

## **AIRPROX REPORT No 2013069**

Date/Time: 6 Jul 2013 1202Z (Saturday)

Position: 5047N 00114W  
(2nm SW Lee-on-Solent G/S)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Chipmunk PA24

Operator: Civ Club Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 2220ft 2100ft  
QFE (NK hPa) QNH (1029hPa)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLBC

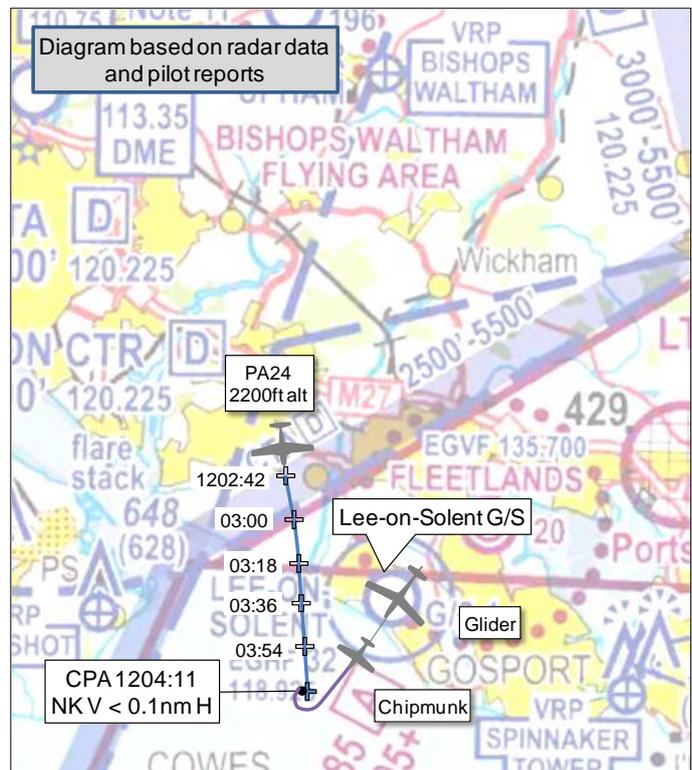
Visibility: 10km >10km

Reported Separation:

15ft V/35ft H 100ft V/75m H

Recorded Separation:

NK V/<0.1nm H



## **PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

**THE CHIPMUNK PILOT** reports glider towing, just a little offshore from Lee-on-Solent A/D. The white and blue aircraft had navigation and landing lights selected on; it was not fitted with an SSR transponder or ACAS. The pilot was operating under VFR in VMC with an A/G Service from 'Lee Radio'. As he was climbing through about 2,200ft he heard another pilot call Lee Radio on RT, pass his details and inform them of his routing intentions; he was just leaving the Southampton zone, passing Calshot and heading E at 2500ft. He thought the pilot may have added that he was inbound to Bembridge. Lee Radio advised him of the runway in use (RW23), the RH circuit direction, and that there was intensive gliding activity in the area. He couldn't recall if Lee Radio stated an aerotow was in progress. The Chipmunk pilot thought initially that the other aircraft was 'a couple of miles' behind him, and potentially at the same height, heading in roughly the same direction. He then heard the other pilot add they were visual with 'the combination'. The glider released about 5-10sec afterwards, at 2500ft, and the Chipmunk pilot immediately made a descending right turn, 'making a specially good lookout', in preparation for a return to the airfield. Visibility had improved through the day, but was hazy, with bright sun, and little cloud. He called directly to the other pilot that the combination had now separated, but that he did not have the other aircraft 'in visual contact'. The other pilot acknowledged. The Chipmunk pilot's intention was for the other pilot to maintain visual contact with him. He completed a 180° turn to the R, maintaining an intensive lookout scan, in the belief that the other aircraft was about 200-300ft above him. Passing 315° at 100kt he suddenly, and without warning, saw a white and blue, low-wing, single-engine aircraft about 30-40 yards in-front, on an almost reciprocal course, about 10-15ft lower and to the RH side. It was travelling slightly towards him and closed as it flashed by, about 1sec after he first saw it. There was no time to react and he did not observe any avoiding action from the other aircraft.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

**THE PA24 PILOT** reports transiting to Sandown, Isle of White, routing via Southampton. He was operating under VFR in VMC with an A/G Service from Lee Radio. The white and maroon aircraft had strobe lights and beacon selected on, as was the SSR transponder with Mode A and C. On contact with Solent he requested zone clearance and a BS but Solent could not accommodate overhead routing so he was routed via Bishops Waltham VRP [Southampton 090°/5.1nm]. On reaching, the controller suggested he contact Lee-on-Solent as their ATZ was busy. Heading 180° at

135kt and level at 2100ft, he called Lee Radio and passed his details. The radio operator acknowledged and informed him there was a lot of traffic and to 'keep a good look out'. He acknowledged and reported that he was in visual contact with a glider and, he thought, a tug over the Solent, near Ryde IOW. He then saw the tug release the glider and turn back towards Lee-on-Solent . A male voice on RT almost immediately said 'I have that plane visual'. He did not hear a call sign but assumed that it was the tug pilot. He didn't remember noticing anything untoward regarding the tug aircraft's approach until it descended rapidly towards him. It looked initially like it was going to pass to his L side, but instead it crossed in front and passed to his R side, still descending. His biggest concern was to avoid the tow cable.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

## Factual Background

The Southampton weather was recorded as follows:

METAR EGBJ 061150Z 19004KT 130V230 9999 FEW032 21/14 Q1029

## Analysis and Investigation

### CAA ATSI

The PA24 pilot was operating on a VFR flight to Sandown, in communication with Lee Radio (A/G), but not in receipt of an ATS. The Chipmunk was operating from Lee-on-Solent under VFR as a glider tug, also in communication with Lee Radio and not in receipt of an ATS. The Chipmunk pilot had released a glider just prior to the incident. Lee-on-Solent is a non-licensed A/D, which is promulgated in the UK AIP ENR 5.5-9 (dated 27 Jun 2013) as a gliding site (Winch and Tow), with an upper limit of 2000ft and site elevation of 32ft amsl. CAA ATSI had access to area and Southampton radar recording together with written reports from both pilots. Lee-on-Solent are not required to record their RTF and consequently no RTF recording was available.

The PA24 pilot had been cleared to transit the Solent CTA, routing via Bishop Waltham. The Solent ATSU reported that he was instructed to contact Lee Radio for traffic information on their busy ATZ. The PA24 pilot's written report indicated that, after passing abeam Bishop Waltham, he contacted Lee Radio and passed his flight details. In response, the A/G operator reported that there was a lot of traffic in the area and suggested that the pilot keep a good lookout. The PA24 pilot indicated he had visual contact with a glider and tug (he thought) which were over the Solent. At 1202:30, radar showed the PA24, 2.7nm NW of Lee-on-Solent with the tug and glider in its half past 12 at a range of 3nm (see Figure 1).

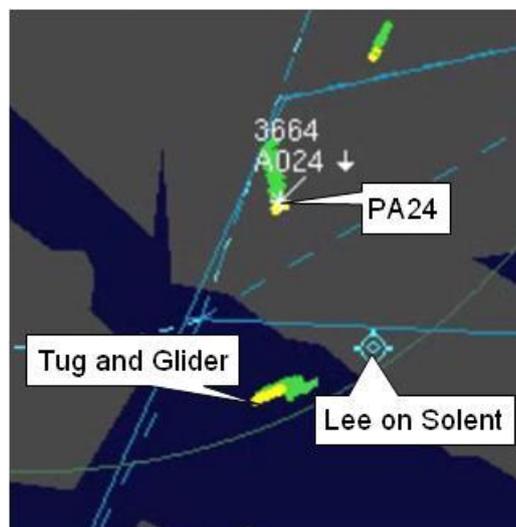


Figure 1 – Southampton radar at 1202:30

The Chipmunk pilot reported being aware of the transit aircraft [the PA24] talking to Lee Radio and of hearing Lee Radio advise the PA24 pilot of intense glider activity in the area. The PA24 pilot indicated that he sighted the Chipmunk release the glider and then observed the Chipmunk turn towards Lee-on-Solent. At 1204:02, radar showed the Chipmunk in the PA24's 12 o'clock at a range of 0.7nm and the glider in its 10 o'clock at 0.5nm (see Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Southampton radar at 1204:02

The PA24 pilot indicated that he heard a transmission, *“I have that plane visual”*, which he presumed was from the Chipmunk pilot. Radar showed the Chipmunk track prior to the incident. The Chipmunk pilot had initially rolled out onto a NE'ly track, followed by a turn onto a NW'ly track as it passed abeam the PA24. At 1204:11, the PA24 and Chipmunk are shown in close proximity as the Chipmunk passed down the RH side of the PA24 (see Figure 3).



Figure 3 – Southampton radar at 1204:11

Both the PA24 and Chipmunk pilots were in communication with Lee Radio, which provided information to the PA24 pilot about the traffic in the area and of intense gliding activity. Neither aircraft were in receipt of an ATS and both pilots were ultimately responsible for their own collision avoidance. CAP774, Chapter 1, Page1, Paragraph 2, states:

‘Within Class F and G airspace, regardless of the service being provided, pilots are ultimately responsible for collision avoidance and terrain clearance, and they should consider service provision to be constrained by the unpredictable nature of this environment.’

## Summary

The incident occurred when a PA24 and Chipmunk came into close proximity whilst operating within Class G airspace and not in receipt of an ATS. The Lee Radio operator provided appropriate information to the PA24 pilot to aid his situation awareness and both pilots were ultimately responsible for their own collision avoidance.

### **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

Information available included reports from the pilots of both aircraft, radar photographs and video recordings and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

The Board first considered the actions of the Chipmunk tug pilot. He had built a mental model of the PA24's position and intentions from the RT and, having just released the glider, he was no doubt intent on returning to Lee-on-Solent. He was satisfied that the PA24 pilot was visual with him but then made 2 flawed assumptions; firstly that the PA24 pilot would maintain visual and therefore the ability to avoid him, and secondly that an immediate R turn would not take him in to conflict, in the belief that the other ac was above him. It transpired that the immediate R turn did not afford the Chipmunk pilot the opportunity to visually acquire the PA24 before CPA and the Board therefore opined that he would have been better served by a more thorough clearing lookout before commencing the turn. Turning to the PA24 pilot, he had seen the glider release from the Chipmunk towing aircraft and hence was visual with both. The Board were unable to ascertain why the PA24 pilot then allowed the Chipmunk to fly into such close proximity and opined that he would have been well advised to change his flight path earlier such that he gave both the glider and tug a wider berth. A gliding member noted that tug aircraft pilots almost invariably make a dynamic manoeuvre after glider release in order to commence expeditious recovery to the launch airfield and therefore that it was always advisable to avoid such a combination by a wide margin.

The Board considered the cause and decided unanimously that the Chipmunk pilot had flown into conflict with the PA24 during his turn back to Lee-on-Solent. Given the reported separation at CPA, the Chipmunk pilot's very late sighting, and the PA24 pilot's concern with avoiding the tow rope, Board members were also unanimous in their opinion that separation had been reduced to the minimum and that chance had played a major part in events.

### **PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK**

<u>Cause:</u>	The Chipmunk pilot turned into conflict with the PA24.
<u>Degree of Risk:</u>	A.
<u>ERC Score:</u>	20 <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although the Event Risk Classification (ERC) trial had been formally terminated for future development at the time of the Board, for data continuity and consistency purposes, Director UKAB and the UKAB Secretariat provided a shadow assessment of ERC.