

AIRPROX REPORT No 2011156

Date/Time: 30 Oct 2011 1306Z (Sunday)

Position: 5142N 00208W (O/H Aston Down G/S - elev 600ft)

Airspace: LFIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Ka13 Europa

Operator: Civ Club Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 1200ft↑ 2000ft
QFE QNH

Weather: VMC CLOC VMC CLOC

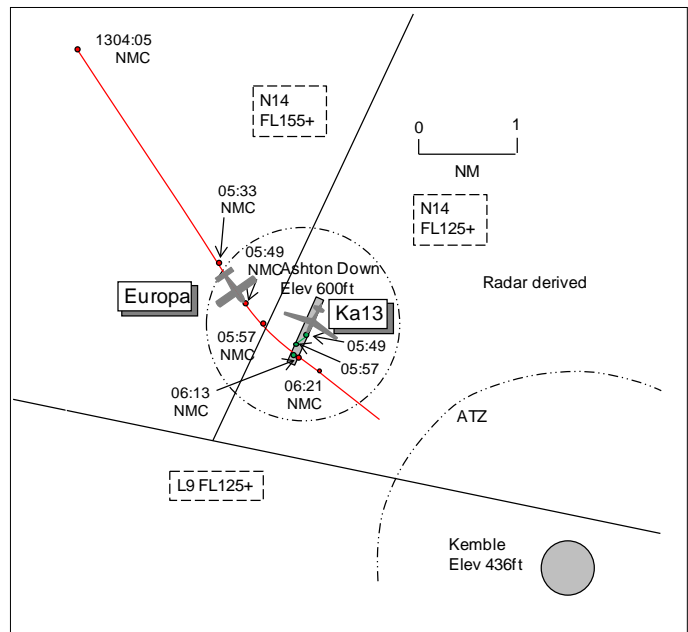
Visibility: >10km >20nm

Reported Separation:

200ft V 250ft V

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE KA13 PILOT reports flying in the rear seat of the glider on a winch launch flown by a trainee instructor at Aston Down; no radio was fitted. The visibility was >10km in VMC and the glider was coloured red/white with no lighting fitted. Heading 210° at 60kt and 1200ft agl as they reached the top of launch at the S end of RW21 pitched upwards at about 30°, he saw an ac 250-300m away approaching from their R and about 200ft below. The cable was released and as the nose of the glider was lowered he pointed out the ac to his pupil. The other ac, a Europa continued towards them and under-flew them by 200ft on a SE'yly track towards Kemble. The incident was observed from the launch point by personnel at the N end of the airfield and by the winch driver who saw that the Europa was O/H and a little N of the winch, well within the airfield perimeter. An instructor at the launch point telephoned Kemble who informed them of the ac's details. There was no risk of collision with his ac, as he was well above the Europa, but it had flown through an area where seconds earlier there had been a steel cable. If it had hit the cable the consequences would almost certainly have been catastrophic. The Gliding Club has permission to cable launch to 3600ft amsl and this is marked on the CAA chart.

THE EUROPA PILOT reports inbound to Kemble from Shobdon VFR and in receipt of a BS from Gloster Approach on 128.95Mhz squawking 7000 with Modes S and C. The visibility was >20nm in VMC and the ac was coloured white: no lighting was reported. Heading 130° at 2000ft QNH and 100kt O/H Aston Down he saw a glider 200yd ahead in a shallow turn to the R and he flew underneath it by 250ft with no need to take avoiding action as there was adequate vertical separation. He acknowledged that he should have diverted around Aston Down, but he was off-track and failed to do so and he assessed the risk as low.

ATSI reports that there was no RT media available from Kemble. The unit was contacted and there was a note of the incident in their log and the FISO had no recollection of any event. As the CA1094 from the Europa pilot was received 3 months after the incident, the Gloucestershire RT recording media had been put back into service so no ATSI investigation was possible.

UKAB Note (1): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-1-3 promulgates Aston Down as a Glider Launching Site centred on 514228N 0020750W where aero-tows take place and winch/ground tows may be encountered up to 3000ft agl between sunrise and sunset; site elevation 600ft amsl.

UKAB Note (2): The Clee Hill radar recording does not capture the CPA. At 1304:05 a 7000 squawk is seen, believed to be the Europa, 3.7nm NW of Aston Down tracking 145° and showing NMC. The Europa continues on a steady track and by 1305:33 is 1.1nm NW of Aston Down. Sixteen seconds later at 1305:49, when the Europa is 0.6nm WNW of the glider site, a primary return pops-up, believed to be the Ka13 glider, in its 11 o'clock range 0.7nm. The next sweep 8sec later at 1305:57 shows the separation reducing 0.4nm with the Ka13 tracking 220°. The KA13 then fades from radar as the Europa is seen to pass close to the upwind end of the Aston Down RW21 turning L to track 130° towards Kemble. On the next sweep at 1306:21 a pop-up primary return re-appears in the Europa's 6 o'clock range 0.3nm as the Europa clears to the SE.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

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

This Airprox highlights clearly the dangers associated with flying O/H a glider site when winch launches are taking place. The airspace hazard is clearly marked on the 1:250,000 and 1:500,000 topographical charts and due regard should be taken by pilots of ac transiting through the area of active glider sites by giving them a wide berth. On this occasion, the Europa pilot was off-track and flew through the Aston Down O/H whilst a glider was on the winch wire approaching the top of the launch. Fortunately the Ka13 pilot saw the approaching Europa to his R and was able to release the cable before the Europa underflew his glider, both pilots reporting similar separation distances. However the concern to Members was the close call that the Europa pilot had of impacting the winch cable, which would have been catastrophic. Members considered whether the launch party had discharged their responsibilities by clearing the airspace into which they were launching. An experienced Member opined that at the Europa's speed it was borderline whether it could have been detected by the ground party ahead of commencing the launch. Also there are hangars to the N of Aston Down which would have delayed visual acquisition of an approaching ac until a later stage than ideal. By flying over Aston Down the Europa pilot had placed his ac into conflict with the winch wire and the Ka13 which had caused the Airprox. Fortunately the Ka13 pilot saw the Europa in enough time to release the cable before the ac crossed however the Board were clear that safety had been compromised during this encounter.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The Europa pilot flew O/H a promulgated and active glider site below the maximum height of the winch cable while gliding was taking place.

Degree of Risk: B.