

AIRPROX REPORT No 2014193

Date/Time: 24 Aug 2014 1316Z (Sunday)

Position: 5217N 00332W
(Elan Valley Aerodrome)

Airspace: London FIR (Class: G)

Aircraft 1 Aircraft 2

Type: PA18 Untraced
Helicopter

Operator: Civ Pte Unknown

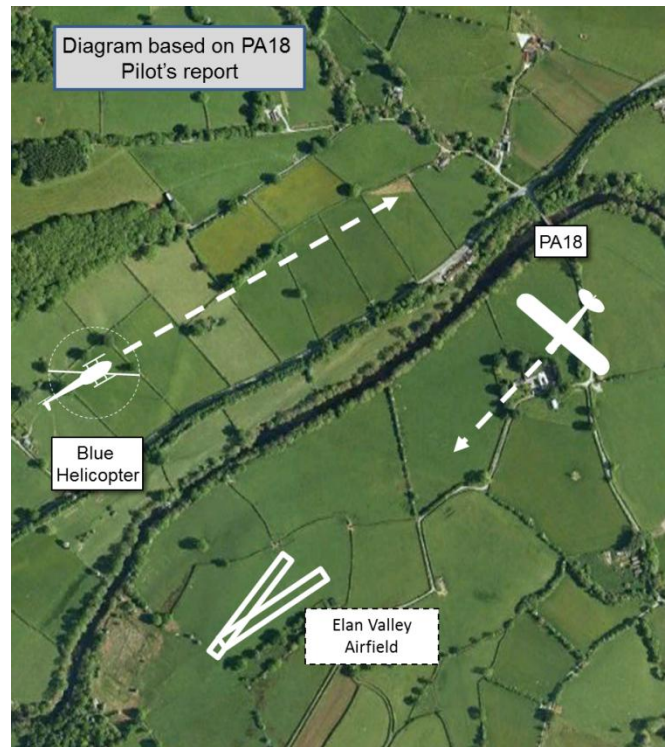
Alt/FL: 300-500ft NK
(1017hPa)

Conditions: VMC NK

Visibility: >10km NK

Reported Separation:
0ft V/0.25nm H NK V/NK H

Recorded Separation:
NK V/NK H



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE PA18 PILOT reports flying VFR in a bright yellow aircraft, with high-intensity strobe lights, red beacon and landing light illuminated, transponder Modes 3/A and C selected, and TCAS¹ I operating. He was on final to land at Elan Valley aerodrome, at around 300-500ft agl, flying at 55kt and monitoring the aerodrome frequency, when he saw a blue helicopter fly over the airfield just to his right; he was able to identify the helicopter's operating company. He received a 'TCAS alarm' when the helicopter was 1nm away, saw it at the same level at a range of 0.25nm, and made a sharp sideslip to the left and landed. He noted that the TCAS indicated that the helicopter approached to 0.25nm, and that the helicopter pilot made no attempt at any avoiding action. The PA18 pilot said that he thought that the helicopter company had carried out numerous pleasure flights that day, that Elan Valley airfield had been in operation for nearly 30 years, was clearly marked on the 'half mil and quarter mil charts', and had a large windsock.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE HELICOPTER could not be traced. An R22 pilot was cruising at 70kt, at 2600ft on the regional QNH, just to the north of Elan Valley Airfield at around the time of the Airprox, and helpfully submitted a full report, but he did not recall seeing another aircraft at close range during his flight. Following further conversation with the PA18 pilot, it was clear that the R22's colouring and direction of travel were completely different from those of the helicopter that the PA18 pilot had witnessed. The Elan Valley Visitors' Centre confirmed that they occasionally operate sight-seeing helicopter flights for tourists, but that no flights had taken place on this date; consequently, tracing action was concluded.

Factual Background

The weather at Shawbury was recorded as follows:

METAR EGOS 241250Z AUTO 18005KT 9999 FEW070/// BKN130/// 17/09 Q1017

¹ Traffic Alerting and Collision Avoidance System

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Both pilots shared equal responsibility to avoid a collision and to avoid flying in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a danger of collision². The helicopter pilot was also required to conform to the pattern of traffic at the aerodrome or keep clear of the airspace in which the pattern was formed³.

Summary

An Airprox was reported in Class G airspace between a PA18, which was on final approach to Elan Valley aerodrome, and an untraced helicopter flying west to east, just to the north of the aerodrome. Both pilots were operating under VFR without an Air Traffic Service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included a report from the PA18 pilot and radar photographs/video recordings. The Board noted that it was clear that the PA18 pilot had been concerned about the proximity of a helicopter to his final approach, and that the aerodrome was clearly marked on the 1:250,000 chart. However, members also noted that there is no avoidance area around the aerodrome, and that the Rules of the Air simply required the helicopter pilot to avoid aircraft in the traffic pattern rather than the aerodrome itself. In addition, the Board opined that the helicopter pilot would have had to balance his proximity to any aircraft in the traffic pattern against the high ground of the surrounding valley. Noting the river which flows along the northwest of the aerodrome, members thought it likely that the helicopter pilot had been using that as a linear feature to ensure that he had some separation from the aerodrome, and would have been relying on his look-out to spot any aircraft in the traffic pattern. The Board noted that the PA18 pilot did not see the helicopter take any avoiding action but, whilst it was perfectly understandable that he may have been concerned by its proximity, the Board agreed that, on the assumption that the helicopter pilot was aware of the airfield as he flew down the valley, 0.25nm separation was not unusual in Class G airspace between aircraft of these performance levels. In the end, the Board agreed that the unknown helicopter pilot had flown close enough to cause the PA18 pilot concern but, because the separation was not considered abnormal for these circumstances, they assessed the degree of risk as Category E.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

<u>Cause:</u>	The unknown helicopter pilot flew close enough to cause the PA18 pilot concern.
<u>Degree of Risk:</u>	E.
<u>ERC Score</u> ⁴ :	1.

² Rules of The Air 2007, Rule 8, Avoiding Aerial Collisions

³ Rules of The Air 2007, Rule 12, Flight in the vicinity of an aerodrome

⁴ Although the Event Risk Classification (ERC) trial had been formally terminated for future development at the time of the Board, for data continuity and consistency purposes, Director UKAB and the UKAB Secretariat provided a shadow assessment of ERC.