



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

September 2019



AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

## The risks are rising

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

PHOTO: Brian Barr/Simon Finlay

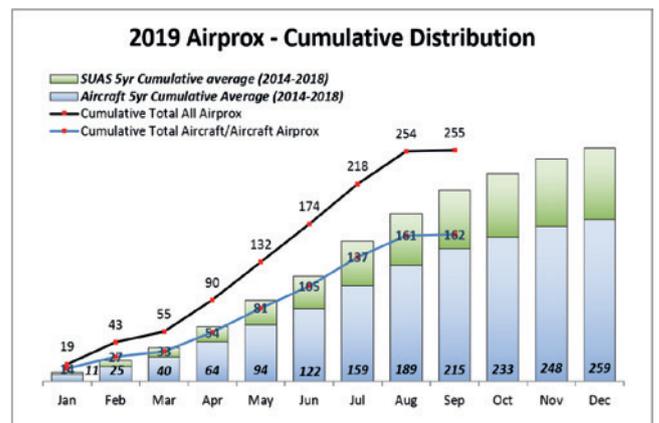
The UK Airprox Board didn't meet during August because it was holiday season and, being a voluntary unpaid activity, Board members deserve a well-earned break as much as anybody else. So I thought I'd expand this month on one of the other July incidents as my Airprox of the month. But before that, though, it's worth noting that we're still seeing increased reporting rates compared to expectations as shown on the chart which covers the year up to early September.

The blue columns show the expected five-year average for manned aircraft-to-aircraft encounters and the blue line shows what we're actually seeing — there were 161 manned incidents actually reported up to the end of August compared with an expectation of 128. The black line indicates all Airprox (i.e. including those involving drones/SUAS), and the green bar shows

the expected number of drone/SUAS incidents. Overall, you can see that we expected 189 incidents in total up to August but we actually had 254.

This shows either that we might actually be having more Airprox or simply be reporting more. I'd like to think the latter was the case but it's probably true that both explanations are playing a part, so it's also a warning signal that incidents might be increasing.

This is reinforced by some of the analysis I've done on the 2018 data (and soon to be released on our website as the Annual Blue Book report No. 34). This



analysis indicates that not only are Airprox incidents increasing but the percentage that are risk-bearing (Category A or B) is also rising. In other words, even if we put down the increased number of incidents to better reporting, all other things being equal, Airprox have become 'riskier' over the last ten years as shown on the second

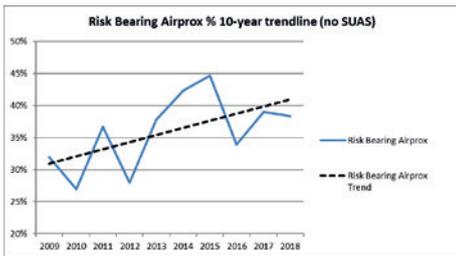


chart: in 2009, about 30% of incidents were risk-bearing; in 2018 it was about 40% and the trend is clearly rising.

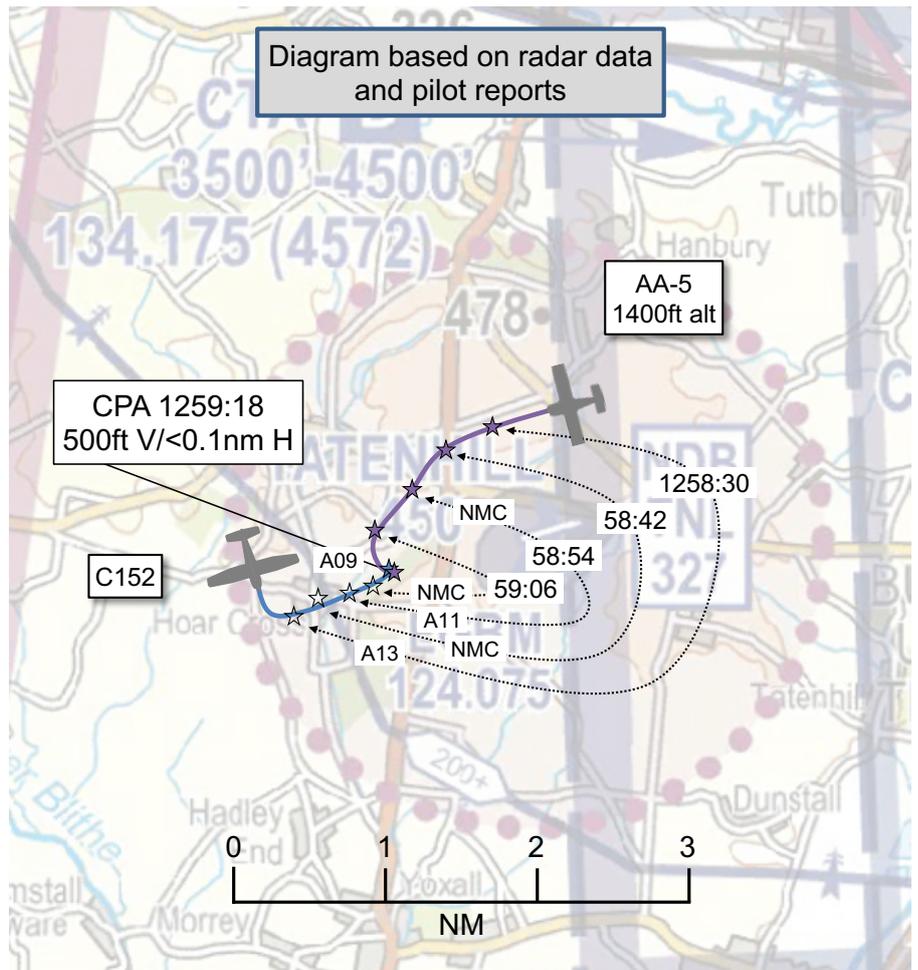
This indicates to me that pilots are both increasingly less aware of other aircraft and are not seeing them until later, otherwise they wouldn't get so close.

There are no simple solutions to this: the old messages of prioritising lookout (especially with the proliferation of electronic navigation aids that vie for a pilot's attention); ensuring a robust scan at all times; talking to ATC; following procedures; and investing in electronic conspicuity and warning systems remain the key elements of mid-air collision avoidance.

But one other aspect seems to be increasingly relevant to me, and that's our willingness to tolerate the mistakes and seemingly sub-optimal actions of others. Too often I'm aware of pilots becoming intolerant of others who might impede them (either by mistake or misunderstanding) and who then deliberately 'press on' into a conflict situation to make their point out of a 'sense of entitlement'.

A little courtesy goes a long way, you simply don't know what's going on in the other cockpit and so, when faced with a situation where you think you're 'in the right', perhaps show a little magnanimity and let them go ahead – it's always better to discuss these things in the tea-bar afterwards than cause an incident and have cross words in the air.

Done in the right way, the other pilot will likely be grateful for your comments, might understand the 'error' of their ways, and you might also come to understand why they perhaps hadn't seen you or been aware of your presence. A bit like when I ride my motorcycle and drive defensively, I liken this to flying defensively: think ahead, expect the unexpected and be tolerant of other aviators' mistakes (no matter how crass you think they are).



**AIRPROX OF THE MONTH**

As for my Airprox of the month (**Airprox 2019071** from the July meeting), this occurred when a Cessna 152 and a Grumman AA5 came into conflict in Tatenhill's visual circuit. The Cessna pilot was on a 'long' final (and yet to make his final call) as the AA5 pilot turned a tight base-leg and then tight-final inside the Cessna.

As Tatenhill is an Air/Ground airfield, everyone must rely on hearing the calls of others for situational awareness, and then looking for, and seeing them, where they expect them to be. The corollary being that everyone must make the correct calls in the right place, fly the expected pattern or, if you're going to deviate, make sure you make a clear call announcing your intentions.

It also reinforces the need to have a good look up the approach path before you turn final, and if you are in any way a bit long on final (either from a wide circuit or a straight-in approach), then have a good look upwards at both base legs (just in case someone's joining without a radio) as you near the airfield.

In this case, the Grumman pilot had not heard the Cessna pilot's downwind call and therefore had not assimilated that the 152

was on 'long' final. Nor did the Cessna pilot see the AA5 as its pilot flew his tight circuit and approached steeply on base-leg to final. 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 Air/Ground service.

Because there have been a number of final/long-final conflicts at Air/Ground airfields in recent months, this led the Board to recommend that the CAA might review R/T procedures with a view to the use of a 'base-leg' call; had there been one from the Cessna or Grumman pilots then this would have alerted the other to their presence and increased the situational awareness of all.

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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