

## AIRPROX REPORT No 2011088

Date/Time: 24 Jul 2011 1143Z (Sunday)

Position: 5207N 00047W (2nm N  
Newport Pagnell)

Airspace: LFIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Discus B P51 Mustang  
+ Spitfire

Operator: Civ Pte Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 2500ft 3000ft  
agl QNH

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLBC

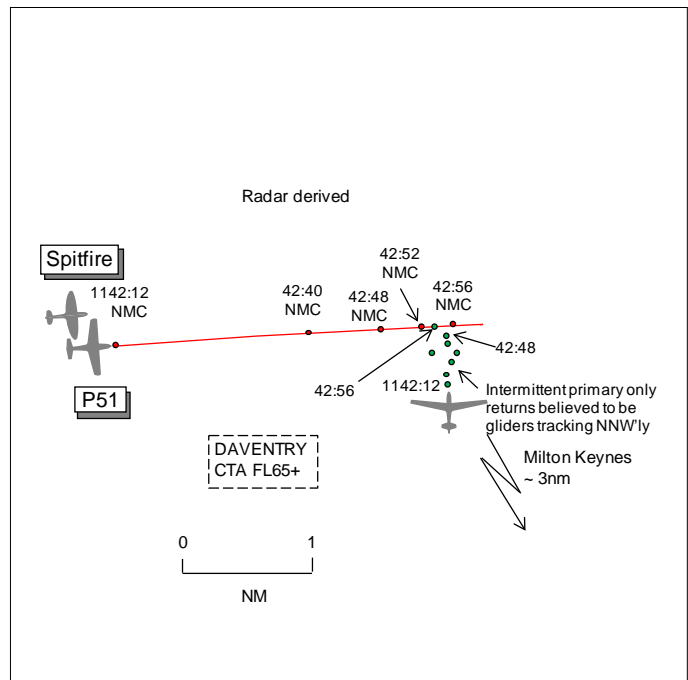
Visibility: 40km 20km

Reported Separation:

50ft V/Nil H 200ft V/Nil H

Recorded Separation:

<0.1nmH



## PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

**THE DISCUS B PILOT** reports thermalling with 2 other gliders 4nm W of Cranfield at 2500ft agl and not in communication with any ATSU. The visibility was >40km flying clear below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured white; no lighting was fitted. The ASK21 glider in front turned N and a glider behind his ac turned W. He followed the ASK21 approximately 600ft behind, 200ft to its R and 400ft below. About 3nm N of Newport Pagnell whilst OH the M1 heading 330° at 60kt he noticed a movement to his L 9 o'clock and slightly low. He looked just in time to see a P51 Mustang, coloured dark gloss green on the upper surfaces, about 100ft away and 50ft or less below which was in formation with a Spitfire, coloured glossy 2-tone grey, positioned to the Mustang's L and slightly behind. He only had a brief second or less to violently pull-up, his glider's nose was just beginning to lift as the pair passed underneath diverging in his 3 o'clock. He assessed the risk as high.

**THE P51 MUSTANG PILOT** reports en-route to Duxford VFR leading a Spitfire in echelon port and not in communication with any ATSU but in contact with the Spitfire on a discrete frequency, squawking 7000 with Mode C switched off. The visibility was 20km flying below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured green/silver with no lighting fitted. About 3nm NW Milton Keynes heading 090° at 3000ft QNH and 190kt 2 gliders, flying in-trail, flew over the formation heading approximately NW'ly. The formation had gently descended as the risk of collision was deemed negligible, passing 200ft below them.

**THE SPITFIRE PILOT** reports in loose formation with the P51 Mustang, 60m ahead in his 2 o'clock returning to Duxford. They were level at 3000ft using a discrete frequency and were aware of several large gliding competitions in the area and had seen numerous gliders during the flight. He spotted 2 gliders in their 12 o'clock at 0.75nm range and at a similar level flying straight and level, 1 behind another about 400m apart. The rear glider was about 100ft higher than the front glider and they were moving from R to L and their formation was going to pass just behind the front glider but close to the second one. He called "gliders ahead" to the lead pilot and glanced over to see that the lead pilot was already looking at them and he acknowledged his call on the radio. He initiated a gentle descent to increase separation on the second glider and the lead ac was seen doing the same. He passed about 100m in front of, and about 200ft below, the second glider. As he passed the glider commenced a L turn. He believed there was no risk of collision.

UKAB Note (1): The Heathrow radar recording 1142:12 shows a 7000 squawk with NMC, believed to be the P51 and Spitfire formation, 5nm NW of Milton Keynes tracking 085°. Ahead by 2.5nm are intermittent primary only returns, believed to be gliders including the Discus B, tracking predominantly NNW'ly. The P51/Spitfire formation continues on a steady track and at 1142:48 a primary only return is seen in the formation's 1230 position range 0.3nm. On the next sweep the primary return fades but then reappears at 1142:56 in the formations 6 o'clock with 0.1nm separation.

## **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

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

Members noted that the P-51 pilot had elected to switch-off Mode C on his ac's transponder, contrary to the guidance promulgated in the UK AIP. This recommends that the transponder is operated with pressure altitude enabled in order to facilitate detection of their ac by collision avoidance systems (ACAS) and ATC radar. As this Airprox occurred in Class G airspace both pilots had equal responsibility to maintain separation from other ac through see and avoid. Undoubtedly the Discus pilot was surprised when he caught a glimpse of the P-51 and Spitfire formation as they were about to pass under his glider from L to R, he thought by 50ft. He had had good SA on the 2 adjacent gliders and he had elected to follow the ASK21 ahead when the formation underflew. His natural reaction to pull-up was ineffective as the formation was already crossing before the glider responded to his control inputs. Meanwhile, both pilots in the formation had seen the ASK21 and Discus following behind, converging on a crossing track from R to L, about 0.75nm ahead and had commenced a gentle descent to increase separation, estimating they passed 200ft below and just in front of the Discus. However, in doing so Members agreed that the P-51 and Spitfire flew close enough to cause concern to the Discus pilot which had caused the Airprox.

Looking at risk, although the passage of the formation appeared close to the Discus pilot, Members agreed that the P-51 and Spitfire pilots were always in a position to adjust their flightpaths further if necessary and that their actions had been effective in removing any risk of collision.

## **PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK**

Cause: The P-51 and Spitfire flew close enough to cause the Discus pilot concern.

Degree of Risk: C.