

AIRPROX REPORT No 2012134

Date/Time: 3 Sep 2012 1519Z

Position: 5221N 00123W (3½nm
E of Coventry A/D - elev
267ft)

Airspace: London FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: DA42 Model Glider

Operator: Civ Trg Civ Club

Alt/FL: 1300ft 900ft
QNH (1025hPa) agl

Weather: VMC No cloud NK NK

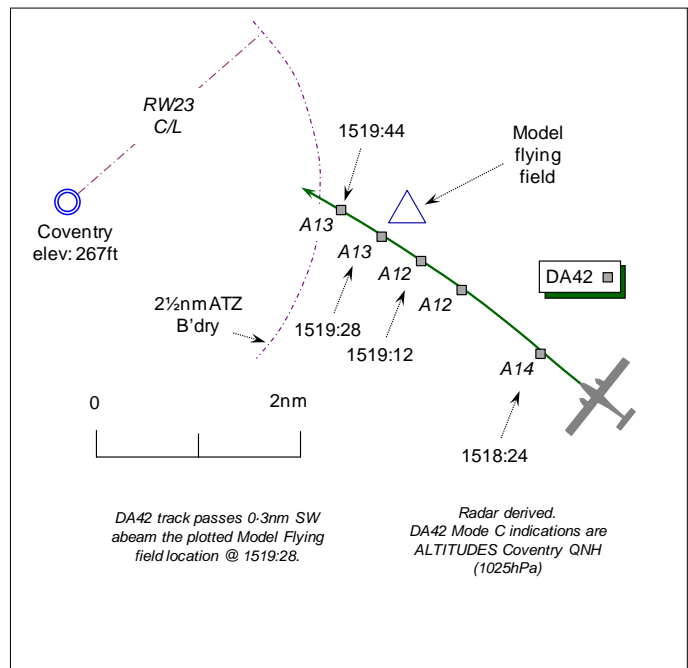
Visibility: >10km 20km

Reported Separation:

100ft V/100m H 200ft V/50m H

Recorded Separation:

Not recorded



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE DIAMOND TWINSTAR DA42 PILOT reports he was inbound to Coventry from Sywell flying dual on a VFR examination flight and was in contact with Coventry TOWER on 118.175MHz. A squawk of A7010 was selected with Modes C and S on; TCAS is not fitted. Routeing in from Draycott Water heading 300° at 130kt, level at 1300ft QNH (1025hPa) and cleared to join L base for RW23, about 3nm from the threshold he caught sight of a 'target' in his 10'clock about ½nm away (he was seated in the RHS). He subsequently realised it was a model glider of 2-3m wingspan with red wingtips, nose and tail, climbing through their level; the model then rolled and descended below his ac so no avoiding action was taken and they passed the model glider about 100m away and 100ft below his ac with a 'low' Risk of collision. TOWER was advised and a warning was given to the pilot of the following ac, who also sighted the glider. His aeroplane is coloured white; the HISLs were on.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MODEL AIRCRAFT CLUB reports that the following information was obtained from an interview with the pilot of the model glider and the Chairman's own sighting of the occurrence. There were other club members present who also saw the occurrence.

The 3m wingspan radio controlled (RC) model glider was being flown from the Club's flying field turning level at a height of about 900ft in a 100ft radius circular thermal pattern at about 10kt. A fixed wing ac – the DA42 - was observed approaching the flying field at a height assessed to be lower than the model glider. The DA42 continued flying straight and level on a heading towards Coventry Airport while the glider pilot maintained his height and flight pattern; no avoiding action was taken as the model glider pilot considered it was safer to stay above the approaching aircraft. The DA42 was at a height of about 700ft; however, from their position on the ground it can be difficult to estimate height. Minimum separation was estimated to be 50m horizontally and 200ft vertically. The model glider is coloured day-glo orange; no lighting is fitted.

The model glider pilot has been advised that in this situation, it would have been more sensible to fly his model glider away from the approaching ac at 90° to the other ac's flight path.

Club Members have been reminded of the requirements of the ANO with respect to small ac.

UKAB Note (1): The ANO 2009, Article 166 - Small unmanned aircraft stipulates:

(1) A person must not cause or permit any article or animal (whether or not attached to a parachute) to be dropped from a small unmanned aircraft so as to endanger persons or property.

(2) The person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft may only fly the aircraft if reasonably satisfied that the flight can safely be made.

(3) The person in charge of a small unmanned aircraft must maintain direct, unaided visual contact with the aircraft sufficient to monitor its flight path in relation to other aircraft, persons, vehicles, vessels and structures for the purpose of avoiding collisions.

[sub-paragraph (4) applies to small unmanned ac of a mass of more than 7kg, however, the subject model glider's mass was less than 7kg.]

UKAB Note (2): The UK AIP at AD2 – EGBE notifies the Coventry Aerodrome Traffic Zone (ATZ) as a circle radius 2.5 nm centred on RW05/23, extending 2000ft above the A/D elevation of 267ft amsl.

ATSI reports that the Airprox was reported at 1519:40 in Class G airspace, 3nm E of Coventry Airport, outside the ATZ, by a DA42 pilot when the ac came into conflict with a model glider while the DA42 was positioning towards left base at about 1300ftALT.

The DA42 was operating VFR on a training flight from Coventry to Sywell and was in receipt of an Aerodrome Control Service from Coventry TOWER on 118.175MHz.

The model glider was being operated from Wolston model aircraft flying field. Page AD 2-EGBE-1-7 from the UK AIP entry for Coventry Airport states:

'Pilots are warned of radio controlled aircraft activity from a private site approximately 3nm east of Coventry airport, 0.5 miles southeast of Wolston village.'

ATSI had access to area radar recordings together with written reports from the pilot of the DA42, the operator of the model glider, the Coventry TOWER controller and RT from Coventry TOWER.

The Coventry METARs:

1520Z 26006KT 230V300 9999 CAVOK 23/11 Q1025=
1550Z 27007KT CAVOK 23/11 Q1025=

At 1518:20 the DA42 pilot contacted Coventry TOWER and was instructed to join L base for R/W23 and given a squawk of A7010.

At 1519:40 the DA42 pilot reported to TOWER that they had just had an Airprox with a model glider. TOWER then passed TI on the model glider to a following ac.

The report from the pilot of the DA42 stated that while joining left base for RW23 he saw traffic in his 1 o'clock at a range of 0.5nm that turned out to be a model glider, which climbed through their level and then rolled and descended through the level of the DA42.

The report from the Coventry TOWER controller stated that the DA42 had reported an Airprox with the model glider on frequency.

Radar recordings did not show the presence of a primary return that could be attributed to the model glider.

The model aircraft site is notified in the Coventry section of the UK AIP so it would not be unexpected for model aircraft to be operating there.

The DA42 pilot was in Class G airspace and was therefore primarily responsible for his own collision avoidance.

Radar recordings did not show any information relating to the model glider and therefore the exact geometry of the encounter cannot be determined.

The Airprox occurred in the vicinity of Coventry Airport when a DA42 came into proximity with a model glider.

TOWER was unable to provide assistance to prevent the Airprox.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The CAA Flt Ops Advisor briefed Members that, although Article 166 of the ANO implies that model aircraft will give way to manned aircraft, clarification is required to the Right of Way rules. The MAA Advisor noted that any clarification should consider applicability to larger military Unmanned Air Vehicles of the type that are currently limited to segregated airspace. The Board noted that in this Airprox the model glider was operating legitimately above 400ft since it weighs less than 7kg and is sufficiently large that it would be visible to its pilot at 900ft agl. Although the AIP entry for Coventry airport warns pilots about the location of the model flying site, it does not provide any indication of the altitudes at which pilots might encounter models. A controller Member suggested that the model fliers might telephone Coventry ATC whenever they are planning to fly above 400ft agl. The DAP Advisor recommended clubs to request the publication of NOTAMs for large club meets and flying events.

The DA42 pilot reports that the glider passed beneath his aircraft while the model aircraft pilot and other observers believed the glider was above the DA42. Since the model is not visible on recorded radar the Board could not resolve these disparate reports. However, it seemed clear that assessing the models altitude by eye alone would be very difficult. Therefore the Board agreed with the advice offered to the model glider pilot by the Chairman of the club. It would have been more sensible for the model glider pilot to turn away from the approaching DA42. The Flt Ops Advisor concurred, noting that British Model Flying Association guidelines recommend model pilots to maintain clear air – horizontal separation - when another aircraft is seen.

Noting all of the factors above, Members agreed that this had been a conflict close to the boundary of the Coventry ATZ and in the vicinity of a promulgated model flying site in which the sightings by the DA42 pilot and the model pilot had been sufficient to prevent the risk of a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict close to the boundary of Coventry ATZ and in the vicinity of a promulgated model flying site.

Degree of Risk: C.