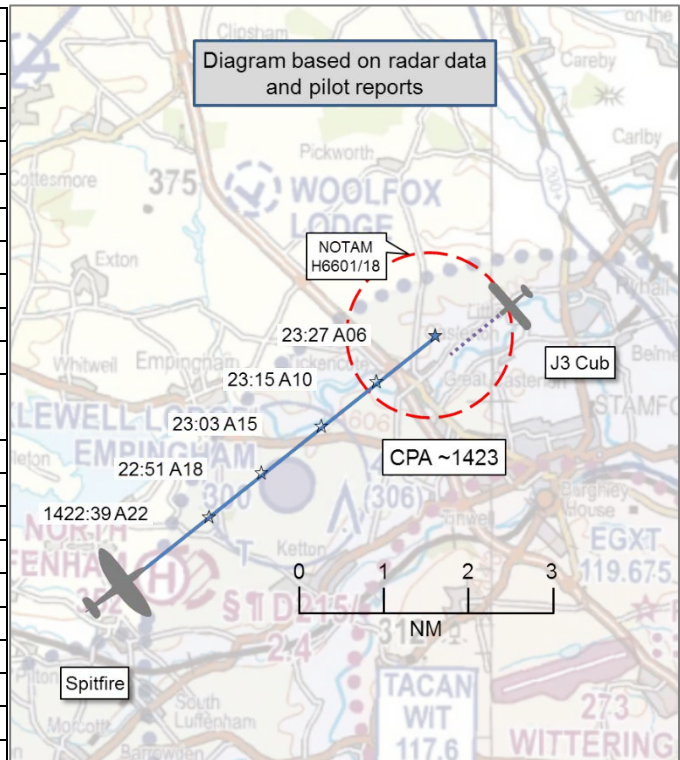


AIRPROX REPORT No 2018257

Date: 15 Sep 2018 Time: 1423Z Position: 5241N 00031W Location: 4.5nm N Wittering

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Spitfire	J3 Cub
Operator	HQ Air (Ops)	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	Listening Out	None
Provider	Wittering	N/A
Altitude/FL	600ft	NK
Transponder	A, C, S	Not fitted
Reported		
Colours	Desert camouflage	Yellow
Lighting	NK	NK
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	30km	'Good'
Altitude/FL	250ft	700ft
Altimeter	msd	NK (1015hPa)
Heading	049°	'Southwest'
Speed	240kt	60kt
ACAS/TAS	PowerFLARM	Not fitted
Alert	None	None
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/<100m H	400ft V//½nm H
Recorded	NK	



THE SPITFIRE PILOT reports approaching a flypast location, making blind calls on the Wittering VHF frequency. After descending to low-level over his intended flypast location, he sighted a small civilian aircraft very close in the 12:30 position. He passed to the left of the aircraft, on a reciprocal heading with a horizontal clearance on the right of less than 100m. After passing, he commenced a gentle left hand turn to re-acquire the aircraft but was unable to obtain a registration; the aircraft registration was subsequently provided by the event organiser. The pilot noted that he was descending from above the other aircraft, which would have appeared stationary against the background of an agricultural show and it was only visible once sky-lined. The event had an associated NOTAM and the Spitfire pilot was operating within the NOTAM times.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE J3 PILOT reports that he was conducting a local flight from his airstrip, at which he had been based for many years, when he saw activity in some fields close by. He had not seen such activity in that location before and flew towards it to have a look. He then saw the Spitfire approaching at a range of about 2nm so he decided to continue on his southwest heading, away from the Spitfire's track. The pilot noted that he did not think the incident had been 'a problem' and that he would not have flown over to have a look at the show had it not been so close to his airstrip. He noted that in future he would make sure he checked all NOTAMs.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Low'.

Factual Background

The weather at Wittering was recorded as follows:

METAR EGXT 151450Z AUTO 25013KT 9999 BKN050/// 20/09 Q1021=
 METAR EGXT 151350Z AUTO 25010KT 9999 BKN050/// 19/10 Q1022=

NOTAM H6601/18 stated as follows:

Q) EGTT/QWALW/IV/M /AW/000/023/5241N00031W002
 A) EGXT B) 1809151420 C) 1809161155
 D) 15 1420-1525, 16 1050-1155
 E) FLYPAST WI 2NM RADIUS 524047N 0003115W (GREAT CASTLETON,
 CAMBRIDGESHIRE). 2018-09-0220/AS4
 F) SFC G) 2300FT AMSL)

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The Spitfire and J3 pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard¹. If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right, although Military Regulation states that ‘... each handling Pilot should alter course to the right, unless to do so would force a crossing of flight paths’². Although the NOTAM provided a warning of activity to civilian traffic, it did not include allocation of controlled, regulated or segregated airspace to the event; as such, normal rules of the air applied.

Comments

HQ Air Command

The Spitfire pilot had planned and executed his mission in accordance with current procedures. On Saturdays, Wittering is usually active with flying operations; however, on this occasion the unit was closed and thus the MATZ was not active. Therefore, the Spitfire pilot transmitted ‘blind’ on the Wittering frequency on the off-chance that ATC was manned and able to provide a service – it was not. Consequently, there was no viable ATS barrier to this Airprox. Additionally, although the Spitfire was fitted with P-FLARM, there was nothing fitted to the J3 that could interact with it and thus the only remaining barriers were see-and-avoid and plan-to-avoid.

The Spitfire pilot maintained his lookout scan on the run-in to the flypast and this permitted him to see the J3 just to the right of the nose. It seems that the J3 pilot saw the Spitfire at a greater range – possibly due to the fact that the Spitfire was sky-lined – and was comfortable with the anticipated proximity, but he could not have known the intentions of the Spitfire pilot. Furthermore, the activity that had sparked the curiosity of the J3 pilot in the first place had been promulgated by NOTAM.

This Airprox is a salutary reminder that aircraft can be encountered anywhere and at any time, and the Spitfire pilot is to be applauded for not becoming fixated on his flypast to the detriment of lookout.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Spitfire and a J3 Cub flew into proximity near Stamford at 1423Z on Saturday 15th September 2018. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither in receipt of an ATS.

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 13.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings and a report from the appropriate operating authority.

Members first discussed the Cub pilot's actions and agreed that a thorough pre-flight study of NOTAMs would probably have apprised him that the event that piqued his curiosity, and to which he passed in proximity, would include a Spitfire flypast. It was evident that the Cub pilot was not aware of the NOTAM, which the Board considered contributory to the Airprox, but it was pleasing to note the Cub pilot's commitment to ensure more thorough pre-flight preparation in future. Members also noted that the NOTAM did not provide any degree of 'protection' for the flypast, other than warning other aviators to apply appropriate airmanship such as remaining clear of the area during the promulgated times.

The Spitfire pilot reported seeing the Cub at a late stage, although the Cub pilot assessed that he had seen the Spitfire at a range of 2nm. Members discussed the likely turn of events and felt that the Spitfire pilot's reported separation at CPA was such that the Cub pilot had probably seen the Spitfire at a closer range than he had reported given that if he had seen it at 2nm, he would have likely aimed to achieve greater separation. The Board discussed the visual acquisition aspect for some time, and eventually agreed that the cause of the Airprox could best be described as a late sighting by both pilots. That being said, members were satisfied that both pilots had seen the other aircraft with sufficient time to assess that although safety had been reduced, there was sufficient separation between their flightpaths that there had been no risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by both pilots.

Contributory Factor: The Cub pilot was unaware of the NOTAM.

Degree of Risk: C.

Safety Barrier Assessment³

In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

Flight Crew:

Regulations, Processes, Procedures, Instructions and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the J3 pilot did not assimilate the NOTAM covering the Spitfire flypast.

Tactical Planning was assessed as **ineffective** because the J3 pilot was not aware of the Spitfire's NOTAM'd flypast.

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because neither pilot was aware that the other aircraft would be in the vicinity at that time.

Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the J3 was not electronically compatible with the Spitfire's TAS.

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the J3 pilot saw the Spitfire at range and elected to maintain track and, although the Spitfire pilot saw the J3 at close range, he had sufficient time to assess that maintaining his track was also the safest course of action.

³ The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).

