

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

The Airprox Board reviewed 25 incidents in the September 2016 meeting. Of these, 13 were assessed as risk-bearing (Category A or Category B); albeit 9 of these risk-bearing events involved drones/unmanned air systems. The remaining 4 risk-bearing events involved a R22 that was joining at Wycombe Airfield and came into proximity with a C152 downwind; an SR20 that was taken by surprise when the formation of Yaks he was overflying suddenly split and one turned sharply up and towards him; a Spitfire came close to a Grob near Halfpenny Green due to a late-sighting and non-sighting respectively; and a C172 was surprised by a Slingsby that flew from above and behind as it was conducting aerobatics. Common themes this month included poor airmanship decisions in 9 incidents; 6 Airprox involving late- and non-sightings; and 9 examples of poor integration within, or lack of avoidance of, ATZ/Glider Sites.

The number of drone incidents continues to cause concern. So far this year we have seen 70 Airprox involving drones/unmanned air systems; most of these are against commercial airliners near the larger airports, but we are seeing increasing numbers in the wider Class G airspace now. I suspect that as they become cheaper their popularity in rural areas will increase so keep your eyes open for drones and keep your height up as much as possible in order to avoid flying in the airspace in which they are likely to be - CAA rules don't mandate a maximum height for drones but they have to be in visual line of sight, which is generally taken to be up to 400ft (or 1000ft if they are flying using first-person-view).

My **Airprox of the month** this month was a Cat C incident involving a Maule and a PA28. As suggested by its categorisation, there was no actual risk of collision, but **Airprox 2016092** did highlight a couple of useful points. In essence, the Maule pilot didn't see the PA28 on his right until it passed beneath. For his part, the PA28 pilot had seen the Maule a long way out but, being on the right, knew that the Maule should give way, and so he didn't react to the conflict (other than flash his landing light) until making a last-minute descent. Rules of the air notwithstanding, self-preservation suggests that an early jink to avoid would have been appropriate on first sighting by the PA28 pilot in order to break the conflict well before coming into proximity – don't assume the other pilot has seen you just because you have seen him. This incident also raised the issue of electronic conspicuity; the cost of such kits is coming down rapidly, so now might be the time to start thinking about the options. The full report can be found on the UKAB website at (www.airproxboard.org.uk) in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section within the appropriate year in the 'Individual Airprox reports' tab.

