



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

September 2022

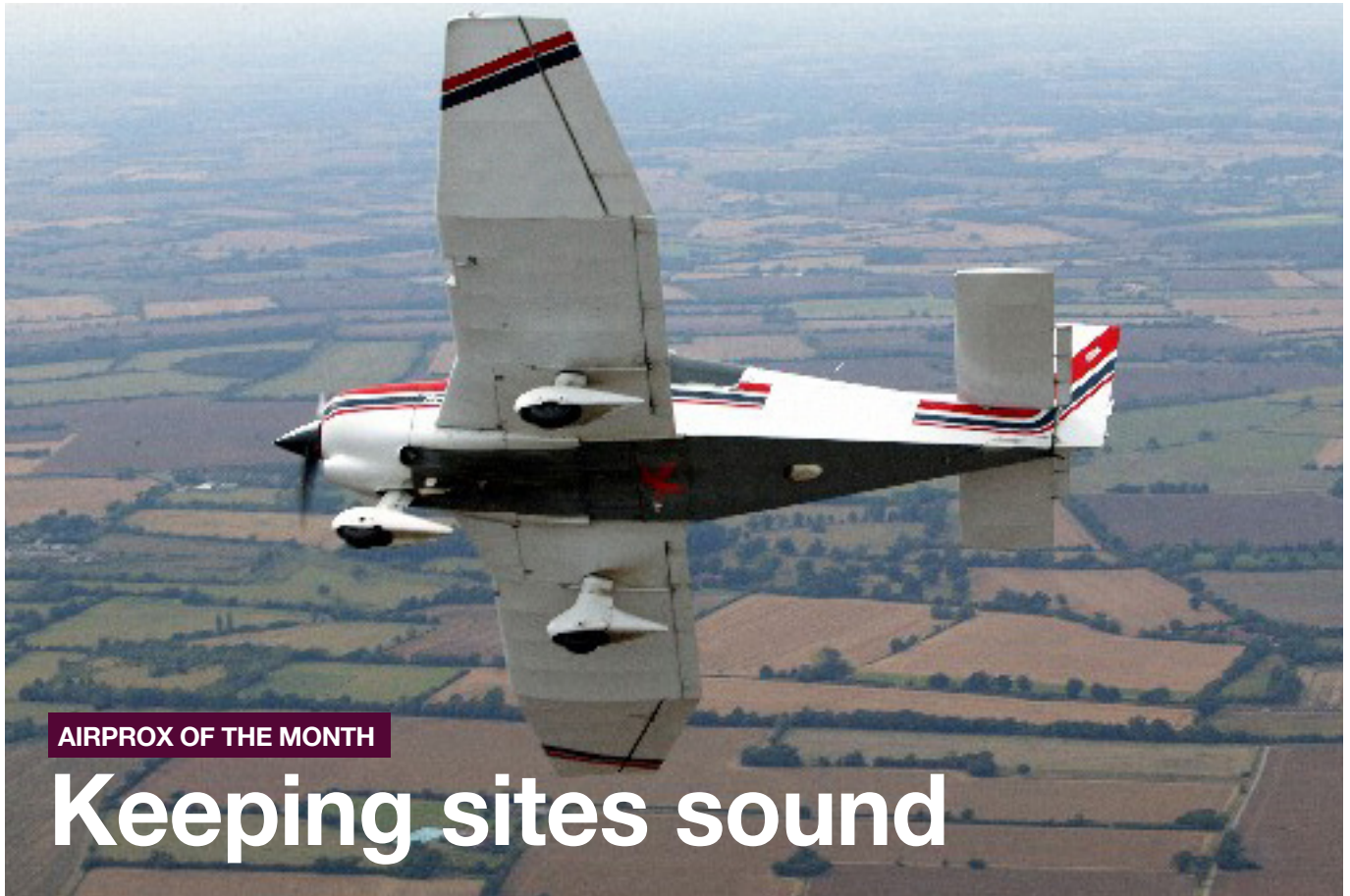


Photo for illustration purposes: Brian Barr/Simon Finlay.

AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

## Keeping sites sound

### Smaller airfields might not have an ATZ, but that doesn't mean they're not busy...

This month I want to highlight some important considerations for pilots flying near to minor aerodromes, glider sites or any other areas intended for take-off and landing, because three of this month's reports concern close encounters at such locations.

We can all learn from these Airprox for different reasons — there's no need to identify which lessons came from which Airprox, just that a combination of the lessons could be applied to any of the scenarios.

One Airprox occurred when a Robin DR40 and a Piper PA-28 came into proximity within the Air Traffic Zone (ATZ) of an airfield. Although there was an ATZ in place, there was no Air Traffic Control Service

or Aerodrome Flight Information Service available – just an Air/Ground frequency in use. The first lesson here is that the presence of an ATZ does not in itself indicate that there will be a manned radio position or that any kind of Flight Information Service will be available.

The DR40 pilot was departing the airfield at the same time as the PA-28 pilot was arriving, and procedures are published that, if followed, would have kept the two aircraft separated. However, neither pilot flew the published procedures and the pair met at the same altitude and separated by less than 0.1NM laterally.

The second example happened when the pilots of a Skyraider Nynja and a PA-28 found themselves in the same bit of airspace above a microlight site (see top right). In this

case, the Nynja pilot was returning to land via a standard overhead join and the PA-28 pilot was transiting close to the airfield. The PA-28 pilot had consciously elected to fly at or around 2000ft as they flew past to avoid any possibility of encountering circuit traffic, but had apparently not considered the possibility of encountering an aircraft joining the circuit at the same height at which they had planned to transit. These two aircraft missed each other by 100ft vertically and 0.1NM laterally.

The final example involved an EV97 EuroStar and a Gazelle where the EV97 was approaching a minor airfield with no ATZ or Air Traffic Control, but there was an Air/Ground operator on the radio. The helicopter pilot was transiting close to the airfield (about 1.5NM to the north) at about

500ft AGL but was not in contact with the Air/Ground Operator. In this case, the Gazelle pilot had not only chosen to fly at a height where aircraft descending into the airfield might have been encountered, but had also flown a track that had increased their chances of meeting an aircraft on either base leg or final for the runway in use.

So, three completely different encounters that all occurred in the vicinity of an area intended for take-off and landing. There are lessons here for all, such as 'know the departure and arrival procedures and follow them', or 'if flying near an airfield it's a good idea to at least listen to the frequency to get an idea of other traffic that might affect you'.

However, perhaps the biggest takeaway from these three encounters is to consider the 'what-ifs' of your plan. What if there is traffic departing/arriving? What if I don't see that traffic? What if I talk to the airfield – will that cost me anything other than my time?

Remember, there are very many minor aerodromes across the UK that sit in Class G airspace but do not have an Aerodrome Traffic Zone associated with them. The lack of an ATZ does not imply that these airfields are not busy – indeed, many of them are homes to flying schools and a multitude of other activities (such as microlight flying, gliding and even parachuting from some).

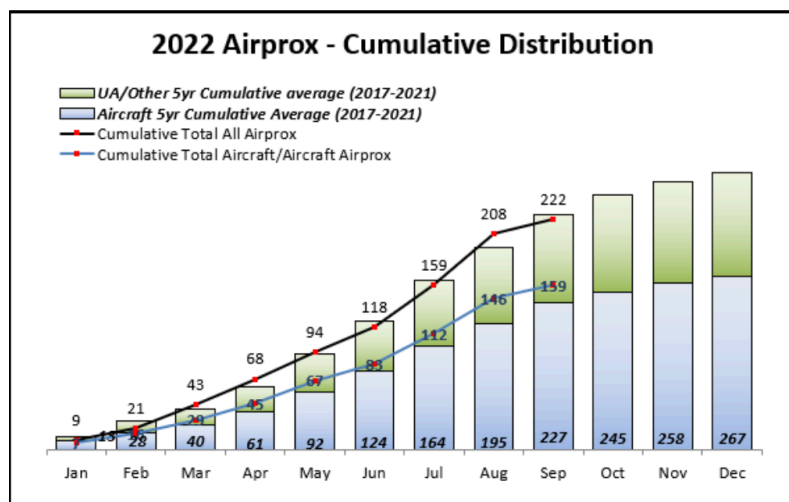
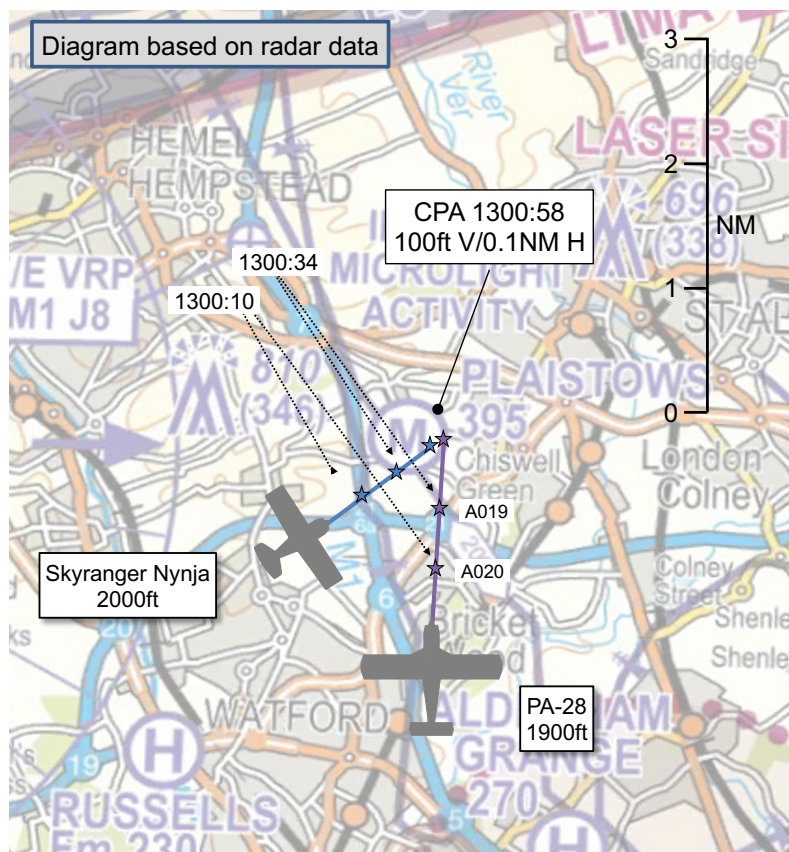
While it's easier to identify the presence of an ATZ on an aeronautical chart, where minor aerodromes can be found is, perhaps, less obvious. Therefore, it's essential to plan your flight thoroughly and to have an understanding of the environment through which you plan to fly.

The CAA's Skyway Code is a really useful publication that explains the rules and gives sound advice in a (relatively) easily digestible format and can be downloaded [here](#).

#### UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

We evaluated 29 Airprox this month including 12 UA/Other events; all of the UA/other Airprox were reported by the piloted aircraft. Of the 17 full evaluations, **six were classified as risk-bearing** – three were category A and three were category B. The Board also decided to raise a recommendation; it followed the consideration of an Airprox between a military helicopter flying along the south coast and a paraglider soaring off the cliffs.

The paragliding community is quite rightly concerned about aircraft flying close to where they are operating. Unlike an Airprox between two powered aircraft, there is a very real risk to paraglider pilots



that the wake turbulence from an aircraft – or the rotor downwash from a helicopter – will adversely affect their canopy to the extent that they may descend rapidly or, in extreme cases, have to deploy an emergency parachute.

Although the Board's role is to assess the risk of collision, much of its discussions around these Airprox involved the separation achieved and what that might mean for the paraglider. While the effects of wake turbulence/propwash/rotor downwash vary by size and weight of the

aircraft and the conditions on the day, one thing is clear – the 'adequate' separation pilots give other aircraft in a see-and-avoid environment can often be inadequate when that other aircraft is a paraglider (or similar). So do try to avoid known areas of paragliding if you can, and if you see a paraglider give it a very wide berth.

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