

CHIRP GA FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

Many thanks to all those of you who contributed to the independent 5-year review of CHIRP. The review was completed on time and the report passed to the CAA before Christmas. The review identified CHIRP's strengths and weaknesses and made a number of recommendations to improve our performance and our contribution to aviation safety.

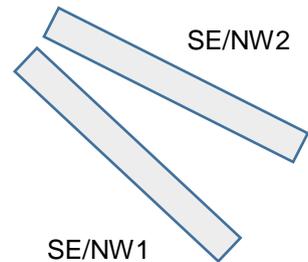
The recommendations were wide ranging and included our interactions with the CAA and industry in addition to improving our communications and raising our profile with the various reporting populations of pilots, ATCOs and FISOs, cabin crew and engineers. I was pleased to see that the basic organisation of CHIRP and the manner in which we process reports, including the dialogue with reporters and the credibility of the Advisory Boards were endorsed by the review. We are nothing if we do not make it easy and rewarding for potential reporters to share their experiences and this will continue to be our touch stone as we go forward with the review recommendations.

Ian Dugmore - Chief Executive

A TIMELY INTERVENTION

CHIRP Note: This aerodrome has 3 runways: one is oriented NE/SW (not shown); the other 2 are oriented SE/NW. For the purposes of disidentifying this report the SE/NW runways are referred to as SE/NW 1 and SE/NW 2.

Report Text: I recently flew to [] with another pilot. He flew the inbound flight and I flew the outbound leg. The A/D does not have any sort of ground-based radio and it is for the pilots flying to/from the A/D to report their action/intentions on [] Traffic.



The wind on the day was light and variable and the windsock did not indicate an obvious runway. As we arrived at the airfield for the return flight [the NE] runway was used by two arrivals.

On the return leg we had completed the pre-flight checks, started up and were taxiing to the 'hold' for runway SE1 for departure checks. Ahead of us was another [aircraft]. I assume the pilot completed checks and, without reporting his intentions, lined up on runway SE2 for departure. The layout of the A/D means there is a common hold for runways SE 1 and 2 and at ground level it is possible to confuse the two thresholds.

As the aircraft ahead lined up on SE2 an inbound aircraft reported that he was on final for the reciprocal runway [NW2]. I looked at the situation and after moment to think, made a radio call "[] Traffic, aircraft on final for [NW2] be aware of an aircraft lined up on your reciprocal runway, [SE1]" (I have to confess that I did not have the A/D chart to hand and misidentified the runway in the radio call).

The aircraft on final immediately initiated a go-around and reported that action on the RT. The aircraft that had lined up on SE2 then moved to line up on SE1 and departed without, as far as I recall, any radio calls.

This highlights a number of learning points:-

- 1 – I should have had an A/D chart to hand.
- 2 – Not all pilots are familiar with the use of the xxx traffic radio frequencies.
- 3 – It is vital to make accurate reports of all intentions/actions when there is no ground service available.
- 4 – It is equally vital to listen to and react to all reports from other A/C on the frequency.
- 5 – It wasn't my responsibility to make the radio call but if I hadn't an accident could have occurred.

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CHIRP Comment: Well done to this reporter! He saw a dangerous situation developing and was correct in taking action to resolve it effectively. We would add to lesson No.4 the importance of looking out as well as listening out. The aircraft lined up on SE2 may not have had a serviceable radio, which might explain why its pilot did not transmit his intentions or react to the inbound aircraft's "final" call. Had he been aware of the inbound aircraft, the pilot had a duty to give way to it. It was unclear how the aircraft on final had arrived there, but an overhead join would have allowed the pilot to view the airfield, the activity of aircraft on the ground and the signal square.

COMMENT ON FEEDBACK 61 RE. MANCHESTER CTR TRANSIT

Report Text: Whilst I completely agree with the comments published in CHIRP #61 regarding the necessity of having a "plan B" when requesting a transit through controlled airspace, I feel the impression given by the Manchester ATC response is that VFR transits cause too much workload. Class-D airspace is not meant to provide an exclusive piece of airspace for one particular set of users; it is to provide safety and a known-traffic environment for all airspace users in a high density area. Having used the Manchester Low Level Route a few times, I would suggest it is reasonably demanding for the average private pilot. There is no lateral or vertical separation between north-bound and south-bound traffic, no radio-navigation (other than GPS) to assist, the route is narrow and doesn't have many good visual navigation features along its length (they're mostly off to one side or the other and well inside the adjacent controlled airspace). There are three active airfields within the corridor and two others nearby. There is a major town completely straddling the route which contravenes the 1000' clear rule if flown at the recommended 1250', and a head-on collision is a constant possibility. Even the CAA's own guidance on using the LLR reads (the reporter's comments in [square brackets]):

"Rapidly approaching is Warrington - a large conurbation. [...] Now the town itself is roughly 250ft amsl so it doesn't take much thought to realise you are only going to have around 1000ft leeway here! [Better make sure your altimeter is accurate!] Personally, to ensure I can alight clear of the area if my 1946 Continental gives up the ghost, I route to the eastern edge of the town [hoping that no-one else flying in the opposite direction has the same idea]. [...] You may also have noticed that the Barton Local Flying Area is now on your right so there's no need to worry about entering controlled airspace without clearance [but don't forget to keep a sharp lookout for microlights from Barton manoeuvring in this area]. As you approach Warrington you'll see a very large church spire to the east of the town centre. This is St Elphins (281ft high)! [Thereby breaking the 1000' rule if you fly over at the recommended 1250']"

I routinely request transits through Gatwick's overhead, and I am rarely refused. On those rare occasions, a reason is always given - once it was due to a large number of aircraft diverting from Heathrow due to a 787 Dreamliner on fire - and even then I got a shortcut, just not "over the top". Gatwick handles many more movements than Manchester does, and manages to handle the integration of IFR airliners, VFR helicopters, and VFR fixed wing without problem. A good example is shown in [a video](#) taken by my passenger during a recent Gatwick transit - the video starts on the climb-out from Redhill. A similar route over Manchester would be Wilmslow to Altrincham not above 1500' which (looking at the map) would be much preferable to the LLR.

CHIRP Comment: We agree that the corridor is congested and has a low ceiling. The ceiling is predicated on traffic inbound to Liverpool airport rather than Manchester. To the credit of pilots using it, there are few altitude excursions by aircraft in the corridor. Manchester ATC is prepared to allow transits via the overhead if traffic conditions allow but the criteria for doing so are identical to Gatwick: VFR traffic is not permitted to transit if there is IFR traffic inbound within approximately 6nm. This is to cater for the rapid climbs that occur when modern airliners conduct a go around. On balance using the corridor will be more expeditious in the majority of cases than orbiting while waiting for a clearance through the overhead.

A VERY SILLY THING TO DO

Report Text: Earlier this year I did the most stupid thing I have ever done in 30 years of flying and am still not sure why. It occurred to me that if I reported it to you one or perhaps both of us might be able to come up with a possible explanation. Here is what happened.

We were to fly our [tail wheel aircraft] into a civil/military air safety day at [a military airfield]; "we" being me as PiC and an experienced (albeit less so than me) pilot friend in the passenger seat. I had planned the route, approach etc. very carefully and was quite familiar with the area.

After a straightforward journey from home base I called the Zone from about 20 miles out and at 2000ft. I was told initially I would be cleared in. However at about 10 miles out I was asked to hold [10nm SW] at 3000ft, there being a fair number of other aircraft inbound from various directions at the same time. No problem, climbed to 3000ft and commenced a LH orbit. After 3 orbits I was told I would be cleared into the overhead at 2000ft and shortly thereafter I was cleared and asked to call field in sight - which I did immediately. I was then switched to Tower and we established 2-way communication without any delay. After another couple of minutes I was asked to descend immediately to join downwind at 1000ft and call again downwind. I asked if I could carry out a descending spiral but was asked if I could fly direct to downwind since it would help ATC a lot. I immediately complied, although this did require a very rapid descent.

The downwind and base legs were interesting. Tower called one approaching pilot 5 times before he replied and another pilot was given what sounded to me like very clear instructions but didn't understand them; a third pilot's reported position was seemingly headed straight for me as I turned base. And so on. Lots of chatter and a few blocked transmissions. Whilst on downwind I noticed that the runway had an upslope that started perhaps a quarter of the way into the runway and ended a little before the mid-point. Since I would need to turn off the runway near the midpoint I decided to make my aiming point for landing about half way up the upslope.

On Final it was clear that I had a gusting wind (17kts) about 70 deg off to my left and my landing clearance confirmed it. So far then, a busy time but nothing exceptional.

As I descended through about 30ft for my aiming point I noted that the tyre marks on the upslope seemed unusual. Instead of elongated spin-up strips of rubber I was seeing what looked like impact marks. I recall wondering fleetingly about these tyre marks and then that the slope looked a lot steeper than it had seemed from downwind and would require appropriate action after flaring. Meantime I was working rudder and stick quite hard to deal with the gusting crosswind, and holding speed, glideslope and centreline well. I was also in the throes of deciding whether to make a wheeler rather than a 3-point landing (because of wind conditions).

I was just about to flare when my passenger suddenly said "you're very fast". I knew I was right on target speed and should have screened him out but I didn't, and promptly "lost the picture" completely for perhaps half a second. I then did that most stupid thing - I checked forward slightly. As a result we landed prematurely and quite firmly on main wheels only, at least 5kt faster than a normal flare and hold off would have yielded, and bounced 3 or 4 times (still on the centreline) before the tail wheel came down. This caused some further pitching and then the aeroplane settled, we completed the ground roll, and I turned onto the taxiway.

I can see why my passenger might have thought we were fast: the upslope would probably have given him the illusion of rapid descent and increasing speed. But why on earth did I check forward instead of back - and why didn't I just block my passenger's comment? Two possibilities, both connected with losing the picture and thus losing a brief slice of time before it came back (by which time it had changed):

1. My brain thought I had already touched down and I was checking forward to make it a wheeler landing.
2. I was looking ahead and taking early account of the end of the upslope and trying to ensure I wasn't a little too high.

I am otherwise at a complete loss. I've been flying tail wheelers for most of my flying years. I like landing on up slopes. I have 13 years on that [aircraft type] and if anything I am happiest flying in strong gusty winds since it makes me really focus and work hard and I get a real kick out of the results. I was certainly

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busy that day but not with anything exceptional, or maybe not. Perhaps I was sufficiently loaded that the "you're fast" comment was enough to tip me into overload. But in that case I would have expected to revert to prior learning, not come up with a novel and wholly inappropriate action.

Your thoughts would be greatly appreciated. I really do need to understand what might have caused me to act the way I did that day.

CHIRP Comment: Once again, we are grateful to a reporter for sharing his experience with us; the title he chose for his report is unduly self-critical. We have all been in situations where we are unfamiliar with the aerodrome and there is lots of chatter on the RT; add a few other factors to sap our mental capacity and an unanticipated intervention at a critical moment and it is not hard to see how the pilot could lose focus. The upslope on this runway is not considered to be significant but the rushed descent to downwind may have been an added factor; also a crosswind at 70 degrees off could easily have become a tailwind in gusty conditions. That said, it could have been just a poor landing; most of us experience them occasionally, not least because the flare prior to touchdown is one of the most demanding of all pilot skills. A fast approach to a runway as long as this one was not a problem and it is difficult to understand why the passenger spoke up when he did. An early discussion before commencing the approach between the pilot and passenger about the conditions, the runway, approach speed and the options for a main-wheel or 3-point landing could have eased the pilot's workload and forestalled the intervention. Finally, having bounced, it would almost certainly have been better to go-around; the pilot's decision to land may have been influenced by where he was more than pure airmanship considerations.

INCIDENT REPORT

Report Text: On [a recent weekend] I took my Cessna [] for a local sortie, given the very good VFR conditions. The plan was to route from [] to [] to practise some VOR holds and let downs, and head back to []. I expected to be airborne for around 1 hour, and had ample fuel available in both tanks sufficient for 2.5 hours endurance.

Weather, NOTAMs and the Red Arrows movements all checked and nothing to affect the sortie was noted.

About 15 miles north of [], on the return, I heard a barely discernible vibration-like sound. If I moved my head it disappeared, I listened for it and could not pick it up after a few minutes, so I dismissed it and put it down to my new headset I was using for only the second time. With 5 miles to run to [], I commenced a gentle descent and planned to join the (uncontrolled) field by flying a left hand circuit for RW [], joining cross wind, whilst avoiding the neighbours. No traffic was seen or heard in the area or moving on the field.

As I was about to join cross wind, having already completed pre-landing checks, I increased the throttle to maintain the circuit altitude, when the engine spluttered and began to run very roughly indeed. After a dramatic unprintable exclamation, I turned to the [reciprocal] RW, at this time in my 11 o'clock position, and accepted a downwind approach was essential, as the engine was not developing sufficient power to maintain height, let alone a circuit.

Cause of failure checks were accurately completed without delay whilst I turned onto final. Everything was in order; carb air was already selected 'hot'. Still the engine ran, but only developing around 1000 rpm, I expected it to stop at any moment. I was unable to announce the urgency of the situation by declaring a mayday or pan call, the aircraft and the predicament took all my focus. Thankfully, I landed the aircraft, remembering to only lower the flaps when I knew I was definitely going to make the field.

I was very fortunate indeed, and in my mind had accepted that the incident was most likely down to carb icing. Our engineer inspected the aircraft and subsequently commented that in fact it was not carb icing, but a seal on the replacement [] air filter had failed and entered the carb, effectively starving the air flow. He commented that this was the second time he had seen this in many years and confirmed he would revert to using the recommended [] original part.

So, it really was one of those things. I did not miss anything on my walk round, my pre-landing checks were spot on, I could have done nothing to foresee this issue, albeit I accept the faintest vibration I heard earlier in the flight might have alerted alarm bells, but at this point in the flight would not have caused me to think of diverting given I was a few minutes away from landing.

I was extremely lucky this failure happened when it did; otherwise I certainly would have ended up in a field. That said, I was delighted that all those training hours, and biennial checkouts came good. The benefit of having the cause of failure checks there without having to struggle to remember them as they

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came automatically, was a nice feeling. Also, my poor instructor who hammered me with engine failures time and time again, with the instructions to fly the plane above all else, and head immediately to the field (if we could make it) ultimately saved me from panic, and salvaging the best out of a very uncomfortable position.

Practise those drills and practise again!

CHIRP Comment: The reporter did well. He was well prepared and when the incident happened he rapidly and correctly assessed the situation and prioritised flying the aircraft over speaking on the RT in the short time he had available. We agree with the reporter's recommendation to practise drills as often as possible and at least every biennial flight with an instructor.

A FORMATION AIRPROX

Report Text: I was leading a loose formation of 3 Fournier motor-glidiers of different types on a transit flight. I was Mode S equipped and squawking 7000. Our route from Kirton in Lindsey was DCT EARLS COLNE DCT RINGMER. The other two pilots were French, both with fairly good command of English and briefed on formation radio procedures. But due to the potential difficulties of checking in a formation on very busy ATC frequencies (Sunday on LARS services) I elected to remain on our discrete formation frequency where possible. I did call Mildenhall for a MATZ crossing earlier. The second leg south of Earls Colne would have taken us just inside the western corner of the new Southend RMZ. To reduce the risk of formation radio problems I elected to move the route a little to the west to avoid the RMZ and route close to the Thurrock overhead, remaining on the formation radio frequency and keeping a good visual lookout. I did not contact Farnborough LARS East because I frequently find that the frequency is impossible to receive without selecting manual squelch, particularly in the area of my home airfield and Farnborough have admitted to there being a problem in the past. After clearing Thurrock I looked down at my chart for about 4 seconds, looked up and see the other aircraft about 100-200ft in my 10 o'clock about to pass just behind my tail. I had no time to react and the other aircraft did not deviate from its course. I called the formation to alert them to the aircraft. I then listened out to Farnborough East 123.225. I could hear other aircraft transiting but could not hear Farnborough as I had come to expect. Then I called London Information on 124.60 who were very busy. I requested to file an Airprox but was told to report it on the ground, which I did after landing I spoke to the formation No.2, who was several hundred yards behind, and said that when I made the call reporting the aircraft flying through the formation he looked round and saw a high-wing aircraft with 'flaps' but it was not a threat.

Lessons Learned: I am aware that this is a very busy GA area and keeping a good lookout is vital. Whether the PA28 was inbound to Thurrock is unknown, but giving this airfield, which does not have an ATZ, a wider berth might have been prudent. It would also probably have been prudent to call Southend, in the absence of communication with Farnborough East. I did not do so due to the complications of checking in a formation of foreign pilots on a busy frequency, but would now reconsider this, and possibly just go over to the radar frequency myself, given that it might lead to formation communication problems. Having a more modern radio with dual listening watch facility would help in this situation. I have now bought a Power Flarm and hope that this might give some additional warning of transponder equipped aircraft in the vicinity. In this respect, the recent approval of non-certified ADS-B out installations is to be welcomed, but is unlikely to provide a reliable system for a long time as it depends on GA aircraft fitting the necessary equipment. It is possible that the radio fitted to this aircraft is slightly deficient as I have had similar reception problems in certain sectors of area radar services on the continent as well. I do feel that the implementation of the RMZ around Southend influenced my routing in this case, resulting in taking the formation through a new VFR bottleneck. Had I not been in formation I would probably have entered the RMZ and talked to them.

CHIRP Comment: This incident was also reported to the UK Airprox Board where it was assessed as a Risk Category A event (actual risk of collision). The [UKAB Report](#) includes a recommendation to GASCo to improve pilot's understanding of RMZs. CHIRP agrees that many pilots appear not to appreciate that they are not obliged to accept an ATS in an RMZ and this may influence their routing decisions irrespective of additional factors such as leading a formation. CHIRP agrees with the reporter's comments and lessons

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learned. His investment in Power Flarm is commended as is his willingness to share his experience with us.

A few words about formations: there are pros and cons associated with flying in formation. They can be an efficient way of flying multiple aircraft along a route but they can be unwieldy and sap the mental capacity of the leader if they are not planned and flown correctly. Useful planning points include annotating all charts with frequency change lines such that everyone knows where you plan to change frequency and the frequency you will be on at any particular point on your route. It can also be useful to have a “Collector Frequency” so that if anyone gets lost there is a frequency that they will select after everything else has been tried; this can be 121.5. A formation must not be larger than 1nm in length and width to be treated by ATC as a single speaking unit; also include in the plan any areas of the route where you want the formation to close up. The wing men in a formation can make the leader’s job easy or very difficult; the old adage “stick, search and report” is a useful one for wingmen to remember. Stick close enough to your leader to ensure you don’t lose sight of him and be a comfortable distance for searching around the sky for other aircraft; report on the RT any aircraft that constitutes a ‘threat’ to any of the formation members. In this Airprox the wingmen were too far from the leader and each other to exploit the advantages of having several sets of eyeballs available. En route, the leader should call the frequency changes to the formation with the executive word “go” then allow time plenty of time before you check the formation in on the new frequency. If someone is missing send one of the other formation members back to the original frequency to look for the missing man and bring him on to the new in-use frequency; as leader you have enough on your plate without chasing your wingmen around on the RT. All this said, think very carefully before agreeing to lead a formation; it is far more demanding than flying as a singleton and takes a great deal of planning and briefing to provide a good probability of success.

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