

AIRPROX REPORT No 2013116

Date/Time: 18 Aug 2013 1100Z (Sunday)

Position: 5153N 00106W
(Lon FIR)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: DR400 + glider Light Aircraft

Operator: Civ Club Unknown

Alt/FL: 2000ft NK
QNH (1009hPa) NK

Weather: VMC CLBC NK

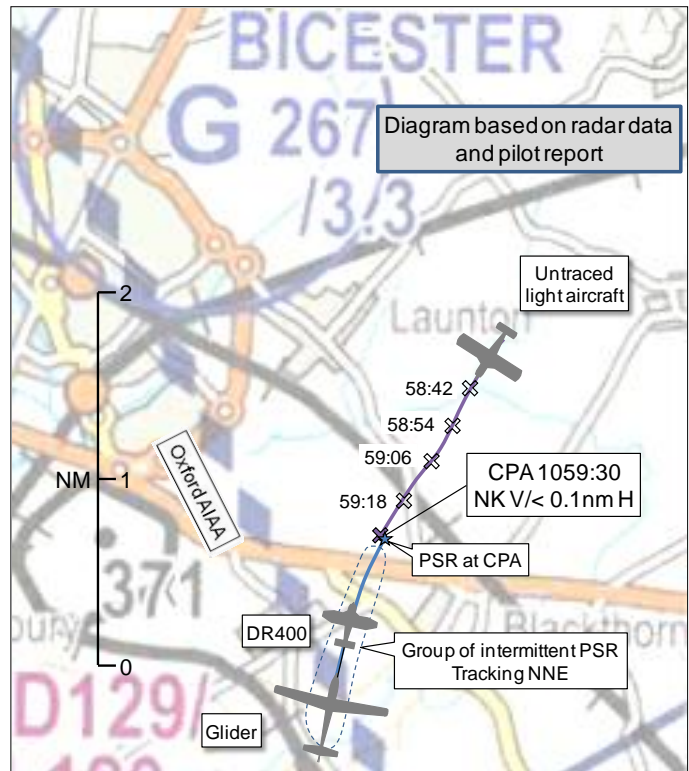
Visibility: 50km NK

Reported Separation:

0ft V/300ft H NK

Recorded Separation:

NK V/<0.1nm H



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE DR400 PILOT reports being in a climb after takeoff whilst glider towing for a competition. The red and white aircraft had navigation and strobe lights selected on, the SSR transponder was selected off, and the aircraft was not fitted with a TAS or ACAS. The pilot was listening out on 'Airfield Grid Master', 129.975MHz¹, without an ATS, and stated that he was the second tug/glider combination to launch. His initial climb was to the south, then left toward the drop zone which, on passing about 1200ft, he turned towards. Shortly after, he heard the preceding tug aircraft pilot report that 'a PA28' had passed very close to him, heading in the opposite direction to the towing stream. The DR400 pilot, now passing 2000ft in a climb at 75kt, looked in the direction of the preceding tug and saw 'a PA28, no more than 100yds in front', passing from left to right in what appeared to be 'a 20-30°' left-hand avoiding turn. The pilot stated that the 'vertical separation was negligible' and that he had not had time to take any avoiding action. He also noted that his workload was high with multiple gliders in the immediate vicinity.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE LIGHT-AIRCRAFT: The light-aircraft appeared on the radar recording, squawking Mode A 7000 but, unfortunately, the returns faded before and after CPA and the aircraft could not therefore be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at RAF Brize Norton and RAF Benson was recorded as follows:

METAR EGVN 181050Z 25008KT 9999 SCT040 21/11 Q1009 BLU NOSIG

METAR EGUB 181050Z AUTO 25007KT 9999 // FEW029/// BKN060/// 19/12 Q1010

¹ The CAA has assigned frequencies exclusively for the purpose of communications between gliders and Aeronautical Ground Stations that are used principally to communicate with gliders within the UK. 129.975MHz has been allocated the Primary Use 'As a control frequency within a 10 NM radius and up to a height of 3,000 ft above certain approved airfields. (CGFF - Common Glider Field Frequency)'.

The gliding competition NOTAM was recorded as follows:

(H3856/13 NOTAMN

Q) EGTT/QWGLW/IV/M /W /000/100/5155N00108W010

A) EGTT B) 1308170452 C) 1308251907

D) SR-SS

E) MAJOR GLIDING COMPETITION INC CROSS-COUNTRY RTE. INTENSE ACT WI 10NM RADIUS 5154 58N 0010756W (BICESTER AD, OXFORDSHIRE). UP TO 50 GLIDERS AND 7 TUG ACFT MAY PARTICIPATE. GLIDERS WILL NORMALLY OPR BLW THE INVERSION LVL OR BTN THE TOPS OF ANY CU CLOUDS AND 500FT AGL. RTF CTC 130.100MHZ. FOR INFO ON DAILY TASK RTE CTC GLIDER CONTEST CTL TEL 01869 325454 OR 07710 501313 OR VIEW WWW.BGALADDER.CO.UK/SHOWTASK.ASP FOR BICESTER. 13-0B-0265/AS3.

F) SFC G) FL100)

The gliding competition ACN is reproduced at Annex A.

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots were equally responsible for collision avoidance². The light-aircraft pilot was required to give way to the tug and glider combination³ unless the aircraft were approaching head-on, in which case both pilots were required to turn to the right⁴. The DR400 pilot reported the 'PA28' approached from head-on, and that he saw it in a left-hand avoiding turn at very close range, passing from left to right in front of him.

Summary

A DR400, towing a glider, and an untraced light-aircraft flew into conflict at 1100 on 18th August 2013. The tug pilot was operating under VFR in VMC without an ATS. The circumstances of the light-aircraft pilot could not be ascertained.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included a report from the DR400 pilot and radar video recordings.

In the absence of a report from the light-aircraft pilot, the Board first considered the tug pilot's actions. He was operating 'normally' within the environment of a gliding competition and was afforded some protection by the NOTAM. Notwithstanding, Board members emphasised that such protection was only conferred if other airspace users were aware of the NOTAM's existence and pro-actively used its information to inform their planning and operating decisions. In the case of a NOTAM advising of a major gliding competition, members opined that appropriate planning would have included avoiding the area of the NOTAM, either laterally or vertically, and requesting a radar based ATS when in its vicinity. Fitment of a FLARM-compatible TAS would provide additional risk mitigation when operating in the vicinity of intensive glider flying, and it was noted that the DR400 pilot had, for some reason, selected his SSR transponder off thereby removing a potentially valuable electronic conspicuity aid for other TAS-equipped aircraft. During the Board's discussions it was also noted that the tug pilot was not using the contact RTF stated in the NOTAM and ACN⁵; some members opined that promulgation of the tug 'airborne' frequency would be of great value for other airspace users and that, in this case, it might have allowed the PA28 pilot to have been alerted to the proximity of tug and glider combinations. However, a gliding Member explained that the volume of traffic during a gliding competition launch was such that a dedicated 'air-to-air' tug RTF was required to facilitate the safe

² Rules of the Air 2007 (as amended), Rule 8 (Avoiding aerial collisions).

³ *ibid.*, Rule 9 (Converging).

⁴ *ibid.*, Rule 10 (Approaching head-on).

⁵ Annex A, paragraph 5 c.

conduct of towing operations. The separate NOTAM/ACN RTF was provided for initial contact with 'Glider Contest Control' by other airspace users in order to prevent additional RT and traffic information from blocking out the tug frequency. In the end, the DR400 pilot had been alerted to the presence of the conflicting traffic by the preceding tug, but did not acquire it visually until too late to take avoiding action.

Turning to the cause and risk, without a report from the light-aircraft pilot the Board was unable to ascertain whether the tug combination had been seen by the pilot and avoiding action taken, or whether the pilot was simply conducting a navigational turn and had not been aware of the tug and glider at all. Members noted the DR400 pilot's testimony that he had seen the 'PA28' too late to take avoiding action, but could not rule out the possibility that the 'PA28' pilot might also have seen the tug and glider at a late stage. Irrespective of the light-aircraft pilot's potential sighting or not, given the close proximity of the encounter, in the Board's opinion, safety margins had been much reduced below normal.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

<u>Cause:</u>	Late sighting by one or both pilots.
<u>Degree of Risk:</u>	B.
<u>ERC Score⁶:</u>	100

⁶ Although the Event Risk Classification (ERC) trial had been formally terminated for future development at the time of the Board, for data continuity and consistency purposes, Director UKAB and the UKAB Secretariat provided a shadow assessment of ERC.



Safety and Airspace Regulation Group
AIRSPACE UTILISATION

ACTIVITY NO: 2013-08-0265

08 Aug 13

See Distribution:

AIRSPACE CO-ORDINATION NOTICE

BGA GLIDING COMPETITION – 18M NATIONALS
BICESTER AIRFIELD
17 – 25 AUG 2013

Reference:

A. British Gliding Association Notification (Mr C Rule). E-mail dated 03 Jun 13 (BGA Comps 2013).

ALL TIMES UTC

INTRODUCTION

1. As requested/notified at Reference A, the following measures have been agreed by AU with the organiser and airspace controlling authorities to accommodate the title subject Unusual Aerial Activity.

ACTIVITY

2. A BGA sponsored 18m Nationals Gliding Competition, including cross-country flights, to be mounted from the Windrushers Gliding Club located at Bicester Airfield in Oxfordshire. [Position: 515458N 0010756W].

DATES AND TIMES

3. **Sat 17 Aug – Sun 25 Aug 2013. DAILY from Sunrise to Sunset.**

VERTICAL LIMITS

4. The activity will take place **from surface to FL100**. Glider participants can be expected at all levels but will normally operate below the inversion level or between the tops of any cumulus clouds and 500ft agl. Controlled airspace will be avoided unless prior clearance has been obtained from the airspace Controlling Authority.

OPERATING AUTHORITY OR SPONSOR

5. a. **Competition Director: Mr Michael Pettican.**

Windrushers Gliding Club
Bicester Airfield
Skimmingdish Lane
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 5HA

Civil Aviation Authority, 45-59 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TE
Direct Dial: 0207 453 6583 or 6599 DFTS (9) 6453 ext 6583 Fax: 020 7453 6593
Email: mandy.biggs@caa.co.uk



FS 36365



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

ACN 2013-08-0265

Mob: 07788 986362
Email: michael.pettican@gmail.com

- b. **Glider Contest Control:** The contact for this competition is **Glider Contest Control Tel: 01869 325454 or 07710 501313** for daily route information.
- c. **Radio Contact:** VHF 130.100Mhz.

AIRCRAFT

- 6. Up to 50 x gliders and 7 x powered tug aircraft may participate.

CO-ORDINATES OF AREA OR EVENT

- 7. The activity will take place within 10nm radius of 515458N 0010756W (Bicester Airfield). After launching, most participants may be concentrated in the airspace around and just downwind of the launch site or on the first leg of the daily nominated cross-country route.

Note: For daily information on routes, activity and likely take off times contact Glider Contest Control Competition Director [as per Para 5 above]. In addition, the BGA web site: www.bgaladder.co.uk/showtask.asp may contain daily task information under the Selected Gliding Clubs tab.

CO-ORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

- 8. It is essential that the Competition Director relays details of the daily flying activities at the site (inc likely cross-country routes) to RAF Wittering Low Flying Booking Cell (LFBC) on Tel: 01780 416701 or Free Phone: 0800 515544 or Fax: 01780 416206 when the military low flying system is open. Ideally, this should be done at least 4hrs before daily launch in order that appropriate Military 'Y' Series NOTAM action can be taken if necessary.

- 9. Aircraft should remain clear of controlled airspace. Should flight in controlled airspace be required, the Competition Director must contact LACC Swanwick TC SWA for coordination on Tel: 02380 401110.

- 10. Other addressees are requested to bring this activity to the attention of their operators/club members, as appropriate, in order that the main activity area can be safely avoided.

OTHER NOTIFIED ADJACENT ACTIVITY

- 11. As per any daily NOTAM promulgated as effective in the area on the day.

AERONAUTICAL PUBLICATIONS

- 12. A Systems NOTAM will be issued by AU to cover the overall event.

AMENDMENT ACTION

- 13. The Sponsor should co-ordinate any changes to this ACN with AU on Tel: 0207 453 6599 or Fax: 0207 453 6593 or Email ausops@caa.co.uk quoting the Activity Number at the top of the page.

ACN 2013-08-0265

A J BIGGS
Airspace Specialist 3
For Hd of AU

Distribution: All by e-mail

Action:

BGA
Bicester Airfield
RAF Wittering

BGA Competition Committee [FAO Mr C Rule]
Windrushers Gliding Club [For Competition Director]
Low Flying Ops Sqn (LFBC)

Information:

Cranfield Airfield
Enstone Airfield
Hinton-in-the-Hedges Airfield
LACC Swanwick
LATCC (Mil)
RAF Benson
RAF Brize Norton
Oxford/Kidlington Airport
Turweston Aerodrome
Western Radar

SATCO
Oxfordshire Sport Flying Club Secretary
Airfield Operator
TC Ops
MABCC, West Supervisor, WO Ops
SATCO
SATCO
Mgr ATS
Turweston Flight Centre Ltd [ATC Ops]
ATC Ops

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