

AIRPROX REPORT No 2016116

Date: 17 Apr 2016 Time: 1400Z Position: 5246N 00247W Location: 2nm SE Sleaf

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	C172	Slingsby T67
Operator	Civ Club	Civ Club
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	AGCS	AGCS
Provider	Sleaf Radio	Sleaf Radio
Altitude/FL	NK	NK
Transponder	NK	C
Reported		
Colours	White, Red	Yellow, Black
Lighting	Strobe, Beacon	Strobe
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	10km	10km
Altitude/FL	2300ft	NK
Altimeter	QFE	NK
Heading	350°	NK
Speed	NK	NK
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Alert	N/A	N/A
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/200m H	NK
Recorded	NK	



THE C172 PILOT reports that he was approaching Sleaf from the SE; he 'informed' Sleaf that he would turn and approach direct into deadside descending, which was acknowledged on the radio by the AGCS. He turned onto a heading of 350° at approximately 2nm from Sleaf and was descending from 2500ft. Within moments, a yellow Slingsby flashed in front of him descending at speed from the top-right side of the canopy at a distance of approximately 200m and away to the lower-left side out of sight. It took him by surprise because there had been no report of aerobatics over the airfield when he called up: he assumed the Slingsby was on an aerobatic training or practice detail. He completed a circuit and landed, after which he spoke to the Pilot of the Slingsby who had also landed at Sleaf. The Slingsby pilot said he had not seen the C172 nor had he heard them on the radio. He believes the situation was in part caused by the Slingsby being higher and behind his high-winged aircraft, and he being below the low-winged Slingsby as it was banking down. He did not know if the Slingsby was also entering deadside or crossing the airfield at 2000ft. Having discussed the matter an Airprox was not filed at the time, but was now being filed at the request of the Sleaf Head of Training.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE SLINGSBY T67 PILOT reports that he was never visual with the other aircraft; however, on landing at Sleaf, the pilot of the C172 approached him on the ground to say that an aircraft matching the description of his Slingsby got close to his C172 during the time when he was flying, and that the reporting pilot believed that the Slingsby was undertaking aerobatic manoeuvres at the time. From the description given by the reporting pilot, and the time he has provided for the Airprox, he would have been undertaking aerobatics practice between 2,000 - 3,000ft approximately 4nm south/south west of Sleaf in the vicinity of the railway line that runs in the NW to SE direction. All the details that he has been able to provide in this Airprox report are based on his likely position determined from information provided by the reporting pilot when he spoke to him.

Factual Background

The weather at Shawbury was recorded as follows:

METAR EGOS 231250Z AUTO 34014KT 9999 SCT047/// 10/08 Q1022

UKAB Secretariat

The C172 and Slingsby 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 converging then the C172 pilot was required to give way to the Slingsby².

Sleap UKAIP entry states³:

Sleap Airfield is authorised by the CAA to carry out low level flying within the Sleap ATZ for the purpose of aerobatic and formation display practice. The pilots of inbound and departing traffic will be informed by Sleap Air/Ground radio when these practices are taking place. These flights will normally be arranged to keep disruption of normal air traffic to a minimum. Visiting pilots should always ensure PPR is obtained when planning to visit Sleap as a further safeguard against possible conflicts.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a C172 and a Slingsby flew into proximity at 1400 on Sunday 17th April 2016. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, both pilots in receipt of an AGCS Service from Sleap.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft.

The Board agreed that without any data from radar recordings, the position of the Airprox, inside or outside the ATZ, was difficult to determine. That being said, it appeared from both pilots' reports that the incident had occurred just outside the Sleap ATZ, in an area in which both pilots were entitled to operate, and that both were monitoring the same ACGS frequency. The Board agreed that the Slingsby was entitled to carry out aerobatics in the area outside the ATZ, but stressed the importance of good lookout to ensure that the area was clear of other aircraft prior to commencing (and during) aerobatics, and of selecting an area with due consideration for other airspace users who may be routing through that area, especially into or out of the airfield.

Accepting that the C172 pilot's reported geometry of the situation indicated that the Slingsby was apparently approaching him from above and behind, GA members wondered whether the C172 pilot may also have been focused on looking ahead for Sleap as he joined the visual circuit, and may therefore not have prioritised all-round lookout. That being said, they agreed with the C172 pilot's own assessment that, in the circumstances described, the Slingsby was likely to have been masked by the high wing of the C172. Clearly, the C172 pilot could not be expected to see other aircraft that were hidden by aircraft structures, but members opined that, although there was a limit to what could be practically done, pilots needed to pro-actively engage in lookout techniques such as manoeuvring the aircraft to clear blind spots if possible in order to help mitigate this risk. As for the Slingsby pilot, the Board noted that he had not seen the C172 at all, and also wondered whether he had become task-focussed on his aerobatic manoeuvres at the expense of a good all-round lookout. Although it was natural that the Slingsby pilot would wish to conduct his aerobatics with the minimum of fuel and time wasted in transit, GA members also opined that there appeared to be more suitable areas for such activities rather than at, or at least near to, the boundary of the Sleap ATZ.

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

² SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

³ EGCV AD2.20 Local Traffic Regulations, 4 Warnings, (h).

Ultimately, without the benefit of radar analysis the Board agreed that it was difficult to ascertain the exact geometry of the incident and thereby deduce who was required to give way to whom. On the one hand, if it was a converging situation then the C172 pilot was required to give way to the Slingsby. If it was an overtaking situation then the Slingsby pilot was required to give way to the C172. Regardless, both pilots still had a shared responsibility to avoid collisions and, in this incident, this hinged on their being able to see-and-avoid each other. In assessing the cause, members therefore agreed that it had been a late-sighting by the C172 pilot and a non-sighting by the Slingsby pilot. The Board then considered the risk and agreed that, although there were no radar recordings, it was clear that safety had been reduced much below the norm in this incident, especially because the Slingsby pilot had not sighted the C172 at close range as he passed in front; they therefore assessed the risk as Category B.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the C172 pilot and a non sighting by the Slingsby pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.