

Airspace update

Carr Withall, chairman of the BGA Airspace Committee, provides a brief assessment of 2006 and the annual reminder on airspace information and recommended procedures for cross-country flights

Start heading parallel to the runway heading into the "official" wind direction. Diving line, loop, chandelle (to reverse direction), humpty bump (canopy down), chandelle and three-quarter turn.

The turn can be in either direction. A useful tip is to turn away from the runway so that you can see it for the roll-out, directly at right angles.

Whilst you are performing your sequence, the judges will be dictating remarks to their assistants. Shortly afterwards, the scorer will give you the score sheets. The judges' comments are intended to be helpful and it is very worthwhile studying these carefully.

Know the rules

The fee to enter your first Beginners contest is included in your BAeA subscription. If there are two or more of you from the same club, it is cheaper to join the BAeA as a club membership rather than individually.

The BAeA contest rules say that you may not practice at the contest site in the week before to minimise noise nuisance. However, this rule does not apply to gliders. Indeed, practice week is a sociable and useful gathering. Experienced pilots are usually happy to chat and offer advice and tips. It is possible that there will be some more formal assistance before this year's Nationals.

On the day

There is a roll call and a full daily briefing, followed by the usual gliding club drill of getting the gliders to the launchpoint. Unlike a cross-country competition, launching is leisurely, because there needs to be a minimum of ten minutes between launches to space out the competitors. When your class is not competing, you can visit the judging line and listen to what is going on.

Go for broke: enter at two levels!

If you can fly some of the Sports figures but are not confident of them all, consider entering at two levels. The rules allow this to encourage pilots to practice for the higher level before formally competing. You are treated as a serious competitor at the lower level. At the higher level you can take a safety pilot or simply miss out some figures. You will be scored and benefit from the judges' comments but won't qualify for a prize.

More information

The BAeA website at www.aerobatics.org.uk is excellent. Once you have joined the BAeA you will get a contest information booklet. The website also has contact numbers for the check pilots. Most are very willing to answer questions and offer advice and help. If your own club does not have training facilities, Asham runs courses, and Dunstable, Salby and other clubs can arrange one-to-one training. Aerobatics should not replace soaring, but it is a useful skill to work upon when you cannot soar. Competition is good and gives you something to aim for. See you at Salby in June, I hope!

DURING 2006 the Airspace Committee was, as usual, continuously involved around the country as changes to, or increases in, controlled airspace gather pace.

This issue of S&G does not include the full description of all types of airspace. See *Gliding and UK airspace update*, April-May 2006, p44, for full details and descriptions of airspace. The BGA website airspace section now contains much of what is in this article and much other useful airspace information.

What is important is that we follow recommended practices that will assist our safety and other users of airspace.

Division Flight Level

This year on March 15 the UK came in line with the rest of Europe and adopted Flight Level 195 as the level above which ALL airspace is Class C controlled airspace. Class B airspace no longer exists. All aviation maps that General Aviation pilots use for flying will not show any airspace above FL195. Existing upper airways will continue to be used by commercial aircraft as they are today, but they will be embedded in Class C airspace.

Therefore it was essential that the wave flying areas were looked at to ensure that this important part of our flying continued. The Scottish areas were changed to reflect their most-used areas and the Borders club at Milfield, which is thriving, now needed an area as they often have climbs above FL195. The agreement with the Civil Aviation Authority and Ministry of Defence and method of activation for flying in the wave areas is going to be the same for all wave sites. This agreement, together with the maps, will be on the BGA website (airspace section) at www.gliding.co.uk/airspace. These areas will be referred to as Temporary Reserved Areas (T).

AIS

I know that the AIS system is still far from user friendly but please check the AIS website before flying cross-country (www.aicorp.co.uk). Last-minute briefing can be obtained from the freephone (0500 3548812). The Red Arrows have their own website where you can see their display programme (www.raf.mod.uk/redarrows). The BGA website (Airspace) has a guide produced by Chris Nicholas and Michael Cross on how to obtain AIS and NOTAM information.

Former TRAs are now RA(T)s

As a result of European airspace classification changes, the current restrictions of flying known as Temporary Restricted Areas (TRAs), that are put in place to protect events such as

air displays and major incidents have had a new name since January 18, 2007. Now they are known as Restricted Areas (Temporary) or RA(T)s. Pilots looking for events such as Red Arrows displays should look at RA(T) information. This change is to avoid confusion with the new Temporary Reserved Areas, which were introduced from March 15 to bring the UK in line with Eurocontrol Flexible Use of Airspace and coincide with the lowering of Class C airspace definitions.

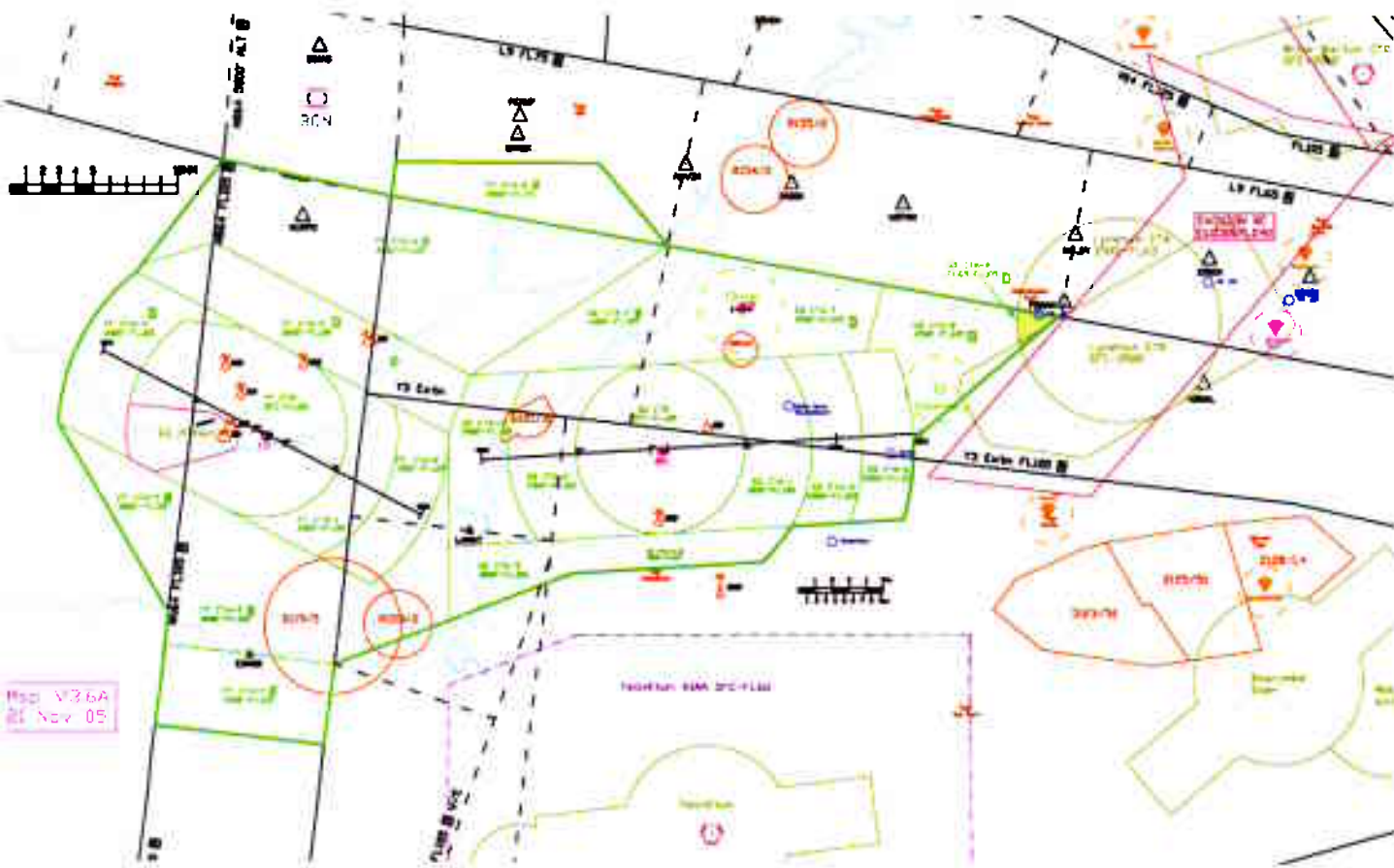
Class D airspace

The increase this year, and in the future, of these areas of controlled airspace around regional airports will mean that cross-country flights will more often have to route through Class D airspace. The only good reason for controllers to refuse access to a glider to transit this airspace is if they are truly busy with other traffic. It is known that a couple of ATC units, Southampton and Leeds, often refuse access, whilst other ATC units are helpful. If after first contact with ATC you are refused access, immediately ask for the traffic information that is causing the refusal and politely remind the controller that it is Class D and you are flying VFR in VMC conditions. There is an agreed R/T wording for requesting a clearance and flying through Class D airspace and this is on the BGA website (airspace section). There is also a form to complete if a pilot has successfully flown through or been denied access to, Class D airspace, which is also on the BGA website.

On August 31, 2006 new areas of Class D controlled airspace at Bristol and Cardiff came into effect together with the Letter of Agreement to allow access for gliders flying through the area. The new areas are shown on the map overleaf and the Letter of Agreement is on the BGA website (airspace). Please read, and if in doubt talk to your CFI.

Code of Conduct for flights through Class D airspace

Remember you must obtain ATC "clearance" to fly through any Class D airspace. Tell the controller that you are a 15-Metre/Standard or Open Class glider. Keep the controller informed of any change of your planned route, due to massive sink for example. Do not circle on the extended centreline of the airfield runway. Be prepared to initiate avoiding action notwithstanding your right of way priority. You are flying VFR rules and therefore separation is not provided from other aircraft. An R/T licence is required. However, safety and commonsense take priority over whether or not you have a licence when



The "new" Class D airspace around Cardiff and Bristol, which came into effect last year. The Letter of Agreement is on the BGA website. If in doubt, consult your CFI

invariably drifting into Class D airspace if the cloudbase is so high that one can fly over the top of Lyneham or Brize Norton zones please give them a call. They will see you on radar and will assume that you are in their zone and so divert their military traffic five miles from the radar target. They should be helpful. My personal experience last summer with Brize Norton met with "keep clear of controlled airspace" every time but I have discussed this with them and trust this will not happen this summer.

Parachuting Drop Zones (DZ)

The list of parachute sites and appropriate contact ATC frequency is on the aviation maps as a block of information. Contact the ATC unit and they will be able to say if the site is active. The glider pilot can then request the DZ frequency to obtain the current activity. By talking directly to the parachute site one may either be allowed to cross safely, if they are having a break, or fly around the zone if they are busy. However, most importantly, in the event of a nil response from the parachute site frequency the glider should act on the strategic information given by the ATC unit and remain clear of the site. **YOU WILL NEVER SEE A FREE FALL PARACHUTIST IN TIME TO TAKE AVOIDING ACTION. IF IN DOUBT KEEP OUT.** The major sites at Langar, Peterborough/Sibson, Weston on the Green and Hinton-in-the-Hedges are very busy. Be sure to make in-flight R/T calls to

ascertain actual status of DZs on your route. An R/T licence is NOT required.

Airspace infringements

Once again we have had a good record. Flying on the QFE altimeter setting, which is our normal practice, can, however, more easily lead to an infringement. The BGA airspace committee suggests that the airfield QNH be written down on the map before take-off. When flying close to the base of controlled airspace (this QNH setting, or 1013, as appropriate, should be set on the altimeter. It is bad practice to add the airfield height to the altimeter reading during flight.

Airproxes

Despite the new symbol for gliding sites on aviation maps there were several airprox reports involving gliders at less than winch launch height, both military and civil aircraft disregarding the symbol on the map. There were also many other incursions over gliding sites well below winch launch height.

Please report every occurrence of light aircraft flying low over your site. There is a simple form to fill in and send to the CAA Safety Regulation Group when this happens.

If you are considering filing an Airprox or suspect one may be filed against you then please contact either Hugh Woodsend (Hugh_Woodsend@compuserve.com or 01993 830588), Bruce Cooper (01628 521360, bruce.cooper68@virgin.net) or Carr Withall (icarrwithall@btinternet.com/

01442 862577) as soon as possible. If carrying a logger please keep the trace. The use of traces may well provide evidence against exaggerated claims.

Maps

There is much useful information at the bottom and side of the map that can greatly assist on cross-country flights: for example, parachute site contact frequencies, ATZ frequencies, Danger Area activity, etc.

In our increasingly-congested skies, it is essential to use every bit of airspace possible. This can only be done if the correct frequency is immediately to hand when you wish to inform airfields that you likely to fly close to or over fly.

Always fly with the current map. NOTE the new half-million aviation maps only show airspace up to FL195. Above this level it is ALL Class C controlled airspace. You will have read earlier that wave areas have been agreed so that high-level gliding can continue, albeit not every day.

Finally, if you're lost...

Remember if you are truly lost and are worried about infringing controlled airspace call on the distress frequency 121.50. This service can very quickly find you as long as you are above 2,000ft and south of Manchester.

Updates and other useful information are at www.glidering.co.uk/airspace