AIRPROX Insight

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE May 2022

AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

What does Long Final mean to the circuit pattern?

Photo for illustration purposes: Brian Barr/Simon Finlay.

It can be a source of confusion, so ask for clarification if you are unsure of the position of other traffic

This month's Airprox (**2021241**) between a PA-28 and a TB10 is interesting because it's all about integration, communication, situational awareness and maintenance of the big picture, and rather neatly finishes my recent string of circuit related instances.

We have often discussed the overhead join and its utility, even if it might not seem expeditious; we've also spoken about downwind joins and even raised concerns regarding orbiting in order to increase separation, but I don't think we have specifically looked at an Airprox involving the integration of an aircraft directly from Final. In this case The TB10 pilot was conducting a long straight-in approach in an area where they noted that the Birmingham controlled airspace above would preclude a normal overhead join and that options were limited.

There was already a PA-28 in the circuit and the TB10 had called the AFISO and was to report 4nm. Up to this point it was for the TB10 to conform or avoid the pattern of traffic already formed in the circuit.

The board discussed the meaning of the 4nm call and wished to emphasise that it is actually the equivalent of a downwind call and would be treated as such by the AFISO and should be understood to be as such by all other circuit traffic.

In this instance, the TB10 pilot made the 4nm call before the PA-28 pilot made the downwind call and so would, at this point, be ahead of the PA-28. The PA-28 pilot took the decision to extend downwind and communicated that they would fit in behind the TB10.

Following the downwind extension the PA-28 pilot turned onto base leg, but was still not sighted with the TB10. Undoubtedly, they thought that the TB10 would have landed or be just about to land by this time and would be safely ahead — it was at this point that the two came into proximity.

So what can we learn from this? Ask for clarification if you are unsure of the position

of other traffic, be accurate at all times when making calls and employ defensive flying techniques whenever possible.

In this case the PA-28 pilot could have made an early go-around if they were unsure of the position of the other traffic. Don't assume that something must have gone past you just because you didn't see it and you felt that enough time had elapsed. The circuit is a busy place — you have to integrate with it at the beginning and at the end of every flight, even if your intention is just to depart or to make an approach to land.

It's critical that everyone is as diligent as possible and makes every effort to ensure that they know where everybody else is in relation to them. Always fly defensively, communicate effectively, and lookout assiduously.

Finally, Board Members noted that neither aircraft was fitted with any additional electronic conspicuity equipment which, on this occasion, might have provided some additional information to aid visual acquisition. It's for pilots to decide on their own requirements for additional equipment according to their needs, and the Board wished to highlight to pilots that additional funding has been made available for electronic conspicuity devices through the CAA's Electronic Conspicuity Rebate Scheme, which has been extended until March 31, 2023.

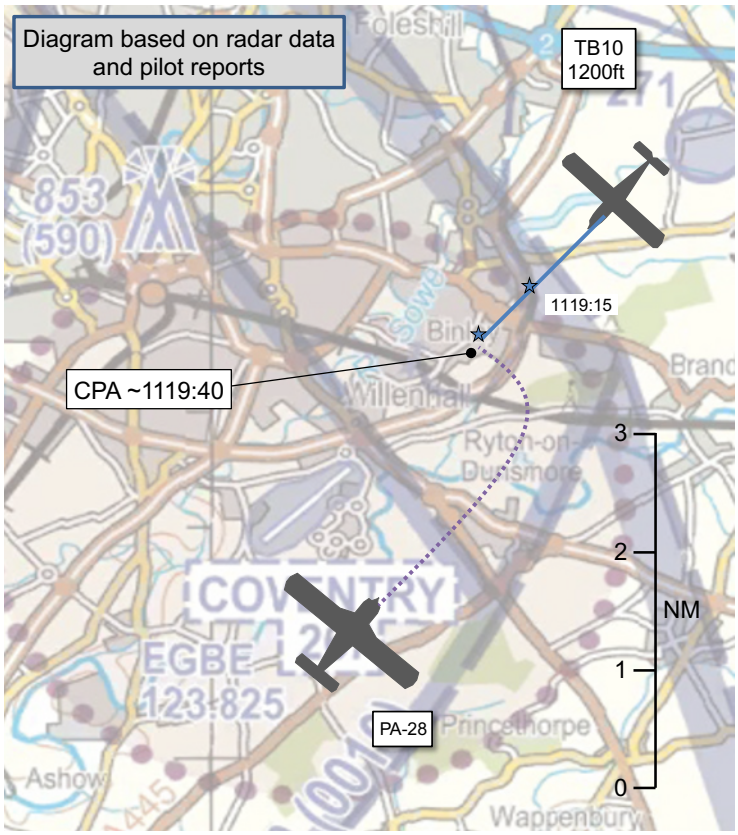
https://www.caa.co.uk/general-aviation/aircraft-ownership-and-maintenance/electronic-conspicuity-devices/

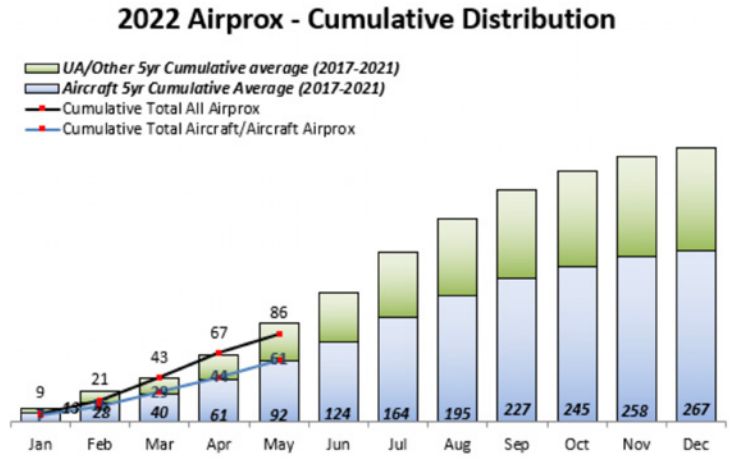
UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

Happily, the May Board contained the last of the 2021 Airprox. Overall, it's been an incredibly busy year which started off slowly and then leaped back to historic norms once the Covid restrictions were lifted fully.

We evaluated 172 aircraft-to-aircraft events, of which 92% involved a GA aircraft. The themes are common and the observations are consistent. Firstly, the Situational Awareness barrier is extremely weak; secondly, lookout is poor, procedures are not known or misunderstood and finally electronic conspicuity equipment is misused, misunderstood or misemployed.

We must remember, though, that when we are looking at Airprox, we are looking at the circumstances surrounding a bad outcome — not all flights end in an Airprox, but by understanding where things do go wrong, we can hopefully highlight them, talk about them and mitigate them with a view to making our flying more enjoyable and ultimately safer.





FLIGHT ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS
Situational Awareness and sensory events — pilot had no, late or only generic, Situational Awareness
Monitoring of other aircraft, non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots
Identification/recognition, late sighting by one or both pilots
Perception of visual information — pilot was concerned by the proximity of the other aircraft
Use of policy/procedures — regulations and/or procedures not complied with
ACAS/TCAS system failure — incompatible CWS equipment