

**Avoiding collisions** – a monthly update from Director UK Airprox Board giving some learning themes for recreational pilots

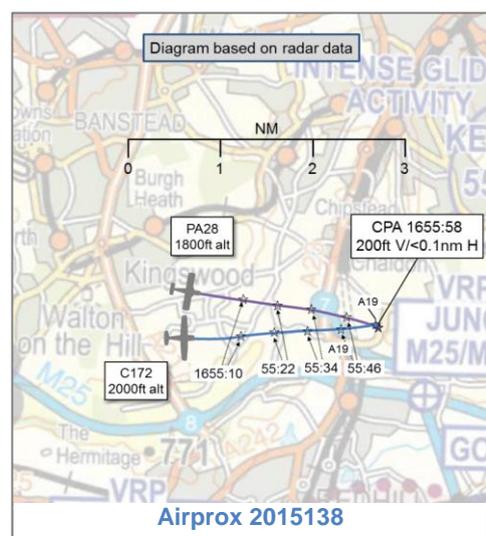
In this month's reports the UK Airprox Board assessed 28 Airprox incidents across all categories of aircraft, slightly higher than the monthly average. Six of these were the most serious *Category A* incidents, where a risk of collision actually existed. A further nine were *Category B*, where safety was not assured. A sure sign of the times is the fact that six of these 28 Airprox involved drones – there were only six drone Airprox reported in the whole of 2014.

Other than the drone incidents, 8 of this month's Airprox occurred between aircraft operating within, joining or departing the visual circuit. These were a result of lack of situational awareness, late sightings, poor airmanship or pilots either not hearing or assimilating radio calls from, or relating to, the other aircraft. One thing that also hasn't changed is that a contributory factor in a large number of incidents was inaction by pilots. We are essentially talking about pilots needlessly flying into conflict with other aircraft for want of either better prioritisation of flying tasks, the assumption of right of way, or lack of consideration for other airspace users.

On the theme of cockpit prioritisation, a couple of incidents we looked at occurred when pilots were preoccupied with dealing with the aftermath of a minor emergency and let their lookout lapse; the old adage of *Aviate, Navigate, Communicate* still holds true, with 'lookout' being an essential element of the *Aviate* function. Easy to say from a 1g armchair, but maintaining a safe flightpath during periods of high workload such as emergencies is something that requires conscious effort in order to avoid becoming overtaken by in-cockpit tasks and other associated post-emergency concerns.

My *Airprox of the month* looks at a specific incident to learn some lessons.

A C172 and a PA28 were both inbound to Biggin Hill. The two aircraft were gradually converging abeam but the pilots did not see each other until the C172 pilot eventually saw the PA28 as it gradually pulled ahead on his left-hand side. The PA28 pilot did not see the C172 at all. The Board commented on the importance of maintaining a robust lookout at all times, and not becoming fixated on looking ahead during visual joins. The lesson is clear, no matter what phase of flight you are in, keep a good all-round lookout going, positively move your head to prevent cockpit and canopy furniture from obscuring your view, and be especially vigilant when approaching VRPs or other choke points.



The full report of this incident (**Airprox 2015138**) can be found on the UKAB website ([www.airproxboard.org.uk](http://www.airproxboard.org.uk)) in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section.