

MILITARY CIVIL AIR SAFETY DAY (MCASD) RAF SHAWBURY 20 MAY 2009 –
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This event produced the highest level of interest for a MCASD yet. We received over 70 applications for aircraft to fly in and well over 100 civilian GA pilots attended the event. The need to limit the number of 'fly in' aircraft to 20 was for several reasons namely, minimising the disruption to Defence Helicopter Flying Training, limit on maximum amount of landing fees that can be waived under the authority of the Station Commander and limited parking space available.

The Station Commander and staff at RAF Shawbury were the perfect hosts and facilitated the event in a most efficient and proficient manner from the provision of refreshments, transport, guides, a large (but cool) briefing facility to the aircraft static display.

The event opened with the project officer, Sqn Ldr Gary Wann RAF from the MoD Directorate of Aviation Regulation & Safety (DARS), providing a short welcome and introduction of the other DARS personnel namely Commander Paul Brundle RN SO1 Operations Support and Colonel Stephen Marshall Assistant Director DARS, (regrettably Air Commodore Dugmore, Director DARS could not attend). The Station Commander RAF Shawbury, Group Captain David Prowse, then welcomed attendees, gave a brief overview of his unit and handed over to the Chief Flying Instructor for the Defence Helicopter Flying School (DHFS), Wing Commander Andy Lovell. Andy gave a detailed presentation on the training structure for helicopter pilots at Shawbury and how the training was provided through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) where the aircraft are civil owned but military registered with a mix of civilian (all ex service) and military flying instructors. Delegates were interested to learn that Shawbury has over 90,000 airfield movements per year with DHFS flying on average over 30,000 hours per annum, with current operations putting huge demand on the training pipeline.

Next up was Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) Vanessa Philpott DSATCO RAF Shawbury. Vanessa provided a detailed overview of where DHFS helicopters operate their different training requirements and regular operating hours. She went on to explain what Shawbury ATC could provide for to the GA community and what they expected of aircraft calling them; the message was simple, the airspace within 30 miles of Shawbury is extremely busy, in particular during the core working day Mon – Fri, and in the interests of flight safety aircraft transiting this area should call Shawbury ATC where possible, if unable for whatever reason then ensure your transponder is switched on with Altitude (if fitted). A summary of the new ATSOCAS was provided and some top 'RT Tips' were provided. Several questions were raised regarding local procedures in particular operations at Sleaf that lies in the Shawbury MATZ; Shawbury agreed to re-look at these procedures to see if they could be improved.

Following Vanessa, Flt Lt Dave Wayman from the Distress and Diversion (D&D) at Swanwick gave a detailed overview of D&D operations and provided a good insight to the day to day tasks and capability of the unit. Dave was keen to emphasise several important points useful for GA pilots, not least the use of emergency frequency 121.5. He encouraged the use of this frequency for 'Practice Pan' calls and training fixes; he also reiterated the need to call D&D if a pilot becomes unsure of his position or inadvertently finds himself in or close to controlled or other restricted airspace. This is considered particularly important if the frequency, for the controlling authority for that airspace, is not known.

After a welcome coffee break Gary Wann gave a presentation on AIRPROX, normally delivered by Peter Hunt the chairman of the UK AIRPROX Board (UKAB), Gary, as an advisor to the board, did a sterling job in describing the AIRPROX process, the need to report and how to do it (unfortunately due to the MCASD falling on the same day as the UKAB, Peter was understandably unavailable). Following lunch, Flt Lt James Mander a Hawk instructor pilot from RAF Valley spoke about fast jet operations in particular the necessary requirement to conduct low flying training. He explained operating heights, some of the routes flown in Wales and how best to avoid an encounter with a military fast jet low flying. In particular he focused on 'see and avoid' and how important it was for not just FJ crews but all aviators flying VFR to continually move their heads' around the cockpit to prevent screening by cockpit structures and wings. James also played an amateur video produced by a pilot colleague when he was flying Tornados; this demonstrated low flying, with film from the cockpit and also took a light hearted view of squadron life; regrettably this is not available on the ASI web-site so you had to be there to see it!

The final presentation was by Commander Paul Brundle who explained the workings of the Airspace & Safety Initiative (ASI) and how changes and safety initiatives were publicised through the ASI Communications and Education Programme (ACEP). It was encouraging to see that the ACEP strategy for notifying ATSOCCAS change had worked so well with almost every delegate in the room having received their copy of the ATSOCCAS interactive CD. A question and answer session followed and once again the issue of the ASI web-site were raised, in particular the need for a 'pictorial representation'. It was explained that this issue was being taken seriously and as such had been elevated to the ASI Coordination Group and would now feature as part of the ASI work.

The day closed with an opportunity to view DHFS Griffin and Squirrel Helicopters, with delegates departing by road and air on completion.

The next MCASD is planned Wed 9 Sep 09 at RAF Leeming, full details will be available on the following web-sites in due course.