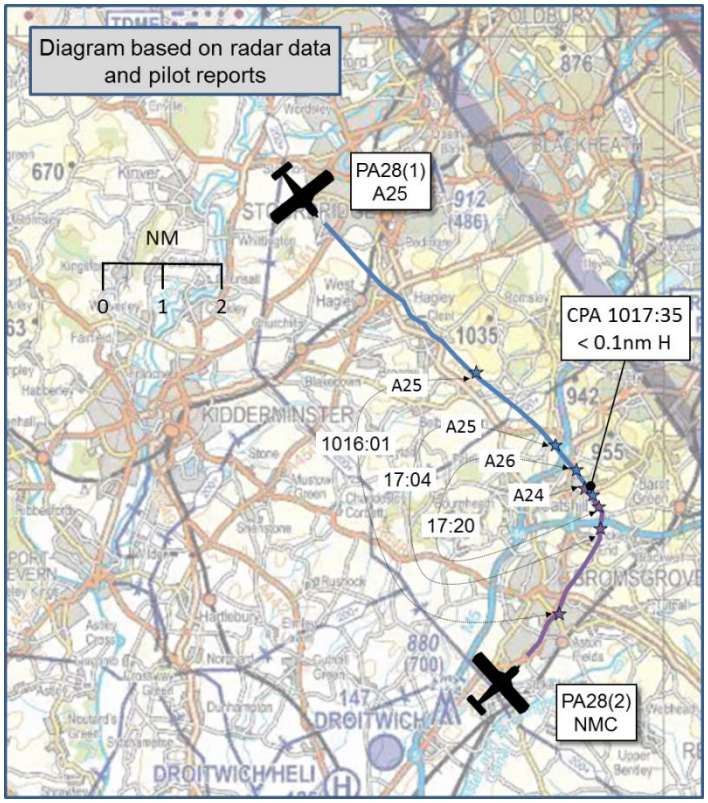
AIRPROX REPORT No 2014014

Date/Time: 16 Feb 2014 1029Z (Sunday)

Position: 5221N 00202W (12.2nm SE of Wolverhampton Airport)

Airspace: Lon FIR (*Class*: G)

	Aircraft 1	*Aircraft 2*
Type:	PA28(1)	PA28(2)
Operator:	Civ Club	Civ Club
Alt/FL:	2500ft QNH (1006hPa)	2400ft NK
Conditions:	VMC	VMC
Visibility:	20nm	NR
Reported Separation:	200ft V/50m H	NK V/NK H
Recorded Separation:	NK V/ <0.1nm H	



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE PA28(1) PILOT reports having over-flown Halfpenny Green (en-route to his next way-point), cruising straight and level at 2500ft (QNH 1006hPa), VFR in VMC, heading 150° at 100kt. He had all navigation lights, wing-tip strobe lights and the LED landing-light turned on, and was squawking SSR Modes 3/A, C and S. He was flying with two other PPL-qualified passengers, and recalls receiving a Basic Service but had transferred from Halfpenny Green's frequency to Wellesbourne's at around the time of the Airprox; he cannot recall which unit he was talking to at the time. As they approached a turning point, the pilot looked into the cockpit to change the VOR; whilst he pointed out the change to the front-seat passenger, the rear seat passenger saw another aircraft around 300m away, 50-100ft above them, and slightly to their right. The pilot assessed that a right turn would have taken him into the other aircraft's path, and a left turn would have 'blindsided' him and made the situation more dangerous had the other pilot turned right, so he concluded that 'the most logical manoeuvre' available was to descend immediately, which he did, and recalls that he achieved 150-200ft vertical separation 'at the point of passing'. He did not believe that the pilot of the other aircraft had seen him and, because it was heading around 330°, he thought that it was inbound to Halfpenny Green.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Low'.

THE PA28(2) PILOT reports[1] flying VFR in Haze in a white and yellow aircraft, with anti-collision lights, landing lights and navigation lights illuminated; the aircraft was not equipped with any form of TCAS but transponder modes 3/A & C had been selected. The pilot recalls either receiving a Basic Service from Birmingham ATC, or listening out on their frequency and thought he would have been flying on the Birmingham QNH (recorded as 1006hPa). Whilst flying at 100kt, heading northwest, in a level cruise or gentle left turn at 2400ft he thought, the pilot saw another aircraft 'positioned lower' to his right-hand side, and moving away from his aircraft. As the aircraft were moving apart at this stage, he did not perceive a confliction, so the pilot of PA28(2) took no avoiding action.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

[1] There was a tracing problem during this investigation and the pilot of PA28(2) was not contacted until 13 Jun 14. Whilst the pilot was keen to be as open and honest as possible, and through no fault on his part, his memory of the occurrence was not as clear as would normally be the case.

THE HALFPENNY GREEN CONTROLLER does not recall speaking to the PA28(1) pilot and was unaware of the Airprox. Halfpenny Green RT is not recorded.

Factual Background

The weather at Coventry Airport at 1020 was recorded as:

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METAR EGBE 161020Z 22011KT 9999 FEW025 06/02 Q1006
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The weather at Birmingham Airport at 1020 was recorded as:

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METAR EGBB 161020Z 24006KT 200V290 CAVOK 06/02 Q1006
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Analysis and Investigation

ATSI

As there was a significant delay in tracing the pilot of PA28(2), who may have been receiving no more than a Basic Service, there was no chance of the controller concerned recalling any useful information; the Birmingham RT recordings had not been impounded within the required timescale and so would have been erased.

UKAB Secretariat

The aircraft appeared to be approaching nominally head-on and so both pilots were, in principle, required to alter course to the right.[2]

Summary

An Airprox was reported 12.2nm southeast of Wolverhampton Half-Penny Green Airport between two PA28s in Class G airspace. Neither pilot was receiving a radar service and neither aircraft was equipped with any form of TCAS. Both pilots reported that they saw the other aircraft and the pilot of PA28(1) avoided the other aircraft by descending.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both aircraft, radar photographs/video recordings and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

The Board agreed that this was a relatively straightforward encounter between two aircraft whose pilots were carrying out normal activity in Class G airspace under the principles of see-and-avoid. It was noted that, with both front seat pilots in PA28(1) looking into the cockpit at the same time, the rear seat passenger had performed very well by spotting the other PA28 and alerting them. Some members thought that perhaps the constant relative positions of the two aircraft in the early stages of the encounter may have made it more difficult for the occupants to see each other's aircraft. As they closed, the radar trace shows that PA28(2) made some small manoeuvres in the late stages of the encounter, and it was thought possible that these created greater relative movement to the eyes of the passenger in PA28(1), which may be why the aircraft had been seen suddenly and very late.

The pilot of PA28(1) had taken effective avoiding action but it was apparent that the pilot of PA28(2) had seen the other aircraft only after CPA and had therefore not materially affected the geometry of the encounter. Taking all of these factors in to account, the Board agreed that the cause was a late sighting by the pilot of PA28(1) and effectively a non-sighting by the pilot of PA28(2). Because safety margins had been much reduced, the Board agreed that the degree of risk was B.

[2] Rules of the Air 2007, Rule 10, Approaching Head-on

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the pilot of PA28(1) and effectively a non-sighting by the pilot of PA28(2).

Degree of Risk: B

ERC Score[3]: 20

[3] 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.