

AIRPROX REPORT No 2010021

Date/Time: 16 Mar 2103 (Night)

Position: 5103N 00130W
(6nm S Middle Wallop)

Airspace: LFA 1 (Class: G)

Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Squirrel Chinook

Operator: HQ AAC HQ JHC

Alt/FL: 300ft NR
(Rad Alt)

Weather: VMC (CAVOK) NR

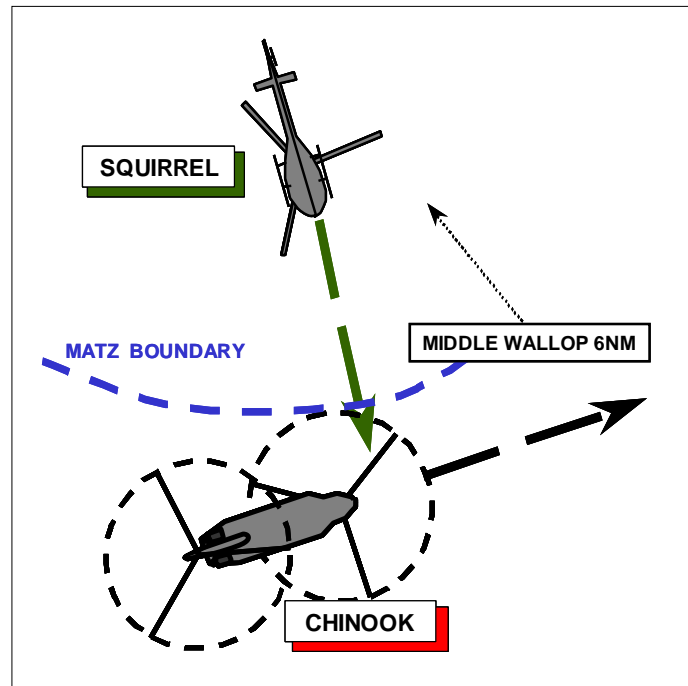
Visibility: >10km NR

Reported Separation:

V 100ft/H 300 Not Seen

Recorded Separation:

NR



PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

THE SQUIRREL PILOT reports that they were flying a standard night departure from Middle Wallop, in receipt of a BS from TWR and squawking with Mode C. When they were approaching the southern MATZ boundary, heading 170° at 90kt, having cleared with TWR, they commenced a descent to 200ft agl and while in the descent a Chinook passed through their 12 o'clock flying from right to left, about 100ft lower than them and about 300m ahead. He assessed the risk as being high.

The NHP contacted Wallop to confirm whether the ac was talking to the controller, which he was not.

JHC Policy states that all ac are to notify Wallop of their intended routing. OC Night had received no notification that the Chinook would be in the area, apart from LFA 1 – Salisbury Plain – LFA 1.

UKAB Note (1): A copy of this policy was requested by the UKAB, but was not forthcoming.

THE CHINOOK PILOT reports, 3 months after the event, that he was conducting a training sortie at the time of this incident in the vicinity of Wallop.

He was operating in accordance with Low Flying Handbook orders relating to LFA 1 and was monitoring Low Level Common frequency on UHF and Odiham APP on VHF. Odiham was selected on VHF as he was returning to Odiham and this frequency was used for 'Ops Normal' calls throughout their operations in LFA1.

When the sortie was planned, the route was notified to RAF Odiham Operations in accordance with JHC policy. Odiham has an e-mail trail to verify that this occurred. He believes there must have been a break down in the Ops process if this information was not disseminated.

He did not see the other ac involved.

UKAB Note (2): A copy of the e-mail trail was requested from RAF Odiham but was not forthcoming.

ATSI reported that the Airprox occurred 6.5nm S of Middle Wallop in Class G airspace. A Squirrel helicopter was conducting a NVG night flying sortie and was in receipt of a BS from Middle Wallop

TWR (WallopTWR). The Controller reported that due to excessive radar clutter, suppression filters had been selected on the radar display but he believed that this had no bearing on the incident.

The Middle Wallop weather was reported as:

METAR EGVP 162050 20006KT CAVOK 05/02 Q1024 BLU NOSIG=

At 2055:55 Wallop TWR made a general broadcast of new ATIS information ROMEO with QFE remaining 1013mb and the New Portland RPS of 1019mb.

At 2058:32 the Squirrel pilot reported ready for departure and was cleared for take off by Wallop TWR, "*..c/s clear take off surface wind one nine zero degrees six knots*" and the pilot responded, "*take off ..c/s*".

At 2102:38 the Squirrel pilot reported, "*..c/s..MATZ boundary south to er to low level*". Wallop TWR acknowledged the call and passed the Portland RPS of 1019mb. The controller's written report states that the Squirrel disappeared beneath radar coverage which is normal for the flight profile, given the terrain to the S. At that point the Wallop TWR Controller expected the Squirrel to change to the Low Flying Area (LFA) common frequency but at 2103:35 the the pilot reported, "*c/s....can you be advised that we've just had a er C H fortyseven pass about er one hundred feet across the nose at just south of West Dean oh just by West Dean*"; the controller responded, "*Roger not on our frequency I'm afraid*". The Squirrel pilot then asked, "*Is he er have you go-have you got him on radar*" and the controller responded, "*No I just - It's intermittent contact on both of you down there at the moment*". At 2103:58 the Squirrel pilot replied "*Yeah he passed about er eighty feet er in in front and er just below the nose*", ATC acknowledged the call and the pilot of the Squirrel requested, "*could you inform O C night*".

The Wallop TWR Controller's report stated that an Odiham SSR code, without primary, was observed, just E of the point where the incident occurred and was seen tracking towards Odiham. Odiham were advised that the Chinook helicopter had been involved in an incident and the callsign was confirmed.

A BS is described in MATS Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 11, Page 4, Para 3.5.1 and states:

'Pilots should not expect any form of traffic information from a controller, as there is no such obligation placed on the controller under a Basic Service outside an Aerodrome Traffic Zone (ATZ), and the pilot remains responsible for collision avoidance at all times. However, on initial contact the controller may provide traffic information in general terms to assist with the pilot's situational awareness. The controller will not normally update this unless the situation has changed markedly, or the pilot requests an update. A controller with access to surveillance derived information shall avoid the routine provision of traffic information on specific aircraft, and a pilot who considers that he requires such a regular flow of specific traffic information shall request a Traffic Service. However, if a controller considers that a definite risk of collision exists, a warning may be issued to the pilot.'

The Middle Wallop TWR Controller was not aware of any other traffic in the vicinity and was therefore not in a position to provide any general TI or warning to the pilot of the Squirrel helicopter.

HQ JHC comments that JHC aircrew conform to the procedures in the Low Flying Handbook (LFH). There is no further JHC Policy. LFH Section 2 LFA 1 Night Procedures Para 2 states:

'**Dissemination of Night Flying Route Information.** Middle Wallop are to produce night flying power-point slides and distribute them to the other MOB's within LFA1 whist Benson and Odiham are to produce route information on a night flying proforma for distribution to the other MOB's. ATCO Boscombe Down is to notify Middle Wallop when they are night flying in order to receive the slides.'

Since the merge of LFAs 1A, 1B and 1C into a single LFA, there has been a problem in the dissemination of night flying information between the MOBs. This has been discussed at length at the LFA1 Users WG and significant progress has been made since this incident. Detailed slides showing routes and timings are now distributed on a daily basis to all the MOBs using LFA1 and this should help prevent incidents such as this. However, the incident happened in Class G airspace, and although the Squirrel crew would have been alerted to the possible presence of a Chinook, they would still have to see it to avoid it. From the Chinook crews perspective, it would have been good airmanship to have given a quick information call to Middle Wallop to acknowledge that they were operating in close proximity to the MATZ as this would have provide far greater SA to the departing Squirrel crew.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac, transcripts of the relevant RT frequencies, radar recordings, a report from the air traffic controller involved and a report from the ac operating authority.

Despite the LFA1 night notification procedures appearing to have broken down, Members agreed that, since both ac had been operating legitimately in the Class G airspace of the UKNLFS, the pilots shared an equal responsibility to see and avoid other ac; the Squirrel crew saw the Chinook, albeit later than optimal, but the Chinook crew did not see the Squirrel nor were they aware of its proximity. Members were aware that both with and without NVG/S, lookout at night could be particularly difficult, especially in areas of high surface traffic or other cultural lighting. Nevertheless, collision avoidance depends on good lookout, which is therefore paramount. A specialist Military helicopter pilot Member observed that he would have expected the Squirrel crew to clear the area of their flightpath and ensure appropriate separation as they descended to Low Level; further he informed the Board that the incident could have been avoided had the Chinook crew given Middle Wallop APP a courtesy call as they passed through the 'choke point' just to S of their (active) MATZ.

The Board was unable to determine positively why the night flying notification procedures had not worked as designed; it seemed, however, that there might have been a breakdown of the communication chain in RAF Odiham Ops centre. One Member also observed that, although his report was minimal and very late, the Chinook pilot also appeared to be unaware that the Squirrel was entering the LFA to the S of Middle Wallop at the time they passed through the area.

When considering the degree of risk the Board noted that the Squirrel crew saw the Chinook in time to take effective avoiding action and therefore had removed any risk of collision.

The Board also noted the work of the LFA 1 Users WG and endorsed their aim of identifying and resolving the operational issues.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: Non-sighting by the Chinook crew and late sighting by the Squirrel crew.

Degree of Risk: C.