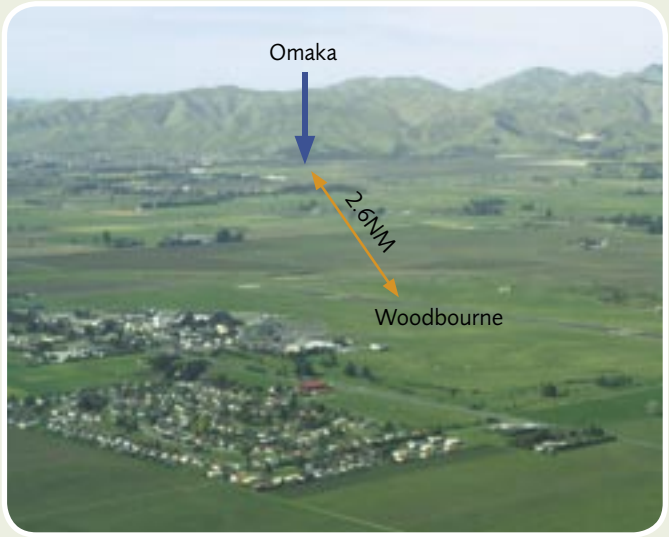
Introduction

Woodbourne and Omaka are two busy aerodromes located within the Woodbourne Control Zone (CTR/D).

Woodbourne is a controlled aerodrome, with mainly scheduled IFR flights and military activity. Omaka is an uncontrolled aerodrome located only 2.6 NM to the southeast of Woodbourne. It has a wide range of aircraft activity, including flight training, gliding, and warbird flying. The wide range of aircraft activity, combined with Omaka aerodrome using unattended radio procedures inside the control zone, can make it unsettling for an itinerant pilot.

To assist with flying safely in the Woodbourne CTR/D, this article discusses flying VFR at Omaka and IFR at Woodbourne.



Omaka aerodrome is located only 2.6 NM southeast of Woodbourne.

VFR into Omaka

Before flying into Omaka, it is very important to be familiar with the arrival and departure procedures in the current *AIP New Zealand, Vol 4*, and to have a current Visual Navigation Chart (VNC). It is good aviation practice to spend time **before** flying into the area becoming familiar with the topography and the airspace of the Woodbourne CTR/D. In particular, be aware that the Wairau Valley is aligned approximately east to west. Some pilots, however, have a mindset that the Wairau Valley is aligned north to south. This can result in errors in position reporting. For example, sometimes pilots flying from the North Island believe that they are approaching the CTR/D from the north when in fact they are approaching from the east. This can result in aircraft holding to the east of the Woodbourne aerodrome (ie, in the middle of the instrument approach sector) when they have been asked to hold to the north of it.

When making a position report approaching any aerodrome, it is good practice to check the compass and directional indicator (DI) to confirm your bearing (eg, if the DI indicates a northwest heading, then you are southeast of the aerodrome) before making the radio call. If you are reporting your position using a geographical point, it is still important to monitor the compass and DI to ensure that you maintain an awareness of your position relative to the aerodrome.

Arrivals

Before entering the Woodbourne CTR/D, listen to the ATIS (128.2 MHz) for conditions at Woodbourne. Be aware that the reported surface wind at Woodbourne can be significantly different from the surface wind at Omaka.

When you request entry into the CTR/D, depending upon aircraft activity, an arrival procedure will be issued to you. During quieter periods, a clearance to track direct to Omaka may be given.

If you are arriving from the east, expect the Ponds Arrival. Unless otherwise instructed, track 1000 feet and below in the Ponds VFR transit lane until passing Vernon Works. Track **south** of the Vernon Works to ensure you remain clear of the Instrument Sector. After Vernon Works (weather permitting) climb to 1500 feet to join overhead at Omaka. Watch out for aircraft departing from Omaka.

If you are arriving from the south, you can track around the coast and request an entry into the CTR/D from the east normally before White Bluffs. This can be sensible during conditions of low cloud and strong northwesterly winds, as an arrival via the Taylor Pass may not be possible. If the weather conditions allow, request entry into the CTR/D via the Taylor Arrival (2500 feet and below), or through the Dashwood Pass.

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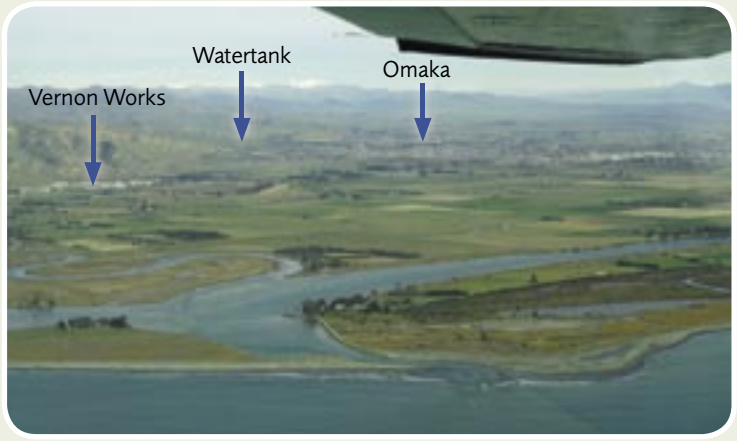
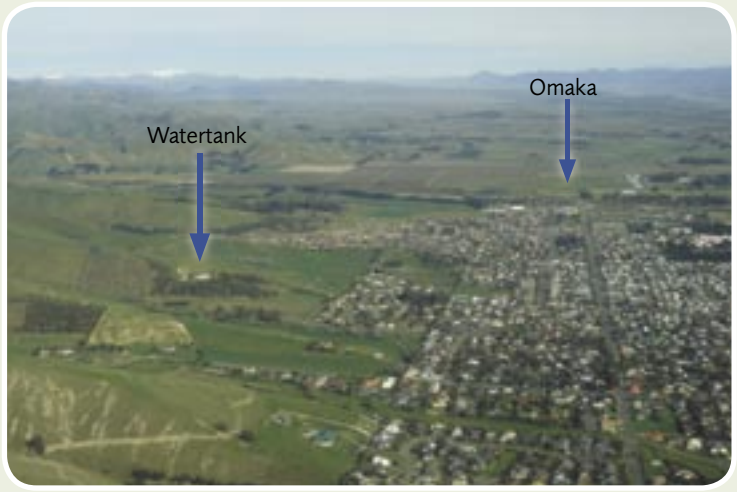
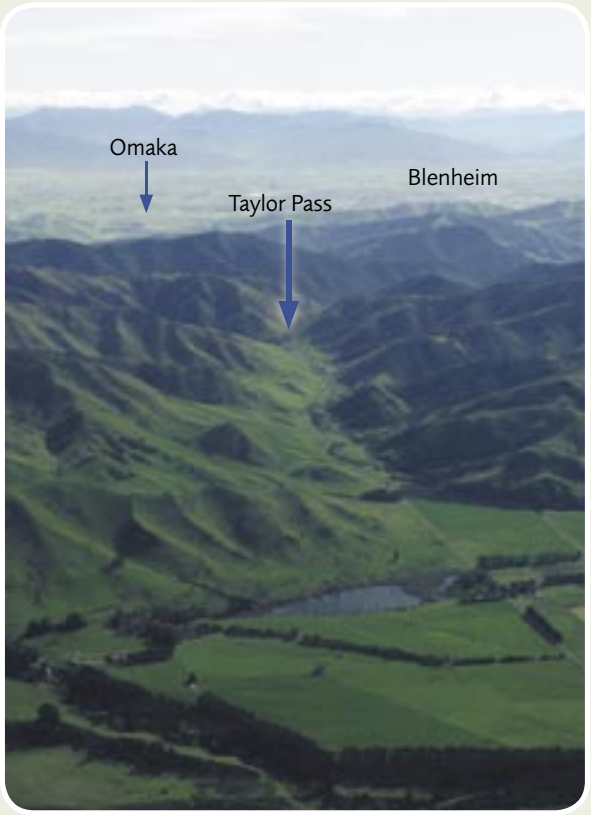


The Wairau Bar looking southwest over Blenheim, towards Omaka aerodrome. The marked reporting points are associated with the Ponds Arrival.



The Watertank reporting point looking west towards Omaka aerodrome.

If there is a strong westerly or northwesterly wind, it may be advisable to request a higher altitude due to the presence of downdraughts and turbulence in the area. Watch out for gliders operating in the Maxwell Sector (particularly around the Taylor Dam) up to 3500 feet.



Taylor Pass looking north into the Wairau Valley and Blenheim.

Taylor Dam looking north towards Omaka aerodrome.

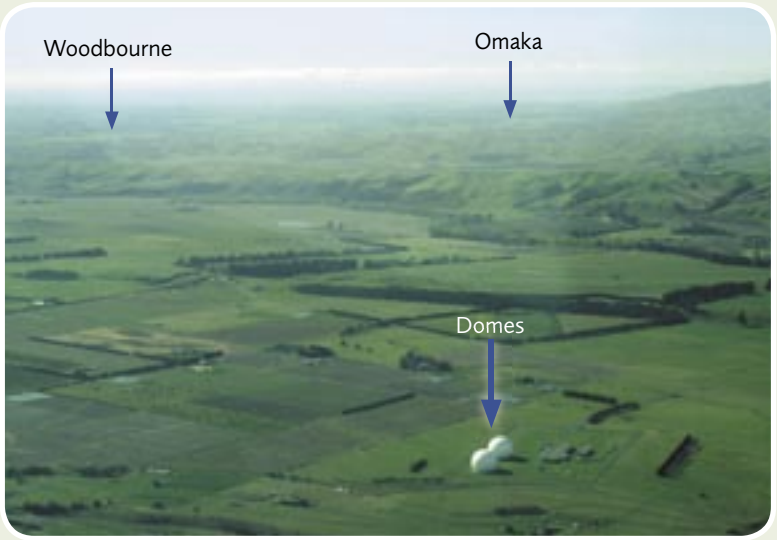
- NORDO aircraft may be operating in the circuit and in the Fairhall Sector (to the north of Omaka).
- Gliders and the tow-plane use righthand circuits.
- There may be crosswind circuit training.

The most commonly used Runways are 25 and 30 due to the prevailing northwesterly and westerly winds. Be aware that local operators may be using different runways from those published in the *AIP New Zealand, Vol 4*. For example, gliders land to the right of Runway 30, when Runway 30 is in use. Be careful if you are using the 01 or 12 circuit, to not get too close to the final approach for Runway 25 at Woodbourne.

It is important to keep the circuits reasonably tight. Be aware of the rising terrain immediately east of Omaka. This can be imposing in the late downwind and base legs for Runways 01 and 30.

If you are arriving from the west, expect a Domes Arrival. Enter the CTR/D via the Domes and track to Omaka at 1500 feet and below. Be on the lookout for training aircraft in the vicinity of the Domes and to the south.

If arriving from the north, typically via Okaramio, be aware that this is a popular route used by VFR aircraft flying between Woodbourne and Nelson. If you are flying at lower altitudes you may not be able to contact Woodbourne Tower until you are south of Okaramio and are on the border of the CTR/D. Be prepared to orbit while waiting for a clearance into the CTR/D. If Woodbourne is busy with IFR arrivals and departures, you may be required to enter the CTR/D via the Domes Arrival. This requires you to track **direct** to the Domes before turning towards Omaka. During quieter periods you may be able to track direct to Omaka overhead Woodbourne Tower.



Domes reporting point looking east down the Wairau Valley towards Omaka.

If you are arriving from the north via Tuamarina Bridge and Woodbourne is busy, you may be required to hold in the River Sector until you can cross the Instrument Sector for Omaka.

When entering the CTR/D, it is important to have traffic arriving at or departing from Woodbourne in sight, as it will speed up your arrival to Omaka. If you are unable to sight the traffic, ATC may hold you at the nearest reporting point until you have established visual contact.

Omaka Aerodrome

After being issued with a clearance to enter the CTR/D for Omaka, unless otherwise advised or contacted by Woodbourne Tower, make standard unattended position and joining radio calls for Omaka on the same frequency (122.8 MHz), eg, "Omaka Traffic, Bravo Charlie Delta, Vernon Works, 1500 feet, joining overhead". To avoid jamming the frequency, ensure the unattended radio calls are precise.

It is strongly recommended that you join **overhead** Omaka for the following reasons:

- The wind direction reported on the Woodbourne ATIS can be different from the Omaka surface wind.

It is important to keep a sharp lookout when taxiing towards the clubhouse after landing, as other aircraft may join on another runway. This is particularly important if you have landed on Runway 12 or 19, as you will have to taxi across all runways to the fuel pump. **Remember to notify Woodbourne Tower that you have landed at Omaka.**

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If you are arriving at Omaka, remember to notify Woodbourne Tower after landing. When you are ready for departure, obtain clearance from Woodbourne Tower before takeoff.

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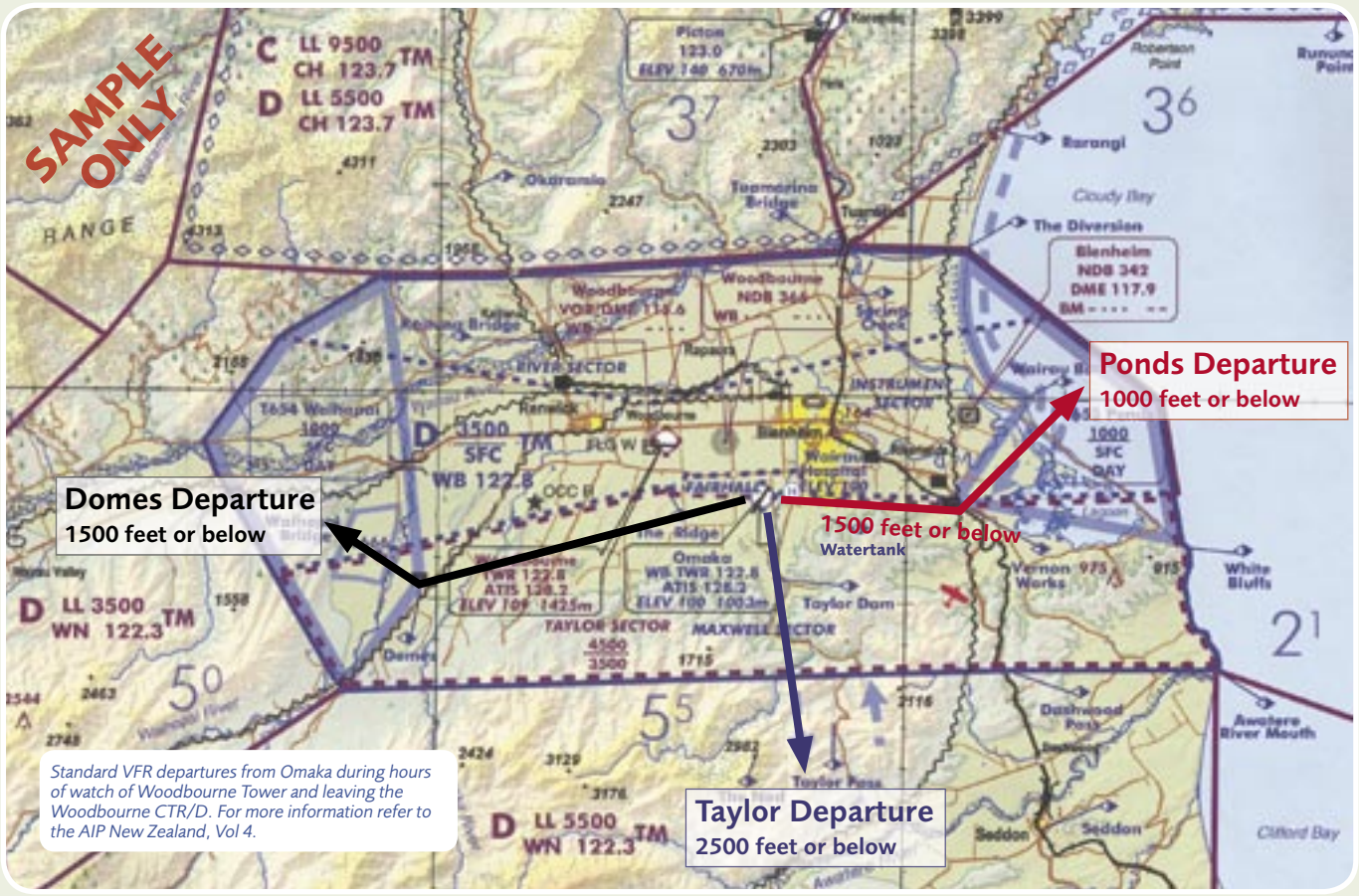

Omaka aerodrome from the west.

Departures

Before departure, listen to the Woodbourne ATIS (128.2 MHz) before contacting Woodbourne Tower (122.8 MHz). All aircraft wishing to depart the Omaka circuit must obtain a clearance from Woodbourne Tower before takeoff (during hours of service). You may be instructed to provide an ETD to assist in traffic sequencing. During quiet periods, expect a clearance direct out of the CTR/D, usually at 1500 feet and below, reporting clear. Otherwise follow one of the assigned departure procedures. (Note: If you are cleared a Ponds Departure at 1500 feet, this altitude instruction overrides the 1000 feet altitude restriction on the departure procedure.)

After obtaining a clearance, make standard unattended radio calls to "Omaka Traffic" on the same frequency (122.8 MHz) detailing your intentions.

Aircraft wishing to operate in the Omaka circuit must first call Woodbourne Tower and state their intentions (ie, the runway they wish to use and the duration of the flight). While circuit movements are uncontrolled, pilots should be prepared to comply with instructions from Woodbourne Tower so that adequate separation is maintained from the aircraft arriving or departing the Woodbourne circuit. Pilots should also notify the Tower if they wish to change the runway in use at Omaka or conduct crosswind circuits – this is important.

Other Considerations

The following are additional points to consider when flying inside the Woodbourne CTR/D:

- Most arrivals and departures (except for the Taylor Pass) have an altitude restriction of 1500 feet and below. Don't be afraid to ask Woodbourne Tower for a higher altitude (eg, 2500 feet) if you are concerned about turbulence and terrain.
- The Woodbourne CTR/D is transponder mandatory (TM), and it is important to have "ALT" selected on your transponder.
- Watch out for gliding activity in the Taylor and Maxwell Sectors, to the south of Omaka.
- Exercise caution when arriving from the east through the Ponds VFR transit lane, as NORDO aircraft may be transiting along the coast.
- Keep a good lookout for aircraft training in the Low Flying Zone near the Domes reporting point.
- It can be difficult to contact Woodbourne Tower at lower altitudes, particularly north of the Tuamarina Bridge and Kaituna Bridge, and south of the Taylor Pass.

- If you are intending to enter the CTR/D from the west from Nelson, be aware of the Wellington Control Area immediately west of the CTR/D.
- Remember that when Woodbourne Tower is off watch (typically before 7 am and after 8 pm – check the latest *AIP Supplement)* the airspace becomes Class G and unattended procedures apply at both Omaka and Woodbourne.
- Refer to the latest *AIP Supplement* 108/05 for information on a temporary restricted area (NZR 692) inside the CTR/D. This restricted area is prescribed to facilitate the safety of air navigation during helicopter frost protection activity.

Climate

Woodbourne and Omaka are situated in a unique microclimate. The surrounding hills and ranges on either side of the Wairau Valley provide orographic protection from the weather and channel the surface wind as westerlies and easterlies. The prevailing wind direction is west or northwest. The surface wind, however, can be completely different at the two aerodromes; for example, a westerly wind can be reported at Woodbourne but an easterly can be occurring at Omaka from the sea breeze.

In the valley system there can be considerable differences between upper-level winds and surface winds. For example, southerly airflows in Cook Strait tend to become light to moderate easterly conditions at Woodbourne and Omaka. During strong southerly flows, there is often a strong shear zone in Cloudy Bay at the edge of the strong southerly wind in the Strait.

Very low cloud is uncommon at Omaka and Woodbourne. The situation is most likely to occur when a broad northeast to east airflow originating from the subtropics, advects warm moist air into the area. In these conditions low stratus with a base of 300 to 600 feet with drizzle can occur.

During moist south to southeasterly winds through Cook Strait, low stratus in the Strait will be advected to the north and northwest of the approach areas and occasionally over Woodbourne and Omaka. At times this stratus remains as a cloud bank along the coast.

During moist airflows from the north, ahead of advancing cold fronts from the Tasman Sea, a low layer of stratus can develop. In these situations precipitation is normally present, with a lower cloud base about the hills to the north and higher to the south over Omaka. At times, low cloud and rain that develops in the upper Wairau Valley and the Richmond Range will stay confined to the ranges, while Woodbourne and Omaka remain clear.

In general, the weather at Woodbourne and Omaka is better than in Cook Strait or the surrounding mountains. If you are able to fly VFR from your destination to Omaka, then a landing should not be a problem. Conversely be aware that when you depart Omaka, the weather conditions may deteriorate as you leave the CTR/D.

IFR into Woodbourne

There is good primary and secondary radar coverage for IFR aircraft flying into Woodbourne. If you are an itinerant IFR pilot, be aware that you may not necessarily fly published routes into Woodbourne, as radar vectoring is common for traffic sequencing. During busy times (early morning and late afternoon) delays may occur in departing from Woodbourne because of arrivals into Wellington.

If you are planning to conduct IFR flight training in the Wellington Control Area, it is recommended that you book the airspace (in advance) with the National Briefing Office. Refer to the *AIP New Zealand* ENR 1.9 para 5.1.2 (f) for further information on instrument training requirements.

Arrivals

Arrivals into Woodbourne are normally handled through Wellington Control (122.3 MHz, or 121.1 MHz outside Woodbourne ATS hours – check the *AIP Supplement*). Alternatively, try Christchurch Control (129.4 MHz).

Most arrivals are from the Tory VOR, Wellington, or the Cape Campbell NDB. These are either via the published flight routes (typically used for IFR flight training) or via radar vectoring from Wellington Control. Radar-vectored flights are positioned for the start of VOR/DME 25 approach, at LUTKA (15 NM Woodbourne). If you have approved GPS equipment, it can be easier to request own navigation direct to LUTKA. Alternatively, request an intercept onto the Woodbourne VOR 062 radial for the VOR/DME 25 approach. If conditions are suitable for a visual approach at Woodbourne, expect to track direct to the VOR – or you can request radar vectors.

Runway 25 at Woodbourne.

Arrivals from Nelson normally join overhead the Woodbourne VOR and track outbound to join the VOR/DME 25 approach via the 15 NM arc.

Typical approach altitudes are 4000 to 6000 feet from Tory, Wellington or Cape Campbell, and 8000 feet from Nelson. If icing is an issue, contact Wellington Control for the lowest safe altitude you can descend to under radar terrain clearance.

Approaches

The most commonly used instrument approach is the Woodbourne VOR/DME 25. Be aware that during busy periods aircraft will be requested to be at or below 2000 feet by 6 DME from Woodbourne. If you are following the advisory altitudes you will be at approximately 1750 feet by 6 DME from Woodbourne.

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Remember that Omaka VFR circuit traffic can be operating in close proximity to Woodbourne; the Tower will pass this traffic information to you.

When meteorological conditions are 1500 feet and 5 km, or better, and Runway 07 is in use, the ATC preferred approach is the VOR/DME 25 circling lefthand for Runway 07. On occasions ATC may require you to join the aerodrome circuit traffic. To assist with circling at night, there is a circuit limit light (fixed red) located 2 NM north of the threshold of Runway 25, and a second light 2.5 NM northwest of the threshold of Runway 07. Circling is not permitted to the south of the aerodrome.

Pilots wishing to use the VOR/DME 07 approach for operational reasons must notify their request on first contact with Wellington Control. Be aware this approach is steeper than the VOR/DME 25, and the minimum descent altitude (MDA) is higher than the VOR/DME 25 circling MDA. (Note: Training operations that require this approach must either notify the requirement when booking the training details or advise the Christchurch ATS Supervisor before departure to Woodbourne.)

As a back-up to the VOR, there is the twin NDB/DME or the twin NDB instrument approach. Note the twin NDB has a lower MDA and visibility minima than the twin NDB/DME for category A and B aircraft.

If the weather conditions result in a missed approach, then the most likely alternate is Nelson, which is generally clear during easterly conditions.

Departures

During certain times of the day, there can be departure delays for IFR aircraft. For example, in the early and late afternoon, Wellington Control is busy sequencing arrivals into Wellington in addition to Woodbourne. If you have arrived at Woodbourne and you are only intending to be on the ground for a short period, pass on your ETD and requested altitude for your next sector to Woodbourne Tower as you taxi to the apron. This may speed up your IFR departure clearance.

Summary

Flying safely and successfully into Woodbourne and Omaka comes down to correct preparation.

Disorientation and confusion can be avoided by studying the topography, airspace, and reporting points on a current VNC.

Potential conflicts with Woodbourne traffic can be kept to a minimum when joining, vacating, or operating in the Omaka circuit by being familiar with the local procedures in *AIP New Zealand*.

Good situational awareness and a good lookout should be maintained at all times.

Finally, if you are ever unsure how to comply with an ATC instruction or clearance, ask the controller for confirmation – they will usually be more than happy to help. Remember that if the clearance you are given makes you question your ability to operate safely, or you are unable to conform to a clearance or instruction – then ask ATC for an alternative. ■