

AIRPROX REPORT No 2015067

Date: 21 May 2015 Time: 1427Z Position: 5145N 004W Location: Halton

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	ASK13	PA28
Operator	HQ Air (Trg)	Civ Pte
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	AGCS	Basic
Provider	Halton	Oxford
Altitude/FL	NK	1900ft
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Red/White	Orange
Lighting	None	HISL
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	30km	10km
Altitude/FL	2200ft	2000ft
Altimeter	QFE (1017hPa)	NK
Heading	060°	104°
Speed	40kt	110kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	Not fitted
Alert	Nil	N/A
Separation		
Reported	<100ft V/0m H	100-200ft V
Recorded	NK	



THE ASK13 PILOT reports soaring around the edge of the Halton ATZ on a heading of approximately 060° after being released from an aero tow at 2000ft. After crossing the railway line, an unknown aircraft passed directly under his aircraft from his 7 o'clock position with less than 100ft vertical separation. He stated that it appeared that the unknown aircraft was following the railway line.

He perceived the severity of the incident as 'High'.

THE PA28 PILOT reports inbound to Stapleford from the west, maintaining 2000ft to keep below the London TMA. At the time of the incident he was in receipt of a Basic Service from Oxford, and was flying straight and level, squawking an assigned code. He recalls seeing two aircraft around the time of the incident: one, a white glider at a similar height but half a mile away; and another, possibly a glider 100-200ft above, fairly close but behind him in his 7 o'clock position.

He did not assess the risk of collision.

THE OXFORD CONTROLLER did not submit a report

Factual Background

The Halton ATZ is a circle of radius 2nm based on the centre of the airfield and extending up to 2370ft amsl (2000ft AAL).

The Oxford weather at the time of the incident was recorded as follows:

METAR EGKB 211420Z 25009KT 210V300 9999 SCT045 17/04 Q1026

Analysis and Investigation

CAA ATSI

The pilot of the glider was receiving an Air/Ground service from Halton Radio. The pilot of the PA28 was receiving a Basic Service from Oxford Radar. RAF Halton is 22nm to the ESE of Oxford Airport. A review of the area radar recording at 1425:00 showed the PA28 17nm to the ESE of Oxford, tracking ESE towards a primary radar contact, 4.8nm directly ahead of the PA28. (Figure 1.)

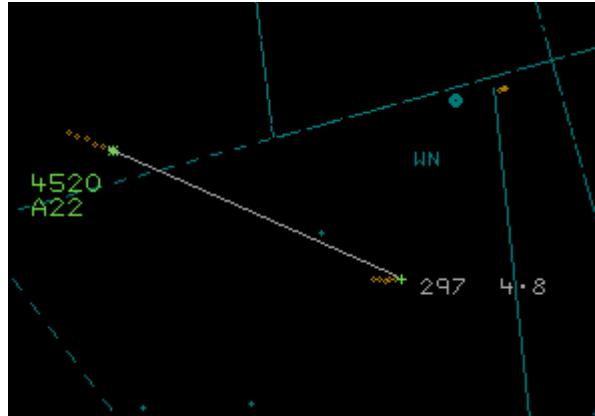


Figure 1 - 1425:00

At 1426:30 that same primary radar contact had passed clear of the PA28's track. (Figure 2.)



Figure 2 - 1426:30

At 1427:00 a new primary contact appeared, <1nm to the south east of the PA28. (Figure 3.)

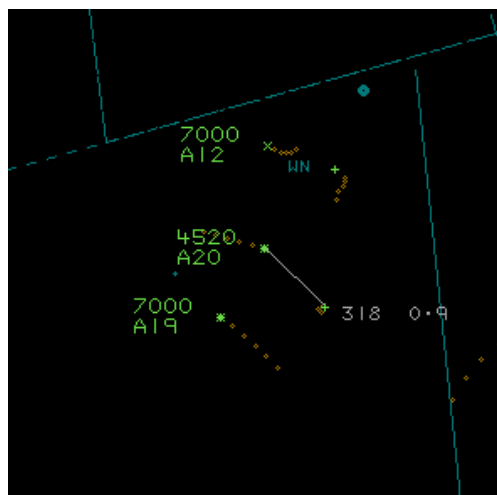


Figure 3 - 1427:00

At 1427:27, the distance between the PA28 and the new primary radar contact was <0.1nm, with both tracks converging. (Figure 4.)



Figure 4 - 1427:27



Figure 5 - 1427:34

At 1427:34 both the PA28 and the primary radar contact merged. (Figure 5.)

At 1428:16, the primary radar contact reappeared 1.1nm to the NW of the PA28. (Figure 6.)



Figure 6 - 1428:16

Based on both pilot reports, correlated with the area radar recordings, it is considered highly likely that the primary contact in Figure 3-6 was the glider which reported the Airprox.

At no time whilst the PA28 was in communication with Oxford Radar did it receive any Traffic Information on any other traffic. However, at the time of the Airprox, the Oxford Radar controller was busy taking avoiding action with an inbound aircraft being vectored for an ILS for RW19 at Oxford, he also had a training aircraft in the hold and, including the PA28, 5 aircraft receiving a Basic Service.

At the time of the Airprox the PA28 was over 24nm to the ESE of Oxford Aerodrome and, under a Basic Service, there is no requirement for the controller to monitor the flight.

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots had equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to fly into such proximity as to create a danger of collision.¹ When converging, power-driven heavier-than-air aircraft shall give way to sailplanes.²

¹ SERA 3205 (Proximity)

² SERA 3210 (Right of way)

Comments

HQ Air Command

This situation emphasises the requirement for all operators to use all means available to enhance their situational awareness in areas of known intense glider activity. Even if he had been adjacent to (rather than inside) the Halton ATZ, due to his proximity a call to Halton may have increased the PA28 pilot's situational awareness to a greater degree than was being provided by the Basic Service from Oxford at the time. The glider pilot did well to spot an aircraft in his 7 o'clock, albeit too late to take any avoiding action.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a PA28 flew into proximity with an ASK13 glider at 1427 on Thursday 21st May 2015. The PA28 pilot was in receipt of a Basic Service from Oxford, the ASK13 pilot an Air/Ground service from Halton. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC.

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, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The Board first considered the actions of the PA28 pilot. Members opined that he might have been better served in opting for a service from the designated LARS agency for that area (Farnborough) rather than a Basic Service from Oxford which was some 24 miles distant. Notwithstanding the fact that the glider involved was not known traffic, and painted a poor radar picture, Farnborough might have been able to provide generic information in that area given that this was their specific task as opposed to Oxford who would be focused on their immediate local area. The Board also opined that it may also have been wiser for him to have given Halton a wider berth than he did (either laterally or vertically), not least because it was a promulgated and active airfield and glider site whose ATZ he appeared to penetrate. At the very least, they considered that he should have communicated with Halton as he approached the ATZ to inform them of his intentions, which would then also have provided an opportunity for both him and the glider pilot to improve their situational awareness. Ultimately, the glider was there to be seen as he approached it from below; that the PA28 pilot only saw it after he had passed emphasised the need for pilots to pro-actively search the airspace ahead of them, and particularly when flying in the vicinity of ATZs and glider sites. The Board also dwelled on the value of PowerFLARM in GA aircraft and noted that, given that the glider was fitted with FLARM, PowerFLARM would also have provided valuable situational awareness to both pilots had the PA28 been fitted with one of these relatively inexpensive units.

Turning to the ASK13 pilot, the Board noted that he had only seen the PA28 very late as it approached from below in his rear-left quarter. Given the glider's likely wing-obscuration of the PA28 in this geometry, and his undoubted likely focus on his flight path ahead as he soared on the ridgeline within the ATZ, the Board acknowledged that it was a challenging conflict to detect, and that it was not surprising that the glider pilot saw the PA28 too late to take avoiding action or increase the separation.

In the end, the Board determined that the cause of the Airprox was effectively a non-sighting by both pilots. The risk was assessed as Category A, separation had been reduced to the minimum and chance had played a major part in events.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Effectively, a non-sighting by both pilots.

Degree of Risk: A.