

METAR EGUY 061350Z 19010KT CAVOK 01/M03 Q1012 BLU=

Glider Launching Sites are notified in the UK AIP, which states at ENR 1.1.5:

‘5.1 Glider Launching Sites

5.1.1 Glider launching may take place from designated sites which are regarded as aerodromes. The sites are listed at ENR 5.5. Where launching takes place within the Aerodrome Traffic Zone of an aerodrome listed within the AD section, details are also shown at AD 2 and AD 3.

5.1.2 Gliders may be launched by towing aircraft, or by winch and cable or ground tow up to a height of 2000 ft agl. At a few sites the height of 2000 ft may be exceeded (see paragraph 5.3).

5.1.3 Sites are listed primarily to identify hazards to other airspace users and listing does not imply any right for a glider or powered aircraft to use the sites.’

Upwood, situated in Class G uncontrolled airspace 4.8nm N of Wyton (see Figure 1), is listed in ENR 5.5 as follows:

Designation Lateral Limits	Vertical Limits	Remarks Activity Times
Upwood , Cambs (AD) (W) 522612N 0000836W	2000 ft agl	Hours: HJ. Site elevation: 75 ft amsl.

[UKAB Note(1): (W) denotes Winch/Ground Tow launch.]

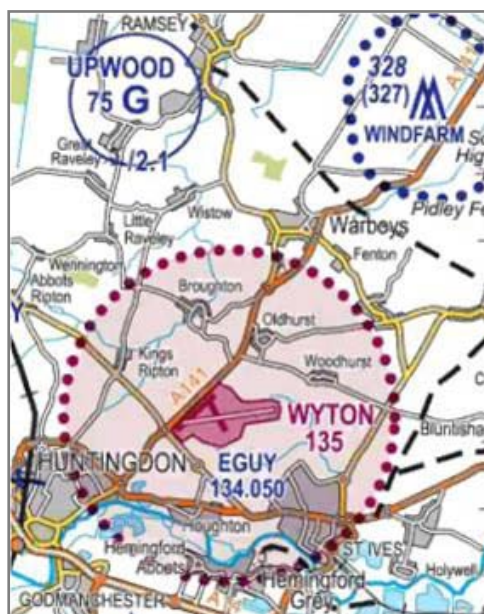


Figure 1: VFR 1:250.000 (2012)

[UKAB Note(2): The 1nm radius circle around a G/S, as shown on VFR charts, does not denote any form of controlled or regulated airspace. Upwood G/S, as shown above in Figure 1, does not have an associated ATZ; the circle is printed only to highlight the presence of the G/S to other airspace users.

UKAB Note(3): A G/S is classified as an A/D in the UK AIP and RoA Rule 12 (Flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome) therefore applies:

... a flying machine, glider or airship flying in the vicinity of what the commander of the aircraft knows, or ought reasonably to know, to be an aerodrome shall conform to the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome or keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern is formed; ...]

Factual History

At 1413:30 the MD500 pilot called Wyton APP, stating that he had just lifted from a site about ¼nm S of Wyton RW27 threshold. Permission was given to transit along the A/D E boundary. Wyton APP informed the MD500 pilot that he would be in receipt of a BS and the Chatham RPS, 1007hPa, was passed.

Swanwick Multi Radar Tracking (MRT) first detected the MD500 at 1413:48, 1.4nm E of Wyton. The MD500 pilot flew on a NW, then NNW track; no Mode C level information was detected. At 1416:00 Wyton APP requested that the MD500 pilot report leaving the frequency. This request was made twice with no reply. Shortly after, at 1416:30, Wyton APP informed another departure that Upwood gliding site was 'now' active. At 1417:40 Wyton APP broadcast that Upwood G/S was notified as active.

Figure 2 below shows the Swanwick MRT surveillance picture at 1417:49; the large cross denotes the Upwood RW06 threshold and the horizontal line shows ½nm range. The MD500 was displaying Mode A code 7000, with no Mode C; the ASK13 was not visible on the surveillance recording. Each track history update represents 4sec in time.

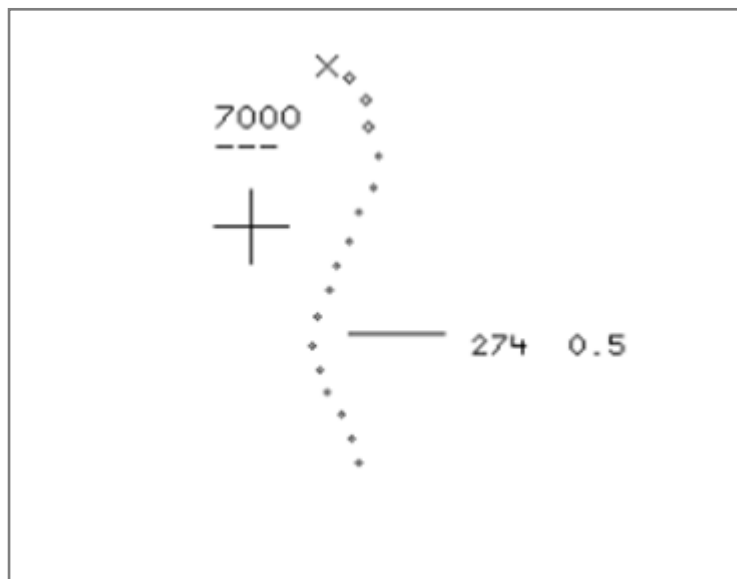


Figure 2: Swanwick MRT 1417:49

The ground reporter's estimate of the MD500's level was given as 800-1000ft above RWY height. The MD500 pilot reported his ac's altitude as 800-1000ft. The ground reporter's account describes the ASK13 as being at 700ft when the MD500 was first observed converging from the S. The MD500 pilot reported observing the ASK13 on the ground, ready for launch.

At 1418:30, Wyton APP called the MD500 pilot using callsign only; he reported 'clear' and thanked Wyton APP for the transit. The MD500 pilot was instructed to free-call en-route.

Analysis

The gliding site at Upwood is notified in the AIP in order to identify it as a hazard to other airspace users. No airspace restrictions exist in the vicinity of Upwood. The radar recording shows that the MD500 was initially on a course to cross the upwind end of RW24. Interpretation of the track history shows that at 1417:09 the MD500 pilot initiated a R turn, less than 1nm from the G/S. This was 31sec before Wyton APP made the general broadcast regarding Upwood activity but subsequent to the first mention of gliding activity on the frequency at 1416:30. The MD500 pilot stated in his report that he was visual with the glider on the ground. This assimilation may have been supplemented by the mention of gliding activity on the frequency in use. It is not known to this investigation whether or not the MD500 pilot's pre-departure route planning had accounted for the possibility of activity at Upwood. The controller's first mention of Upwood indicates that activity had just been notified to Wyton: 'now'.

Under a BS pilots can expect to receive information and advice useful for the safe and efficient conduct of their flight. This may include information such as general airspace activity information. No form of flight path monitoring or TI should be expected under a BS and pilots remain wholly responsible for the avoidance of collision.

Conclusion

An Airprox was reported when an MD500 was observed converging with an ASK13 in the process of being winch launched from Upwood RW24. Surveillance information was insufficient to determine the exact proximity of the two ac. The MD500 pilot, previously on a track to cross the RW06 threshold, was observed to amend his course when within 1nm of the G/S. The MD500 pilot may have amended the ac's course upon hearing reference to gliding activity at Upwood on the frequency in use.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the glider club DI, the helicopter pilot, radar photographs/video recordings and reports from the appropriate ATC authority.

The Board initially considered the actions of the glider pilot and concluded that he was operating normally from a promulgated and active G/S. The glider launch party had seen the helicopter after the winch launch had commenced and had one option available to affect deconfliction, to abort the launch, but with associated high risk to the glider pilot. Turning to the MD500 pilot's actions, pilot Members were unanimous in their opinion that his transit did not appear to take sufficient account of the G/S location. The radar recording showed his intended track crossing the upwind end of RW24 but then deviating to the R when less than 1nm from the G/S, as he saw the glider 'ready to launch'. His subsequent track took him adjacent to the RW24 threshold, which, if an ATZ had existed at Upwood as he thought, would have been well inside it without establishing RT contact prior to entry. Board Members emphasised that he would have been well advised to remain clear of the G/S, and the pattern formed by ac intending to land, on the 'fail-safe' basis that this undemanding plan would have afforded a measure of deconfliction from ac he might not see. The CAA Flt Ops Advisor stated that impact with the steel cable used for winch launching would most likely cause loss of control of a helicopter.

In summary, the Board agreed that the MD500 pilot had been unwise to plan to overfly a promulgated G/S below the maximum altitude of the winch cable, relying for deconfliction on his ability to see any gliders launching or in the circuit pattern. In the event, however, there was only one glider airborne and the MD500 pilot saw it in good time to avoid it by a safe margin but not without causing the launch party concern.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The MD500 pilot flew close enough to a promulgated and active glider site to cause the launch party concern.

Degree of Risk: C.