

AIRPROX REPORT No 2013013

Date/Time: 3 Mar 2013 1643Z (Sunday)

Position: 5158N 00030E
(Wethersfield G/S)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Viking T1 PA28

Operator: Mil Club Civ Club

Alt/FL: 550ft ~1200ft
QFE (1010hPa) QNH (1021hPa)

Weather: VMC NR VMC CLBC

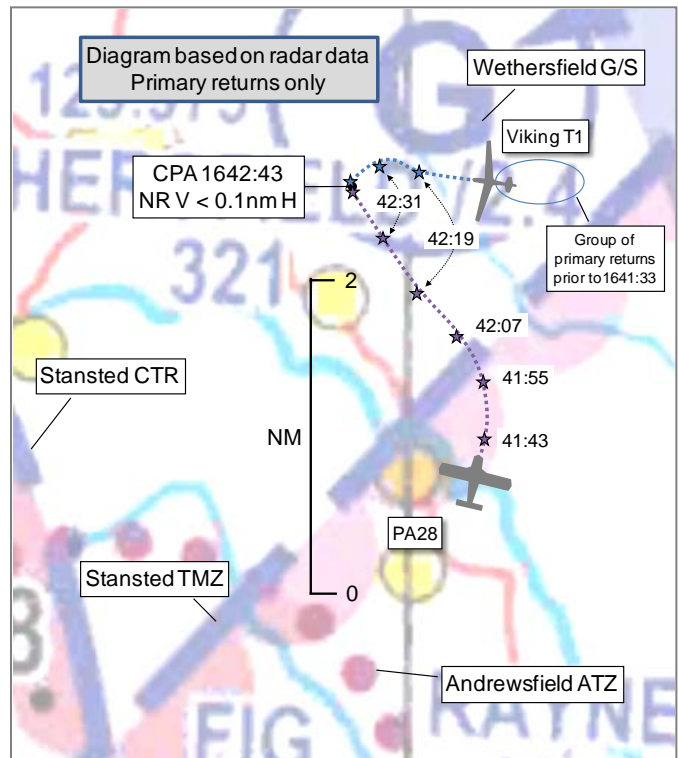
Visibility: 10nm >10km

Reported Separation:

200ft V/0m H 100ft V/300m H

Recorded Separation:

NR V/<0.1nm H



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE VIKING T1 PILOT reports being tasked to fly a training flight. He was operating under VFR in VMC with an A/G service from Wethersfield Radio [129.970MHz]. The white and 'dayglo' orange striped ac was not fitted with an SSR transponder or ACAS. He turned R to commence the RH downwind leg for RW10 when, abeam the winch at 750ft and passing through a heading of about 220°, he saw an aircraft about 2nm away in his low 9 o'clock position. He assessed it to be a single propeller engine, low-wing, fixed undercarriage ac with white upper and black lower fuselage. There appeared to be no conflict. He continued the downwind leg and, passing 700ft, commenced another lookout scan but could not locate the previously seen ac. Assuming the ac had changed course, he continued the downwind leg until abeam the caravan at 600ft, where he looked out to the R and saw the ac pass underneath. No action was taken at the time due to his workload.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE PA28 PILOT reports climbing to the N after departing from Andrewsfield. He was operating under VFR in VMC; he was not in receipt of an ATS but was 'monitoring Stansted' [120.625MHz]. The black and cream ac had the SSR transponder selected on with Mode A only selected. The ac was not fitted with an ACAS. He saw a glider and recognised that the ac were converging with his ac approaching from the glider's rear L side. He thought the glider pilot would not be able to see him, so he altered course to the R and passed behind. He realised this manoeuvre now placed him close to the boundary of the Wethersfield ATZ, which he knew, and the presence of the glider confirmed, was active. He stated that he couldn't climb because the base of the Stansted TMA was above him at 1500ft. He therefore turned L in order to remain clear of the Wethersfield ATZ and to pass the glider, keeping it in view throughout on his L side at what he considered to be a safe distance. He stated that he was aware that the glider pilot would not be able to see him until his manoeuvre was 'nearly complete'. He was unable to maintain as much separation from the glider as he would have liked, as he was now between the glider and the ATZ but, in what he considered was a 'fairly swift manoeuvre' he did not perceive any collision risk.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

[UKAB Note(1): The 1nm radius circle around a G/S, as shown on VFR charts, does not denote any form of controlled or regulated airspace. Wethersfield G/S, as shown in the diagram, does not have an associated ATZ; the circle is printed only to highlight the presence of the G/S to other airspace users.

UKAB Note(2): A G/S is classified as an A/D in the UK AIP and RoA Rule 12 (Flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome) therefore applies:

... a flying machine, glider or airship flying in the vicinity of what the commander of the aircraft knows, or ought reasonably to know, to be an aerodrome shall conform to the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome or keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern is formed; ...]

HQ AIR (TRG) comments that the PA28 pilot's decision to alter course to route between the glider and its A/D appears to have been instrumental in this incident, where the glider pilot was clearly concerned by the proximity of the PA28. An early change of course to the L, to route well ahead, a reduction in speed, or an orbit might all have been better options than the one selected. The Wethersfield Duty Instructor had observed the approaching PA28 and transmitted a warning to the gliders in the visual circuit.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

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

Members agreed that the glider pilot was operating normally from an active and promulgated G/S. Members opined that, having spotted the PA28, he would have been well advised to monitor its flight path but recognised that it was not always practical in a high workload environment. Members also noted that, although both pilots were operating in class G airspace, under Rule 12 the glider pilot could have expected some degree of protection in the cct pattern and that it was the PA28 pilot's responsibility either to conform to the pattern of traffic or to remain clear of it. Turning to the actions of the PA28 pilot, Board Members were unanimous in their opinion that he appeared not to have planned ahead sufficiently. Several pilot Members opined that flight within constrained airspace requires prior planning or alternative routing to avoid the airspace. Having seen the glider, the PA28 pilot had sufficient space and time to exercise a number of options: to turn to the L, to turn R and route around Wethersfield G/S to the E and N, to climb well above the glider or to orbit L or R until the glider was clear. Any of these options would have mitigated conflict but the PA28 pilot essentially continued on course. The Board noted the PA28 pilot's report referred to the Wethersfield 'ATZ' and wondered whether he was using the term loosely to describe the area surrounding the G/S; if an ATZ had existed at Wethersfield G/S, the PA28 pilot would have been wrong to enter it without prior communication with the A/D controller. In summary, the Board opined that although the PA28 pilot took effective and timely action to avoid collision, he placed both himself and the glider pilot in an avoidable situation and flew close enough to the glider pilot to cause concern. The Board commended the actions of the G/S duty instructor who had seen the approaching PA28 and warned cct traffic of its presence over RT.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The PA28 pilot flew close enough to cause concern to the Viking pilot downwind in the Wethersfield circuit.

Degree of Risk: C.