

**AIRPROX REPORT No 2010132**

Date/Time: 5 Aug 2010 (Thursday) 1147Z

Position: 5134N 00102W (5nm  
S Benson)

Airspace: Lon FIR (Class: G)  
Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Lynx GLIDER

Operator: HQ JHC NK

Alt/FL: 3000ft NK  
(QNH 1006mb)

Weather: VMC CLBC NK

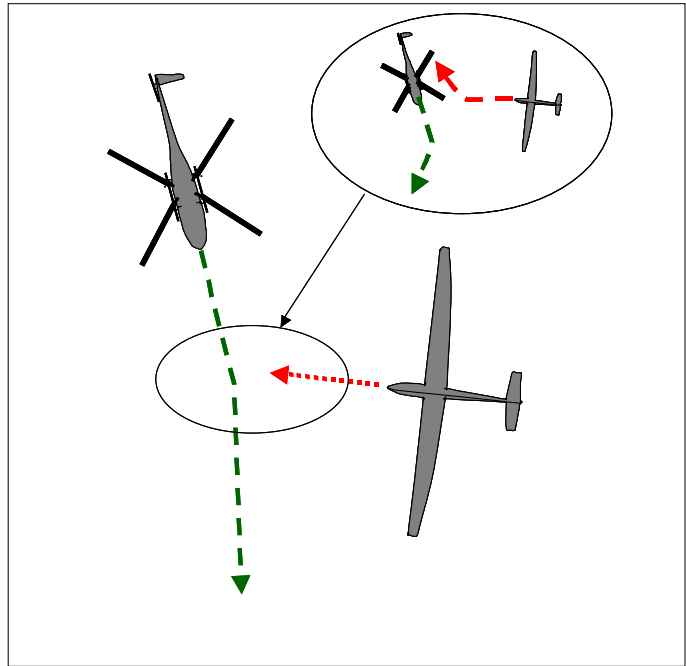
Visibility: 40km NK

Reported Separation:

0 V/ 80m H NK

Recorded Separation:

NR



**PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

**THE LYNX PILOT** reports that he was flying an Instrument Flying exercise between RAF Benson and Middle Wallop with a PAR to 'Low Approach' at Odiham en-route. He was ac commander and handling pilot in the left seat with his No 2 pilot as safety pilot in the right seat; they were in receipt of a TS from Benson and were squawking as directed with Modes C and S. The Airprox occurred shortly after they departed from Benson while they were level at 3000ft (Benson QNH) and heading 170°. There were many TI reports from ATC of other [he thought] ac in the area and he was aware that a gliding competition was taking place at Bicester, so both his 2nd pilot and himself were exercising extra vigilance and he was carrying out a regular lookout even though he was under a helmet mounted IF hood. While beginning one such lookout scan he caught a glimpse of an object in his 10 o'clock, looked up and identified it as a modern, white, fiberglass glider 200m away, at the same level and heading directly towards them. He immediately banked the ac hard right and the glider simultaneously initiated a roll to the right for avoidance. He estimated the glider was within 100m of his ac when he lost sight of it behind his door frame. They continued on track towards Odiham, and did not see the glider again. An initial report of the event was made to Benson APP, followed by a full Airprox Report 3-5min later.

He assessed the risk as being high.

Despite extensive tracing action, the glider pilot could not be identified.

UKAB Note (1): The recording of the Heathrow 23cm radar shows the Lynx throughout, squawking 3615, tracking 175° at FL031. At 1145:21, an intermittent primary only contact, presumed to be the glider, pops up at 3nm in the Lynx's 11 o'clock. The Lynx continues to close with the primary contact which tracks 280° until 1146:46 when it disappears from radar when under ½nm away in the Lynx's 1030 position. The CPA is not recorded but the Lynx can be seen to turn right at 1146:55.

**HQ AIR BM SM** reports that the transcript time code appears to lag the radar replay by around 4sec; consequently, the transcript times have been amended to bring them into line with the radar replay.

At 1145:18 APP passed accurate TI to the Lynx on the glider describing the contact as "left eleven o'clock, four miles, crossing left right, no height information." While CAP774 states that:

“controllers shall aim to pass information on relevant traffic before the conflicting aircraft is within 5 nm”

In this case, given the slow speeds of the ac, the TI was considered timely even though first passes when the ac were 4nm apart.

APP updated the TI on the glider at 1146:44 saying, “*previously called traffic twelve o’clock, half a mile crossing left right, no height information;*” however, the glider’s primary contact had disappeared from the radar recording [not necessarily APP’s display] as it was being called. While the CPA is not captured on the replay, there is no reason to believe that the loss of data occurred on the Watchman display at the unit. It is possible to extrapolate from the replay that at the point that the TI was updated, the glider was actually in the 11 o’clock position at ½ nm, rather than 12 o’clock, with the glider moving towards the 10 o’clock position given the ac’s relative speeds, in keeping with the Lynx pilot’s description. The CPA probably occurred at around 1146:51 immediately prior to the Lynx pilot’s sighting report, with the Lynx’s avoiding action turn to the right becoming apparent on radar at the next sweep at 1146:56.

**HQ JHC** comments that with hindsight, the decision by the Lynx crew to stay ‘under the hood’ simulating IF was not sound. They appear to have been aware of the risk of flying in airspace that is likely to have been occupied by numerous gliders and were convinced that the extra vigilance they were using was appropriate in these circumstances. The crew stated that ATC was busy with traffic being called and it appears from their report and the HQ AIR BM SM report, that the glider was called appropriately. Arguably, having already made the decision to compromise the simulated IF scan with extra lookout from under the hood, it would have been better to come off instruments completely for a period of time until the airspace became less congested. If the glider had been fitted with SSR then the information passed could have been more detailed. The fact that the crew did not see the glider until the last minute suggests that the glider was difficult to see.

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

Information available included reports from the Lynx pilot, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar recordings, reports from the air traffic controller involved and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

Although the incident did not take place at low level, the Low Flying Ops Advisor informed the Board that on the day the incident took place there were a number of gliding competitions in the southern half of UK and they had sent representatives to several locations to ensure that timely, accurate and informative NOTAMS were issued. Members agreed that it is inadvisable to conduct simulated IF at the same altitudes as gliders operate, at times when there are notified competitions resulting in a high density of glider traffic. On such occasions, a military Member pointed out, at least one RAF Station had ceased all non-essential flying since there were too many gliders in the operating area. The Board agreed that it was unwise to programme this type of training sortie for a period when glider traffic was likely to be most intense.

Controller Members observed that Benson APP had on two occasions passed timely and accurate warnings of the primary contact (the glider involved), but the TI apparently had not been assimilated or reacted to by the Lynx crew, since the radar recording showed the ac continuing to track directly towards it. Controller Members agreed with HQ Air BM SM, that in these circumstances the TI had been passed at the appropriate time, even though later than the guidance in CAP774 (UK Flight Information Services).

Despite the factors described above, the incident took place in Class G airspace where the pilots of both ac shared a responsibility to see and avoid other ac. Since the Glider could not be traced, Members could not ascertain whether the pilot had seen (or heard) the Lynx or whether he had reacted to it. Under the Rules of the Air the Lynx should have given way to the glider and did so,

albeit at a late stage when the ac were separated by only 200m. The Board considered that the lateness of the sighting and subsequent avoiding action had caused an erosion of normally accepted safety standards. Members agreed, even accepting that gliders are hard to see and that safety pilot was looking across the cockpit, the glider should have been visible to him, particularly assisted by timely warnings from Benson APP. If this lookout responsibility could not be complied with, and given the density of glider traffic encountered, pilot Members unanimously agreed with the HQ JHC comment that the IF exercise should have been terminated, despite the pressure to continue in order to complete the syllabus.

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

Cause: Late sighting by the Lynx crew; the glider was untraced and it could not be determined whether or when its pilot saw the Lynx.

Degree of Risk: B.