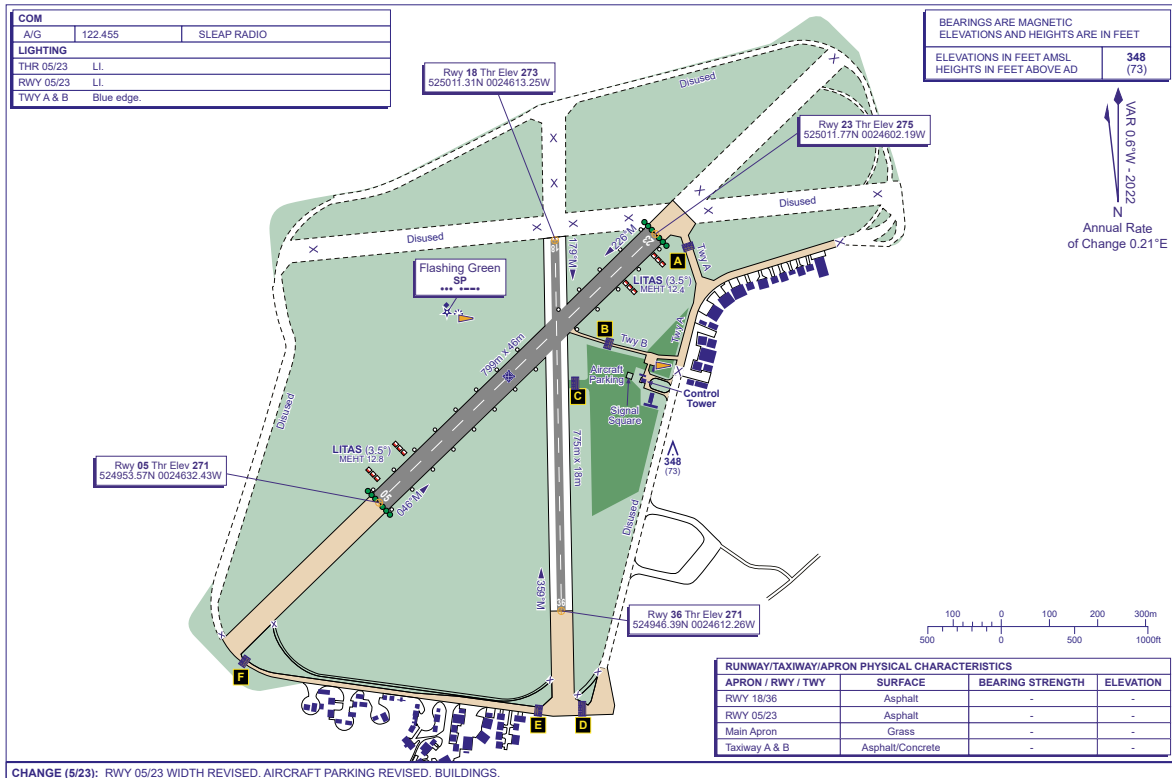




# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

July 2023



## AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

# Appropriate arrivals

### Has something changed since the last time you joined this particular circuit?

Throughout my time flying, I have been asked by controllers on numerous occasions if I was 'familiar' with the airfield into which I was arriving. If I'm honest, I rarely responded in the negative, even if I wasn't sure about a few things, because nobody wants to admit that they might not have been as fully prepared as they should have been, do they...?

Besides, it's pretty straightforward, isn't it? What could really go wrong during the approach and landing that would mean that any holes in my knowledge might be exposed?

If you're wondering why I'm revisiting the subject of arrivals in this month's article it's because, from the 14 evaluations that the

UK Airprox Board conducted this month, at least three occurred during their 'arrival phase'.

The example I have chosen is **Airprox 2023025**, but it could equally have been **Airprox 2023013**. In the example I've selected, a DR400 and a PA-28 were both approaching Sleap airfield at around the same time but from different directions. Both pilots made the appropriate calls on joining the airfield, although the report of 'overhead' from the PA-28 pilot had been made when they were still at least one mile to the south-west (and I have commented previously on the importance of making accurate positional calls to aid the situational awareness of other pilots).

Unfortunately, when the PA-28 pilot made their slightly inaccurate call of 'overhead' the Air Ground Operator (AGO) responded that the Robin was 'descending deadside'. This had not been the case, as the Robin was still on the live side at that time and so this could well have led the PA-28 pilot to have looked in the wrong place for the DR400.

As the PA-28 pilot couldn't see the Robin, and with no indication as to its position from their electronic conspicuity equipment, the PA-28 pilot decided to orbit for spacing and to give themselves time to sight the DR400. What's crucial here, though, is that the orbit wasn't performed in the overhead but, in fact, in the path of the Robin that was turning crosswind.

So, what lessons can we learn from this? The first thing that's important to note is that at Sleaf, on weekends, the powered-aircraft circuit is a left-hand circuit on all runways, which is different to the published circuit directions for weekdays. A simple 'rule of thumb' for joining the circuit is to keep the airfield on the same side of the aircraft as the circuit direction i.e. keep the airfield on the left for left-hand circuits and on the right for right-hand circuits.

In this case, the PA-28 pilot had the airfield on their right throughout their join and so, when they couldn't see the Robin, they had increased the chances of a conflict with its track. The second thing is to ensure you have planned and thought through your arrival, including a few contingencies, before getting airborne.

The UK Airprox Board often sees Airprox occurring in the 'transition' from en-route to arrival or from arrival to integration into the circuit, and a quick refresh of the airfield's website or its entry in the [UK eAIP](#) might save a few blushes later!

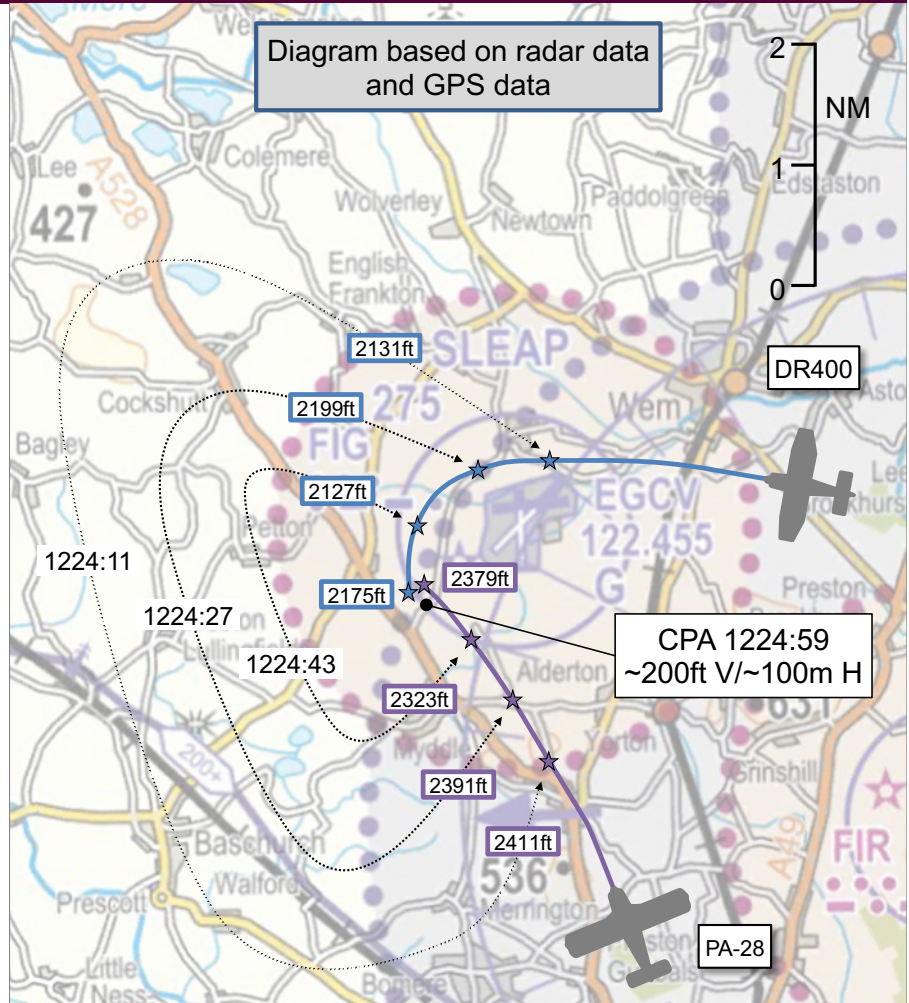
Thirdly, always consider an overhead join (in the overhead!) if at all possible – this is designed to give pilots time to orientate themselves and observe any traffic in the circuit or the vicinity of the aerodrome – and do not underestimate the value of spending time in an orbit in the overhead. While the [Skyway Code](#) has an excellent diagram illustrating the overhead join, it does not really describe the value and reasons for performing an orbit in the overhead.

Finally, remember that at uncontrolled aerodromes (i.e. those with an AGO, AFISO or no radio operator at all) then it is *always* the pilot's responsibility to integrate safely with the other traffic (aided, of course, by any traffic information that they might receive from the AGO or AFISO) and therefore it's essential to build situational awareness on the traffic at or around the aerodrome as early as possible.

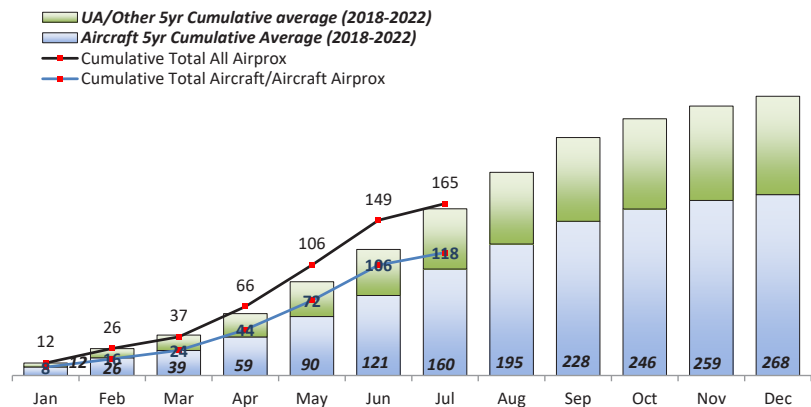
Also, I mentioned this last month as well, if what you see out of the window is not what you are expecting to see, or you are not sure of what you should be doing, then don't be afraid to ask. When it comes to safety, there is no such thing as a 'stupid question'...

**UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP**

This month the Board evaluated 22 Airprox, including eight UA/Other events, all of which were reported by the piloted aircraft. Of the 14 full evaluations, five were classified as risk-bearing – all category B. With all 2022 Airprox now assessed by the



**2023 Airprox - Cumulative Distribution**



Board, preparation of the annual report (the 'Blue Book') has commenced. The headlines are likely to centre around the incompatibility of the various types of electronic conspicuity equipment available to pilots flying in Class G airspace and, linked to some degree, pilot situational awareness.

Last month, I mentioned that Airprox reporting over the first half of 2023 had been significantly higher than the previous year. However, and as the graph demonstrates, this has started to level off in July. I do think that the weather has played a major part in reporting rates – we saw

excellent flying conditions in May and June, but July has been rather disappointing in terms of the 'British Summer'.

That said, we can never be complacent, and I expect reporting rates to pick up again as we move into August and September, which are historically the months in which we see the highest number of Airprox reported.

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