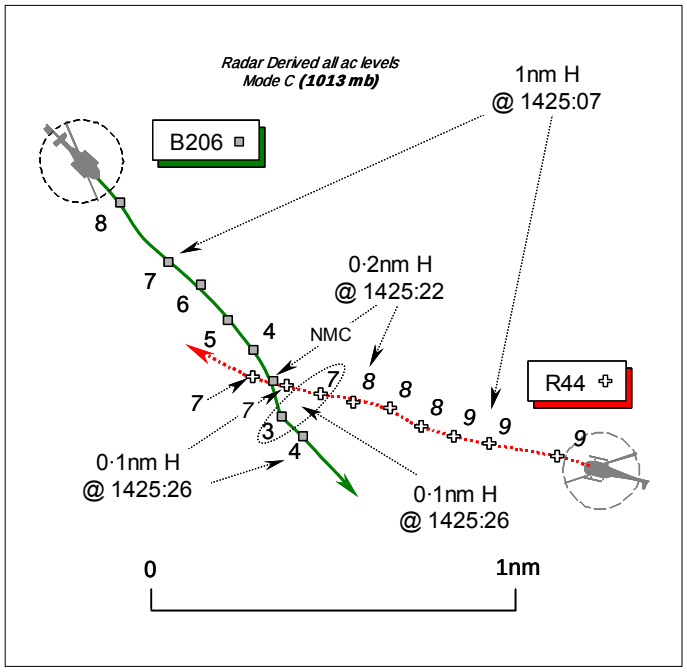
AIRPROX REPORT No 2010047

Date/Time:	4 May 2010 (Tuesday) 1425Z	
Position:	5342N 00232W (4½ nm SSE of Samlesbury)	
Airspace:	London FIR	(*Class:* G)
	Reporting Ac	*Reported Ac*
Type:	Bell 206B	Robinson R44
Operator:	Civ Comm	Civ Pvt
Alt/FL:	1000ft QNH (1027mb)	NR NR
Weather: *Visibility:*	VMC CLBC 10km	VMC NR NR
Reported Separation:	200ft V/500m H	400ft V
Recorded Separation:	400ft V/0·1nm ~ 200yd H	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE BELL B206B JET RANGER (B206) PILOT reports he was conducting a pipeline survey VFR at 100kt, whilst in receipt of a BS from Warton APPROACH (APP) on 129·525MHz.

About 2min before the Airprox occurred APP reported an unknown contact in his 10 o'clock at a range of 3nm at the same level. He warned his observer and increased his lookout but continued with the pipeline inspection at 500ft agl – about 1000ft Warton QNH (1027mb) – in VMC some 3000ft below cloud. APP continued to issue warnings as the separation against the unknown ac decreased, but about 4½ nm SSE of Samlesbury at ½nm range he had not established visual contact and so elected to descend to low-level and turn R away from the pipeline. TCAS I then enunciated 'TRAFFIC'. As he descended to 300ft agl he saw a blue and silver R44 or R22 helicopter, sky-lined now in their 8 o'clock position about 500m away and about 200ft above him - as confirmed by his TCAS I display. His observer noted it was an R44, blue and silver in colour. He thanked Warton for their assistance and informed them that he would file an Airprox.

Warton APP had no radio communication with the R44 but tracked it to a landing site near Maghull. Subsequently, when he landed at Blackpool, some enquiries were made and he discovered the aircraft registration, he thought, and advised the R44 pilot that an Airprox would be filed. It was suggested that the other pilot had seen his Jet Ranger, but not until he had descended to low level.

His helicopter has a dark livery; the HISLs and pulse landing lights were all on. The pipeline conspicuity squawk of A0036 was selected with Mode C.

UKAB Note (1): The registration offered by the B206 pilot was subsequently found to be incorrect by one letter, as the suggested helicopter identification had not flown in this vicinity at all. However, the pilot of the R44 helicopter seen by the B206 pilot was subsequently traced.

THE ROBINSON R44 HELICOPTER PILOT provided a brief written account supplemented with further information provided in a telephone call to UKAB staff. He reports that he was returning from Rochdale to Blackpool [a track of about 290° - 28nm] under VFR in VMC, but not in receipt of an ATS. A squawk of A7000 was selected with Mode C; his helicopter has a blue and silver colour-scheme and the HISL was on.

In the vicinity of Darwin [2nm SE of the Airprox location] he saw the Jet Ranger from a range of about ⅔nm crossing ahead from R – L at low-level - about 700-800ft below his helicopter he estimated. He was unconcerned by this as the Jet Ranger appeared to be operating at low level. No avoiding action was warranted and he estimated the minimum vertical separation to be about 400ft. This was about all he could recall, but he stressed that he kept the Jet Ranger in sight throughout. He opined that in future, whilst in transit, he will call an appropriate ATSU and endeavour to elicit TI about ac operating nearby.

ATSI reports that the Jet Ranger pilot, on a pipeline patrol, established communication with the Warton APR at 1407. The pilot requested a BS routeing Nelson-Preston-Ramsbottom to Blackpool. The controller confirmed the BS and passed the Warton QNH (1027mb). The pilot read back the ATS and reported he would be not above 1500ft ALT. The controller commented *"Roger I see your squawk"*. The helicopter was squawking A0036 (Helicopter Pipeline/Powerline Inspection Flights).

At 1424, TI was issued to the Jet Ranger pilot *"traffic information for you southeast range 2 and a half…it's 15 hundred feet descending gonna go down your right hand side at the moment heading about 2-8-0"*. The pilot reported looking. The traffic information continued to be updated over the next minute.

APP	*"If you're on a steady heading he's half past 12 range 1 and a half"*.
Jet Ranger	*"roger still looking"*.
APP	*"Okay I see you in a right turn he's on your left side and just 1 hundred feet above you"*.
Jet Ranger	*"right dropping low level not seen at all"*.
APP	*"Okay traffic shows 2 hundred feet above left 10 o'clock a mile"*.
Jet Ranger	*"Got him visual thanks a lot sir we're dropping low low level to...stay..clear of him"*.
APP	*"Okay"*.

The pilot of the Jet Ranger described the traffic as probably an R44 helicopter.

A Basic Service is an ATS:

> '..provided for the purpose of giving advice and information useful for the safe and efficient conduct of flights. Basic Service relies on the pilot avoiding other traffic, unaided by controllers. It is essential that a pilot receiving this service remains alert to the fact that, unlike a Traffic Service and a Deconfliction Service, the provider of a Basic Service is not required to monitor the flight. Pilots should not expect any form of traffic information from a controller, as there is no such obligation placed on the controller under a Basic Service outside an ATZ, and the pilot remains responsible for collision avoidance at all times. A controller with access to surveillance derived information shall avoid the routine provision of traffic information on specific aircraft, and a pilot who considers that he requires such a regular flow of specific traffic information shall request a Traffic Service. However, if a controller considers that a definite risk of collision exists, a warning may be issued to the pilot'.

On this occasion the controller realised the potential for a close confliction and issued appropriate warnings to allow the pilot of the Jet Ranger to sight the R44.

The St Anne's radar recording [which was not that used by Warton] shows that as the two helicopters passed 0·1nm apart at 1425:26, the Jet Ranger was indicating 300ft (1013mb) – about 720ft QNH (1027mb) – with the subject R44 indicating 700ft (1013mb) - about 1120ft QNH (1027mb).

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequency, radar video recordings, and reports from the appropriate ATC authority.

Notwithstanding the caveats applicable to the provision of TI under a BS, the APR evidently believed that a definite risk of collision existed here and astutely issued warnings to the B206 pilot in the form of a number of transmissions of TI. The steady flow of pertinent TI provided enabled the B206 pilot to formulate a good mental air picture, which ultimately enabled him to take effective action to forestall a close quarters situation. The Board commended the Warton APP controller for the conscientious service he provided to the B206 pilot, however, it was important to point out that pilots should not expect this as the norm under a BS. There is no compunction on the part of the controller to identify or monitor a flight under a BS and pass this intensive level of information. It was fortunate, therefore, that the APR was not constrained by other more pressing tasks and was able to do so here.

It was clear that each pilot was legitimately proceeding about their respective tasks and Members noted that the B206 pilot had wisely elected to interrupt his task and descend out of harm's way. Although the TCAS I would have also contributed to the B206 crew's SA as they descended, they had only spotted the small R44 helicopter after it started to draw L down the port side, some 400ft above him the unverified Mode C of the R44 reflected at the CPA of 0·1nm.

The R44 pilot was plainly unconcerned having spotted the B206 as it crossed ahead, without any warning from ATC, but after the B206 pilot had initiated his descent in avoidance, so from his perspective no avoiding action had been necessary. Members pointed out that it was always worthwhile communicating with local ATSUs whilst in transit. Useful information can be obtained merely from listening to other pilots' transmissions on the frequency; nevertheless, if pilots wanted to receive TI about other ac in the vicinity then a TS should invariably be requested.

The Board concluded that this Airprox had been the result of a conflict in Class G airspace that had been resolved by the B206 pilot, assisted by timely TI from the APR. Given the B206 pilot's prompt descent below the level of the R44 and the latter pilot's sighting, Members agreed unanimously that there had been no Risk of a collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G airspace resolved by the Bell 206B pilot, assisted by timely TI from the APR.

Degree of Risk: C.