



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

November 2020



Photo for illustration purposes only: "File:Astir-JPM.jpg" by TSRL (licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)

**AIRPROX OF THE MONTH**

## How close is too close

### It might be legal, but flying near to a glider winch launch site could be a fatal mistake

**A** Beech 23 pilot receiving a Basic Service from Cardiff ATC was given a direct routing which took him directly overhead Halesland gliding site at an altitude of around 2000ft and close to an Astir glider.

Halesland is marked on the VFR charts with a winch launch height of 2900ft and the airfield has an elevation of 870ft which put the Beech 23 even further into proximity with any potential circuit traffic or winching gliders.

Fortunately, in this case (**Airprox 2020090**) both pilots saw each other and took action. The Beech pilot saw the glider at some distance and turned right to keep clear, meanwhile the Astir pilot was thermalling close to cloudbase at around 2000ft and, after straightening up, saw the

Beech and turned right.

In the end the lateral separation was in the region of 0.4nm (comparing the radar replay with the GPS file from the glider) which was why the Board assessed that although safety had been degraded, it was classed as Category C with no risk of collision.

The Board has recently seen a number of Airprox where pilots have flown through, or very close to, the vicinity of glider sites<sup>1</sup>.

Such sites in Class G airspace are not protected by any formal airspace and overflight is not prohibited by any regulation; the Board often hears pilots claiming that as there is no protective airspace they have the right to fly close to them, but flying near to a winch launch

gliding site clearly introduces a risk, both to the glider on the winch launch and to an aircraft flying through.

An article by the BGA published on UKAB's website notes that pilots should not rely on being able to see a winch launch happening; a glider will go from ground to 1000-1500ft in about 20 seconds and a collision with a winch cable would be likely to be fatal<sup>2</sup>.

ATC sometimes remind pilots about glider sites, especially if the glider site is busy and it is in an area where there is also lots of other traffic. Previously Bristol covered this area with a LARS, but this is not the case anymore. Consequently, Cardiff Radar have found that pilots are calling them earlier than they used to, expecting the same information that

they would have received from Bristol. As a result of this Airprox, Cardiff are considering marking Halesland on their Radar map so they can highlight it to pilots more easily. However, it is worth remembering that most ATC Radars will not pick up gliders, so it is difficult for controllers to provide specific information on them. Also, it is worth thinking about the type of service you request from an ATC unit – remember, you should never expect to get Traffic Information from a Basic Service – this is not what this service is designed to provide.

So how much should you avoid a glider site by? There is no set amount, the CAA Skyway Code tells pilots ‘You should never overfly a glider site below the specified winch launch altitude’<sup>3</sup>. But in their safety evenings GASCo goes further, recommending that glider sites are given space 2nm laterally (from the edge of the representative ‘circle’ on the chart) and at least 200ft above the marked winch-launch altitude.

Of course, it is for every pilot to decide their own risk appetite, but next time you are planning your route – think twice about glider sites.

**UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP**

Some 15 aircraft-to-aircraft Airprox were examined this month, one was classified as Category A (separation reduced to the minimum and/or where chance played a major part in events — actual collision risk) and four were Category B (avoiding action may have been taken, but still resulted in safety margins being much reduced below normal — safety not assured).



While the number of Airprox is significantly lower this year because of the Coronavirus pandemic, they are still happening and for the same reasons: Not talking to an Air Traffic Service so reducing everyone’s situational awareness; expecting too much from a Basic Service because of a misunderstanding of what that service offers; flying close (vertically or horizontally) to ATZs without understanding how busy they are, and not

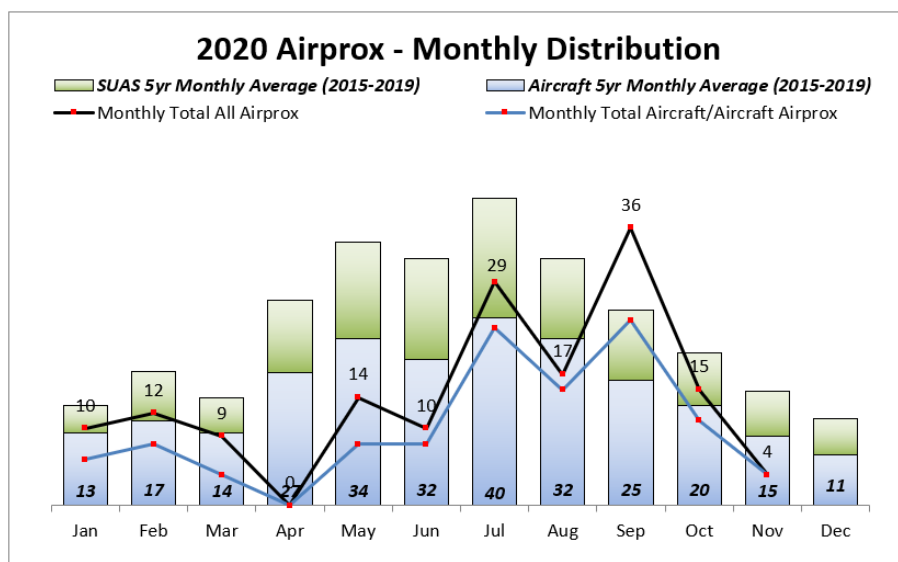
avoiding glider sites by a sensible margin are all examples of contributory factors to Airprox.

Most of these points can be tackled by placing a healthy emphasis on planning. After all, it’s the pilot and those present in the aircraft who have the greatest interest in the flight occurring without incident!

Most Airprox take place in Class G airspace below 3000ft and between GA aircraft — a sector more likely to encounter an Airprox than any other sector, including the military.

The chart above shows five things relating to the planning and execution of a flight which contributed to the risk bearing Airprox discussed this month — think about each one in turn and see if any of them have applied to you in the past. If they have, perhaps take a moment and think about what you can do in the future to prevent them happening again.

1 See also [Airprox 2020062](#), [2020080](#), [2020083](#)  
 2 Full article [here](#)  
 3 Skyway Code [https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP1535\\_Skyway\\_Code\\_V2\\_INTER.pdf](https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP1535_Skyway_Code_V2_INTER.pdf)



Download the **new Airprox app**

