



AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

October 2023



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AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

Going for the gap

Don't try to squeeze through an area that gives few options should things not go as planned

If I wanted to route in a certain direction in my early days of flying training I would often plan either to fly between two restrictions rather than go around them, or talk to someone to gain entry into one or other of them. It seemed an efficient use of the airspace until one of my instructors pointed out that routeing through small gaps leaves little-to-no room to deal with the unexpected.

With that in mind, the Airprox I have chosen this month to stimulate discussion is **Airprox 2023073** which involved a DA42 and an untraced motor-glider.

The DA42 pilot was conducting instrument approach training to runway 19 at Oxford and was established on the approach at around four miles. Meanwhile, the untraced motor-glider pilot was transiting north-west bound through the small gap between the Oxford ATZ and the Weston-on-the-Green parachuting zone (D129).

The Oxford radar controller reported that they often see aircraft transiting through this gap and that, quite often, pilots of those aircraft do not call Oxford. However, once they had spotted that the motor-glider might have presented a hazard to the DA42, they passed Traffic Information to the Tower controller (who was talking to the DA42 pilot at the time) to pass on to the DA42 pilot.

The gap between the edge of the Oxford ATZ and the Weston-on-the-Green parachuting zone is no wider than 0.4nm at its narrowest point, and I probably don't need to mention how little room for error this provides. What's worth considering, though, is if another aircraft had been 'threading the needle' in the opposite direction? There's barely enough room for one aircraft to fit through this gap, let alone two travelling in opposite directions.

Of course, there is always the option of deconflicting by altitude, but there's also every chance that opposing traffic might be at the same level. It's also pretty obvious that, if transiting this gap north-westbound, you will be pointing straight at the approach path of instrument traffic inbound to Oxford's runway 19.

Oxford aerodrome is marked on the CAA VFR charts with 'feathers', indicating that it has instrument approaches outside controlled airspace. There is also a note on the CAA VFR charts stating that 'Pilots are strongly recommended to contact aerodrome ATSU before flying within 10nm of any aerodrome marked with instrument approach feathers.'

I imagine most of us would think of 'contact' as a radio call but, as I pointed out in last month's Insight, Article 139 of the ANO prohibits that if you don't hold a Flight Radiotelephony Operator's Licence (FRTOL).

However, if you don't hold one have you considered telephoning ATC beforehand just to alert them to your intentions?

I realise this might not always be a practical option, but it's worth considering. Similarly, there are options to gain entry into areas of restricted airspace – in this case, a radio call to Brize Zone, or even a telephone call beforehand, might get you permission to enter Weston-on-the-Green (D129) – see the CAA VFR chart and the UK AIP (and most aircraft navigation software applications) for details.

Finally, I thought I'd take a moment to highlight the advice contained within the [GASCo Take-Two](#) initiative. Although GASCo suggests taking at least 200ft separation from the base of controlled airspace, or 2nm from the lateral limits of controlled airspace, it's certainly worth considering applying that principle to any bit of airspace that you want to stay out of — and not just controlled airspace. Also, consider if what you intend to do might have unintended adverse consequences for someone else.

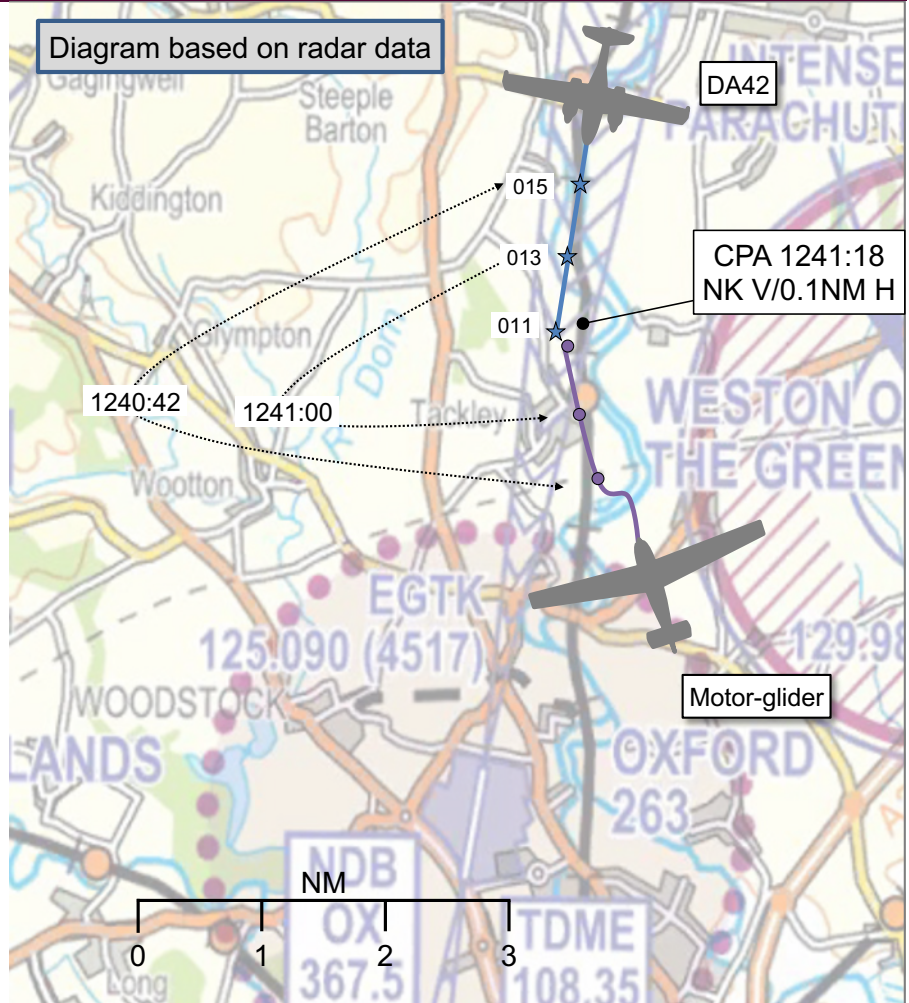
In the case I have highlighted, the motor-glider pilot had not spoken to anybody, was not transmitting on any form of electronic conspicuity (EC) equipment (which might have helped a controller or interacted with another aircraft's EC equipment) and was transiting an extremely narrow gap pointing straight towards an instrument approach path at the altitude at which one would expect to find traffic on that instrument approach. Of course, all of the above is perfectly 'legal'...

UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

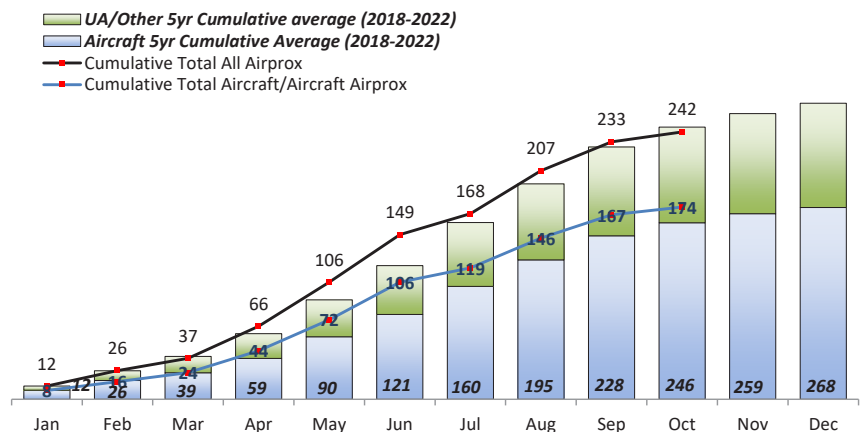
This month the Board evaluated 28 Airprox, including nine UA/Other events, seven of which were reported by the piloted aircraft and two by the drone operator.

Of the 21 full evaluations, nine were classified as risk-bearing – all as category B. The Board also raised one Safety Recommendation this month during the assessment of an Airprox between two military aircraft conducting an exercise over the North Sea.

Board members noted that the two pilots had a different interpretation of the training rules, specifically the procedure for a pilot to follow when they have been simulated as 'killed'. Because of the differing expectations of the two pilots involved, the Board has asked that HQ Air Command considers reviewing kill-removal procedures within Air-to-Air Training Rules to remove any ambiguity.



2023 Airprox - Cumulative Distribution



As I gaze out of my window at the changeable weather, and lament the passing of the British summer (such as it was), my thoughts turn to winter flying and how the challenges of a rapidly changing meteorological situation can call for short-notice adaptations to our plans as the situation evolves.

With that in mind, do think about contingencies during the planning stage (before flight) and have a few ideas about what you might do should you encounter weather that's not as good as forecast. It's always useful to have a few frequencies

up our sleeve in case we need to talk to somebody, but also think about whether ATC might appreciate a call from you so that they know what your intentions are – even if you don't plan on getting a service from that agency.

It's better to have something and not need it, than to need something and not be able to find it.

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