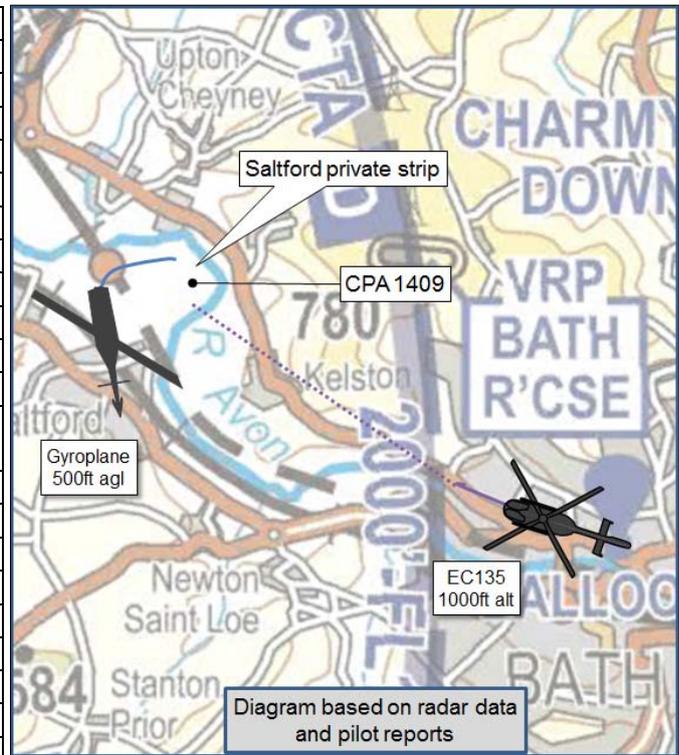


AIRPROX REPORT No 2016058

Date: 17 Apr 2016 Time: 1409Z Position: 5125N 00227W Location: Saltford private strip

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Gyroplane	EC135
Operator	Civ Pte	NPAS
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	Basic
Provider	NA	Bristol
Altitude/FL	NK	NK
Transponder	A,C,S	A,C,S
Reported		
Colours	Yellow	Blue, Yellow
Lighting	Strobes, Nav, Headlights	HISLs, Nav, Strobes
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility		>10km
Altitude/FL	500ft	1000ft
Altimeter	amsl	NK
Heading	240°	320°
Speed	65kt	120kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	TCAS I
Alert	N/A	Unknown
Separation		
Reported	300ft V/0m H	200ft V/400m H
Recorded	N/K	



THE GYROPLANE PILOT reports that he was on final approach to a small private strip in Saltford using the safety comm frequency. Prior to that, he had been receiving a Basic Service from Bristol. He was approaching RW27 from the north-west when a police helicopter flew along the west side of the airfield, below circuit height. He was flying at 500ft agl and, although he didn't see the helicopter, a witness on the ground estimated that the police helicopter directly overflew him with less than 300ft separation.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE EC135 PILOT reports that at approximately 1330 the Police helicopter had landed at a field location during a task for a missing person. At 1405, the aircraft lifted from the field location after a 'blind' call on Bristol App; the aircraft was due to reposition to Bristol Filton for a refuel and await further tasking. On passing 1000ft, comms were established with Bristol App and a Basic Service agreed. When passing Bath, Bristol ATC gave Traffic Information on an aircraft landing in the area west of Bath. Crew members were made aware and, because they were not on task, all eyes were out looking for the aircraft. A yellow gyrocopter was spotted to the starboard side of the aircraft by the pilot and the Mission Commander, and a 'no confliction' comment made. The aircraft was some distance away, and below the transit height of the police aircraft, so no avoiding action was considered necessary.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

Factual Background

The weather at Bristol was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGGD 171350Z AUTO 27005KT 210V340 9999 SCT042 10/M01 Q1017=
METAR EGGD 171420Z AUTO 27007KT 240V310 9999 FEW044 10/M01 Q1017=
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Analysis and Investigation

CAA ATSI

The MT03 Gyroplane was inbound from the south of Bristol to a private landing site to the east of Bristol Airport and below their controlled airspace, in receipt of a Basic Service from Bristol Radar. At 1405:03 the Gyroplane pilot reported ready to 'QSY to SafetyCom', and was cleared by the Bristol controller so to do. At 1408:35, the EC135 helicopter reported airborne from a site to the south-east of Bath, inbound to Bristol Filton. A Basic Service was agreed, and Traffic Information on the Gyroplane making an approach to Saltford was passed and acknowledged by the EC135 pilot.

At 1408:15 the EC135 disappeared from radar and, at 1409:02, the Gyroplane also disappeared from radar. At 1409:32, the EC135 pilot reported that there was a gyrocopter operating east of Keynsham, to which the controller replied that that was the aircraft they had informed him about earlier, which was acknowledged. The controller was also vectoring an aircraft inbound to Bristol Airport, and Traffic Information on this aircraft was also passed to the EC135 pilot.

It was not possible to determine the CPA between the Gyroplane and the EC135.

UKAB Secretariat

The Gyroplane and EC135 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. An aircraft operated on or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation².

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Gyroplane and an EC135 flew into proximity at 1409 on Sunday 17th April 2016. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, the Gyroplane pilot not receipt of a ATS and the EC135 pilot in receipt of a Basic Service from Bristol.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar photographs/video recordings, and reports from the appropriate ATC and operating authorities.

The Board first looked at the actions of the Gyroplane pilot. They noted that he had spoken to Bristol ATC prior to making his landing at his private strip, and that this had in turn enabled Bristol to pass Traffic Information to the EC135 pilot. Members also noted that he had not seen the helicopter at all, and was only made aware of the incident once he had landed. Commenting that the judgement of separation and closure is extremely difficult from ground observation (which is the reason that Airprox submissions are not normally accepted from 3rd parties), the Board thought it highly probable that the perspective from the ground was such that the EC135 likely looked much closer than it was in reality,

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

and that the EC135 probably passed behind the Gyrocopter as described by the EC135 pilot rather than over the top as perceived by the observer looking obliquely at both aircraft.

Turning to the EC135 pilot, members noted that he had lifted from a field location and commended him for calling blind on the Bristol frequency prior to establishing comms with them as soon as possible. Having then received Traffic Information, the Board thought that there was little more that he could have done in the circumstances other than to perhaps have taken more lateral or vertical separation from the general area to the east of Bath given that he had been told that an aircraft was making an approach to a strip in that area. Some members wondered whether he had fully assimilated the Traffic Information provided by the Bristol Controller. Their suspicions were raised because the EC135 pilot had reported that there was 'a Gyrocopter operating east of Keynsham' as if he had not been informed of its nature beforehand, as opposed to reporting that he was 'visual with the gyrocopter making the approach to the Salford strip' that he had been told about. However, even if this was the case, it was clear that the crew had been at least aware that there was some form of aircraft in that area because they had prioritised their in-cockpit tasking to looking out for it.

In assessing the cause of the Airprox, the Board quickly agreed that it had been the ground observer's report that had concerned the Gyroplane pilot over the proximity of the EC135, which he himself did not see. The risk was then debated, with some members thinking this was Category C (arguing that safety had been somewhat reduced but with no risk of collision because the EC135 pilot had seen the Gyro-plane), whilst others believed it was actually just normal operations in Class G airspace. The Chairman put it to a vote and, by a majority, it was agreed to be Category E, normal procedures, safety standards and parameters had pertained.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: The gyroplane pilot was concerned by the proximity of the EC135, as a result of the ground observer's report.

Degree of Risk: E.