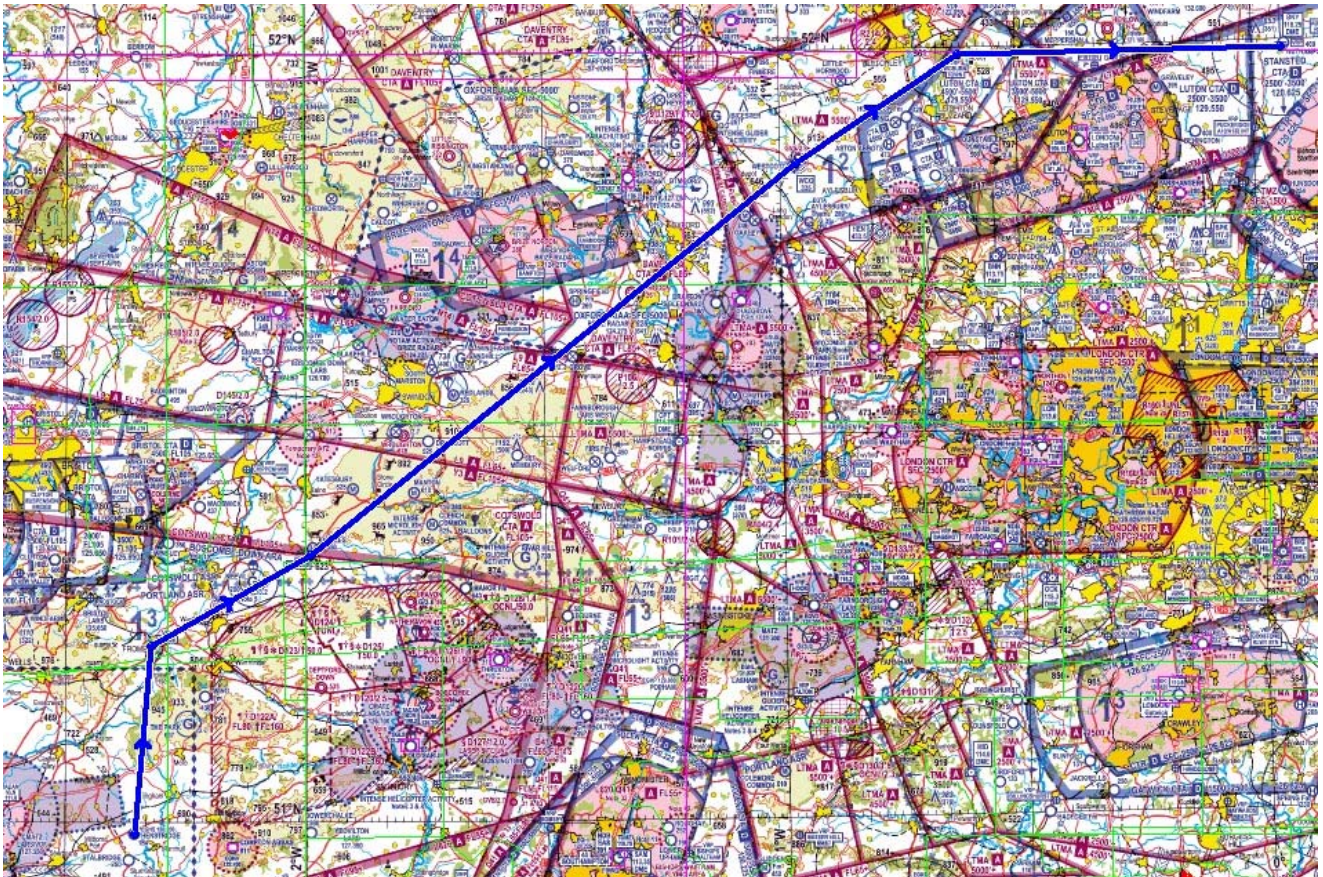


Smug and not so smug

We've all done it! Smugly read an airspace infringement report and thought "I wouldn't have done that". I admit that I am one of the smug ones, but after what happened recently, my smugness has gone! So now I put myself up for public ridicule and retell the events of 19th April this year.

Myself and a colleague flew to Henstridge to attend the local LAA rally. I was to fly the return leg. The route was EGHS > Frome VRP > Devizes VRP > WCO > Wobun > BKY



After engine start I prepared the Garmin 296 GPS



by using the previous flight plan (the reverse of above) and I expected to use the “Invert” function give me the route.

Inexplicably the invert function was not available. Puzzled I put the GPS into simulator mode and then could access the Invert function. I hit “activate” and was ready for departure.

The runway in use was 07 right hand with an extended departure leg to avoid noise sensitive villages. After turning on to the reciprocal heading I thought it would be possible to climb above the broken clouds and expected the tops to be around 6500’ as per the forecast. With the climb initiated I gave occasional glances at the GPS and had the nagging feeling that something wasn’t right. The distance to go to the first waypoint wasn’t moving! My initial reaction was that the unit had “frozen”. I switched it off and then back on and got it functioning correctly.

You guessed it - I had taken off with it still in simulator mode! What with the GPS problem plus concentrating on the climb to tops that turned out to be 7400’ plus my colleague telling me “we should be heading north” and me not taking any notice of him, by the time I levelled off at 8000’, my position in relation to the first waypoint was all guesswork.

I was in contact with Brize radar who advised me that I was very close to infringing Bristol’s airspace. This meant I was way off to the northwest of where I should have been, all due with hindsight, as the result of climbing into an increasingly strong easterly wind. After two heading changes to the east by Brize, things settled down and the rest of the flight was carried out as per plan.

When I got home I downloaded my flight track to view with horror the result of my digressions. I had infringed Bristol’s airspace.



I have filed a report to CHIRP and I have submitted a report to NATS.

The Garmin 296 which I have had for over six years has never before not presented an “Invert” function. In fact it is so quick to lock on to available satellites that I will confess to being blasé about firing it up and hitting “activate” and away we go.

I have not found by subsequent experimentation, why I was not getting the “Invert” function. It could have been as simple as not scrolling down far enough to see it.

Lessons learnt:

- a) Make doubly sure you are receiving satellites before activating the flight plan
- b) Turn onto track aggressively before getting bogged down with other tasks
- c) Make each flight plan individual, not an inversion. That way you should have no need to put it into “simulator” mode to get it to invert.

Last but not least, none of us “know it all”. That is the mindset for mistakes. Be cautious and double check everything.

The last time the authorities (CAA) had to speak to me about faulty navigation, was 39 years ago. I am humbled in the extreme.

May 2014