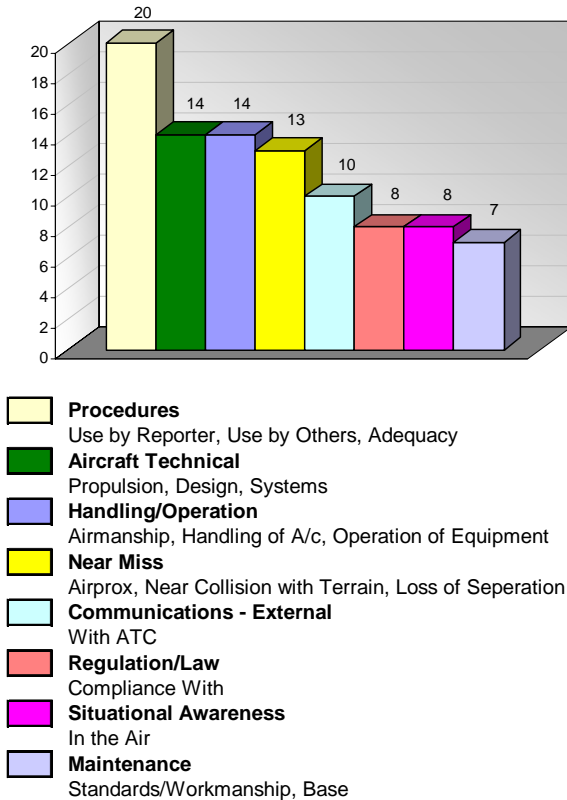


CHIRP FEEDBACK

Issue No: 30

Winter 2006

Most frequent GA Issues Reported
12 months to October 2006



- Procedures**
Use by Reporter, Use by Others, Adequacy
- Aircraft Technical**
Propulsion, Design, Systems
- Handling/Operation**
Airmanship, Handling of A/c, Operation of Equipment
- Near Miss**
Airprox, Near Collision with Terrain, Loss of Separation
- Communications - External**
With ATC
- Regulation/Law**
Compliance With
- Situational Awareness**
In the Air
- Maintenance**
Standards/Workmanship, Base

REPORTS

VFR APPROACHES IN POOR WEATHER

CHIRP Narrative: Winter operations present General Aviation pilots with a number of additional challenges, one of which is the suitability of the weather for VFR operations.

It is interesting to note that whereas a pilot is not permitted to commence a published approach to an airfield if the cloud base and/or visibility are below the published minima for the relevant approach aid, at airfields with no published approach the responsibility for assessing the suitability of the weather is solely that of the pilot irrespective of whether he/she holds an IMC rating.

(1)

Report Text: A Piper aircraft was inbound to this airfield on a VFR Flight Plan from a European airfield. A colleague and I were on FISO duties.

CCC Radar (an adjacent airfield) called us to inform us of the aircraft's imminent arrival and asked for our weather. I responded 2k visibility and an estimated cloud base 200ft AGL. Radar reported the aircraft was 3nm to our west attempting a VFR approach to the easterly runway. Several minutes later the aircraft appeared over the centre of the airfield at an estimated 150ft AGL heading in a southeasterly direction.

CCC Radar had asked the pilot to contact this unit by radio. No radio call was received until I called them to ask if they were on frequency. The pilot acknowledged and called, 'Going around'. The aircraft then flew a very tight low level circuit (RH) estimated 150-200ft AGL and disappeared into cloud to the southwest of the airfield. I received a 'Finals' call followed by the aircraft appearing on short finals for the easterly runway. A normal landing followed.

I consider the pilot's actions in attempting a VFR approach non-radio in the prevailing weather conditions to be extremely dangerous in light of the pilot having been offered an ILS into CCC.

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Number of Reports since the Last Issue: 19

Report Topics Have Included:

- Forced Landing - Pre-flight checks interrupted.
- Near Miss Incidents (4)
- Controlled Airspace Infringements (2)
- Runway Incursion - not monitoring VHF
- Max Operating Weights of PFA aircraft

GA FEEDBACK is also available on the **CHIRP** website - www.chirp.co.uk

A General Aviation Safety Newsletter

from **CHIRP** the Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme

(2)

Report Text: This airfield has no published instrument approach and operates a Flight Information Service. On the morning in question the weather conditions were very poor; an unofficial weather observation estimated the cloud as scattered at 300ft, overcast at 400-500ft with visibility estimated at 1,500 - 2,000m/mist. The Automated Terminal Information Service (ATIS) broadcast at a nearby airport was, "Broken cloud 500ft, visibility 2000m".

The first call received from G-*** (a PA32) was, "Inbound from North". The pilot presumed the joining details and then read back the wrong runway. The aircraft was first seen intermittently crosswind in and out of cloud, and was not seen again until on final approach for the active runway. The pilot had failed to obtain PPR from tower or check destination weather before departure.

During the morning several helicopters had returned from flights due to the very low cloud base in the local area.

CHIRP Comment: It is worth remembering that manoeuvring on an airfield and thus, by implication take-off and landing, requires the permission of the airport authority/owner. This can and has been withdrawn for perceived breaches of safety/regulation.

Also, a reminder that the CAA Mandatory Occurrence Reporting is available for ATCOs/FISOs/Air-Ground operators to report incidents such as those described above.

PRE-FLIGHT CHECKS

(1) IGNORE THEM AT YOUR PERIL

Report Text: I was foolish, but lucky that I was not too foolish. A friend has been asking me to fly his aeroplane for over a year but the opportunity never presented itself. On this day I was at the airfield with no intention of flying and my friend flew in. After a cup of tea I accepted an invitation to sit in the cockpit and "try it out for size". This I did And succumbed to the invitation to "Just try a circuit", so proceeded to strap myself in. My friend checked the fuel contents and said there was enough for ¾ hr and proceeded to make cushions etc in the rear cockpit seat secure.

Lid down, engine started and taxi to the hold. During the taxi I heard a metallic noise from the rear cockpit. At the hold I went through my standard pre-take-off checklist (CHIFTWAP) and found my 'full and free' check was OK in one direction round the box but I got a stick jam the other way. Double checked - same result. So I shut down and climbed out rather shakily.

My friend came over, investigated, and found his metal fuel dipstick had fallen out of his pocket in the rear cockpit onto the floor. It lay in such a position as to jam the stick in one part of its movement. I thank

the instructor who instilled in me the habit of "full and free - BOTH WAYS".

My big mistake? Not getting out again on accepting the flight to do a full pre-flight. It's worth it, even just for a circuit.

I did the circuit in the end and have another type in my logbook.

(2) BEWARE OF DISTRACTIONS

Report Text: While carrying out the pre-flight check of my Piper Cub for a one-hour local trip, I topped up the oil. This is now an infrequent task since replacing the old leaky cylinders with new items a year or two ago.

I was concerned that the taxi path between my hangar and the runway was partially obstructed by an awkwardly parked Islander, and had decided to get a marshaller as the gap between the Islander's tail and the corner of the hangar across the taxi-way was only slightly larger than my aircraft's wingspan. In discussion with the marshaller we decided to man-handle the aircraft past the Islander rather than risk it under power. Having negotiated this obstruction I started up and departed normally and proceeded with the flight.

About 15 minutes into the flight I carried out a routine FREDA check and was astounded to find that the oil pressure was at the lower end of the green arc (35 psi) instead of at the top (40 psi) where it usually sits. A glance at the undercarriage leg on the starboard side confirmed that I was losing oil. I immediately headed back to base, and started a gentle climb from 2,000ft. After about 10 minutes, I was at around 3,500ft with base in sight in the distance, but with some difficult terrain in between. The oil pressure was still in the caution arc but falling. I informed air traffic that I was making a forced landing into a convenient field and was fortunately able to make a decent job of it while I still had some power.

What had gone wrong? I had failed to secure the oil filler cap. Why? I suspect because I do not fully remove the dip stick from its housing when topping up. It is not the first time I have made this mistake, and I often double check the oil filler on completion of my pre-flight checks. Missing my mistake was probably exacerbated by the distraction of the Islander. In future when topping up the oil, I shall wipe the dip stick and place it on the pilot's seat - I will certainly notice if I have not properly replaced it then!

Once on the ground, I checked in with base and asked them to call air traffic for me to confirm the situation was OK. I checked with an engineer that it would be OK to fly out, and was advised that as long as the pressure had not dropped below the caution (it hadn't) that it would be OK. The landowner was surprised by my presence, but thankfully not annoyed - the field was grass and no damage had been done.

A helpful R22 pilot flew some oil over from my base. I carried out a confirmatory engine run to make sure things were OK and paced out the field to check the length - about 350 metres in the take-off direction. The trip back to base was thankfully uneventful. I spent the rest of the afternoon washing oil from the airframe - no physical damage to man or machine, although the pride has taken a severe denting.

CHIRP Comment: The authors of both of the above reports are to be commended for taking the appropriate action when confronted with an unexpected difficulty.

The first report is an example of what can happen when a thorough pre-flight check is not carried out and highlights the importance of completing the pre-take off vital actions diligently and investigating any unanticipated results.

In the second case, the reporter's pre-flight error is a reminder of how easily we can be distracted; however, when faced with a difficult in-flight situation, he correctly resisted the temptation to attempt to return to the airfield in favour of carrying out a pre-meditated precautionary landing.

A DIVERTING EXPERIENCE

Report Text: Returning from France the weather reports were not brilliant but the METAR supported by the TAF was reporting better than 1,500ft cloudbase on the South Coast and improving, with 2,000ft plus at my destination XXX (Southern England). As the English coast was reached sure enough the weather changed from the good VFR at 5,000ft to an increasing cloud cover below. The ATIS at YYY (UK regional airport) was reporting 'Broken at 1,500ft'. Starting my descent over the sea it was soon evident that a fog bank was preventing me breaking cloud. In the circumstances I elected to climb with an IFR Clearance and radar vectors from YYY.

In the circumstances, as the weather was not panning out as expected and now unsure of the weather further north I asked for an ILS approach to land at YYY so I could re-assess the situation. It was at this point that the YYY Controller advised that he was unable to allow me to land unless I had a PPR (Prior Permission) authorisation from the handling agent, promptly provided me with the frequency to contact them and asked my intentions. I was fortunate in this circumstance to be flying with an equally experienced friend who contacted the handling agent while I handled the aircraft; we were still operating with an IFR clearance, in IMC and had to change frequency from YYY to contact the handling agent and agree a PPR and the fee!

All ended well with an ILS approach to land, tea, chocolate biscuits and updated weather, which showed the poor weather clearing, and we able to continue our journey in good VMC. I didn't declare an emergency, I maintain currency in instrument flying, I

hold an IMC rating, the aircraft has all the instruments required for flight in IMC and therefore I was able to handle the situation safely. Looking back at the weather reports it's difficult to see how I, or my friend, could have expected the fog bank given that the closest observation was AAA.

What I hadn't expected was the need for negotiation in the air for a PPR authorisation with a handling agent while in IMC and asking for an ILS approach to land. This I find unacceptable and unhelpful for any agency to require this and for ATC to have to apply the PPR rules before allowing a pilot to get out of difficulties. I was fortunate to have an experienced friend who was able to share the additional workload, in particular deal with the PPR issue. I have to admit that the YYY NOTAMS, which I do read prior to flight, did advertise PPR due restricted parking space, however I had not anticipated this would be applied in such circumstances.

Now ZZZ (A second regional airport) have also issued a NOTAM to the same effect, in fact I witnessed ZZZ Radar refuse entry today to a pilot into the ZZZ ATZ as the pilot had no PPR number. Fortunately, the weather was CAVOK, the pilot not in difficulties and the Radar Controller negotiated a parking slot while the pilot held outside the ATZ. This tactic by airfield operators now means that pilots cannot expect to be allowed to land at two of the major airports on the south coast, who are best equipped to handle instrument approaches and best placed for pilots following a busy published route between the UK and France. I am equally concerned that negotiating PPR while in IMC is not recommended and I can see me in future having to obtain PPR for my alternates just in case. I hope this policy is not going to be come widespread.

CHIRP Comment: This report raises several points. The first is that, as the number of commercial air transport movements into and out of UK regional airports increases, some airport authorities are increasingly reluctant to accept GA traffic and require Prior Permission to be obtained for all such movements.

The second relates to a pilot's responsibility to obtain as much weather information as the circumstances require when planning a cross-country flight. In this particular case en route/destination area forecasts would have been helpful in determining the weather pattern over the Southern UK, in addition to the TAF and METAR information referenced in the report. Also, if the en route/destination weather conditions are such that it might not be possible to complete the flight as planned, either delaying departure or planning for an alternate, with a PPR authorisation if one is required, would be the prudent course of action.

With regard to diversions, following the CAA Review of GA Fatal Accidents 1985-1994, the Civil Aviation Authority published CAP 667 in 1997 in which one of the secondary recommendations was that GA aircraft

should be permitted to make emergency landings or precautionary diversions at no charge. A subsequent AOPA campaign was mounted to implement this recommendation. Both airports in this report are quoted by AOPA as being participants in the scheme.

The reporter determined that the en route weather conditions justified a precautionary diversion but elected not to declare an emergency in view of his experience and IMC qualifications; the ATCO's response, whether as a result of policy or perhaps misunderstanding the reason for the diversion, was unhelpful. If you elect to initiate an unplanned precautionary diversion to a regional airport due to adverse weather, making your request in the form of a 'PAN' call will clarify the situation; it follows that you should be prepared to justify this decision subsequently.

Finally, in the second case cited by the reporter involving ZZZ airport, the weather conditions, as reported, were such that the provisions of the AOPA scheme would not apply and therefore PPR authorisation would have been required and should have been sought.

A LACK OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

(1) ON THE GROUND

Report Text: Whilst hovering on the apron awaiting an aircraft that was taxiing in, a high-wing Cessna taxied past to the right of my helicopter, close enough that the Cessna port wing tip passed beneath the rotor disc of my helicopter. The aircraft was far too close to pass safely; furthermore, the pilot could not proceed into the taxiway due to the aircraft taxiing in and two aircraft, a fixed wing aircraft and my helicopter, having both been cleared to taxi outbound ahead of the Cessna.

As my flight was a training sortie with a student, there was a very real risk of collision as the student may have moved without warning and could not have seen the Cessna until it had passed alongside and therefore under the rotor disc. Also, the vertical clearance between the Cessna's high wing and my tail rotor height was very close, again leading to a high risk of collision if the helicopter had inadvertently yawed.

(2) INSTRUCTING IN THE VISUAL CIRCUIT

Report Text: I was on a flight from AAA to BBB in an MCRO1 Club (a light-weight composite two-seater). The cloud base was 3,000 ft and the in-flight visibility was approximately 30km. On arrival at BBB, I was following a Cessna downwind, which was flying a normal circuit. As I turned base two aircraft reported downwind in quick succession.

The wind and thermal activity were causing some turbulence and as it was my first visit to this airfield for many years and I was solo, I was under quite high workload. I turned final (75KIAS) with the Cessna

about to touch down and reported "G-## finals 06 to land, contact one ahead". The A/G operator responded with the wind which I acknowledged (15kts, gusting 20/25kts at 80deg) I dropped full flap and slowed to 60KIAS. After a pause G-*** called finals, and this seemed to fit with my mental picture of the aircraft, which had called down wind behind me.

The approach was good given the conditions and I was aiming to touch down just beyond the 06 numbers. At about 30ft a PA-28 G-*** overtook me from above at 10-15kts faster on a steep approach about 30ft above me, I called "G-*** go-around you are about to land on top of me" G-*** acknowledged and went round and I made a passable landing!

I went up to the tower and asked about the incident. The A/G operator had seen the incident as I commenced my transmission; he informed me the aircraft had an instructor on board. I suggested we report the incident and mentioned that I would like to have a chat with the instructor, as I would value his input. 45 min later the A/G operator found me and said the instructor thought it was best to forget the incident. I have since contacted my PFA coach who suggested I submit this CHIRP report.

I have been flying for some time but this is a first for me. If the frequency had been occupied at the instant the PA28 appeared above me there would have been a very nasty, possibly fatal accident and there would have been absolutely nothing I could have done about it. I think it likely that the relatively small size of my aircraft made it hard to spot, despite the high power strobe on the tail; the radio calls should have alerted G-*** to my presence, but without input from the instructor, who obviously did not wish to meet me, I can only guess.

I would value your input as to how I could have better handled the incident.

CHIRP Comment: Both incidents merited a MOR/Airprox report being submitted to permit the circumstances to be investigated and lessons learned. Don't be dissuaded from reporting such incidents.

The second report is a reminder of the importance of maintaining situational awareness and a good lookout when conducting circuit instruction. The instructor's reluctance to meet with the reporter might be viewed as an acknowledgement that this had not been the case.

ACCIDENT TO REPORT?

Call AAIB on 01252 512299

AIRPROX TO REPORT?

Call UK Airprox Board on 01895 815121/2/5

OCCURRENCE TO REPORT?

Call CAA Safety Investigation & Data Department on 01293 573220