

AIRPROX REPORT No 2011056

Date/Time: 11 June 2011 1258Z (Saturday)

Position: 5215N 00057W
(7nm SW Sywell)

Airspace: London FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Discus Glider T6 Harvard

Operator: Civ Club Civ Trg

Alt/FL: 4300ft NK
(QNH 1007mb) (QNH)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLBC

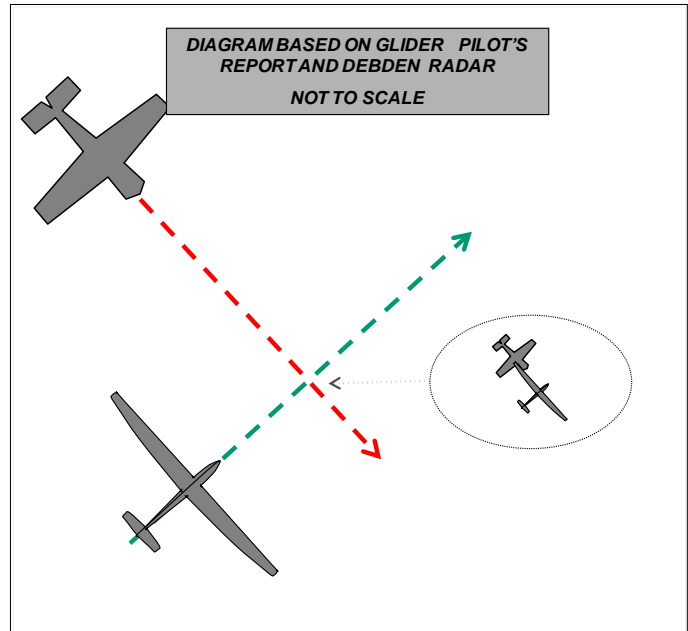
Visibility: 20km >10km

Reported Separation:

20ft V/0m H Not Seen

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE DISCUS 15M GLIDER PILOT reports soaring at 70kt in a white single-seat glider with orange hi-visibility flashes on the wings and fin. He was 7nm SW of Sywell and listening out on a gliding common frequency when he had a close encounter at 4300ft (QNH) with a single-engine GA ac, believed to be low wing or mid-wing configuration, mostly white with some blue and possibly a yellow flash [actually silver with a yellow band]; the registration was not seen. He was not equipped with SSR or TCAS; FLARM was fitted and serviceable but did not indicate any contacts.

While heading 050°, in the cruise between thermals, the other ac appeared from behind and below his L wing tip and passed overhead with no more than 20ft clearance. He was aware only of a very sudden movement in his peripheral vision, a very rapid expansion of the size of the ac and a loud engine noise with Doppler Effect; from first sighting to the ac passing overhead was 1sec or less. He instinctively pushed the stick forward but the other ac had already passed overhead before his glider responded. He was unable to see the direction taken by the ac after the Airprox as he was a little disoriented. After a few minutes consideration he decided to continue with his planned flight which was a cross-country task from Leighton Buzzard/Moreton-in-Marsh/Corby South/Grafham Water/Newport Pagnell/Dunstable.

He assessed the risk as being high and reported the incident to the CFI on landing.

There was a NOTAM in force for aerobatics at Sywell but he was well outside the promulgated area.

THE T6 HARVARD 4 PILOT reports that he submitted a report in response to an Airprox filed against him. He was flying local training flights (one of eight that day) from Sywell, in receipt of a BS from them, in a silver ac with a yellow band but with SSR switched off and no lights fitted; at the time he was in the vicinity of the reported position.

On the day of the incident he saw numerous gliders but none that he considered close enough to generate an Airprox; he suspects, however, that the encounter might have been with one of these. There was one encounter with a white glider, possibly with red markings, which was closer than the

rest, however, he had the ac continuously in sight as he crossed in front of it about ½nm away and he did not consider there was a risk of collision.

UKAB Note (1): There are several primary only contacts in the area of the incident; at 1258:44 two primary only contacts, almost certainly the Harvard and the glider, (from radar tracking and Datalogger information) can be seen 0.3nm apart in the reported position; since the glider disappeared from radar as the Harvard continued towards its last seen position the actual CPA cannot be measured. It is assessed that the CPA was most likely on the radar sweep (8 sec) after the glider disappeared from radar.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

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

The Board agreed that this was a straightforward but serious incident. The Gliding Member noted that the glider pilot was aware of the increased activity at Sywell and sensibly avoided the immediate area; due to the nature of the flight however, the Harvard was slightly further away from the field and outside the NOTAMed area. Members accepted that due to the number of flights he flew on that day, the Harvard pilot would not have been able to recall precise details of each flight, critically the ac alt at the incident time [the glider was at 4154ft datalogger]. Although the radar picture was open to interpretation, bearing in mind the vivid description, the diagram and the Datalogger information provided by the glider pilot, Members were satisfied that the geometry of the incident was as portrayed in the diagram above. However, with no alt information regarding the Harvard, Members could not verify the glider pilot's estimate of 20ft. Further, again based solely on the glider pilot's report, Members agreed that the vertical separation had been small and his sighting had been too late for his avoidance to have been effective. Although there was no radar evidence to substantiate the theory, Members thought that the ac might have been closing on a line of constant bearing or that the Harvard might have been closing from the 8 or 9 o'clock and its head-on aspect would make it hard for the glider pilot to see.

Members also suggested that the glider might have been slightly below the Harvard and therefore obscured to the pilot by its large nose.

Whatever the reason, the ac had come very close to one another, neither pilot had seen the opposing ac in time to take effective avoiding action, despite the glider pilot's last second and instinctive bunt, and the separation had been by good fortune. Since there was no corroborating information, the Board had only the glider pilot's vivid description and estimate of 20ft to inform their decision; although Members agreed that the separation would probably have been slightly larger, they also agreed that there had been an actual risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A non-sighting by the Harvard pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the Discus pilot.

Degree of Risk: A.