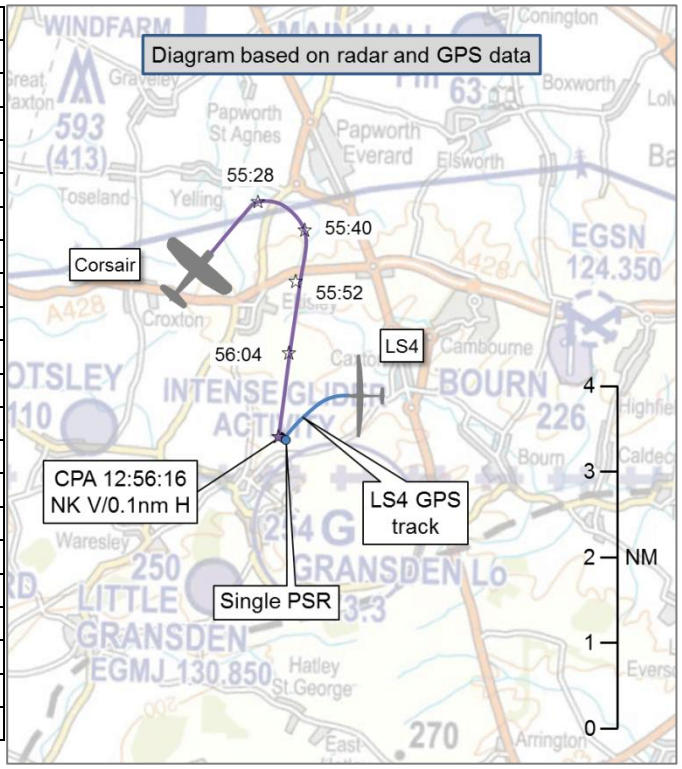
AIRPROX REPORT No 2015068

Date: 27 Apr 2015 Time: 1256Z Position: 5212N 00008W Location: 1.2nm NNW Gransden Lodge

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	LS4 Glider	F4U Corsair
Operator	Civ Pte	Civ Comm
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	None
Altitude/FL	3500ft	No Mode C
Transponder	Not Fitted	A
Reported		
Colours	White	Blue/Yellow
Lighting	None	NK
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	15km	50km
Altitude/FL	3700ft	5000ft
Altimeter	QNH (NK hPa)	NK
Heading	220°	Turning right
Speed	55kt	230kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	Not fitted
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/200m H	100ft V/400m H
Recorded	NK V/0.1nm H	



THE LS4 PILOT reports having been winch launched from Gransden RW04 into a thermal to 3800ft. He exited the thermal 1.7km from Gransden hanger and turned left to fly parallel to RW 22, with the intention of making a left run over the clubhouse 'start turn point'. In a visual scan to the right he observed the Corsair in a vertical climb about 200m off the starboard wing, with the aircraft underside toward the glider. The LS4 pilot was unsure of [the Corsair's] flight path, so he made a left turn away towards the airfield, and airbrake descended to land. The pilot reported that a club member had observed the Corsair flying 'close by' at high speed when there were a number of gliders in the vicinity of the airfield. He had identified it as a Corsair and, the following day, spoke to the pilot, who acknowledged performing aerobatics in the vicinity of Gransden airfield but felt there was no risk to gliders. The LS4 pilot stated that he did not report the incident at the time since the Corsair pilot had been identified and spoken to. However, the week before filing this report there was another incident with a different aircraft performing aerobatics out of cloud and close to the airfield and so the club CFI felt it was important to record this event too.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE CORSAIR PILOT reports that following a sustained period of heavy winter maintenance, a shakedown flight was planned with the requirement to remain as close to the home airfield as possible, in case of technical problems, whilst operating within a sensible height band of 3000ft to 6000ft. The area selected was adjacent to Bourn airfield. The weather was broken cumulus with large 'blue gaps' between; outstanding conditions for gliding and therefore he was not surprised to see a number of gliders engaged in both local and cross-country flying during the flight in question. For this reason, he specifically avoided flying under developed clouds where gliders where likely to be thermalling, and remained in the 'blue' sections where gliders were less likely to be, and would hopefully stand out against the sky. At one point in the flight, whilst manoeuvring in a right tum, he saw a glider under the edge of a cloud also in a right tum. Vertical separation was about 100ft and he observed that there was no risk of collision. In order to maintain a reasonable lateral separation, he tightened the turn slightly to pass at an estimated lateral separation of 400m. The rest of the flight

was uneventful but, following landing, the aircraft operator received a call from a gliding club official at Gransden Lodge, who seemed somewhat disturbed that anybody else would consider operating near 'their patch', regardless of altitude. A lengthy conversation ensued, but at no point was it suggested that the incident required the filing of an Airprox, nor was the opportunity offered to speak directly to the glider pilot involved.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

Factual Background

The weather at Cambridge was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGSC 271150Z VRB02KT 9999 SCT034 09/M01 Q1012
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The LS4 and Corsair pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard[1]. If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right[2]. If the incident geometry is considered as converging, then the Corsair pilot was required to give way to the LS4[3]. If the incident geometry is considered as overtaking, then the LS4 pilot had right of way and the Corsair pilot was required to keep out of the way of the LS4 by altering course to the right[4].

Comments

BGA

Whilst it is very good to see such awareness of gliding operations, it is unfortunate that the Corsair pilot chose to conduct his test flight so close to a known and promulgated area of intense gliding activity.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an LS4 glider and a Vought Corsair flew into proximity at 1256 on Monday 27th April 2015. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither in receipt of an Air Traffic Service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft, radar photographs/video recordings and a data log file.

Members first considered each pilot's description of the Airprox itself. The LS4 pilot had observed the Corsair in a vertical climb about 200m off his right wing, with the aircraft underside toward him, whereas the Corsair pilot had seen a glider in a right turn. Members were also informed that the glider datalog file indicated that the glider was in a shallow left turn at CPA. After some discussion, members came to the conclusion that the Corsair pilot had probably either seen a different glider, or had seen the Airprox glider but not near CPA. Members commended the Corsair pilot for the degree of planning he had applied to the shakedown flight with respect to expected glider operations, but observed that he had nonetheless elected to operate in a promulgated area of intense gliding activity.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c) (1) Approaching head-on.
[3] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c) (2) Converging.
[4] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c) (3) Overtaking.

Given that there were other areas in the immediate vicinity which were potentially available to the Corsair pilot, and which were not notified as areas of intense gliding activity, the Board felt that this was contributory to the Airprox. Notwithstanding, members also re-iterated that glider pilots are also required to share the available airspace with other entitled users, even if within an area notified as having intensive glider activity; a powered aircraft being operated in the vicinity of a glider site was not a cause for complaint in itself, unless other circumstances pertained.

In the end, members agreed that the cause of this Airprox was that there had simply been a confliction in Class G airspace. They decided that the Corsair pilot had probably not seen the glider in question, and therefore felt that; as a result, in this instance safety margins had been much reduced below normal.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G.

Contributory Factor: The Corsair pilot chose to conduct his shakedown flight in a promulgated area of intense gliding activity.

Degree of Risk: B.