

**AIRPROX REPORT No 2010031**

Date/Time: 7 Mar 1318 (Sunday)

Position: 5525N 00134W  
(Boulmer)

Airspace: Scot FIR (Class:G)  
Reporting Ac Reported Ac

Type: Sea King Chipmunk

Operator: HQ AIR (OPS) Civ Pte

Alt/FL: 120ft 700ft  
(QNH 1034mb) (NK)

Weather: VMC NR VMC CAVOK

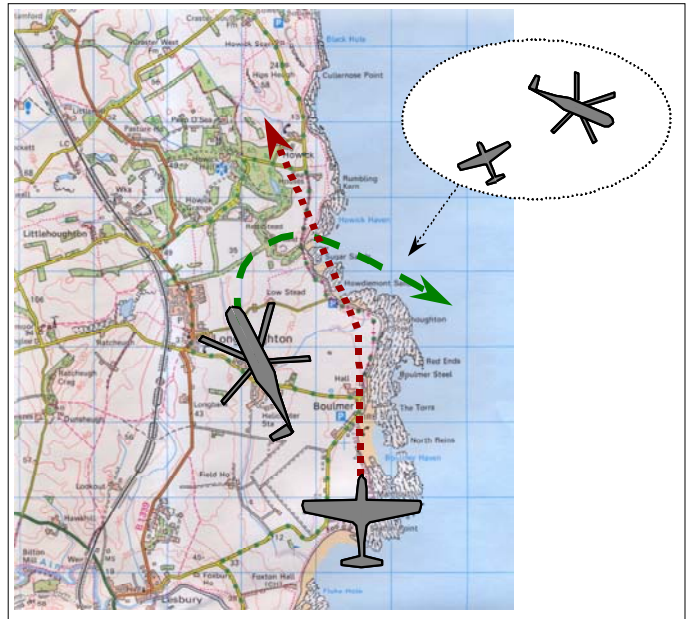
Visibility: 10km >50km

Reported Separation:

50ft V/125m H NR

Recorded Separation:

NR



**PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

**THE SEA KING PILOT** reports flying a yellow helicopter on a local S&R training flight squawking 7000 with Mode C in contact with Boulmer Radio. Whilst completing the finals turn of a drum winching circuit, in a period of high workload, in a 30° aob right turn onto 120° at 50kt and descending from 150ft AMSL towards 100ft, the winchman, who was primarily concentrating his attention on remaining visual with the simulated survivor through the right-hand bubble window, called “ac 2 o’clock high”. The reported ac was a red and white Chipmunk, initially 300m away, which passed 125m to the right and 50ft above. The winchman continued to observe the ac and call its position as it descended northwards along the coast passing behind them. He did not take any further avoiding action as he was already in a descending turn to 50ft asl. The ac was last seen behind them on the coast where it was then obscured by the terrain. At a time interval of 90sec after the CPA, the winchman judged that the ac appeared to be flying at 100ft agl, based on the height of the Sea King and the backdrop with the horizon.

The crew considered this to be a significant flight safety risk as it occurred during a period of high workload and at a height civilian ac are not expected.

**THE CHIPMUNK PILOT** reports flying a red, white and grey ac on a local, VFR private flight from Eshott airfield with a CAA test pilot and instructor sic [UKAB Note: Class Rating Instructor] in the rear seat. They were squawking 7000 but Mode C was not fitted and they were in receipt of an ‘advisory service’ from Eshott. They were following the Northumberland coast heading N at 700ft and 90kt, just when abeam Boulmer, when both his passenger and he saw a helicopter 45° right of the nose about 2nm away. He altered course 20° to the W onto 340° to avoid the helicopter; at no time was there any possibility of a conflict, and he assessed the risk as being none.

He has been flying in this area for a number of years and is aware that the SAR crews carry out regular exercises off the coast; he always keeps an improved lookout whenever he is near Boulmer.

UKAB Note (1): The incident took place below the base of radar cover.

UKAB Note (2): Boulmer does not have a MATZ or an ATZ.

**HQ AIR (OPS)** comments that the Sea King crew perceived a confliction but the Chipmunk crew were visual and took avoiding action. An advisory radio call to Boulmer from the Chipmunk would have improved the situational awareness although there is no requirement to do this.

Boulmer is one of the few SAR helicopter sites that does not have an ATZ. The establishment of an ATZ should ensure that passing traffic is able to deconflict via RT and should be pursued.

## **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

Information available included reports from the pilots of both ac and report from the Sea King operating authority.

The absence of radar data and the substantially different pilots' reports made it difficult for the Board to analyse this incident. In particular, it was not possible to determine with any degree of certainty the precise tracks of the two ac. The Chipmunk pilot reported that he was following the coast when he saw the Sea King 45° right of the nose at 2nm and turned left 20° to avoid; if this estimate was correct the miss-distance would have been in excess of 2.7nm. If the helicopter's reported position was accurate, this would put the Chipmunk some 2nm inland. Alternatively, the helicopter was working with a buoy much further out to sea than its reported position. The Chipmunk pilot reported that he was flying at 700ft, presumably, though not reported, amsl which would have put his ac well clear vertically at over 500ft above the Sea King. The Sea King crew also reported that the Chipmunk was following the coast but the crewman saw it in their 2 o'clock slightly above them. Members observed that if the Chipmunk had been over 2nm W of the helicopter, then it would have been in the 4-6 o'clock position relative to the helicopter. Moreover, if the Chipmunk was several hundred feet higher than the helicopter in its 4-6 o'clock position while the helicopter was banking to the right in its finals turn on to the buoy, it would have been particularly difficult to see out of the starboard bubble window.

Although unable to resolve the differences positively, Members agreed that the Chipmunk was probably further from the Sea King than its crew estimated, but considerably closer than the Chipmunk pilot estimated; by flying close to the Sea King at a critical time in their winching circuit the Chipmunk pilot had caused the Sea King crew concern.

The Board noted the arguments for and against the establishment of an ATZ at RAF Boulmer given by the several Members and Advisors, but agreed unanimously that comment on this aspect would be inappropriate.

## **PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK**

Cause: The Chipmunk flew close enough to the Sea King to cause its crew concern.

Degree of Risk: C.