CHIRP GA FEEDBACK

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EDITORIAL

I am indebted to my predecessor, Peter Tait, for his comprehensive handover to me as the incoming Chief Executive at CHIRP. On behalf of all of us across aviation, I would like to thank him for his outstanding work over 18 years in promoting safety and wish him the long and happy retirement he so richly deserves.

Ian Dugmore

DANGEROUS BEHAVIOUR

Report Text: I observed a potentially fatal incident whilst enjoying a meal in the Club restaurant. A visiting high-wing nose-wheel aircraft had just landed on the downhill runway and was turning to the right in order to taxi back up the field to the parking area. Unfortunately the turn wasn't tight enough to clear one of the Club aeroplanes, despite the fact that it was parked some distance from the runway. The next moment, with the engine still running, I saw the passenger step out of the door and rush around to the FRONT of the starboard lift strut, where he proceeded in a vain attempt to swing the aircraft around sufficiently to clear the parked 152. When this failed to achieve the desired effect, he strode to the tail of the aircraft, and attempted to push down on the tail plane to swing the nose around. When this was also unsuccessful, the pilot finally shut down the engine and the aeroplane was manhandled into position before both guys re-boarded the aeroplane and taxied it to the designated parking area. I don't believe that any further comment is required.

CHIRP Comment: **The dangers associated with a rotating propeller should be obvious to everyone but accidents still occur. If in doubt, shut the engine down.**

OWN NAVIGATION

Report Text: I've just had a friendly chat with an ATC supervisor about an occurrence in June. She is in a position to take up the phraseology issue with the CAA but we agreed a report to CHIRP might be helpful.

I own and operate an aircraft well equipped for radio navigation in VMC. I hold an IR(R). I fly over 100 hours a year; 710 total. I regularly practise instrument procedures in VMC.

I filed a VFR flight plan from EGPC to EGNE via EGPD, SAB, EGNT and EGNV, requesting transits at FL055. My southbound route through the Central Highlands was still afflicted with cloud, and the eastern coastal belt was much clearer. I arrived at the EGPD CTR, was expected, and was given a radar service and transit level of 5000ft which (QNH 1028) gave FL054 on my transponder. I was also vectored onto HDG 190 to pass a few miles west of the airport. I was in VMC just below scattered StCu, spilling over from an overcast covering the high ground to the west. The controller was very busy but coping manfully; so I thought was I. About 3 miles NNW of LAVTI I was told ATC had nothing further for me, to continue on own navigation to SAB. I interpreted this to include vertical navigation, and commenced a climb to clear the tops of clouds to the south whose bases were a little below me. I had not yet acquired SAB and stood a better chance above than below. The controller quickly detected the climb (2000 ft/min) and called me back down to the cleared level from 948ft above it. The remainder of the flight continued as planned. I was asked on arrival at EGNE to complete an Occurrence Report; filed the next day, to which I was able to attach horizontal and vertical breadcrumb trails covering the entire incident.

In conversation with ATC today, the ambiguity of the phrase "own navigation" was identified as causal. I did not just wander upwards; in fact my flying had been quite accurate. I had misunderstood my clearance. During a basic service "own navigation" would include vertical navigation. During a radar service it does not. Pilots more used to the former might appreciate different terms in the two different contexts, such as "own heading" when under radar. The words "maintain cleared altitude" would just prolong the message which, on days as busy as this, is asking a lot.

I wish everyone was as civilised as air traffic controllers!

CHIRP Comment: **A recent Airprox was caused by a similar misinterpretation of an ATC 'own navigation' clearance. The lack of a definition for the phrase "Resume own navigation" or similar had been raised previously with the CAA with a view to providing a clarification in MATS Part 1 and CAP 413; the issue is under consideration. When an altitude or Flight Level has been stipulated by, or agreed with ATC, "own navigation" does not mean clearance to climb or descend.**

UNINTENTIONAL DESCENT

Report Text: I was required to deliver an aircraft to ZZZ in Austria. I have over 2000 hours experience including some commercial single pilot operations over England and northern France; I have avoided flying over high ground as I have always thought it potentially dangerous in a light piston twin aircraft but I did this delivery as a one off. The destination has an RNAV approach but our GPS did not have a prefilled RNAV approach so I decided not to use it. The plan included diversion airfields that have conventional ILS approaches in case the weather was unsuitable at our destination. I planned IFR as far as YYY (a VOR/DME 2nm NNE from my destination) with intention of continuing VFR or diverting, preferably before descent. Visibility was poor

descending to YYY but was enough to see the surrounding high ground. At YYY I could see the ground including houses but the visibility remained poor. Unfortunately I was not cleared direct to my destination from YYY; rather I was told to level off at 3000' and take heading of 090, which I did. The controller then told me to go direct to the IAF (5nm E of the destination airfield). I was a bit stressed at this point thinking what to tell the controller about the RNAV procedure but decided, as I could see the ground directly beneath me, if I complied with the controller's instructions I might see the airfield and not need to descend on the GPS; if I could not see the airfield then I would have to ask to divert. I asked for a heading and turned to this while asking my colleague with me to pass me the map just to refresh myself on the position of the IAF. What happened next was intensely confusing. I saw the ground to my left was closer than I expected and I had a sensation of speed. Then the air traffic controller came on the radio very annoyed that I had descended without permission. I looked at the altimeter and saw that it read 2200 feet and not the 3000 feet I had been cleared to. At that point visibility had improved dramatically and very soon after I saw the airfield and thought it just safest to land which I intensely wanted to do.

It took me a couple of days and several sleepless nights to work out exactly what had happened. I don't think I would have flown into the ground as the visibility improved as I descended. Also – fortunately – the MSA at the point I descended was 2400ft. But a different situation if the weather had been just a bit worse.

Lessons Learned: I'm sure there are many obvious ones but do not put yourself in a position where you are under stress. IFR in a familiar environment is not particularly stressful but I put myself in a very difficult position and presumably overloaded myself. I could have been much more specific in telling ATC about my requirements, options and intentions. Finally, having made a bad mistake, I should have told ATC and let them help me.

CHIRP Comment: **This honest report provides a good example of the stress that can be induced by embarking on a sortie that stretches one's 'comfort zone'. The pilot was unfamiliar and uncomfortable with flights over and into areas of high terrain and would be faced with a diversion if he could not complete the approach to his destination under VFR. In the event the weather at the point at which he planned to be VFR was marginal but he elected to continue inbound and follow ATC instructions. Ultimately he became distracted by concerns over what to say to ATC and navigating to the IAF. His 'lessons learned' are very relevant; stress saps mental capacity. It can be good to be flexible, but it risks becoming overloaded; better to make a plan and stick to it. Finally, in any environment, if the situation is getting away from you, ask for help from ATC, in plain language if necessary.**

NOTAMS

Report Text: Intending a flight in Scotland I checked the NOTAMS using the [proprietary application] software. Noting a circle around Tain Range I clicked on it and brought up the following NOTAM: Ref: D0903/13 FIR: EGPX Traffic: VFR/IFR Lower Limit: (FL) 000 Upper Limit: (FL) 150 Centre and Radius (nm) 5756N 00349W014 Parent ICAO EGPX Start date/time 24/06/2013 16:00UTC End date time 27/06/2013 21:00 UTC Activity period 1600-2100 Lower ht limit 000 Upper ht limit 150 Danger Area EG D703 TAIN DEACTIVATED

To me this quite clearly stated that Tain range had been deactivated but having been caught out this way before I rang the range to check; it was not. I rang the NOTAM office to remonstrate and received a helpful lesson on how to read a NOTAM. Well, for most of my life I have had a navigator to read NOTAMs for me but I am not a novice and I suspect that many other people could have made the same mistake. If the last line (in capitals) had read 'Danger Area EG D703 TAIN DEACTIVATED 1600-2100' it would have been unambiguous; as it was the NOTAM contained a double negative, which I missed. NOTAMs could and should be written in plain English, particularly when presented through a software program designed to make them more accessible.

Lessons Learned: Earlier in the week I had spotted that a NOTAM activating D513A had been mis-plotted in the vicinity of Aberdeen and had reported this to RAF Lossiemouth who had had the NOTAM changed. I was therefore preconditioned to believe that any military NOTAM is likely to contain mistakes and checked with the range before starting the flight.

CHIRP Comment: **The software used by the reporter relies on reader interpretation of NOTAM text information. The complexity and formatting of information in NOTAMs, particularly in those parts of the UK with significant amounts of controlled airspace, has led to confusion and errors similar to that reported. More recently developed graphical software packages present the same information more clearly and are easier to interpret.**

Instructor Situational Awareness

Report Text: Whilst on holiday I hired an aircraft from the local flying school, taking one of their instructors with me as it was the first time I had ever flown out of a different airfield other than my home one. I had flown another PA28 at my home airfield a few days prior just to "get my hand in" back on type. I had flown to this airfield before on a few occasions as a fare paying passenger so knew the very basic layout of the field. Walking across to collect the aircraft, my conversation with my instructor revealed that although he was originally from the area we were flying in, and that he had done various forms of other flying, he was new to the school, and this was his second flight from the airfield. We discussed that I would do all the work, and he would simply act as a safety pilot should the need arise. The pre flight was all completed, and information received from the ATIS indicated the runway in use; our taxi clearance required us to taxi via a different runway to the holding point. I read-back the clearance incorrectly and it was given again, which I then read back correctly, and proceeded to taxi – the instructor had written down the taxi instructions on his kneepad. As we entered the out of use runway, the instructor lowered a stage of flap which I thought odd as the runway in use had a TORA of over 1800 metres, and a

few seconds later I felt the brakes of the aircraft go on and the plane came to a stop about one fifth of the way down. The instructor told me that I had to do the power checks soon as we didn't have much runway left to take off from. At this point I realised why he had lowered some flap; he thought we had to take off from here on the out-of-use runway. I showed him where the hold was as we could see it directly in front of us, and pointed out where the runway in use was. He then asked for clarification from the tower, who repeated a third time the clearance that I had correctly used. With that he released the brakes, and I continued the taxi and took off for the flight, the remainder of which was uneventful with the instructor teaching me some valuable points about mountain flying which I had not ever come across, as well as complimenting me on my flying skills.

Lessons Learned: 1) The most important lesson learned was never be afraid to challenge/discuss an event which you don't feel happy about even if it is with a person who has had more training than you, have higher ratings/qualifications - i.e. Instructor or Captain. As I replayed the incident a few hours later, I did think what if it had been a student at the beginning of their flying career, or a person simply out on an air experience flight? Clearly this was a controlled airfield and the tower would have spotted it (hopefully) when take off clearance was asked for, but on a non controlled field, the take off path would have taken us directly toward downwind traffic. At the moment he lowered a stage of flap, that was the first clue of something amiss-on this occasion I was clearly correct, but even if I turned out to be wrong, there would have been no harm in discussing the event prior to anything serious happening.

2) We had discussed that I was to do all the work, and as taxi clearance was given, it was written down by the instructor. My initial read back was incorrect. In retrospect, as I knew I was going to do everything, I should have asked for some paper etc prior to the flight so that I could have written it down myself as I normally do when flying, which would have negated repeating to and from the tower and perhaps had started off the confusion about the take off point.

3) Although I didn't ask either the instructor or the club, at no point did I see him with an airfield plate. As stated I knew the very basic layout of the field (I had also studied my own copy prior to going on holiday), and the marker boards were very visible, but clearly he was not as familiar with the field as I thought he should have been, having confirmed this was only his second flight from the field. Maybe in our pre flight discussion during which time he told me this was only his second flight, I should have queried his knowledge of the airfield/local area.

CHIRP Comment: **Although the reporter and the instructor had discussed their respective roles whilst walking to the aircraft, it does not appear that they shared the same understanding. In the circumstances described, the instructor should have said something if he considered there was a safety issue or to keep quiet and clear of the controls. The reporter was prudent to fly with an instructor on his first flight from an unfamiliar airfield. It would also be sensible for instructors to make themselves familiar with a new location, possibly by flying with another instructor, prior to commencing instructional flights with students. A similar case involved an inexperienced instructor who had received no local area familiarisation and as a result flown inappropriately within the London TMA.**

Reciprocal Landing

Report Text: I made a reciprocal landing at WWW – essentially through holding my [computer application-derived] airfield plate on the squint and reading it upside down. This was far less easy to do using [a proprietary flight guide publication] as it is obvious which way is up.

Fortunately there was no other traffic in the circuit – but in mitigation "had there been" I would more likely have realized my mistake (from the radio traffic/observation). I am guilty of 'not looking at my compass' on the downwind leg, which would also have been a give-away.

I bring it to your attention as I consider this is an increasingly probable occurrence as we increasingly use mechanised pre-flight planning and GPS as our principal sources of navigation.

CHIRP Comment: **This honest report about misreading a printed copy of an aerodrome plate is a good reminder to all pilots to ensure they understand the orientation of the plate and its relationship to their approach to an aerodrome. The application used by the reporter provides airfield chart information from the AIS, which is not always 'north-up' but does include a symbol indicating the direction of north. The application also allows the depiction of the extended runway centre-line, which can be helpful in orientation. Where local procedures allow, overhead joins provide a reliable way of orienting pilots with the airfield geography, runway in use and traffic pattern.**

Close Encounter on Final Approach

Report Text: Returning to my local airstrip on a clear fine day I made several blind calls stating my intentions that included turning base and turning finals. As I turned base leg keeping as I thought a good lookout, I raised the nose of my aircraft and set the flaps for landing; this gave me a nose high attitude and obscured an approaching motor glider that I had failed to spot earlier, low against the hills and trees. Although my aircraft has good forward visibility, the approaching aircraft was now in my blind spot on a converging course. I called and turned "finals" keeping a good lookout at the runway and clearing my turn; all this time the converging aircraft remained in my blind spot being obscured by the nose of my aircraft and was closing on a constant bearing as I turned.

As I completed my turn levelling the wings I spotted the converging aircraft very close and at the same height. A swift turn to my right resolved the conflict and I continued with my landing.

I later found and chatted to the other pilot. Neither the other experienced pilot nor his also experienced passenger saw my aircraft at any time during the incident; they both considered that they were keeping a good lookout particularly as they were passing the

airfield at low level (500ft) close in and intersecting the finals glide path. The other pilot was not monitoring the airfield frequency and did not hear my calls. He concluded that he had chosen the worst possible place to pass the airfield and at the worst possible height; he was also mortified that he hadn't seen me even during my steep close turn.

In conclusion, his aircraft was on my right and had right of way. He was returning to his airfield some three miles away and chose the worst place and height to be. We both did not keep an adequate lookout. He acknowledges that he should have been monitoring the airfield frequency. He subsequently briefed other pilots at his airfield on the incident, circuits and frequency etc. I concluded that I need to look for the unexpected, particularly low in the background clutter and to keep a better lookout.

CHIRP Comment: **Flying through the overhead of a neighbouring airstrip at 500ft without making any R/T transmissions was poor airmanship. If you know the location of an airfield or airstrip either stay well clear of the traffic pattern or make a radio call on the airfield frequency and plan your transit to avoid any aircraft already established in the traffic pattern.**

Instrument Approaches in Class G Airspace

Report Text: I wish to respond to the "Instrument Approaches in Class 'G' Airspace" report in the latest FEEDBACK. Class 'G' airspace is free to all users at the moment and I would suggest the approaches in it have to be flown at the pilot's own risk while maintaining separation from other traffic by lookout or radar service. For example the GNSS approach for Shoreham Airport commences at 2200 feet, from the west just north of Parham gliding site and from the east just north of Ringmer gliding site and is not shown on charts likely to be used by non-instrument rated pilots. The base of the London TMA in this area is 2500 feet, it is also an extremely busy corridor for light aircraft transiting east-west around the Gatwick zone, gliders and hang gliders/paragliders from the various South Downs Launch sites, and yes they do get into the instrument approach area on thermic days. Is it reasonable to expect all other traffic to avoid the airspace south of the Gatwick zone in case someone wants to make an instrument approach to Shoreham? Many light aircraft are probably only there to avoid the Farnborough bottleneck.

CHIRP Comment: **The report raises an important issue relating to the awareness of GA pilots to the existence of a GNSS approach procedure, particularly in cases where these were established at airfields with either a FIS or an Air/Ground Service. Although GNSS final approach paths should be adequately annotated on aeronautical charts by a fan/cone symbol, there is currently no provision for the let-down pattern to be depicted. GNSS approaches are promulgated in the UK AIP in the same manner as other instrument approaches. If you are flying in the vicinity of an airfield that you know has an instrument approach procedure, it is good airmanship to call ATC on the RT to make yourself known and to learn the whereabouts of any traffic in the instrument pattern.**

Bad Weather Circuits

Report Text: A FISO reports that an aircraft reported inbound from the South was given R25LH QFE. The pilot requested a downwind join for R25LH. The pilot subsequently reported on final but could not be observed from the tower as the wx to the east was estimated cloud base 400ft and visibility estimated as poor. Wx to the west of the airfield was better, estimated OVC020 5000m. The aircraft was subsequently observed landing on R07. Fortunately due to the poor weather there were no other flights airborne in the ATZ. (All of the RTF is recorded and confirms the information given and read back by the pilot).

Thirty minutes later Farnborough Radar passed details of an inbound aircraft that was diverting from its original route due to the weather. Farnborough Radar had previously passed the airfield details of R25LH + QFE, and these were re-iterated to the pilot on first contact with the FISO.

The aircraft was observed over the western airfield boundary and the pilot stated that he was joining downwind. The flight proceeded to the R25LH dead side and the pilot was informed that he was wrongly positioning and that the circuit details were R25LH. There was no read-back from the pilot who proceeded to fly a right hand circuit for R25, which is over the noise sensitive area and landed on R25

A weather front was passing through decreasing the visibility and cloud base and appears to have affected both of these flights.

CHIRP Comment: **This report involved two pilots electing to make non-standard approaches due to adverse weather/low cloud at an airfield with a FIS. The FISO had no responsibility for the aircraft whilst airborne except to provide information; a FISO cannot 'clear' a pilot to join downwind. In the situation described, the responsibility for the safe operation of the aircraft was solely that of the pilots involved. It was not unreasonable for the pilot who had diverted to this airfield to elect to fly a non-standard RH circuit in order to avoid adverse weather. However, both pilots should have transmitted their intentions for the benefit of other pilots in the vicinity. If the situation demands it, pilots also have the option of declaring an emergency to alert other pilots and ATC to their situation.**