

Piper PA-25-235, G-ASLK

AAIB Bulletin No: 7/2001 **Ref:** EW/G2001/05/16 **Category:** 1.3

Aircraft Type and Registration: Piper PA-25-235, G-ASLK

No & Type of Engines: 1 Lycoming O-540-B2C5 piston engine

Year of Manufacture: 1963

Date & Time (UTC): 12 May 2001 at 1330 hrs

Location: 1 mile south of Nympsfield Airfield, Gloucestershire

Type of Flight: Training

Persons on Board: Crew - 1 - Passengers - None

Injuries: Crew - None - Passengers - N/A

Nature of Damage: Glider damaged - Both wings and a broken canopy

Commander's Licence: Private Pilot's Licence

Commander's Age: 46 years

Commander's Flying Experience: 118 hours (of which 52 were on type)
Last 90 days - 10 hours
Last 28 days - 5 hours

Information Source: Aircraft Accident Report Form submitted by the pilot

The Piper Pawnee was being operated as a glider tug from Nympsfield airfield and was flown by an experienced glider pilot familiar with the local area. The weather was fine with visibility estimated at 20 km in bright hazy sunshine and a cloudless inversion at 2,700 feet. Surface wind was 080°/12kt and the glider/tug combination climbed out to the east before the glider was released at 2,200 feet QFE approximately one mile east of the airfield. Also airborne were three other gliders, two of which were soaring on the ridge, which drops away from the north side of the airfield and one thermalling to the south of the field.

The tug pilot had noted the position of the two gliders on the north ridge and following the right turn after glider release began a descent at about 120 MPH streaming the 60 metre tow rope. The intention was to carry out a right hand circuit keeping clear of the activity on the north ridge and drop the tow rope at the glider launch point before making an abbreviated left hand circuit to land.

A KA13 glider was in a right hand orbit to the south of the airfield carrying out a familiarisation flight with the instructor seated in the front seat and the passenger in the rear. The tug was making a gentle left turn with the pilot monitoring the progress of the two gliders on the north ridge and, whilst maintaining a lookout ahead, positioning to turn right base. The tug speed was reduced to 100 MPH and at that speed the pilot estimated that the metal ring on the end of the tow rope was

trailing approximately 5m below the tug aircraft. As the tug pilot levelled the aircraft wings she immediately saw the KA13 glider about 200 metres ahead on a collision course at a high closing speed. At the same instant the glider pilot saw the tug coming towards him and slightly above. Both pilots took immediate avoiding action with the glider diving and continuing the right turn and the tug pilot turning hard left and applying full power to climb away. The Pawnee pilot felt a slight tug on the tow rope and realised that it had contacted the glider. The end of the rope struck the port wing of the KA13, smashed the cockpit canopy and then struck the starboard wing. The rear seat passenger received minor cuts and scratches from the broken perspex.

The pilot of the tug aircraft considered that, whilst concentrating on keeping a good separation from the gliders on the north ridge, she had not seen the KA13 south of the airfield. The long nose of the Pawnee possibly obscured the glider and with both aircraft turning to the south the relative positions were unchanged. A white paper placard on the top of the black instrument coming was also noted to reflect on the perspex, creating a blind spot. The placard has been removed and the club is considering fitting a device which permits the tow rope to be reeled in and stowed for descent and landing.