



AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

October 2019



Just as the slack was being taken up on a winch cable to launch an ASK 21 glider at Portmoak one of the launch-team saw a PA-28 about to overfly the airfield and shouted “Stop, stop, stop” — a few seconds later and the glider pilot would have been established in the climb and poorly placed to avoid the Piper (even if he had seen it at all).

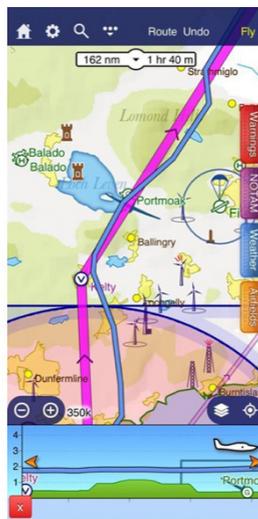
Although the risk in this case ([Airprox 2019101](#)) was graded as Category C (where no risk of collision has existed or risk was averted), there are important lessons here about the in-flight use of electronic maps.

The Piper pilot had been rerouted as he transited north from Edinburgh towards Leuchars, and had originally planned to be nowhere near Portmoak. As many of us would do, he entered the new waypoint into SkyDemon and started to follow the magenta line.

Although he knew Portmoak was somewhere nearby (and also that Fife and Balado were active so he needed to keep a good lookout) the new magenta line neatly obscured Portmoak’s gliding activity and site

symbols so it wasn’t obvious that they were there (as the graphic shows).

Although the PA-28 pilot was looking out and had seen another glider in the area, he didn’t see Portmoak, and so wasn’t aware of the glider about to launch.



Hindsight is wonderful of course, and it’s easy to say that the Piper pilot should have made sure his route didn’t go over an active

glider site, but he wasn’t helped by the SkyDemon display which shows gliding sites as a small symbol rather than the larger circle depicted on the VFR chart.

Also, it could well have been that the site was off the top of his display when he did his reroute so, without actively swiping and looking along the new track, all sorts of things could be missed. Finally, and although not pertinent in this case, it’s possible to deselect sport aviation and glider site symbology on SkyDemon and so pilots might not even know the site was there.

The lessons are clear — always check your route when planning and re-planning (especially when in the air) and take note that electronic displays are not always as clear as VFR charts in making some sites obvious; beware of things being obscured by the magenta line, and note that glider winch-launch altitudes are not shown by default and have to be positively accessed by selecting on the glider site and accessing ‘What’s here?’.

Also, be wary of deselecting sports aviation and glider sites in the menus. Would you be as happy to fly around using a VFR

chart that didn't display all the relevant aeronautical information? Full details of the incident can be found at the link within this note or at airproxboard.org.uk in the 'Airprox Reports and Analysis' section within the appropriate year and then in the 'Individual Airprox reports' tab.

UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

There were 35 airprox, of which 15 were SUAS incidents, reviewed at the Board's September meeting. Of the 20 manned aircraft-to-aircraft incidents, seven were risk-bearing with one being Category A (where separation was reduced to the bare minimum and only stopped short of an actual collision because providence played a major part in events), and six were Category B (where safety margins were much reduced below the norm through either chance, misjudgement or inaction, or where emergency avoiding action was only taken at the last minute).

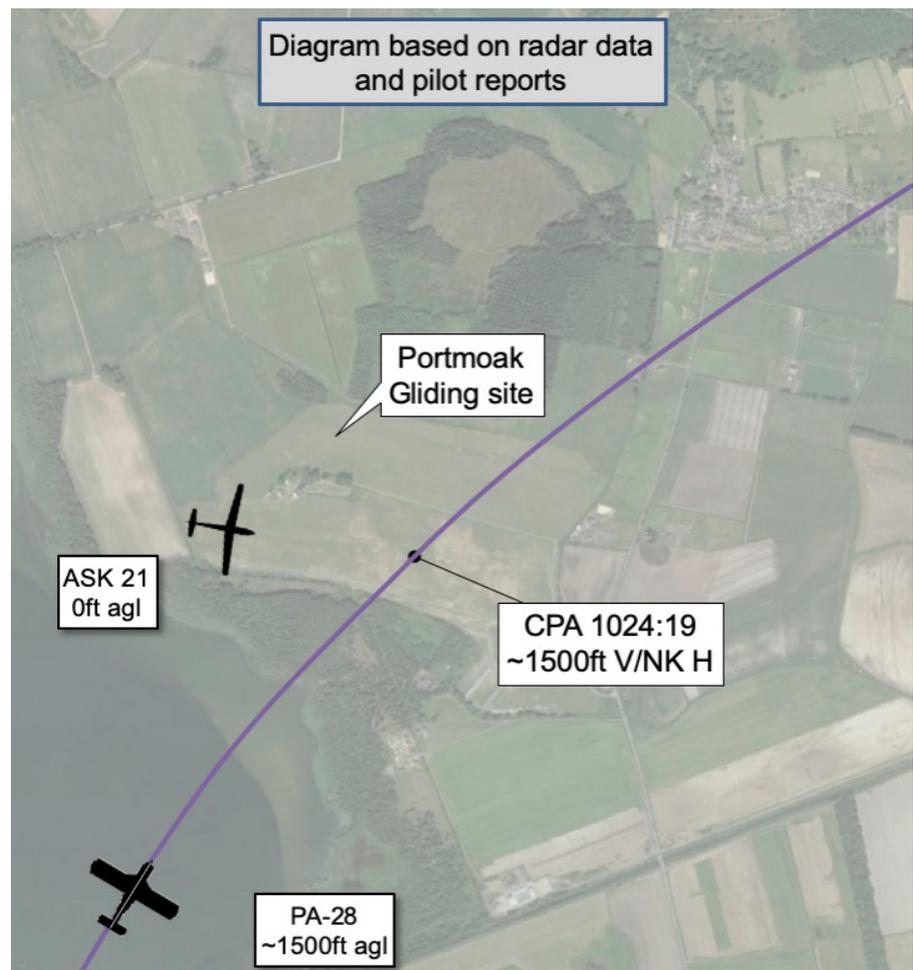
Overall, this year's increased reporting rates continue and it looks as if 2019 will be a record year for Airprox notifications. There are two ways of looking at this: either there are more Airprox (which would be the pessimistic view), or people are embracing the safety process and reporting incidents they might not have done before (which is good because we then have the visibility of lessons that we might not have known about before).

So please keep reporting – there's absolutely no stigma; it doesn't reflect on your prowess as a pilot, we don't do 'blame', we don't publish identities and our sole remit is to enhance air safety by trying to identify lessons and trends.

Speaking of which, I've just published the 2018 'Blue Book' annual Airprox summary and analysis at airproxboard.org.uk/Reports-and-analysis/Annual-Airprox-summary-reports/. Do have a read; it gives some thoughts from me and plenty of statistics for those who want to delve deeper. There's also a catalogue of all the 2018 incidents.

This month's predominant theme was again late-/non-sighting (15 cases), reflecting the fact that most incidents were from this summer when GA flying rates increase and the probability of having an encounter also rises.

Perhaps more informative, though, was the second-most common theme which was sub-optimal selection of air traffic services (including not talking to nearby airfields) which featured in nine incidents. This reflects



on pilots not seeking a surveillance-based service when available, not seeking a service at all, or transiting near to busy airfields without either listening-out or making an information call to increase the situational awareness of others.

Although it isn't always practical to seek or obtain an air traffic service, Traffic Information from ATC is one of the prime sources of situational awareness that's not being employed to its fullest extent. Associated safety barrier analysis indicates that the 'ATC Situational Awareness and Action' barrier was not used (or was not required to be used due to the requested/available ATS) in 29% of incidents so far this year.

Inaction on receipt of situational awareness information or after a visual sighting featured in seven incidents, and sub-optimal planning or execution of the plan was evident in six events. Both of these reflect on the airmanship of those involved and more could have been done to prevent the situation unfolding had they acted more appropriately.

Sub-optimal Traffic Information or controller actions featured in five incidents,

and, disappointingly, there were another five where pilots either overflew glider sites below the winch-launch height, or flew close to busy airfields without thinking to call and announce their presence.

It was two of these glider site overflight incidents that led the Board to examine the use of SkyDemon by the pilots concerned, where it became apparent that SkyDemon's facility to deselect 'Sport Aviation' and Glider Sites from the display was less than desirable from a charting perspective given that pilots could then easily, and unwittingly, plan to fly through such sites without warning. The Board's recommendation reflected this issue as shown.

AIRPROX Recommendations 2019101 & 2019110

SkyDemon review the selection and depiction of sites used for aerial sporting and recreational activities.

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