

AIRPROX REPORT No 2011070

Date/Time: 26 Jun 2011 1403Z (Sunday)

Position: 5056N 00018W
(8nm N Shoreham)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: C172 Untraced Ac

Operator: Civ Pte NK

Alt/FL: 2200ft NK
(NK)

Weather: VMC NR NK

Visibility: 30nm NK

Reported Separation:

20ft V/0ft H NK

Recorded Separation:

NK



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE C172 PILOT reports flying a red and white ac with all lights switched on, on a VFR private flight from Guernsey to Rochester. He was squawking with Modes C and S, but TCAS was not fitted. He was initially in contact with Shoreham APP then Farnborough Radar (it was his intention to go back to the Farnborough frequency earlier but Shoreham requested that he stay with them until he was abeam the RW – which he did). He is always cautious in the Shoreham area since it is always busy, so he advised them of his presence and, on being advised of oncoming traffic, decided to give the field more clearance; he advised Shoreham and moved further to the N. It was during this time while he was cruising below 2200ft, heading 085° at 100kt, that he spotted an ac 100yd ahead and 20ft above, coming straight towards him. He instinctively pushed the stick forward and went underneath the ac with only feet to spare. He believed the ac, which apparently did not see him, was also a Cessna. He was shaken for a time and then went back to Farnborough Radar.

UKAB Note (1): On the telephone he described the contact as a shadow.

He acknowledged that his description of the Airprox is brief.

It is now his policy to track even closer to the Gatwick CTA as the area is very congested; this is exacerbated by the direction of the Shoreham RW and the 'tunnelling' of the Gatwick CTA. He has long thought this to be a dangerous area and in his view all ac flying there should have Mode S and be in receipt of a LARS service from Farnborough. He also believes the Mayfield VOR is badly sited for same reason.

He reported the incident initially to the UKAB by telephone several days after the incident assessing the risk as being high.

UKAB Note (2): The reported time of the incident was 1230 UTC. Enquiries revealed that the reporting ac did not depart Guernsey until 1241, and was eventually identified from its elementary Mode S, to the N of Shoreham Airport at 1403.

UKAB Note (3): The recording of the Heathrow 10 and 23cm, the Pease Pottage and the Gatwick 10 cm radars were all viewed; the Gatwick 10 cm provided the best coverage. A further telephone call

to the reporting pilot revealed that although he was confused regarding the time of the event, he was certain that the event took place to the N of Shoreham Airport and that something flew directly above him. During the telephone conversation he stated the following: "something definitely cast a shadow over me, and I suppose it could have been a cloud or a bird". The radar recording only showed one track getting very close to him, but this track passed 1200ft directly below his ac at 1403:33 in a position 7nm NW of Shoreham (the C172 was at 2200ft and the ac below was squawking 7000 at 1000ft). At 1404:36 the C172 passed about 1nm N of the last seen position of a disappearing primary only contact about 5nm NW of Shoreham. At 1408:33 the C172 passed about 2nm S of the last seen position of another disappearing primary only contact about 6nm NNE of Shoreham. The C172 then tracks 085°, passing 4.6nm N of Shoreham at 1406:51 and at an alt of 2200ft; it continues roughly on that track until 1411 when the recording ends with the ac positioned 11nm NE of Shoreham at alt of 2400ft. No other primary or secondary contacts can be seen within 5nm of the reporting ac. (See also ATSI report below).

ATSI reports that the Airprox was reported by the pilot of a C172 operating VFR, on a flight from Guernsey to Rochester. The pilot's written report indicated that the Airprox occurred 8nm to the N of Shoreham at 1230 UTC. The second aircraft is unknown.

The Shoreham controller was operating a combined Aerodrome and Approach control position, without the aid of surveillance equipment.

CAA ATSI had access to the RTF and radar recording, together with the C172 pilot's written report. Shoreham ATC was not aware of the reported Airprox.

METAR EGKA 261250 15005KT 9999 3000S VCFG FEW002 18/16 Q1021=
METAR EGKA 261320 15005KT 9999 3000S VCFG FEW002 19/16 Q1021=
METAR EGKA 261350 15005KT 9999 VCFG FEW002 19/16 Q1021=
METAR EGKA 261420 13006KT CAVOK 20/17 Q1020=

The C172 called Shoreham APP at 1353:55. [Note: this is at variance with the time indicated in the pilot's written report]. Radar recordings show the C172, squawking 5022 (Farnborough LARS) at a position 20.4NM SW of Shoreham. The C172 pilot reported at 3000ft descending to 2400ft from Guernsey to Rochester via the Shoreham overhead. The Shoreham controller agreed a BS, passing the QNH of 1021 and TI on VFR traffic passing S of Shoreham Westbound at 2400ft; the pilot acknowledged the TI and reported 'turning inland a bit'.

At 1357:08, the C172 pilot reported an intention to pass 10nm N of Shoreham at 2500ft and advised going back to Farnborough on 123.15MHz but the Shoreham controller reported that this Farnborough frequency was incorrect and requested that the C172 pilot report N of Shoreham, which the pilot agreed.

During the period that the C172 was in receipt of a BS from Shoreham, radar recording shows the C172 passing abeam 3 other aircraft, at 1358, 1403 and 1404 (see below). However none of these was considered to have been the Airprox as described in the C172 pilot's written report.

At 1358:21 radar recording shows the C172 tracking NE, at a position 14nm W of Shoreham, indicating FL023 and passing 1nm NW abeam traffic Westbound indicating FL025. The ac maintain their respective levels.

At 1403:33, radar recording shows the C172, positioned 7.1nm NW of Shoreham and indicating an altitude of 2200ft. Also shown is an ac on a reciprocal track squawking 7000 and indicating an alt of 1000ft; both ac maintain their respective levels.

At 1404:36, radar recording shows the C172, 5.5nm NW of Shoreham, tracking NE, indicating an altitude of 2200ft and passing 1.3nm NW of a primary contact, tracking SW.

At 1406:15, the C172 pilot reported N abeam and the Shoreham controller transferred the ac to Farnborough LARS. Radar recording shows the C172 position as 5nm NNW of Shoreham indicating an alt of 2100ft on an E'ly track.

From the information and data available to CAA ATSI, it was not possible to determine the position or time of the reported Airprox and the second aircraft remains untraced.

The Shoreham controller was not aware that an Airprox had occurred.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the C172 pilot, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar recordings, reports from the air traffic controller involved and reports from the appropriate ATC authorities.

Members noted the incident took place in an area of very good radar coverage and that there were no contacts, either primary only or SSR, in the vicinity of the C172 at the (corrected) time reported. From track following and Mode S data, the Secretariat was satisfied the track they identified was that of the C172 concerned and that the C172 was in the area at the (corrected) time. Members therefore agreed that the object reported was most likely not a light ac or helicopter. Although they could not be certain, they believed that it had not been a glider due to the confines of the airspace in the area but it was possible that it could have been a microlight, paramotor or some other non-painting ac.

Members were surprised that the C172 pilot did not remain with Farnborough LARS or call Gatwick APR as either would have been able to provide radar derived information if they had the capacity.

Although the Board supported the C172 pilot's decision to report the incident, in this case they had scant information to support their decision making process.

Due to the lack of reliable supporting information, Members were unable to assess the degree of risk or offer a cause more definitive than a possible conflict; they accepted that it might have been an actual conflict but were unable to identify or trace the other ac.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A possible encounter in Class G airspace.

Degree of Risk: D.