

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010026

Date/Time: 24 Mar 1537

Position: 5120N 00131W (1nm E
Rivar Hill G/S - elev 730ft)

Airspace: FIR (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: K8 Glider SK76

Operator: Civ Trg Civ Comm

Alt/FL: 1600ft 2500ft
(QFE 978mb) (QNH)

Weather: VMC CLBC VMC CLBC

Visibility: 10km 10km

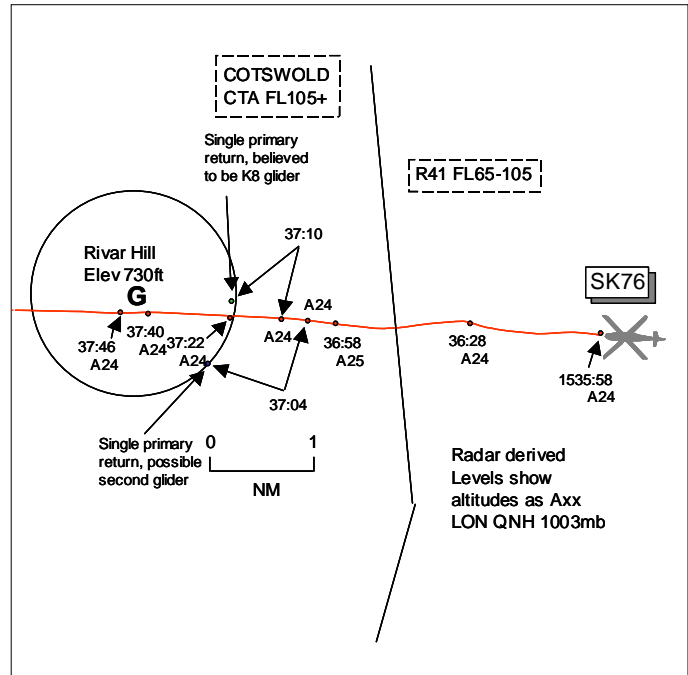
Reported Separation:

20ft V/100yd H *200ft V/0.5nm H

Recorded Separation:

NR

*not the reporting glider



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE K8 GLIDER PILOT reports flying a local solo sortie from Rivar Hill non-radio. The visibility was 10km flying 400ft below cloud in VMC and the ac was coloured green/white. Soaring in weak lift about 0.25nm E of Rivar Hill heading 180° at 35kt and 1600ft QFE 978mb he heard a helicopter and spotted it about 0.25nm on his port side heading 270° and closing rapidly. He dived his glider to accelerate out of the helicopter's flightpath and provide vertical separation. The helicopter, an Agusta type, he thought, passed about 20ft above and 100yd behind, maintaining course and speed and showing no sign of having seen his glider. He assessed the risk as high. The helicopter then passed O/H Rivar Hill, a winch launch site with permission to launch to 3000ft agl, thus infringing the cable hazard. The incident was seen by the Duty Instructor, who was airborne in another glider about 0.5nm to the S at 1300ft QFE, and personnel on the ground.

THE SK76 PILOT reports flying enroute to a private site near Bristol VFR and in receipt of a BS from Farnborough and then Lyneham squawking an assigned code with Mode C; TCAS 1 was fitted. The visibility was 10km in VMC, although poor flying into sun, and the ac was coloured blue. Heading 280° at 140kt and 2500ft QNH he saw a white glider converging from his 10-11 o'clock range 900m and 200ft below. At the same time as he saw it, the glider started a descent and turn so no avoiding action was taken. He assessed the risk as low.

UKAB Note (1): The SK76 pilot was contacted by the UKAB Secretariat to clarify his viewpoint of the incident owing to the disparate reporting of the geometry by both pilots. He confirmed that he only saw the glider to his L and did not see any glider crossing ahead from R to L.

ATSI reports that the SK76 flight established communication with Farnborough LARS (W) at 1528 reporting "...just airborne from Blackbushe en route to a private site near Bristol in the climb to Two Thousand Five Hundred feet squawking Seven Thousand requesting Basic Service". After a slight delay, whilst the controller dealt with other traffic, the pilot of the SK76 was advised of the QNH and "...it's a Basic Service squawk Zero Four Three Zero". The pilot confirmed receipt of a BS. The helicopter is seen to change squawk at 1535:08, when it is 19.5nm from Blackbushe. No further contact was made with the SK76 until 1538, when it was transferred to Lyneham, to remain on the same squawk. At the time, it had just passed Rivar Hill, which is situated approximately 26nm from Blackbushe.

'A Basic Service is an ATS provided for the purpose of giving advice and information useful for the safe and efficient conduct of flights. Basic Service relies on the pilot avoiding other traffic, unaided by controllers. It is essential that a pilot receiving this service remains alert to the fact that, unlike a Traffic Service and a Deconfliction Service, the provider of a Basic Service is not required to monitor the flight. Pilots should not expect any form of traffic information from a controller, as there is no such obligation placed on the controller under a Basic Service outside an ATZ, and the pilot remains responsible for collision avoidance at all times'.

UKAB Note (2): The UK AIP at ENR 5-5-1-5 promulgates Rivar Hill as a Glider Launching Site centred 512038N 0013235W active during daylight hours with winch launching up to 3000ft agl; site elevation 730ft amsl.

UKAB Note (3): The Airprox is not captured on recorded radar. The Pease Pottage radar recording at 1535:58 shows the SK76 4.6nm E of Rivar Hill tracking 270° indicating altitude 2400ft London QNH 1003mb. The SK76 continues on a broadly W'ly track reaching a position 1.5nm E of Rivar Hill at 1537:04 with a single pop-up primary contact, believed to be the second glider reported by the K8 pilot, in its 11 o'clock range 1nm. On the next radar sweep 6sec later at 1537:10 another single pop-up primary contact appears, believed to be the K8, in the SK76's 1230 position range 0.5nm. Thereafter, no other returns appear that could possibly be gliders close to Rivar Hill, the SK76 passing through the Rivar Hill O/H between sweeps at 1537:40 and 1537:46 at 2400ft QNH.

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.

Whether the SK76 pilot had planned to fly directly O/H the gliding site whilst flying VFR is not known; however, the gliding site is clearly marked on the 1:250,000 and 1:500,000 topographical charts. The radar recording shows the SK76 on a steady W'ly track approaching the glider site from the E at 2400ft LON QNH before transiting directly O/H post Airprox. Members agreed that best practice was to take due regard of the airspace and its activities during the planning stages before flight and then plan and fly the route accordingly. As the incident occurred in Class G airspace both pilots were responsible for maintaining their own separation from other traffic through 'see and avoid'. Although the SK76 was under a BS from Farnborough, the controller was under no obligation to monitor the flight or pass TI. The SK76 pilot, who was flying into sun, recalled seeing a white glider out to his L but not the green K8 crossing ahead; the K8 pilot heard and then saw the helicopter, albeit late, 0.25nm away to his L. Members agreed that the non-sighting by the SK76 pilot and late sighting by the K8 pilot had been the cause of the incident.

Although the K8 pilot had right of way, he fortunately saw the approaching SK76 on his LHS and dived his glider to avoid it, which the GA/Glider Member opined was probably the only option available owing to the glider's low performance. The SK76 was then seen to pass 20ft above and 100yd behind maintaining its course and speed. Taking these elements into account the Members believed that the robust action taken by the K8 pilot had been just enough to remove the actual collision risk but with the ac passing in close proximity, unsighted by one pilot, safety had not been assured during the encounter.

The same lesson was identified in this Airprox as that in 2010007 - when flying close to a promulgated site, an encounter with a glider is likely and therefore a wide berth should be given. The far greater potential hazard was that of an impact with the winch cable if crossing O/H the site below the promulgated maximum winch height, in this case 3000ft agl (3730ft amsl). Fortunately no launch was in progress when the SK76 pilot passed O/H Rivar Hill.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A non-sighting by the SK76 pilot and a late sighting by the K8 pilot in the vicinity of a notified and active gliding site.

Degree of Risk: B.