

AIRPROX REPORT No 2014165

Date/Time: 7 Sep 2014 1411Z (Sunday)

Position: 5231N 00135E
(4.6nm NNW Beccles)

Airspace: London FIR (Class: G)

Aircraft 1 Aircraft 2

Type: EC135 Quik GT450

Operator: NPAS Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 1000ft 1300ft
QNH (1016hPa) NK (1016hPa)

Conditions: VMC VMC

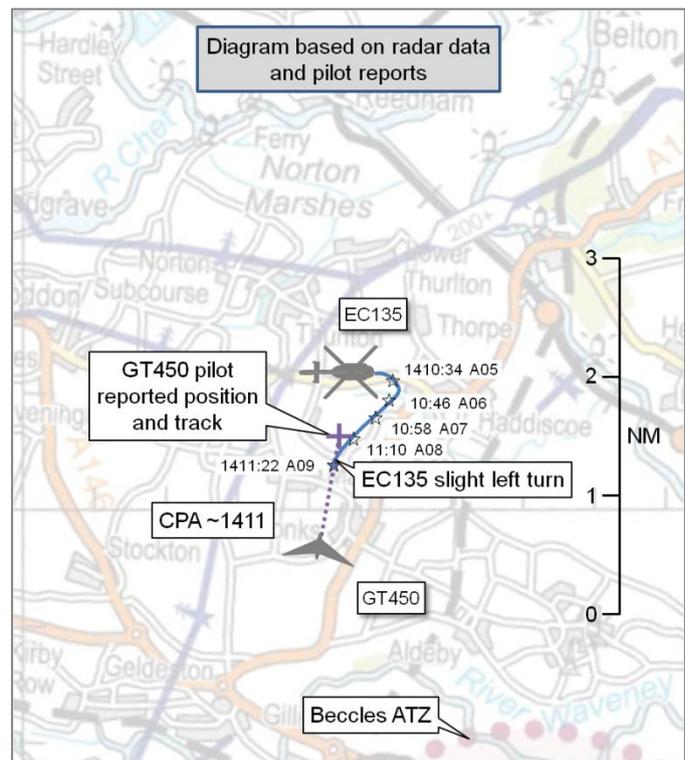
Visibility: >10km 15nm

Reported Separation:

75ft V/<100m H 200ft V/200ft H

Recorded Separation:

NK



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE EC135 PILOT reports returning to base after completing a low-level tasking. The black and yellow helicopter had navigation lights selected on, as was the SSR transponder with Modes A and C¹. The aircraft was fitted with a TAS. The pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, not in receipt of an Air Traffic Service but listening out on Seething Radio after having made an 'initial call' due to the air display at Seething. Heading 225° at 110kt in straight and level cruise, he had a late sighting of a white and red flex-wing microlight, less than 100m away in the right 1 o'clock position and slightly above. He took avoiding action by turning left and descending. The pilot reported the Airprox to Norwich ATSU the next day.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE GT450 PILOT reports enjoying an afternoon flight from his farm strip. The white and red flex-wing microlight had top and bottom strobe lights selected on. The aircraft was not fitted with an SSR transponder or TAS. The pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, not in receipt of an Air Traffic Service at CPA. On departure, the pilot listened to Wattisham RTF for any SAR or NPAS traffic. He changed to Seething as he approached Bungay and then to Beccles frequency to check for paradrop traffic as he deviated to the east of his direct track to Northrepps airfield. He had selected the Norwich RTF, and was confirming his position on his chart prior to making contact with Norwich for a Basic Service, when he noticed rescue services on the ground attending an RTA, which was directly on his track. Rather than overfly the scene at 1300ft, he deviated about 4nm east of track. He did not hear any other calls on the Norwich RTF and was about to make initial contact when, heading about 010° at 60kt in straight-and-level cruise at 1300ft, he saw a police helicopter in the right 1 o'clock position at a range of 300yd, about 200ft below and heading directly towards him. He assessed that the helicopter would pass about 150ft down his right side, applied full power and climbed to the left in order to avoid any potential rotor turbulence. The pilot stated that at no time did he consider himself to be in imminent danger as he had time to react and could clearly see the other



¹ Mode S was also selected.

aircraft, albeit in close proximity. The pilot noted that he was surprised he had not heard any calls from the police helicopter pilot on any of the frequencies he had monitored en-route, and that the police helicopter pilot was not in receipt of a Traffic Service from Norwich on a busy Sunday afternoon.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium to High'.

Factual Background

The weather at Norwich was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGSB 071350Z 33006KT 280V060 9999 FEW036 19/10 Q1016 NOSIG
METAR EGSB 071420Z 33007KT 280V360 9999 SCT039 18/10 Q1016 NOSIG
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The EC135 and GT450 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to fly into such proximity as to create a danger of collision². If the incident geometry is considered as head-on then both pilots were required to turn to the right³, notwithstanding their responsibility not to collide.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an EC135 and a Quik GT450 flew into proximity at about 1411 on Sunday 7th September 2014. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, and neither were in receipt of an Air Traffic Service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft and radar photographs/video recordings.

The Board were presented with an encounter in the 'open' FIR where both parties were operating under VFR and without an Air Traffic Service. As such the deliberations centred around the pilots' actions. The GT450 pilot was enjoying an afternoon flight in his local area, which the Board commented on as being undertaken with considerable attention to local factors. The Board noted the degree to which the GT450 pilot listened out and communicated with local agencies and commended him for doing so. It was unfortunate that his early sighting of the RTA site, and subsequent routing to avoid it, then took him into conflict with the NPAS helicopter, but this served to underline the importance of effective lookout as the basis for operations in Class G. For his part, the EC135 pilot had contacted Seething on departure from his tasking and may have been somewhat pre-occupied with his departure from the task site; it was again just unfortunate that the 2 pilots were not on the Seething frequency at the same time.

In the event, the Board felt that the GT450 pilot saw the helicopter just before the EC135 pilot saw the microlight. The GT450 pilot had sufficient time to make an assessment of miss-distance and to manoeuvre away to avoid rotor turbulence. The EC135 pilot reported a closer first-sighting range but was also able to take action to increase separation at CPA.

Members agreed that the cause of the Airprox was a late sighting by both pilots; the Board was sufficiently concerned by the reported separation at CPA to agree that, although avoiding action had been taken, safety margins had been much reduced below normal.

² Rules of the Air 2007 (as amended), Rule 8 (Avoiding aerial collisions).

³ *ibid.*, Rule 10 (Approaching head-on).

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by both pilots.

Degree of Risk: B.

ERC Score⁴: 20.

⁴ Although the Event Risk Classification (ERC) trial had been formally terminated for future development at the time of the Board, for data continuity and consistency purposes, Director UKAB and the UKAB Secretariat provided a shadow assessment of ERC.