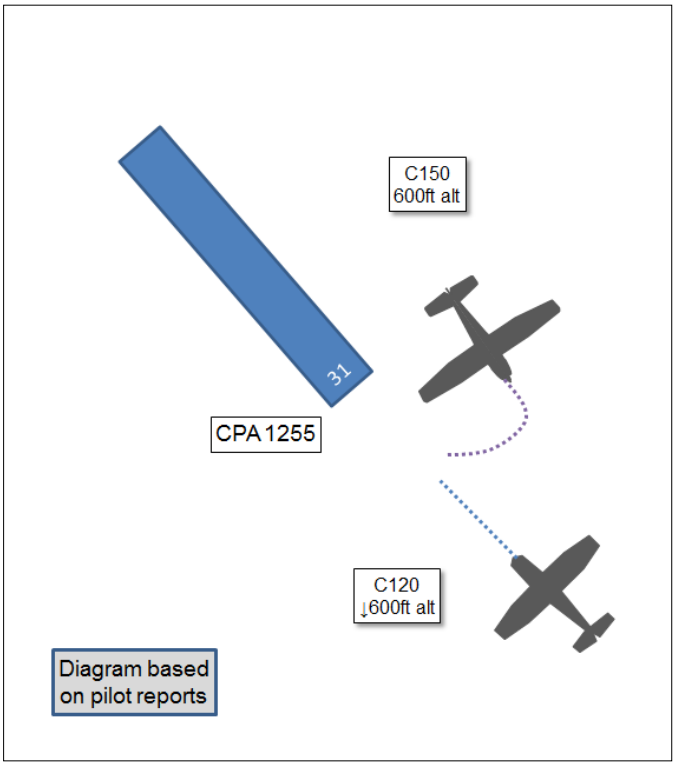
AIRPROX REPORT No 2016029

Date: 03 Mar 2016 Time: 1255Z Position: 5227N 00118E Location: Hardwick

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Cessna 120	C150
Operator	Civ Pte	Civ Pte
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	AGCS	None
Provider	Hardwick	Safety Comm
Altitude/FL	NK	NK
Transponder	A, C	Not fitted
Reported		
Colours	Red	Red, White, Blue
Lighting	NK	NK
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	600ft	4-500ft
Altimeter	QFE (1000hPa)	Norwich QNH (1004hPa)
Heading	310°	NK
Speed	60kt	60kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	NK
Separation		
Reported	200ft V/600m H	
Recorded	NK	



THE CESSNA 120 PILOT reports that he had been carrying out work on his aircraft in the company of an LAA inspector. He conducted several satisfactory ground engine runs, after which it was decided that he would perform air-test circuits. The appropriate runway was RW31, and right-hand circuits gave him the option of being able to use the alternate grass runway. He got airborne at 1240 and reported his circuit position on the unmanned radio frequency, Hardwick Ops 129.75 MHz. On his 2nd circuit downwind, he became aware of a C172 (he believed) on short finals for RW31; he didn't believe the other pilot had announced his intentions on the frequency. He extended his downwind leg, checking for other traffic before turning base and completing a satisfactory touch-and-go. On his 3rd circuit, having reached mid-point on finals to land, he became aware of a C152 (sic) in his 2 o'clock descending from right to left. Initially its approach was on a constant bearing to him, before it began a curved approach to the right, approximately 600m ahead to establish on finals. The other pilot had not called on the Hardwick Ops frequency, nor taken into account that the C120 was already established on finals. He was left with no other choice than to take avoiding action and go-around, passing to the C152's right shortly after it touched-down. He later discovered from the C172 pilot that both aircraft had been using a 'safety comm' frequency, not the Hardwick Ops frequency. Disappointingly, when he later discussed the event with the C152 pilot he reported that the other pilot became offensive and unrepentant.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE CESSNA 150 PILOT reports that his aircraft had been undergoing some maintenance at Derby and he had enlisted a friend to take him there in his C182 to pick up his aircraft. Both pilots had then returned to Hardwick separately. After an uneventful flight to Hardwick, he positioned to join the circuit downwind at 1200ft and saw the C182 was already in the circuit. He positioned behind it and arrived at the downwind position just as the C182 was turning finals. His final turn was at about 1nm from the runway threshold. Just before turning he checked the extended centreline and saw a red

high-wing aircraft at what he estimated to be between 3 or 4 miles out and about 800-1000ft, possibly positioning for a straight-in approach. At this point he was between 4-500ft and he elected to carry on as he was lower and ahead of the other aircraft. He completed a normal approach and touched down with full flap using approximately 250yds of the runway. He then backtracked and was vacating the runway when the red aircraft flew directly overhead at about 50ft and high speed. He taxied in and shut down and, after about 10 minutes, the red aircraft landed and taxied in. The pilot jumped out and proceeded to shout abuse at him. He defied all attempts by the C150 pilot, or the other people present (the C182 pilot and passenger) to calm down and refused to discuss anything so the C150 pilot left the airfield. He opined that the C120 pilot had joined long finals and probably didn't see either the C182 or the C150 in the circuit until he was on the runway.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

Factual Background

The weather at Norwich was recorded as follows:

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METAR COR EGSH 031220Z 27008KT 240V340 9999 FEW018 SCT024 07/02 Q1004 NOSIG=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The C120 and C150 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard[1]. When two or more heavier-than-air aircraft are approaching an aerodrome or an operating site for the purpose of landing, aircraft at the higher level shall give way to aircraft at the lower level, but the latter shall not take advantage of this rule to cut in front of another which is in the final stages of an approach to land, or to overtake that aircraft[2].

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a C120 and a C150 flew into proximity at 1255 on Thursday 3rd March 2016. Both pilots were in the visual circuit at Hardwick and operating under VFR in VMC. The C120 pilot was on the Hardwick Ops frequency and the C150 pilot was operating on Safety Comm.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted only of reports from the pilots of both aircraft.

The Board first wondered why the two pilots were operating on different frequencies. In trying to discover how other pilots might find out what frequency to use or who to contact at the airfield, an extensive internet search by a UKAB inspector did not bring up the Hardwick frequency, nor even a telephone number to contact anyone at Hardwick. Neither did Pooley's guide list Hardwick at all, and a subsequent conversation with SATCO Norwich highlighted that the frequency was thought to be allocated to KLM at Norwich. It was only on checking with CAA Spectrum that it was confirmed that the frequency 129.750 MHz was licensed to Eye Technology for use as an 'operational control' frequency at Hardwick farm strip. Operational Control frequencies are normally used for non-ATC communications such as ground handling agents, or company frequencies for flying schools and airlines, but their use does sometimes evolve with time into a more general frequency, particularly at quiet airfields. It was believed that the frequency was on display within the hangars, but noting how difficult it was to find out this information elsewhere, members opined that it was hardly surprising that the C150 and C182 were using Safety Comm, and the Board agreed that if it was intended that all users of Hardwick were to employ the Eye Technology frequency, Hardwick operators should

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way, (4) Landing, (i).

endeavour to publicise the frequency more widely to prevent such confusion in the future. Notwithstanding, given that all the pilots were either regular users of Hardwick, or delivering aircraft to the hangars there, the Board still could not understand why there should be such confusion over which frequency to use.

Looking at the actions of the C120 pilot, the Board noted that he had reported that he was established in the circuit, on what he believed to be the Hardwick frequency and was surprised by the appearance of the other two aircraft. He reported that he had completed a touch-and-go after the C182 had made his approach and was on a subsequent circuit when the C150 cut in front of him. Board members agreed that if this scenario were correct then the C120 pilot would have had right-of-way and would not have expected another aircraft to cut in front of him. However, members also noted a disparity in the report from the C120 pilot and that of the C150 pilot in that the C120 pilot reported having completed a touch-and-go and 3rd circuit between the C182 landing and his sighting of the C150 on finals. For his part, the C150 pilot had reported that he was following the C182 around the circuit and had landed after it, which was not coherent with the C120's recollection. The C120 pilot had also reported that he flew past the C150, to its right, shortly after it had touched down, whereas the C150 pilot reported that he had come to a halt, backtracked and was vacating the runway before the C120 flew past, which indicated much more separation on the final approach.

Turning to the actions of the C150 pilot, he had reported joining the circuit at a similar time to the C182 and, because the two pilots were operating on what they thought was a suitable frequency (Safety Comm), no doubt neither of them expected another aircraft to be in the circuit. The C150 pilot reported that he turned base behind the C182, and on checking finals saw the C120 at some distance conducting what seemed like a 'straight-in approach'. Members wondered whether the C120 pilot had extended his circuit to fit in behind the C182 and whether this was why it seemed to be at some distance to the C150 pilot. However, recalling again the C120 pilot's assertion that he had conducted a touch-and-go after the C182 had landed, it did not seem that the extension of his circuit for the C182 was relevant to the incident with the C150. A discussion then ensued about what was likely to have been the actual sequence of events but members found the differences between the two reports impossible to reconcile.

Unfortunately, the incident was too low for the NATS radars to have detected the aircraft and so the Board had no independent verification of the event. With this in mind, the Board felt that it could not come down on one side or the other. On the one hand it seemed that the C120 pilot thought that the C150 had cut in front of him, whilst on the other hand the C150 pilot assessed that there was plenty of room ahead of the C120 on a very long final approach, and so there was ample room to complete his circuit ahead as the lower aircraft, or so he thought. As a result, the Board therefore decided that probably the best way to describe the incident was simply as a conflict in the visual circuit. Similarly, when it came to assessing the risk, although some Board members thought that this was probably a Category C incident because both pilots were visual with each other, the Board eventually agreed that, without knowing more definitively how close the two aircraft actually were, this incident should be assessed as Category D, not enough information.

The Board expressed its disappointment that two pilots operating out of the same airfield could not amicably resolve the situation after the event. They wholeheartedly urged all the operators at the airfield to resolve any operational differences and, at the very least, agree what frequency pilots should use at Hardwick. Once determined, they also urged the operators to publicise this in an easily searchable manner so that a similar incident did not occur again, be it with resident pilots or visitors.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in the visual circuit.

Contributory Factor: The 2 pilots were on different R/T frequencies.

Degree of Risk: D.