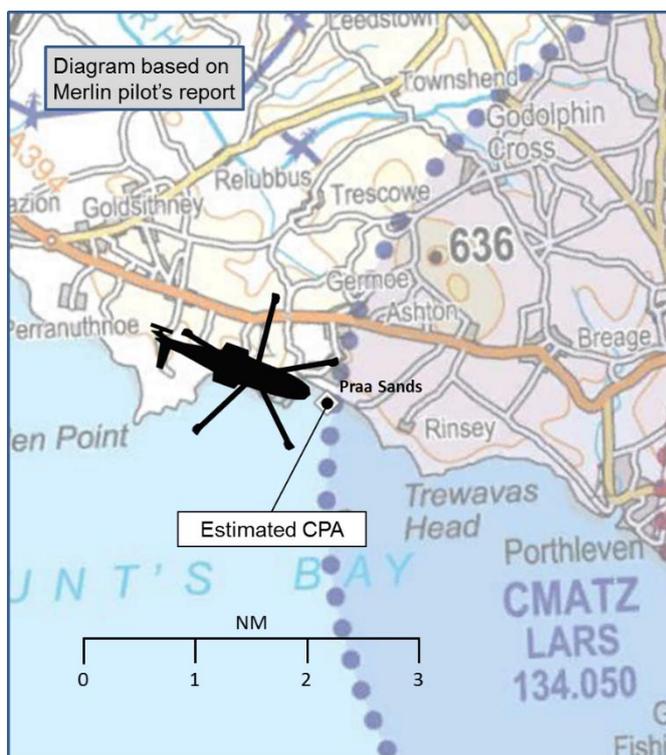


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2014118****Date/Time:** 24 Jul 2014 1140Z**Position:** 5006N 00523W  
(Praa Sands)**Airspace:** London FIR (Class: G)**Aircraft 1**                      **Aircraft 2****Type:** Merlin                      Untraced object**Operator:** RN                      Unknown**Alt/FL:** 550ft                      NK  
QFE (1006hPa)**Conditions:** VMC                      NK**Visibility:** 18km                      NK**Reported Separation:**

50ft V/0m H                      NK V/NK H

**Recorded Separation:**

NK V/NK H

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

**THE MERLIN PILOT** reports flying a grey helicopter with 'standard' navigation and HISLs<sup>1</sup> illuminated and squawking transponder Modes 3A, C and S. The crew were flying under VFR at 550ft agl, in receipt of a Basic Service from Culdrose Tower, heading 110° towards Culdrose, when they saw a cylindrical object silhouetted around 50ft above them and less than 100m away. They could tell that it was not a meteorological or toy balloon, but it was a cylindrical object around the size of a large caravan gas bottle. The crew did not have time to take any avoiding action, and they saw the object pass over their helicopter.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

**THE CYLINDRICAL OBJECT** could not be traced.

**Factual Background**

The weather at Culdrose at 1050 and 1150 was recorded as:

241050Z 08012KT 9999 HZ FEW032 SCT080 BKN120 23/16 Q1016 BLU TEMPO 4000 TSGR SCT012 BKN024CB  
241150Z 08009KT 9999 HZ FEW032CB BKN080 23/17 Q1016 BLU TEMPO 4000 TSGR SCT012 BKN024CB GRN

**Analysis and Investigation****UKAB Secretariat**

Neither the Merlin nor the UAV can be seen on the radar recordings; the Culdrose Tower controller did not see the occurrence. Praa Sands sits just outside the Culdrose MATZ<sup>2</sup> and is in Class G airspace. There is no known model aircraft club based at Praa Sands, but there is a holiday camp close to the beach and it is possible that a UAV or model aircraft was being flown by an individual from around that area.

<sup>1</sup> High Intensity Side Lights

<sup>2</sup> Military Air Traffic Zone

## Comments

### Navy HQ

There is no doubt that Small UAVs (SUAs) represent an increasing hazard to other airspace users, particularly in view of their reducing costs, increasing capability and ease of operation. As such, and recognising the minimal regulation currently applied to them, the RN Operating Duty Holder has “accepted the risk of MAC between a Navy Command aircraft and SUA as ... one of my Top Risks.” He has written to DG MAA suggesting “close cooperation with the CAA, to establish the feasibility of regulation and/or to develop safe practices for SUA operators.”

## Summary

An Airprox was reported between a Merlin Helicopter and a cylindrical UAV in the vicinity of Praa Sands just outside the Culdrose MATZ; the helicopter crew did not have time to take any avoiding action and the UAV passed around 50ft above the Merlin.

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

Information available included a report from the Merlin pilot and the radar recording.

Members with local knowledge of Praa Sands noted that because it is a popular tourist area there are numerous places that balloons, remote controlled aircraft and other airborne toys could be purchased and used by holidaymakers, and there was a possibility that the Merlin pilot had seen one of these objects. However, with so little information available the Board agreed that the cause and risk could not be fairly assessed and so graded it as a Category D.

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

Cause: Insufficient information.

Degree of Risk: D.

ERC Score<sup>3</sup>: Not scorable.

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<sup>3</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.