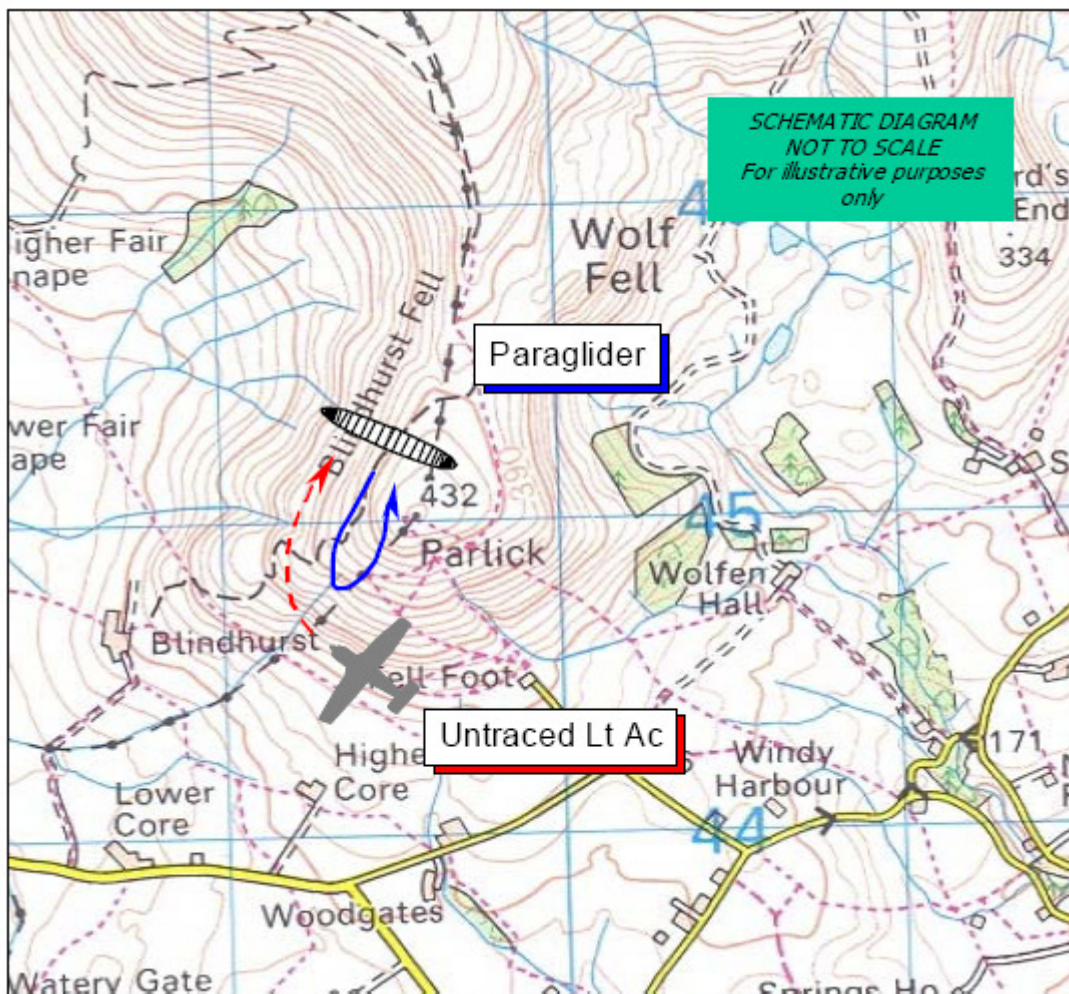


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AIRPROX REPORT NO 115/07

Date/Time: 1 Aug 2007 0900
Position: 5354N 00237W (Parlick)
Airspace: London FIR (Class: G

	<i>Reporting Ac</i>	<i>Reported Ac</i>
Type:	Paraglider	Light Ac Untraced
Operator:	Civ Pte	N/K
Alt/FL	1400ft	NR amsl
Weather	VMC CLBC	NK
Visibility:	100km NR	
Reported Separation:	Nil V/20yd H	NR
Recorded Separation:	Not recorded	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE GIN ZULU PARAGLIDER PILOT reports he was soaring the hill at Parlick on his own, parallel to the western facing slopes in a southerly wind, at about 420-430m [~1377-1410] just level with the top when he heard a light ac (LA) coming around the corner to the S. He expected it to cut straight across the bowl away from the ridge to the W, but the LA just turned N and contoured the hill at about his level or slightly higher. Knowing about the 'rotor' wash a paraglider can take from a LA he became very worried as the ac headed "straight for him" with no avoiding action. He had two choices, try and ride the 'rotor' and risk a collapse or turn into the hill onto a downwind leg, which he did. He turned L NNE'ly at 10-20kmph and landed hard, taking quite a knock. At the closest point the LA passed about 20yd to the W. He assessed the risk as "high".

THE RADAR ANALYSIS CELL (RAC) AT LATCC (MIL) reports that the absence of any detailed information, coupled with no recorded radar data on the LA to assist the trace have prevented the RAC from identifying the reported LA. Therefore, despite exhaustive enquiries the LA remains 'untraced'.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available was unfortunately, only a report from the paraglider pilot. Clearly the absence of any other amplifying information had prevented the RAC from identifying the reported LA here. Consequently, without a report from the LA pilot the investigation was very unbalanced and it was therefore difficult for the Board to come to any meaningful conclusions. However, there was no reason to doubt the veracity of the paraglider pilot's report and it seemed at face value to be a very close call. The paraglider pilot's account reflected that the LA had been masked by the terrain until he spotted it approaching from around a hill. Members deduced from the paraglider pilot's account that he was poorly placed by the sudden appearance of conflicting traffic and with few options available, his elected recourse was then to turn downwind and land. The glider pilot Member cited this Airprox as an example of what can happen if aeroplane pilots fly too closely to windward facing slopes where paragliders can be encountered at any time. Wiser airmanship would be to give such likely sites a wider berth until it could be clearly established that no other ac are around. Some Members suggested that the cause might be that the untraced LA pilot flew sufficiently close to the paraglider to cause it's pilot concern, but this presupposed that the LA pilot might have seen the paraglider, which could not be determined. In assessing Cause and Risk the Board could only base their assessment on what had actually happened rather than what might have occurred if circumstances had been slightly different. Here, the paraglider pilot saw the LA and elected to turn towards the hill and land to avoid it, thus on the limited information available the Board could only conclude that this Airprox had been the result of a conflict with an untraced LA, which had been resolved by the paraglider pilot.

Clearly, in effecting a downwind landing the paraglider pilot was increasing the potential risk of injury to himself from a fast, hard landing - a risk that had to be balanced against a possible collision. Here it was worth pointing out that the Board was under remit to assess an Airprox on the basis of risk of collision with another ac, which did not encompass the overall compromise to a pilot's safety by having to land downwind, with all that this potentially entails; nor would it necessarily encompass any potential for the collapse of his wing from the effects of turbulence induced by the LA's passage. Fortunately, the paraglider survived the hard landing relatively unscathed but he should not have been placed in that situation by the LA pilot in the first instance. However, it was clear that the paraglider had limited time to detect and sight the LA, deduce where it was going and decide what to do. Having elected wisely to get out of the way of the LA and forestall a collision by turning downwind to land, this still apparently resulted in a mere 20yd horizontal separation at the closest point as the LA flew past. On this basis the Board concluded unanimously that the safety of the paraglider and the untraced LA had been compromised.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Conflict resolved by the Paraglider pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.