



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

March 2021



## AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

# If in doubt, just ask

Don't just assume you know who's where and what's happening,  
if you're not sure (or don't see what you expect to see) then call out

As a Sonaca 200 was re-joining at Blackbushe from the north the visual circuit was fairly busy; two PA-28s and a Cessna 152 were already established in the pattern and a helicopter was operating from the Helicopter Training Area (on the south side and approximately at the mid-point of the runway).

As the Sonaca pilot joined, they were passed Traffic Information by the airfield AFISO informing them of one aircraft on climb-out (the Cessna 152), one on final (the Airprox PA-28(A)) and one on base leg (the second PA-28(B)).

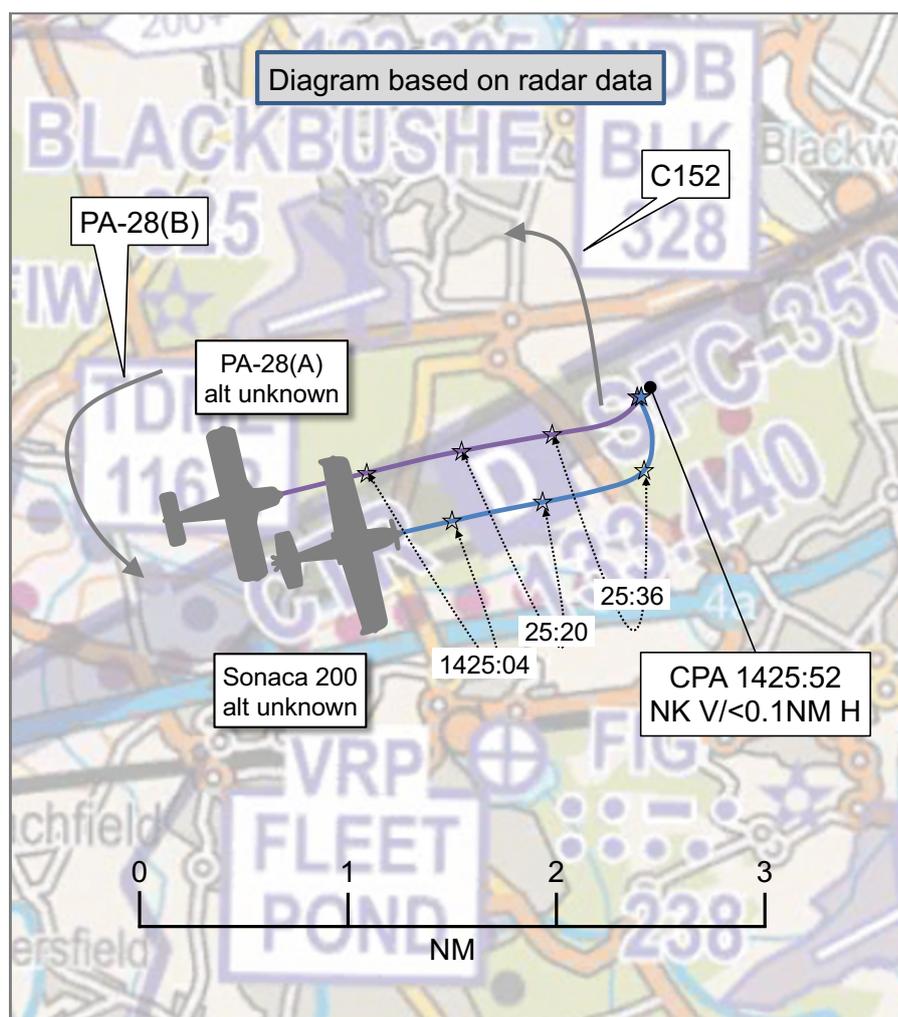
The Sonaca pilot assessed that they would be able to fit into the pattern behind the Cessna 152 and in front of the PA-28(A) on final. However, and crucially, the pilot of the PA-28(A) on final was not passed reciprocal Traffic Information on the Sonaca and had not realised that the Sonaca was joining the circuit in front.

The Sonaca pilot continued the join and positioned downwind at an appropriate spacing from the Cessna ahead. Unfortunately, the PA-28(A) pilot turned from crosswind onto downwind a little tighter than the preceding traffic and ended up with a narrower downwind track than the Cessna and the Sonaca.

The PA-28(A) pilot called downwind before the Sonaca pilot and was told to report final; the Sonaca pilot called downwind immediately after this and was told to report final with one ahead. The Sonaca pilot took this to mean the Cessna 152 which they could see ahead at the end of the downwind leg, assuming that the PA-28(A) pilot had taken adequate spacing behind.

As the Sonaca pilot turned from downwind onto base, they noticed the PA-28(A) pass underneath in a descent; the PA-28(A) pilot hadn't seen the Sonaca and was turning on to base leg at the same time and had initiated a normal descent as part of their normal circuit flying. At this point, the Sonaca pilot announced their intention to go around and the PA-28(A) pilot, becoming aware of the Sonaca's presence for the first time, considered the safest course of action was to continue the approach and land behind the Cessna 152.

Blackbushe is a very busy airfield, with rotary-wing, light-aircraft and often larger business jet traffic on a daily basis. Traffic management in the circuit is further complicated by the recent creation of Farnborough's controlled airspace and the



consequent introduction of the Blackbushe Local Flying Area (see UK AIP, Part 3 – Aerodromes, EGLK AD 2.22 Flight Procedures).

Additionally, and due to the busy nature of the multiple circuit patterns, the passage of Traffic Information from the AFISOs is often restricted to the bare minimum out of necessity. In this case, however, the Board felt that there had been an opportunity for the AFISO to have passed Traffic Information to the PA-28(A) pilot on their climb-out or while they were crosswind, which would have prompted the PA-28(A) pilot to look for the Sonaca ahead (or, in this case, on a wider downwind track).

The difficulty for the PA-28(A) and Sonaca pilots in this Category B incident, [Airprox 2020156](#) (safety was not assured: aircraft proximity in which the safety of the aircraft may have been compromised) was recognising that their mental pictures of the circuit traffic were incorrect – the Sonaca pilot thought the PA-28(A) pilot

had taken spacing behind them and the PA-28(A) pilot was unaware that the Sonaca was even there. This makes the assistance of an AFISO or controller all the more important.

We all know that VFR separation under a UK FIS is the pilot's responsibility, but that responsibility can only be executed on that which we know to be there or have seen. This Airprox reminds us that assumption can lead to undesirable outcomes. If in doubt – look; if still in doubt (or you don't see what you expect to see) then ASK.

Full details of the incident can be found at the link within this note or at [airproxboard.org.uk](http://airproxboard.org.uk) in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section within the appropriate year and then in the 'Individual Airprox reports' tab.

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