

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010007

Date/Time: 19 Feb 1441

Position: 5154N 00108W (0.75nm SSW
Bicester G/S - elev 267ft)

Airspace: Oxford AIAA (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reporting Ac

Type: PA34 Discus B

Operator: Civ Comm Civ Club

Alt/FL: 2500ft 2100ft
(RPS 992mb) (QFE)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLOC

Visibility: >10km 30km

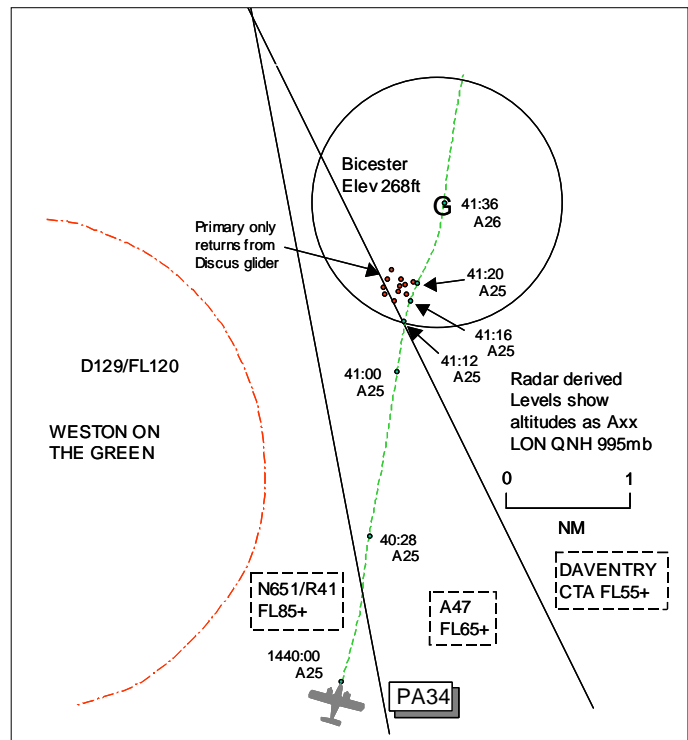
Reported Separation:

Nil V/200m H Nil V/30-50m H

Recorded Separation:

<0.1nm H

BOTH PILOTS FILED



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE PA34 PILOT reports flying enroute to Leeds VFR and in receipt of a BS from Brize on 124.275MHz, squawking 3715 with Modes S and C. The visibility was >10km flying 1000ft below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured white/red/blue with strobe lights switched on. About 2nm E of Bicester Glider Site heading 010° at 145kt and 2500ft RPS 992mb [actually 990mb] she saw a glider, as it banked L from straight and level flight, in her 12 o'clock range 0.5nm at the same level. She disconnected the A/P and turned R to increase separation whilst the glider continued in a steep, near 90° bank, L turn and passed down her LHS by 200m. She assessed the risk as high

THE DISCUS B PILOT reports flying a local soaring flight VFR and in communication with Bicester Launch-point on 129.975MHz. The visibility was 30km in VMC and the ac was coloured white with no lights fitted. After 45min of flight he was turning L in a thermal over the SE corner of Bicester airfield at 2100ft QFE and 60kt. He first saw the twin-engine ac when it was approaching from the S on a collision course about 30-50m away at the same level. He pulled hard in the turn and lowered the nose, the other ac continuing on its course heading N across the airfield where winch launching was taking place. The other ac was silver in colour with red registration letters but it passed too quickly to read the registration. He assessed the risk as high.

BRIZE SATCO reports the PA34 flight called Brize LARS at 1431:07 for a BS when NW of CPT, tracking towards DTY, the pilot reporting at 2500ft on a pressure of 991mb. A squawk of 3715 was given along with the Cotswold QNH of 990mb. No other transmissions were made between LARS and the PA34 pilot until she was told to squawk 7000 and freecall enroute agency (1442:28). During the period of the incident Brize LARS was working at a medium intensity controlling 3 to 4 TS tracks and another BS track. The controller was unaware that any incident had occurred and does not recall whether the vicinity of Bicester appeared busy with gliders whilst the PA34 transited through the area. If gliders were in the vicinity of Bicester producing radar returns, according to JSP 552 when in receipt of a BS, 'The avoidance of other traffic is solely the pilot's responsibility' and therefore the controller was not obliged to call any traffic.

HQ AIR ATM SAFETY MANAGEMENT endorsed the Brize unit (SATCO) report.

UKAB Note (1): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-1-1 promulgates Bicester as a Glider Launching Site centred 515458N 0010756W active during daylight hours with aerotows and with winch launching up to 3000ft agl, site elevation 267ft amsl.

UKAB Note (2): The Heathrow radar recording at 1440:00 shows the PA34 3.9nm SSW of Bicester Gliding Site, tracking 010° and indicating altitude 2500ft London QNH 995mb with a primary only return, believed to be the subject Discus glider, 3.1nm ahead. Over the course of the next minute the glider return manoeuvres in, what appears to be, a LH orbit about 0.7nm SSW of the Gliding Site whilst the PA34 continues on a steady track. As the PA34 reaches a position 1nm SSW of Bicester at 1441:12 the Discus is 0.2nm ahead. Four seconds later at 1441:16 the PA34 is seen to commence a R turn but the Discus glider has faded from radar before reappearing on the next sweep at 1441:20 in the PA34's 7 o'clock range 0.2nm. By interpolation, the CPA, which occurs during the radar fade period of the Discus, is estimated to be within 0.1nm; the Discus pilot reported flying at 2100ft QFE (2367ft QNH) at the time of the Airprox. Thereafter, the PA34 tracks 030° for a brief period before regaining its 010° track, passing O/H Bicester at 1441:36 indicating 2600ft London QNH 995mb.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and reports from the appropriate ATC authorities.

From her written report, the PA34 pilot believed she was 2nm E of the gliding site when the incident occurred. By inference, it appeared that she was planning to remain clear of the gliding site, which is clearly marked on the 1:250,000 and 1:500,000 topographical charts, whilst flying VFR. The radar recording shows the PA34 tracking 010° and approaching the gliding site from the S on a steady track at 2500ft LON QNH with the primary return from the glider orbiting ahead, the CPA occurring about 0.75nm SSW of the site. Under a BS from Brize within the Class G airspace of the Oxford AIAA, the PA34 pilot was responsible for maintaining her own separation from other traffic through see and avoid. Similarly the Discus B pilot had an equal responsibility to avoid other traffic although he had right of way. However, Members agreed that the PA34 pilot's chosen flightpath had placed the flight into conflict with the Discus B and this had caused the Airprox.

Turning to risk, the PA34 pilot saw the glider 0.5nm ahead and altered course to the R estimating the glider passed 200m clear on her LHS. The Discus pilot was thermalling L and, after sighting the PA34, albeit late (an estimated 30-50m away), he increased his AOB into a steep L turn with a descent, belly-up to the PA34. Members believed that the actions taken by both parties had been enough to ensure that the ac were not going to collide but the ac passed with separation margins reduced and with safety compromised.

The lesson identified from this encounter is that when flying close to a promulgated site, an encounter with a glider is likely and therefore a wide berth should be given. That said, of more consequence is the far greater potential hazard of an impact with the winch cable if crossing O/H the site below the promulgated maximum height, in this case 3000ft agl (3267ft amsl). Fortunately there was no launch in progress when the PA34 pilot flew O/H Bicester after the Airprox.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The PA34 pilot flew into conflict with the Discus B in the vicinity of a notified and active gliding site.

Degree of Risk: B.