



AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

August 2019



Picture for illustration purposes only/Keith Wilson SFB Photographic

AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

Circuit-breakers

You might know where people are at your airfield, but what about those just passing by (or over...)?

The pilot of a Scheibe SF-25 Falke motor-glider was late downwind in the visual circuit at Enstone (which is nominally flown at 800ft) when the instructor spotted a helicopter in their 11 o'clock and very close. The motor-glider pilots climbed immediately but felt that not a lot of avoiding action was possible due to the late sighting.

The A109 helicopter pilot was routing from a private site to the south-west and passing Enstone at 1500ft on the QNH; with Enstone at 550ft elevation, this put the A109 at almost the same height as the SF-25 and the pilot didn't see the motor-glider as he flew between it and the airfield.

The incident (**Airprox 2019096**) raised a couple of points of interest. Firstly, it's a reminder of the need to maintain a robust

lookout at all times, even in the visual circuit where a pilot's attention might be diverted into flying the correct pattern, height and speeds. All of the former are important of course (and who hasn't been clipped around the ear by an instructor for not being accurate!) but it's vital to keep that lookout scan going in the circuit, even when you're within the protection of an ATZ (we get many cases of aircraft mistakenly flying through ATZs or getting confused and joining the wrong way in the circuit).

Which brings me to the second point. There is no ATZ at Enstone but, even so, the Rules of the Air (SERA.3225 to be specific) still require others flying past airfields to 'avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation'. So, the A109 pilot was required to avoid the SF25 pilot's 'pattern of

traffic' and would have been much better served by ensuring greater avoidance of the airfield either vertically or laterally.

As you'll see on the diagram, Enstone is marked with a blue circle with a 'T' that indicates it's a busy training airfield, but it's important to note that the blue circle has no significance in respect of geographical avoidance criteria, it's just a symbol designed to draw pilots' attention to the airfield, so don't think that by avoiding the circle you're avoiding the visual circuit traffic.

Finally, you'll also see that the Enstone frequency is printed on the chart, so if you are going to pass nearby to minor airfields then why not listen out and, even better, make a broadcast call of your intentions so that you enhance both your situational awareness and also that of those who might

be operating at the airfield. Full details of the incident can be found at the link within this note or at airproxboard.org.uk in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section within the appropriate year and then in the 'Individual Airprox reports' tab.

UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

At its July meeting the Airprox Board reviewed 32 Airprox, of which 14 were SUAS incidents.

Of the 18 manned aircraft-to-aircraft incidents, ten were assessed as risk-bearing with three being Category A (where separation was reduced to the bare minimum and only stopped short of an actual collision because providence played a major part in events), and seven were Category B (where safety margins were much reduced below the norm through either chance, misjudgement or inaction; or where emergency avoiding action was only taken at the last minute).

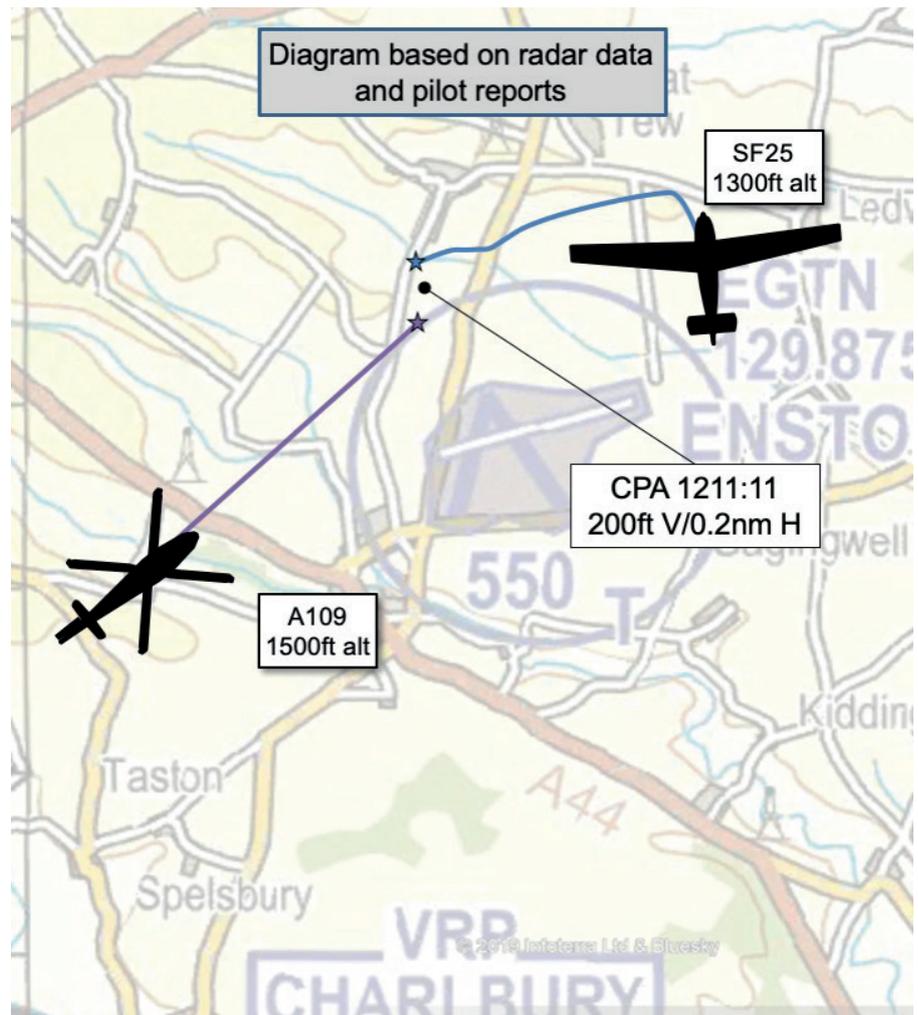
Overall, this year's increased reporting rates continued in July, with overall numbers remaining well above the five-year average for both aircraft-to-aircraft and SUAS incidents.

I was struck this month by the number of incidents where collision warning systems (CWS) were present in one or both aircraft but were unable to provide a warning due to either incompatibility of equipment (TAS vs Flarm) or aircraft not squawking (and therefore not detectable by the TAS).

There were eight such incidents, most of which would likely not have occurred if the pilots had received appropriate warnings from their equipment. This reflects the dilemma of current electronic conspicuity equipment; without a common interface, users are purchasing equipment that they think will best suit their needs fully aware that others may be operating different equipment that will not be detected.

The CAA's 'Share the Air' conference on June 27 again highlighted this problem, with a clear understanding that a universal data-sharing/transmission protocol was required such that all equipment can interface with each other and so avoid the current 'VHS vs Betamax' situation.

Notwithstanding the compatibility issue, this month's predominant theme was again late-/non-sighting (14 cases). Somewhat implicit in the Airprox definition and so unsurprisingly a regular feature in Airprox themes, it is nonetheless interesting that associated safety barrier analysis indicates



that see-and-avoid was only fully effective in 30% of the incidents so far this year, partially effective in 41% (the late-sightings) and completely ineffective in 21% (the non-sightings).

This is also backed up by our new Contributory Factor assessment process which shows that, for the 56 incidents assessed to date for 2019, non-sighting was a factor 23 times, and late-sighting was a factor 25 times. Overall, factors associated with see-and-avoid – or lack thereof – represent about one quarter of all contributory factors to date.

Other themes included poor planning or adaption of plans by pilots (seven cases), insufficient or lack of communication of intent (four instances), inaction (three incidents), and not integrating sufficiently with other aircraft in the visual circuit (two). All of these are regular features in Airprox assessment and, unlike see-and-avoid (which is often down to physiological issues), are often eminently correctable by a little forethought and courtesy for others.

The Board made one recommendation

during the July meeting as highlighted below. This related to an incident where two aircraft in the visual circuit came into proximity on final. One aircraft had turned fairly long on final while the other had turned tight and was just rolling out.

It seems that neither had yet made their 'Final' call, and this is a problem we've seen before when pilots don't hear or assimilate others' downwind calls at airfields under an A/G service. The Board thought there might be value in looking again at whether a 'Base' call might be useful at such airfields. In the incident we looked at, this would quickly have alerted both pilots to the presence of the other aircraft.

2019071

The CAA review R/T procedures at non-ATS aerodromes. ■

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