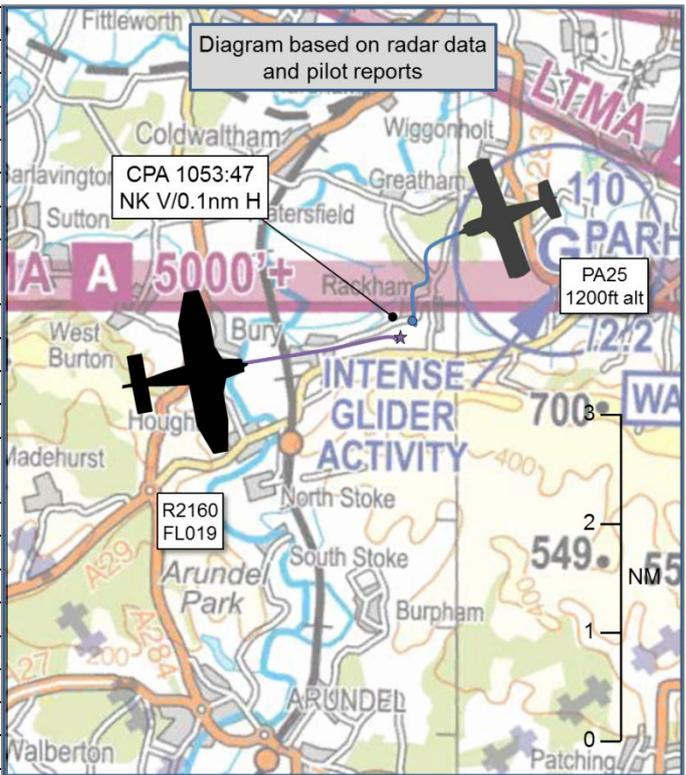


AIRPROX REPORT No 2015153

Date: 9 Sep 2015 Time: 1053Z Position: 5054N 00030W Location: Parham gliding site

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	PA25	Robin R2160
Operator	Civ Club	Civ Pte
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Nil	Basic
Provider	NA	Farnborough LARS East
Altitude/FL	NK	1800ft
Transponder	Not Fitted	A,C
Reported		
Colours	White, Orange	Red, white
Lighting	Strobes.	Strobes, landing light.
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	10km
Altitude/FL	1200ft	1700ft
Altimeter	QFE (1016hPa)	QNH
Heading	180°	075°
Speed	65kt	100kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/100m H	200ft V/0.5nm H
Recorded	NK/0.1nm H	



THE PA25 PILOT reports that he was glider launching from Parham. He had been launching to the north of the airfield, but for this flight he turned south to look for better conditions for the single-seat glider on tow. Moments later he saw an aircraft at a similar height crossing from right to left in front. It showed no sign of having seen the glider and tow, so the PA25 pilot lifted his right wing markedly to highlight their presence. There was still no apparent movement from the other aircraft and so he lifted his left wing, at which point the glider behind released and climbed left, and so he was able to descend steeply to the right. The incident was witnessed by several people on the ground.

He assessed the risk of collision as ‘High’.

THE R2160 PILOT reports that he was aware that his track took him close to the edge of the Parham glider site, and that he was taking care not to overfly it. He was keeping a good look-out, and could see gliders on the ground, but not any airborne. He was then aware of a tug and glider to his left climbing towards. He saw it turn to the right and release the glider; he believed he briefly turned his own aircraft to the right to show that he had seen them, but that no avoiding action was required.

He assessed the risk of collision as ‘None’.

Factual Background

The weather at Shoreham was recorded as follows:

METAR EGKA 091050Z 12014KT 9999 FEW040 19/09 Q1021=

Analysis and Investigation

CAA ATSI

At 1053:22 a primary-only contact, believed to be the PA25 was first observed on radar, 1.2nm west south-west of Parham Gliding site, tracking south. The R2160 was 0.9nm to the south-west of the PA25, tracking east north-east (Figure 1).

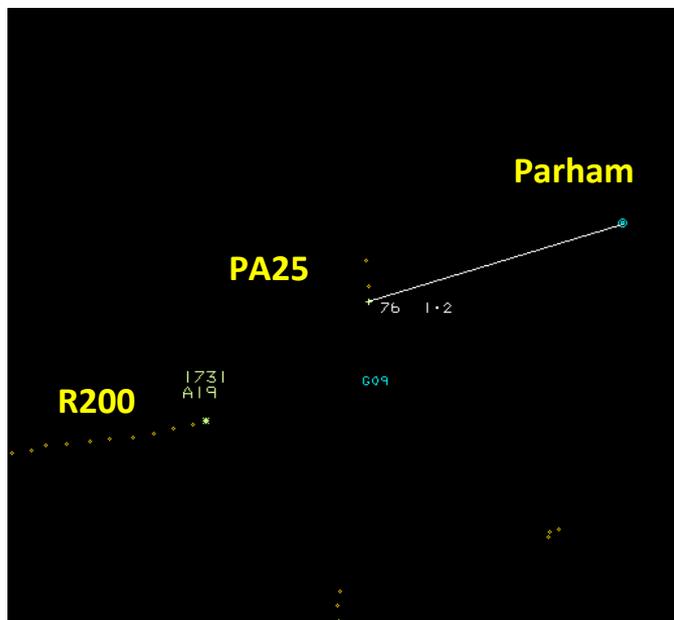


Figure 1 – 1053:22

CPA took place at 1053:46. No altitude information was available for the PA25 (Figure 2).

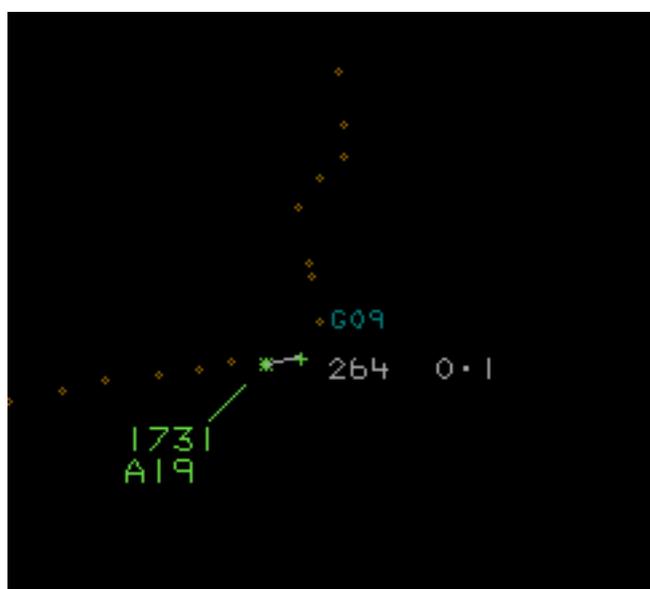


Figure 2 – 1053:46

No reference to the gliding activity at Parham was made by Farnborough ATC, but the report from the pilot of the R2160 indicated that they were aware that their track would take them close to the area, and that they were keeping a good look-out.

Parham Gliding site is notified as an area of Intense Glider Activity with a maximum winch-launch altitude of 2200ft.

UKAB Secretariat

The PA25 and R2160 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. When two aircraft are converging at approximately the same level, the aircraft that has the other on its right shall give way, except as follows: (i) power-driven heavier-than-air aircraft shall give way to ... aircraft that are seen to be towing other aircraft or objects.²

Comments

BGA

Another incident that illustrates that an aircraft routing close to known active gliding sites will likely encounter gliders and/or tugs. Tug and glider combinations are not as manoeuvrable as solo aircraft and will generally be trying to climb as quickly as possible. On release, the tug will descend quickly. Most of the time these activities take place within a few miles of the gliding site.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a PA25 and a Robin R2160 flew into proximity at 1053 on Wednesday 9th September 2015. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, the R2160 pilot in receipt of a Basic Service from Farnborough and the PA25 pilot not in receipt of an ATS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar photographs/video recordings, and reports from the appropriate ATC operating authorities.

The Board first wondered whether Farnborough was likely to have known that Parham was active and whether they should have passed this information as a reminder to the Robin pilot. There were a number of Board members who were familiar with Parham and so were able to confirm that Parham is a very active gliding club and, weather permitting, active most of the time. The Robin pilot himself reported that he was aware of Parham glider site and knew he needed to look-out for gliders whilst in the vicinity. Therefore, the Board agreed that not receiving any information from Farnborough about the status of Parham was probably not a factor.

The Board commended the Robin pilot for actively looking into the airfield to search for gliders, but reminded pilots that gliders, and tugs, could be expected all around a gliding site, not just above the airfield. With a notified winch-launch height of 2200ft, and with the Robin at 1900ft, the Board wondered whether the Robin pilot had planned to give the airfield a wide enough berth. That being said, they commended him also for pro-actively trying to route around the gliding site, and noted that gliding activity was intense in the area so it was not possible to be prescriptive about distances to avoid gliding sites.

As for the PA25 pilot, the Board thought that, because he had a glider in tow, he probably felt vulnerable when he realised the other pilot hadn't seen him. His aircraft was significantly less manoeuvrable in that configuration and, although other aircraft have to give way to an aircraft towing a glider, this does depend on the other pilot being visual in order to give way. The Board felt that the PA25 pilot did all that he could to try to attract the attention of the other pilot by lifting first his right wing and then his left; in the end, because the glider he was towing released, he was able to take avoiding action.

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way.

In assessing the cause of the Airprox, the Board agreed that it was a late sighting by the Robin pilot. However, because the PA25 pilot had taken timely and effective avoiding action, the risk was determined to be Category C.

It was noted that neither the Robin nor the PA25 were fitted with an ACAS. The Board felt that P-FLARM would have been a useful addition to the Robin to mitigate the risk of collision with gliders if it was frequently operated near gliding sites; although the PA25 was not fitted with P-FLARM, the glider he was towing may well have been and could have provided the Robin with an indication that something was there. Similarly, for the PA25, P-FLARM may well also have been a useful aid to assist other pilots to be more aware of him with or without a glider in tow. Finally, the Board noted the lack of transponder in the PA25 which denied other pilots with TCAS the ability to detect him, or ATC to provide accurate and persistent Traffic Information on him.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the Robin pilot.

Degree of Risk: C.