

AIRPROX REPORT No 2011073

Date/Time: 10 Jul 2011 1515Z (Sunday)

Position: 5155N 00111W
(3nm WNW Bicester)

Airspace: Oxford AIAA (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Nimbus 3 Glider BE90

Operator: Civ Pte Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 2500ft NR
QNH (1011mb)

Weather: VMC CLBC NR

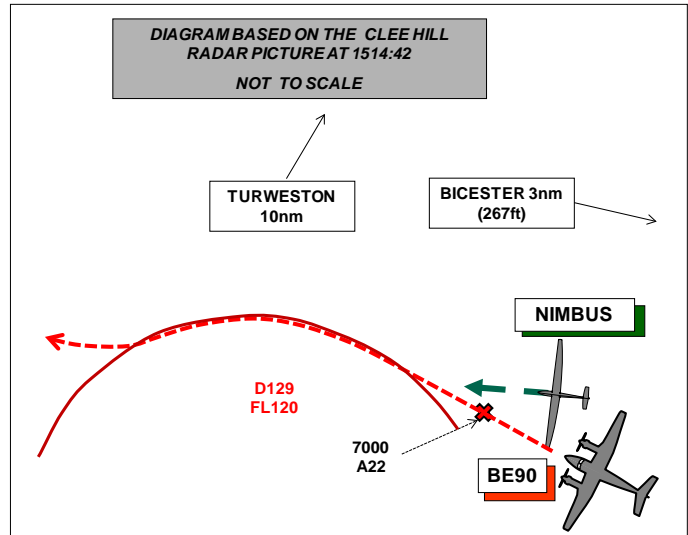
Visibility: 20nm NR

Reported Separation:

0ft V/50-100ft H 200ft V/1.5nm H

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE NIMBUS 3 GLIDER PILOT reports soaring in a white glider while listening out on a gliding frequency. While he was just to the N of D129, heading 270° at 55kt, a BE90 flying over the W edge of Bicester Town, overtook him very close to his L wing at the same height. [2nm SW of the centre of Bicester Glider Launch Site]. He first saw the BE90, which was brown with 'cheat' lines, 50-100ft away just behind his L wing tip and overtaking him, but it had passed before he had time to react.

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

The glider pilot believes that the BE90 pilot showed a lack of judgement in flying at speed over a town very close to two gliding clubs, on a Sunday afternoon in summer.

THE BE90 PILOT report was submitted almost 4 months after the event following several prompts by the Secretariat. He was flying a private VFR flight to Turweston in a white ac with red and black stripes, squawking with Modes C and S and TCAS was fitted. He recalls seeing a white glider about 1.5nm away and made a gentle turn to the L to avoid it. He considers that the event was not an Airprox suggesting that the glider pilot had been startled by his ac.

ATSI reports that the Airprox was reported by the pilot of a Nimbus Glider who was not in receipt of an ATC service.

Although the radar recordings show no returns corresponding to an ac at the position and time of the reported incident, at 1513 a contact is seen displaying A7000 at alt 2300ft, approximately 6nm SE of Upper Heyford. The ac routed W along the N boundary of D129 (South of Upper Heyford) and then departed the area to the W. The ac continued its flight until appearing to manoeuvre for a landing at Turweston aerodrome at 1523.

UKAB Note 1: The recording of the Cleve Hill radar showed a contact believed to be the BE90 as stated in the ATSI report above, tracking along the N edge of D129 at an alt of 2200ft, passing close to the reported incident position at 1514:42. An intermittent primary only contact can be seen in the area of the reported incident but it disappears just after 1514:23. The track of the BE90 (indicating A22, heading 290°) passed very close to the last seen position of the contact at 1514:35.

UKAB Note (2): The BE90 that landed at Turweston is predominantly white with 2 dark coloured 'cheat' lines.

UKAB Note (3): Bicester is promulgated as a Glider Launch Site, HJ, (winch/ground tow and tug/motor glider) up to 3000ft aal site elev 267ft.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, radar recordings and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

Members were satisfied that the BE90 identified was the one involved in the Airprox despite the significantly differing pilots' estimates of the separation.

The Board was disappointed that it took the BE90 pilot almost 4 months to submit a report as, due to the time elapsed, it most likely reduced its accuracy significantly and thereby probably the overall accuracy of the investigation.

Members also noted that the incident occurred in an area that is severely limited by local airspace constraints, is busy, particularly with gliders, and presents a choke point to ac transiting N to S or vice versa at lower levels. Although Members considered it wise to avoid the area they understood that in some circumstances this is not possible. If it is necessary to fly through the area, it is prudent to moderate ones airspeed to provide more time to see and avoid other traffic. When reviewing the pilots' reports, Members noted that the glider pilot reported that the BE90, which he described accurately, was very close and appeared from behind his left wingtip as it overtook him. Although the BE90 pilot reported that he saw a glider, Members agreed that it was most likely not the reporting ac, but another Weston or Bicester launched ac in the area. In good weather which is conducive to soaring with white cumulus cloud, gliders are notoriously difficult to see, particularly when viewed head or tail on (the glider pilot reported heading 270°); however pilots should anticipate them and avoid areas such as this where they are known to congregate. Although the BE90 had TCAS fitted, the glider was not SSR equipped and would not have been displayed. A Member familiar with Bicester/Weston on the Green operations informed that the Board that the latter is very busy, particularly at weekends, with mixed parachuting/gliding and some other GA movements, and it is commonplace for parachutists and more likely their dropping ac to operate right up to the extremities of the Danger Area; that being the case it is wise for ac not operating therein to give it a wide berth.

It was noted that although under the RoA, although the glider had right of way, the principle only works if pilots see (in time to avoid) the opposing ac; in this case neither did. Some Members thought that the glider pilot could have done more to improve his lookout in 'blind' areas particularly when on a straight and level glide.

Although the separation could not be determined accurately, since neither pilot saw the opposing ac in time to initiate any avoidance, Members agreed that in this incident, safety had not been assured.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Probably a non-sighting by the BE90 pilot and effectively a non-sighting by the Nimbus pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.