

AIRPROX REPORT No 2013016

Date/Time: 29 Mar 2013 1258Z (Good Friday)

Position: 5256N 00238W
(Tilstock Parachuting Site
– elev 301ft)

Airspace: Shawbury AIAA (**Class:** G)

Reporting Ac **Reported Ac**

Type: Parachutist Rockwell RC114B

Operator: NK Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 1400ft 1500ft
NK QFE (1002hPa)

Weather: VMC NK VMC NK

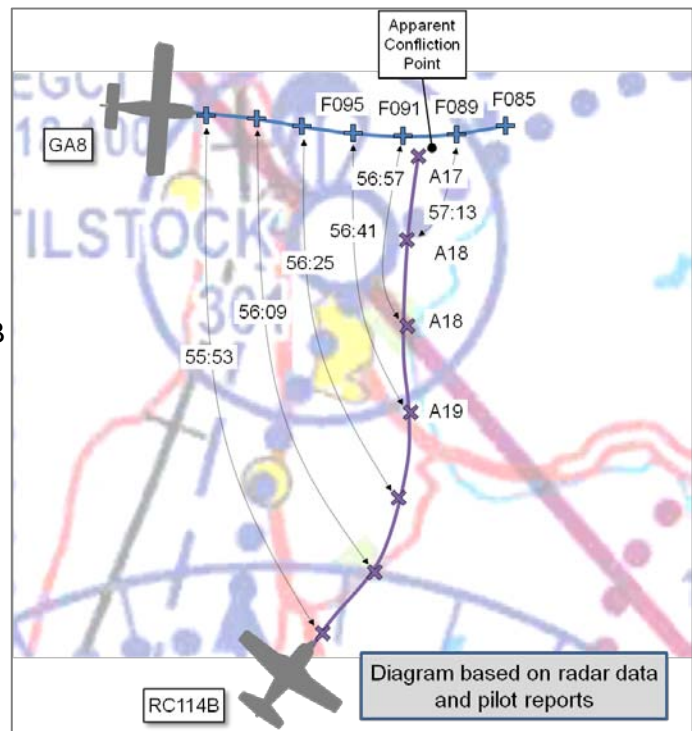
Visibility: 10km > 10km

Reported Separation:

400ft V/0.5nm H NK

Recorded Separation:

NK



REPORT FILED BY GA8 PILOT ON BEHALF OF PARACHUTIST AND D/Z CONTROLLER

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE PARACHUTIST reports taking avoiding action against a light ac at 1400ft, near the O/H of Tilstock parachuting site.

The Parachutist assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

[UKAB Note(1): Tilstock Parachuting Site was promulgated in the UK AIP ENR 5.5-6, valid at the time, as a Parachute Jumping site of 1.5nm radius, up to FL85, and normally active during daylight hours, Monday to Saturday and PH, 0800 – 2000 during winter and 1hr earlier in summer.]

THE GA8 PILOT reports conducting parachute dropping at Tilstock parachuting site. He was operating under VFR, in VMC, with an A/G service from 'Tilstock Radio' [118.100MHz]. The white ac had navigation and strobe lights selected on, as was the SSR transponder, with Modes A, C and S. The D/Z controller had observed the RC114B fly through the Tilstock parachuting site O/H on a number of occasions in the half-hour prior to the Airprox; the GA8 pilot was also 'occasionally visual' with the ac. Repeated efforts were made by the D/Z controller to contact the ac but with no response. At about 1301, the ac was seen to fly N-S along the central portion of the drop zone, with parachute canopies in the air above it. The D/Z controller instructed all parachuting activity to be suspended and pilots to land. Two of the parachutists in the air saw the subject RC114B, one of whom took avoiding action at about 1400ft, estimating a minimum separation of 400ft V and 0.5nm H.

THE RC114B PILOT reports operating autonomously, testing a new avionics installation. He was operating under VFR, in VMC, listening out on Shawbury LARS [133.150MHz]. The white and blue ac had strobe lights selected on, as was the SSR transponder with Modes A, C and S. The ac was fitted with a TAS. Whilst level at altitude 1500ft, tracking the Shawbury VOR '360° – 010°' radial at 130kt, he received TAS information and saw a white, single-engine, ac in his L 11 o'clock at more than 1nm range. He turned away to the R.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac and radar video recordings.

Members first considered the actions of the RC114B pilot. It appeared from additional information submitted that the locally-based pilot was not aware of the operating hours of Tilstock parachuting site and believed that parachuting activity would be promulgated by NOTAM. Notwithstanding this error, GA Members noted that the incident could easily have been avoided by the pilot choosing to use a more appropriate position and a surveillance based ATS when exploring the capabilities of his new avionics fit. Given that radar replay showed the RC114B pilot flying O/H the D/Z at altitudes between 1700ft and 2200ft on six occasions in the half hour preceding the Airprox and that the pilot did not report seeing parachutists, the Board also opined that he was most likely not maintaining an effective lookout and that this was due to being distracted by manipulating the new equipment in the cockpit. Board Members reemphasised that mitigation against mid-air collision in class G airspace is achieved by effective lookout and opined that the RC114B pilot's lack of appropriate planning and ineffective lookout placed all the airspace users at risk.

Board Members made several observations: Sortie planning should include the addition of a safety pilot if it is anticipated that a significant amount of time will be spent 'heads-in'. Parachute D/Zs often promulgate extensive hours of operation and it is anecdotally reported that activity often does not occur to the same extent, hence engendering a sense of 'false-alert'. The Board felt that it behoves all pilots to remain clear, especially upwind, of parachute sites during promulgated operating hours unless they can positively confirm that the site is inactive, noting that the absence of a response on the RT does not confirm that the site is inactive. The Board also observed that a parachuting D/Z such as Tilstock, with no civilian regulated or controlled airspace associated with it, does not have priority over other entitled airspace users. As such, the D/Z controller's decision to suspend operations was commended by the Board.

There were no ATC barriers to prevent this occurrence and, although the 'see and avoid' principle functioned as the only remaining barrier to a limited degree, it was fortuitous that the parachutist, who had right of way, saw the RC114B at a range where his limited ability to take avoiding action was not tested. Overall, effective and timely action was taken to prevent a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The RC114B pilot flew through a promulgated and active parachuting site and into conflict with a parachutist, who he did not see.

Degree of Risk: C.

ERC: 4.