



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

February 2021



Photo for illustration purposes only: Brian Barry/Simon Finlay Photography

## AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

# A bit too close for comfort

**It doesn't hurt to give others a wide berth, after all you never know what might happen**

**A** Cabri G2 was on an instructional sortie in the Daventry area at 1800ft when the crew saw a de Havilland Vampire slightly below in their 12 o'clock, crossing right-to-left about 200-300 metres away which was too late for them to react and take avoiding action.

The Vampire was travelling at 240kt at about 1800ft and routing through a familiar area. The pilot saw the Cabri at about 5NM but did not believe it constituted a threat. Because of this they continued their routing and turned where planned. Unfortunately, this brought them to within 0.1nm of the Cabri (**Airprox 2020137**).

While the Cabri pilot was receiving a Basic Service from Birmingham ATC, the Vampire pilot was listening out on a different frequency with the transponder on standby – this would have meant that even if the Birmingham controller had seen the situation developing, there would have been only a primary radar return with no height information. (Remember, the Birmingham controller was providing a Basic Service – so would have only seen the confliction by chance if they happened to be looking in that area at that specific time.)

Neither aircraft was fitted with an electronic warning system so there was no way for the Cabri pilots (in particular) to

have been alerted to the other aircraft by in-cockpit electronic means.

The Board agreed that, because the Vampire pilot saw the Cabri at about 5NM, they had enough time to avoid the Cabri by a greater margin than they did. The Vampire pilot could not have known if the Cabri pilot had seen them or not, so it might have been better to have avoided the Cabri by a larger margin just in case it altered heading or height suddenly.

As they were operating a fast-moving aircraft in class G airspace the Board also said the Vampire pilot would have been better served by requesting an Air Traffic Service from a suitable radar-equipped unit which could have provided both them

and other airspace users with a greater situational awareness within their sphere of operation.

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the high speed of the Vampire coupled with the late sighting from the Cabri crew meant that safety was not assured and there was a risk of collision, a Risk Category B (safety not assured: aircraft proximity in which the safety of the aircraft may have been compromised).

#### UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

The Board considered 15 incidents at its January meeting, seven were determined to be risk bearing with five in the visual circuit. In all cases, all of the flight elements barriers (which predominantly rely on human factors) were assessed as having been ineffective or partially effective, and the associated Contributory Factors related to planning, communication, lack of situational awareness, poor assimilation of information, and poor lookout.

Importantly, it seemed that the Tactical Planning and Execution Barrier performance was particularly poor. The main observations from the Board drew out the following things:

- Choice of routing, or communication plan (the plan in general)
- Pressing on with original plan even when the situation changes
- Unfamiliarity with procedures at airfields
- Differences of understanding as to where and how to fit into a circuit pattern based on the information available from other pilots and Air Traffic Control
- Not being clear on the radio
- Not talking on the radio or talking to the wrong (or not the best) agency

We are in an unenviable situation at the moment (and have been for some time) where flying is severely restricted or non-existent for many, so when the rules are lifted to allow recreational activity there is an elevated risk; namely that it is really difficult to keep as current as one might be used to, and the fact that everyone is pushed into a small window of opportunity.

This is why it's very important to do everything possible to prepare on the ground: plan; think about what could go wrong; think about who you are going to talk to on the radio; study the procedures



at the airfields you are going to – even if it's your home base – and be prepared to encounter others out there who are in the same boat and also potentially a little rusty.

I chose the incident between the Vampire and Cabri for this month's Airprox not only because it's about giving other air users a wide berth, so as not to startle those you might encounter, but also to cater for those times when someone might do something unexpected – in this particular case, the other aircraft did not change course or altitude, but also they did not see the conflicting aircraft and so could easily have made changes as they were completely unaware that the other aircraft was there.

The conflicting aircraft had been visual for a long time and, because of this, did not think that there was any possibility of a collision even though they flew close. But consider this; if that aircraft had manoeuvred unexpectedly, we might not

be talking about an Airprox. Never assume that just because you are visual, that they are visual with you...

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to encourage anybody who thinks they have had an Airprox to make a report on the radio (if you are talking to anybody) at the time. You will, of course, still need to file a full report using our website form when you land, but announcing it on the radio means that the Air Traffic Unit will start recording the conditions from their perspective and preserve lots of information which would otherwise be lost; this helps any investigation and ultimately means that we can learn more about what happened and hopefully prevent it from happening again.

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