

Avoiding collisions – a monthly update from Director UK Airprox Board giving some learning themes for recreational pilots.

The UK Airprox Board reviewed 25 Airprox this month and 11 of these were what we term 'risk-bearing' in that a serious risk of collision existed or safety was not assured (Airprox classified as category A or category B). Six of the 25 incidents were drone Airprox, and this reflects the overall increase we have seen in drone Airprox reports in 2015 (there were 39 incidents involving objects in 2015, of which 29 were positively reported as drones). Aside from the drone incidents, 7 Airprox occurred between aircraft operating within, joining or passing by airfield visual circuits; poor airmanship decisions were evident in 6 Airprox; 7 Airprox were late/non-sightings in Class G airspace; and 5 Airprox resulted from controller errors or inadequate Traffic Information.

Airprox in the visual circuit remain my number one concern at present. Accepting that aircraft obviously converge on airfields to land or get airborne (and therefore potentially face greater exposure to collision risk in this environment), that is exactly why there are clearly defined procedures for how to operate predictably and safely. Most Airprox in the visual circuit result from pilots not following procedures, not integrating properly, or pressing on when they do not have sufficient situational awareness about other aircraft in the circuit. All of which is wholly avoidable by thinking ahead, being considerate to other pilots, or simply asking for more information to clarify matters. In particular, remember the handy tip for overhead joins – keep the airfield to the same side as the circuit direction – and you won't go far wrong. In other words, right-hand circuits - keep the airfield on the right as you approach; left-hand circuits - keep it to the left. That way you'll naturally be positioned to turn in the right direction as you commence your overhead join.

To illustrate the need to be sure about other aircraft in the circuit as you join, my *Airprox of the month* this month occurred when a PA28 and an SR20 came close-aboard in the Lee-on-Solent visual circuit. The PA28 was already established in the visual circuit as the SR20 joined downwind and, despite being told by the A/G operator that the PA28 was in the circuit, the SR20 pilot continued inbound without first sighting the PA28. Although it is worth noting that only downwind joins are permitted at this airfield, it behoves the joining aircraft to give way to those already in the circuit, and to establish where the other aircraft are before joining. The PA28 pilot had to roll hard left to avoid the SR20 which appeared at close range (100-150ft), crossing from his left-hand side, as it flew towards the downwind leg. The full report of this incident (**Airprox 2015194**) can be found on the UKAB website (www.airproxboard.org.uk) in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section.

