

# CHIRP GA FEEDBACK

Issue No: 50

4/2011

## **INCORRECT A/G FREQUENCY (GAFB48)**

**Report Text:** I would like to comment on the report titled 'Incorrect A/G Frequency' in GA FEEDBACK 48. The reporter states that he was in the circuit, (correctly).....and that an aircraft on 'long finals' complained of being 'cut up'. The reporter then goes on to apologise for his bad airmanship.

I was always under the impression that an aircraft doing a standard overhead join, and then positioning in the circuit, is operating correctly. If another aircraft is joining on 'long finals', (or long anything really), then they are the ones 'pushing in'.....or 'cutting-up'! Obviously.....if the circuit is very quiet, or vacant, then a long straight-in join may be acceptable.....but active/busy? I feel the reporter in this instance had nothing to apologise for.

**CHIRP Comment:** This comment is quite correct. Electing to make a straight-in join should be contingent on the number of other aircraft established in the circuit and the pilot joining must give priority to those aircraft unless subject to an ATC instruction.

## **'LHR AIRSPACE INFRINGEMENT' (GA FB49)**

**(1) Report Text:** I have to make a comment about the lead incident in CHIRP GA 49 regarding an LHR Airspace infringement. In my opinion the primary mistake was in the initial routing from WOD to BNN. This actually grazes the LHR TMA. It is unnecessary to fly this close to any control zone. I presume it was done this way to give radio navigation backup, but the accuracy of backtracking an NDB (WOD) and tracking towards a VOR (BNN) is a problem waiting to happen. Far better to use the capability of the GPS to fly via Marlow, giving a good visual position check as well and using radio crosscuts as a check.

I would agree absolutely with your comment about checking total distance and tracks and distances against a PLOG but would add a waypoint change drill as well, checking that the aircraft turns onto the next track correctly, and the distance is correct.

My concern is that these sort of GPS problems may put some off from using them sensibly, I plan using SkyDemon which produces a PLOG and also removes the possibility of getting coordinates wrong, and use it during flight on a tablet PC, but back this up using an 'App' (Airspace Avoid) from Pocket FMS that runs on my Samsung Galaxy phone. I also draw a line on a chart and use VOR radials as well.

**(2) Report Text:** With regard to the item about the LHR Airspace Infringement, a similar situation happened to me a few years ago while flying north along the low level route between the Liverpool & Manchester CTR's with

much the same alert assistance from Liverpool ATC, a good de-brief with my NPPL examiner after the event and the subsequent grovelling letter to the senior controller at Manchester offering my abject apology for such poor airmanship.

Subsequently, I now generally fly with a Lowrance GPS as back-up to the traditional navigation and do my flight planning and GPS programming well in advance utilising Google Earth to do so. It's free and amazingly accurate in respect of both co-ordinates and distances. I plot my course in the traditional way and then use Google Earth to fine tune it with the resultant waypoint co-ordinates entered into the GPS as well as being noted on the half mil chart (including VOR position fixes where appropriate along track).

It takes a little bit more time but is an extremely good back up to the traditional method which is, in my opinion, still the best way to navigate. As a certain super market chain keeps reminding everyone "every little bit helps".

Hopefully someone might benefit from this little bit of "magic" if they haven't already discovered it for themselves.

**CHIRP Comment:** As these two very useful comments show there are a number of ways to flight plan and navigate effectively using the modern technology that is now readily available. However, whatever method you employ should include four simple components:

1. Select a route and waypoints that are compatible with your experience, the navigation aids that you intend to use and take account of NOTAMS/warnings. Ensure your route has an appropriate margin for error with respect to Controlled Airspace.
2. Familiarise yourself with major visual features and/or back-up navigation aids along your planned route.
3. Cross-check tracks/distances/timings.
4. Have a back-up plan for failure of your primary navigation equipment and/or adverse weather.

A very interesting WW2 two-part video/film titled 'RAF Low Flying Navigation Technique' that explains the basics can be found on YouTube at:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQWZEVaoFKQ&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQWZEVaoFKQ&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

## **AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN?**

**Report Text:** A private pilot colleague phoned me to seek advice on an owner pilot operating from the same airfield. It appeared that this pilot not only operates his aircraft at times dangerously, but also chooses to boast about his adventures to other locally based pilots.

A recent typical example was the pilot, a NPPL holder who has no IMC rating, electing to fly to a destination in

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south west England, in spite of the Met Forecast predicting fog. On contacting the airfield, he was advised that the poor visibility and low cloud had indeed arrived; however, he elected to let down through a fairly solid chunk of overcast, broke out in the low hundreds of feet, and then returned to brag about it.

A group of these pilots asked my friend, who I had recently revalidated, to enquire as to who they should contact to report this pilot before an incident or accident occurs. The airfield has neither a licence nor a resident Flight Training Organisation etc and so the raising of an MOR for some particular second-hand report is not practical, or so I believe; although I suspect that the ATCO involved in the above incident might have done so, if he/she had been in possession of the facts.

**CHIRP Comment:** Behaviour such as that alleged in this report is typical of only a small minority of GA pilots. Any individual with first-hand knowledge of an incident involving an alleged breach of the Air Navigation Order and/or the Rules of the Air may report the matter directly to the CAA irrespective of the status of an airfield or the location at which an alleged incident occurred.

Details of how to report to the CAA can be found on the CAA website at [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk) ; click on "Reporting, Information, Requests and Appeals" and then click on "Making a Report to the CAA". Methods include the voluntary submission of a CAA Mandatory Occurrence Report or, if preferred, reporting under the 'Whistleblower' scheme.

Alternatively, a CHIRP report may be submitted in the first instance, but subsequently direct contact with the CAA might be required.

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## TRIAL LESSON - ADVERSE WEATHER

**Report Text:** I teach at a local flying school and, when requested, act as the Senior Instructor, as was the case on this occasion. The weather was overcast with a METAR cloudbase of 1,200 ft; the actual base was varying between this and the top of nearby hills (about 1,700 ft). The wind was south-westerly at 15 kts, gusting 25kts and very turbulent low down. A weak cold front was scheduled to pass through around mid-day and the TAF had a TEMPO between 1200 and 1900 UTC for this frontal passage. We had already cancelled PPL students for circuit work that morning on the grounds that the weather was definitely unsuitable.

The holder of a Trial Lesson 'Gift Certificate' telephoned late morning to find out whether or not he should come in for a pre-arranged 40-minute trial lesson (T/L). At that time the wind had increased and was still gusting to 25 kts. I observed a sole light aircraft climbing after take-off through a cloudbase of less than 1,200 ft. Some light rain had also started and more significant rain was observable in the distance. On the basis of the TAF, METARs and my own observations, I advised the would-be student that although some aircraft were flying, it would not be suitable for the trial lesson a little later in the day. He responded that he had some gliding experience and had concluded that the gusty wind and the low cloudbase would make it unsuitable. He asked if he could book another date, which we did.

Two senior managers involved in the school's operations and training had overheard my conversation with the student and I was admonished for giving the customer a choice of whether to fly or not. I was told that I should have told him to come in for the T/L and that I should just "get him out of the way". I argued that the weather was marginal at best and that giving a T/L in such bumpy conditions and being restrained by low cloud might frighten customers and provide a bad experience of flying. A gift certificate is, after all, given to someone in the expectation that they will enjoy the experience.

I was told that this was irrelevant and that it was "A pain to have to re-book T/Ls". I asked the training manager to confirm that his view was that commercial factors and administrative ease were of greater importance than either safety of flight and providing a paying customer (in excess of £130) with an enjoyable experience of flying. He answered in the affirmative. Furthermore he expressed the opinion that 'T/Ls were a pain' and that you should just "get them out of the way, whatever the weather".

I was made to feel very uncomfortable by this outright questioning of my decision not to fly and the conflict between my professional decision vs. ease of administration, especially as I was the Senior Instructor that day, (supervising a Restricted Flying Instructor (FI)) and the whole scene had been played out in open forum in front of the Restricted FI. I was then put under further pressure to call the customer and tell him that the weather 'had improved'. This I refused to do having made my decision that I would not fly a T/L in the prevailing conditions. An awkward silence prevailed for the rest of the afternoon and it certainly affected my respect of the capability and decision-making criteria of the managers, whom I now hold in very low esteem.

Lessons Learned:

1. My licence, my responsibility, my decision. Resist pressure from others to change your mind in order to make someone else's life easier!
2. A younger and less confident instructor might have been bullied by a senior manager into flying in adverse conditions, against his better judgement.

**CHIRP Comment:** Commercial pressures come in many forms; treating a trial lesson in the manner described could be considered to be commercially unethical and potentially unsafe. The reporter is to be congratulated for resisting the pressure described and submitting this report for the benefit of other individuals.

As the reporter notes; remember, it's your licence, your reputation and possibly your life at risk not your management's.

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## A SIMPLE OVERSIGHT; A MAJOR PROBLEM

**Report Text:** I took off from a private strip in Southeast England for a flight to Gloucester. I was alone at the airstrip and alone in the aircraft. I took off with the tow bar still attached to the nose wheel. The take-off run was unaffected but on rotation I heard a loud bang from beneath the aircraft and felt a "kick" though the pedals.

I raised the undercarriage as normal and the 'Gear-in-Transit' light remained on. Normally it would go out a few moments after raising the undercarriage. I orbited the airstrip to identify the problem and discovered that I

could lower the main wheels but not the nose wheel. I proceeded to a nearby airfield with an Air/Ground (A/G) service and made a low pass so that the A/G operator could view the undercarriage. He confirmed that only the main wheels were down.

I issued a PAN call on the local Regional Airport frequency and was instructed to proceed towards the Airport. Another pilot in the area heard my PAN call and flew to my position to assist. He told me that my tow bar was hanging from the undercarriage mechanism. The wind was not suitable at the Regional Airport for a landing on two wheels so the emergency services prepared for me to land at the airfield with the A/G service, where the runway direction was into wind. I carried out a careful landing on the main wheels and was unhurt. The aircraft has sustained minor damage but appears repairable.



Lessons Learned: I believe the problem occurred because I moved the aircraft after my external checks were complete. My checklist includes, at item four, an instruction to remove the tow bar. However, after completing my external checks it became necessary to move the aircraft with the tow bar. I have done this many times in the past and always removed the tow bar as soon as the movement was completed. I cannot explain why I did not do so on this occasion although I assume that some other activity, such as closing the hangar doors, broke my chain of thought.

It is difficult to see a foolproof method of preventing this kind of pilot error. In future I will make a point of always walking once round the aircraft before getting in even when my checks are complete. However, I am confident that I personally will not make this particular mistake again.

**CHIRP Comment:** The reporter handled the difficult situation that resulted from his error extremely well.

**A significant number of serious incidents/accidents are caused by pre-flight Vital Actions being missed due to a distraction and/or time pressure. The only safe option is to repeat all Vital Actions immediately prior to taxi/take-off.**

**A second point worthy of note is that if you hear anything unusual during or shortly after the take-off, if unable to stop safely in the remaining runway available, the safe option is to leave the aircraft in the same configuration, investigate the possible cause(s) and land as soon as practicable.**

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## **CLOSE ENCOUNTER - OVERFLYING AIRCRAFT**

**Report Text:** I was returning to our home airfield in NW England from a cross-country flight with a passenger, a

Flexwing pilot. At about 10 miles out we flew into a weather front moving west to east. As we are both fairly inexperienced I decided to divert to a nearby strip and sit the weather out.

With the front chasing us I blind called on the Air/Ground frequency at 3 miles out and again on finals. Descending through 300 - 400ft on long finals on to the southwesterly runway, I looked ahead to see a DC3 flying directly towards me, slightly above and straight down the runway. I immediately aborted my landing and took avoiding action. I then rejoined the circuit to land just as the front passed over.

Lessons Learned: Be prepared for the unexpected - even when under pressure

**CHIRP Comment:** The strip in this report had no Air Traffic Zone and was not marked on the aeronautical chart for the area. Many strips are not so marked at the owner's request. In these circumstances it is entirely legal for an aircraft to transit at 500ft AGL or in accordance with Rule 5. Notwithstanding this, where the location of a strip/airfield with no ATZ is known it is good practice to avoid flying through the overhead.

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## **MISIDENTIFIED DESTINATION**

**Report Text:** IFR Flight from Channel Islands to Oxford, routing Ortac, SAM, CPT, OX, cruising at F170. Weather was very clear with no haze or cloud over southern England.

I had been to Oxford several times previously but not recently and not since the rebuilding programme had commenced. Oxford ATIS advised Runway 01 in use, so I self briefed the NDB/DME 01 procedure. I was cleared by London Control to descend and to leave Controlled Airspace, routing CPT direct to the OX beacon and to contact Oxford Approach. I was aware of a NOTAM that advised that Brize Norton radar would not provide radar vectors for instrument approaches at Oxford. I had no DME readout, but I saw an airfield in 11 o'clock relative position which looked like Oxford and (talking to Oxford Approach /Tower) I was cleared to position on a right base to its northerly runway.

Only on final did I realise that I was making an approach to Abingdon, not Oxford. I carried out a missed approach and although I turned right after the go-around, I allowed the aircraft to infringe the south-eastern corner of the Brize Norton CTR (class D airspace). I continued to Oxford and positioned to right base for RW01 and landed normally.

After landing, I contacted the Brize Radar supervisor by telephone to admit my error and to confirm if there had been a problem at Abingdon (no aircraft seen in the area) or Brize (no problems as they had been using their easterly runway)

Lessons Learned: Both airfields have a northerly main runway with buildings on the right hand side, both have a town on the right, both have a main road crossing just in front of the runway threshold. I did not switch from IFR navigation mode to VFR navigation mode properly and confirm my position on my VFR chart, which was current and to hand, because I was confident I knew where I was (I had just passed Didcot power station) and had identified my destination airfield - except that I

hadn't! My confidence in my flying led to complacency which led to an error. Don't assume - check!

**CHIRP Comment:** This report is a good example of one form of human error known as 'Confirmation Bias' in which an individual will accept information that confirms a previous assumption but rejects information that calls that assumption into question.

In this case the reporter accepted the similarities in the layout of the two airfields but did not assimilate the differences. As noted, confirmation of the aircraft's position prior to switching to VFR navigation would have made misidentification less likely.

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### WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT?

**Report Text:** On several occasions whilst flying north from my private air strip in North West England I have been transferred from AAA Radar to Scottish Information (119.875) when in the area of Barrow-in-Furness.

During the past couple of months several other aircraft (mainly opposite direction) have been in contact with London Information (125.475) causing a potential confliction. When I questioned this with AAA I was told that VFR traffic over the lakes below 5,500ft should normally work Scottish Information. Could this please be clarified before an accident occurs?

Is this London Information's area or Scottish's? Looking at the charts this area is London Information's responsibility but why is AAA passing traffic to Scottish instead.

Lessons Learned: Clarify to all local ATC units as to who works which area of the Lake District north of Blackpool.

**CHIRP Comment:** This report was referred to NATS. NATS advised that they had become aware of a problem between London and Scottish Flight Information Service Officers in the provision of a Basic Service in the vicinity of the boundary between the two Air Traffic Service Units. Instructions had been issued that a handover must be effected at the boundary.

However, NATS was aware that many users preferred a service from Scottish Information due to R/T congestion on occasions when London Information combine the London East and London West R/T frequencies. A NATS/CAA working group had been established to review the sectorisation of the FIR in the area referenced in this report.

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### A LUCKY ESCAPE

**Report Text:** I had planned a standard overhead join for the southwesterly runway, which was advised as the runway-in-use by phone. On entering the overhead I noted that this would give me a tailwind component for the current wind. I opted in the overhead to convert to the northeasterly runway.

Using the northeasterly runway gave a small headwind component but largely crosswind (within my limits). At this stage I continued positioning for the northeasterly runway and found myself too high at what for me was a new airfield. Probably overconfidence in my ability to land and control my speed led to me continuing with the approach which was generally fast and high. Side slipping down got me onto a touchdown point about half

way down the runway. At that point I made the decision to go around.

However, on applying power rapidly my engine did not immediately respond fully. At this point I went from being in a situation where I may have brushed the far hedge to one where I definitely was going to. But having committed to a probable ground incident I had to deal with it by braking, turning and eventually forcing a ground loop which resulted in about one foot of wing ending up in the far hedge. I concluded that if I had an engine problem it was far better to argue with hedge at 20mph than attempt to climb on partial power and into a stall spin/clip hedge situation. As it was I managed to avoid anything more than superficial damage and after having the aircraft checked over by the resident engineers was able to fly back in it.

My summary of events is that this incident arose through bad judgement and overconfidence. The following factors applied:

1. It was my first time at this airfield.
2. There was little or no headwind and the runway was downhill.
3. My early turn onto final led to a high glide approach, which in turn led to a higher speed on approach.
4. The glide approach with idle power increasing the possibility of carburettor icing on a day conducive to it, although I had left the CARB HEAT on all the way down the approach.
5. I left the decision to go around too late thus reducing my options.
6. In the heat of the moment I didn't cut the ignition after landing which might have stopped me sooner.

Lessons Learned: Essentially everything resulted from basic pilot error; a poor approach, poor judgement, overconfidence and a late decision to go around.

Also, remember to cut the engine (magneto or ignition) in such circumstances and isolate the fuel and turn off the fuel pump. I did not as I was preoccupied with not bending the airplane. This was despite doing it many times during recent training.

**CHIRP Comment:** A significant number of non-fatal GA accidents involve landing overruns. This report highlights the problems associated with landing on an unfamiliar downhill runway in light wind conditions.

In addition to the reporter's observations, with the wind conditions described it might have been preferable to accept a slight tailwind to land on the uphill runway. Also, remember that the perspective on final approach to a downhill runway can lead to a tendency to fly higher than normal unless the visual illusion is recognised.

However, the key point from this incident is not to persevere with a poor approach but to make an early decision to carry out a go-around, select CARB HEAT off, increase power smoothly and progressively, and reposition for a further approach.

#### ANYTHING TO REPORT?

We are no longer including report forms with GA FEEDBACK. If you would like to submit a report to CHIRP, you can do so by submitting an electronic report via our secure website [www.chirp.co.uk](http://www.chirp.co.uk) or download a report form from our website and post/fax it to us (see P1 for our contact details).