

Parachuting & Gliding don't mix

Parachute Drop Zones. The British Parachute Association has asked us to point out that a 2014 version of their map showing drop zones, along with club contact details and radio frequencies is available at <http://www.bpa.org.uk/forms/download/37/pdf>

Parachuting has become much more popular in recent years and far more dangerous to us. Most parachuting used to be done below cloud base and there was very little free falling. We could see what was going on, generally large colored parachutes with men underneath falling at about 10 knots. Now free falling from over 10 000 feet is common. We often can't see the dropping aircraft, as it is climbing above cloud for several minutes. Parachutists are falling around, and occasionally through, cloud at 100 knots. You are extremely unlikely to see them before they hit you. The only safe option is to keep clear of the parachute sites.

The most active sites are listed below and their zones must never be entered unless you get definite confirmation that they are not operating.

Weston on the Green

Oxford Gliding Club operates from the same airfield and may tell you about parachuting activity on 130.1 MHz. Brize Norton (119.0 MHz) know if they are active but will often say "active all day".

Hinton in the Hedges

A very busy commercial operation. A collision between a parachutist and a Ka 8 occurred in 2002, it was fatal for both. Free fall parachutists recently came within a few feet of 3 gliders. The glider pilots are being prosecuted as the parachutists read their numbers. Hinton have a telescope that enables them to read glider's numbers at up to 6000 feet. They are normally shut on Mondays.

Redlands, just SE of Swindon. Generally operate spasmodically on Friday, Saturday & Sunday. Try calling them on 129.825 (the Microlight frequency) Brize Norton (119.0 MHz) know if they are active but will often say "active all day".

Chiltern Park 3 ½ NM South of Benson is very active. 134.025 MHz Tel 07739802010 or call Benson for information. Their Web site says "Glider Pilots we are happy to see you but Please, Please use the radio!"

Sibson West of Peterborough. Very active, normally only operate Thursday to Sunday. 120.325 MHz (on ½ M map).

Langar Just NE of the East Midlands Zone. Very active.

South Cerney

Brize Norton (119.0 MHz) tel 01993845123 know if they are active, which is very rare but annoyingly they must still be treated as active unless Brize confirm otherwise.

Note that Lewknor no longer exists and there has been no parachuting for years at Abingdon (except occasionally when NOTAMed.)

I strongly recommend that everyone who flies cross-country has a moving map with airspace, including parachute zones, on it.

Tim Macfadyen 27 Nov 2017