

AOPA UK

August/September 2024

Keeping the story of D-Day alive *P.28*

When **Keith Perkins** discovered there were no plans to celebrate the 80th anniversary of D-Day, he fired up his two Dakotas and ensured the heroes were honoured

PPL IN A TIGER MOTH

Hangarchat meets
the Cambridge
Flying Group
P.16

ROUND THE COAST

Raju Vulla and two friends completed a
Coast-to-Coast challenge around the UK *P.36*

WORKING FOR YOU

Malcolm Bird gives examples of how the
Maintenance Working Group can assist *P.14*



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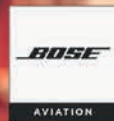
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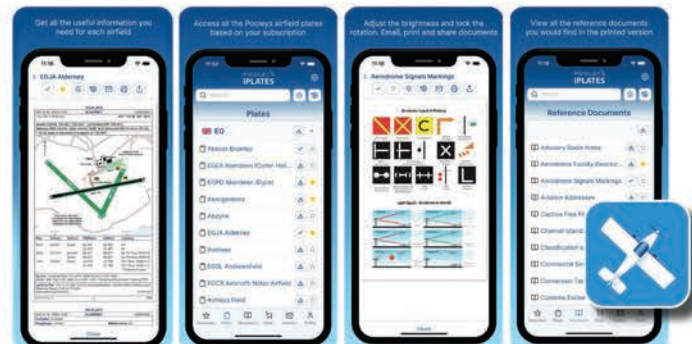
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VOLUNTEERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO SECURING THE FUTURE OF GA

OVER THE LAST few months I've been lucky enough to head out and visit several airfields and organisations to get more of an understanding of how we can keep aircraft flying. More specifically, rare and vintage aircraft – as you'll be able to tell as you read through this magazine.

One thing that struck me, which I was unaware of before I visited these airfields, was how much they rely on the help of volunteers. And I'm not just talking about the young student pilots cleaning aircraft for flight time, I'm talking about vastly experienced and knowledgeable pilots and aircraft owners who devote their free time to help others get into the skies.

I popped along to Old Warden to meet Mike Derrett, CFI of the Cambridge Flying Group. I met Mike for Hangarchat (page 16) and was not only astounded by the fact that they offer PPL course in their two stunning Tiger Moths, but also all 16 of their instructors – former airline and military pilots – are volunteers, as is everyone in their organisation.

If you're falling out of love with aviation, just go and see Mike and his team and it won't be long before your passion is reignited. I would like to especially thank Bob Morcom who took me up in one of the Tigers – if you've never flown in an open cockpit, go do it!

"I'm talking about vastly experienced and knowledgeable pilots and aircraft owners who devote their free time to help others"

Elsewhere in the magazine, our cover story (page 28) on the fantastic – almost military – organisation of Keith Perkins and his team at Aero Legends who ensured the 80th anniversary of D-Day was commemorated properly. Keith and his team, largely made up of volunteers as well, were able to fly their two Dakotas as well as their WWII fighter aircraft to Normandy to honour those men of 80 years ago. And

I would also like to thank Wayne Davey and Darren Harbar whose photography really makes this issue come alive with their fantastic images, having very generously 'volunteered' them to the magazine.

So, if you can, why not see who's at your local airfield that might benefit from your skills? It could grow GA. ■



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Articles, photographs and news items from AOPA members and other readers are welcome. Please send to the Editor. Inclusion of material in AOPA Magazine cannot be guaranteed, however, and remains at the discretion of the Editor. Material for consideration for the August/September issue should be received no later than 01 September 2024

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AOPA WORKING FOR YOU

The new UK Labour government is likely to implement new policies, so General Aviation could experience a range of specific impacts over the next five years

FIRST, I want to say something about AOPA's move to a more environmentally friendly location and investment in sustainable infrastructure, as it demonstrates a commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and improving our environmental image in several ways.

REDUCTION IN ENERGY CONSUMPTION

By investing in solar panels, AOPA UK can generate its own renewable energy, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions. This move highlights a tangible shift towards sustainable energy use.

Enhanced Air Quality and Biodiversity:

Located by a lake and surrounded by trees; our new headquarters' natural setting is likely to contribute to better air quality and supports local biodiversity. Trees act as carbon sinks, absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere, which helps mitigate AOPA's carbon footprint. Central urban areas typically have higher energy demands and greater environmental strain due to dense population and heavy traffic. By relocating to a less congested area, AOPA UK can reduce its contribution to urban pollution and the heat island effect, thereby lowering its environmental impact. For some this will not be enough, but we have taken a positive stance on the business environmental impact – doing something is better than doing nothing.

Promoting Green Transportation: The new location may encourage the use of eco-friendly transportation options like electric vehicles, (we have a charging point for cars) further reducing the carbon footprint associated with visitors.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The relocation and investment decisions made by AOPA reflects a broader corporate strategy towards GA's environmental stewardship. Hopefully, this can enhance AOPA UK's reputation among stakeholders, the Government, and regulators. It is also a wonderful place to work...

BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

By building stronger relationships AOPA UK can effectively lobby both the Government and CAA by adopting a strategic, multifaceted approach. With a new government and new ministers, we need to understand their issues and priorities. We will need to research and understand the key issues affecting GA and identify priorities for lobbying. This includes safety regulations, environmental concerns, infrastructure needs and training requirements. By engaging with key officials, who will have changed since the elections, to establish and maintain relationships with relevant government ministers, MPs, and civil servants in departments such as Transport, Environment, Business and Education. Schedule regular meetings with CAA officials to discuss issues and propose solutions. Establish a working relationship with key personnel responsible for GA regulations. Consultation participation will remain an import activity and we will continue to look to our members to participate in these processes to influence regulatory changes from the outset.

DEVELOP COMPELLING MESSAGING

Develop well-researched and clear policy proposals that highlight the benefits of supporting GA, such as economic contributions, job creation and regional connectivity. Again, we will be seeking members' input. Insist that Regulatory Impact Statements accompany regulatory proposals that identify the costs versus the benefits. The use of data and case studies to illustrate the impact of current regulations and policies on GA that highlight success stories and areas needing improvement.

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Where it is desirable and in association with our groups, we may need to run public awareness campaigns to build broader support for GA. Use media, social media and public events to highlight key issues to mobilise opinion. We will consider the use of petitions

and surveys to demonstrate public and member support for specific initiatives or changes. We will continue to collaborate with other stakeholders that share our objectives. Industry alliances like the one we have with GA4Business and GASCO. Form alliances with other aviation associations, industry groups and stakeholders to present a unified front as collaboration strengthens lobbying efforts and demonstrates widespread support.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement for GA aerodromes will become more important in the years ahead as engaging with local communities around airfields to build grassroots support will address any concerns they may have about GA activities. I know it is difficult when dealing with people who just do not want to see aircraft in the sky, but local engagement is important.

PROVIDE EXPERTISE

Offer expert testimony at government hearings and CAA promotion of consultations. Submit detailed reports and position papers to support our arguments. We may need to commission independent studies to provide credible evidence supporting our policy positions. This may require additional funding. We will continue to work on improving our communications with members.

REGULATORY CHANGES

CAA Overhaul might be pushed for by the new government who may call for a review of CAA regulations to reduce bureaucracy and make compliance easier for GA operators.

ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

Introduction of stricter emission controls and noise reduction measures for GA aircraft. This could include incentives for adopting cleaner technologies and penalties for non-compliance. The Government may push for sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) use and electrification of small aircraft.



“Policies aimed at protecting and enhancing access to smaller airfields, which are vital for GA operations and needs to be on the government agenda”

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Upgrades to Regional Airports: Labour's infrastructure investment plans could see significant funds allocated to improving regional and local airports, enhancing facilities, runway extensions and navigation aids, which would benefit GA. Improved airfield access would be great but we also need to protect aerodromes from closures in favour of housing. Policies aimed at protecting and enhancing access to smaller airfields, which are vital for GA operations and needs to be on the government agenda around levelling up. This might include grants for maintenance and development of GA airfields or certain tax breaks.

TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

There is a need for funding for pilot training. The Government in addressing the skill shortage may increase funding for pilot training programmes, including subsidies and scholarships.

ECONOMIC POLICIES

Introduction of tax relief for GA operators, such as reduced VAT on aircraft parts and maintenance, and potentially lower fuel taxes for GA. The Government might also consider grants or low-interest loans for purchasing new, more efficient aircraft.

INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Support for Green Aviation Technology is likely to promote the development of green aviation technologies, including electric aircraft and sustainable fuels. Expect funding for research and development initiatives and potential subsidies for GA operators adopting these technologies.

Investment in digital air traffic management systems and support for integrating advanced technologies into GA operations to improve efficiency and safety.

SAFETY AND STANDARDS

The DfT might invest in safety programmes and technologies for GA, aiming to reduce accidents and improve overall safety standards. This could include grants for installing modern avionics and safety equipment. Government policy on GA and CAA regulation are interrelated and distinct aspects of aviation governance. Government policy refers to the strategic decisions and plans made by the national

Government to guide the development, support and regulation of the sector. These policies reflect the Government's broader goals and priorities.

CAA regulation refers to the specific rules and standards set by the Civil Aviation Authority (or other equivalent regulatory body) to ensure the safe, secure and efficient operation of the aviation sector, including GA.

CAA regulations focus on the technical and operational aspects of aviation which include standards for aircraft maintenance, airworthiness, pilot licensing, air traffic control and airport operations where regulations are enforced through a legal framework. The relationship between government policy and CAA regulation is where government policy sets the overall direction and priorities for the aviation sector. These policies can influence the focus and scope of CAA regulations. For example, government policy emphasising environmental sustainability might lead to the CAA developing stricter emissions standards for GA aircraft. Part of AOPA's role is to make sure that policy objectives/regulations are achievable at a cost which is affordable. Understanding the distinction between these two areas helps clarify how the GA sector is managed and the separate roles played by the Government and the regulatory authority.

Often policy that may be popular is not right whilst what is right is not always popular. The work that AOPA does at the higher levels is supported through your membership and the more members we have the better our representation can be. More members also mean we can keep subscriptions at affordable levels. Effective lobbying involves a combination of relationship building, clear messaging, collaboration and strategic advocacy efforts. By engaging with both the Government and the CAA at multiple levels and using a variety of methods, AOPA UK can influence policies and regulations to better support the GA community. ■



M Robinson

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Welcome to the UP FRONT section of the magazine. Bringing you help, advice, and other insights from the world of AOPA, in an honest and 'up front' way to help you stay flying. Something to say? Please contact us at editor@aopa.co.uk

WORDS & IMAGES Steve Hamilton

FLYING AFTER AN ACCIDENT

Steve Hamilton always dreamed of becoming a pilot, and it didn't happen until after a serious accident... but it has changed his life for the better!

I HAVE always dreamed of becoming a pilot since I was a young lad.

Back then it was a rich man's world, and other life priorities took precedence, so it stayed a hidden dream.

Fast forward to 2018 and a scooter accident left me with a snapped left arm, now plated, a smashed right little finger, right knee broken and degloved down to the bone. This ended up with an amputation late 2022 after years of problems.

Since then I'd been hiding away in my home. A friend told me about a charity that offers scholarships to disabled people for flying, but I still didn't see myself as disabled enough to qualify.

"I bit the bullet and filled in my application to Flying Scholarships for Disabled people"



Early 2024 I bit the bullet and filled in my application to Flying Scholarships for Disabled People (FSDP), and to my shock I got chosen with 17 other applicants out of nearly 80 to go to RAF Cranwell for three days of selection, interviews and aircraft assessment. We all were thrown into this strange place away from our usual support network, but it worked. We all got on with the days and bonded in the evenings. This was the longest I had used my prosthetic leg.

The day after selection, I got a call from FSDP saying I had been chosen to receive a scholarship for 2024 – a total of 11 were chosen.

May 2024 and I was once

again away from my safe place, but this time for three weeks with two others about to start our scholarships with Bristol Aero Club.

During this time I realised that an aircraft with hand controls for rudder operation does not see a disability and relies on the pilot at the controls to do what's needed. Everyone at Gloucester airport didn't see us as disabled people, but as student pilots.

One of the special things was that there was no pressure on any of us and this allowed us to get exactly what we wanted out of the experience. Be that just flying to another airport for pizza or cake. Or to take the three weeks as far as possible. I was lucky enough to do my first solo circuit in that beautiful Piper PA28-151.

I am now working out how to take this as far as possible, with the view to getting my PPL, then going further so I can really give back to this amazing charity.

I now have a spring in my step, I can once again hold my head up, and know that I can fly a aircraft, I am a disabled student pilot with a reignited dream that had faded.

Thank you to everyone involved with FSDP and my fellow scholars Caz and Luke, and a massive thanks to John Sorsby and Debra Ford, our instructors from Bristol Aero Club. ■



Steve (second from right) with fellow trainees and instructors from Bristol Aero Club

WORDS Michael Powell IMAGES Various

THINGS THE PILOT/OWNER MAY AND MAY NOT DO

In part 13 of his series of aircraft maintenance, Licensed Engineer **Michael Powell's** looks at how to check your aircraft after a 'heavy landing'

I CAN remember carrying out a 'firm' landing in my Rally at Tibenham airfield some years ago.

So firm in fact that I expected the undercarriage legs to be rammed up through the wing. It is a testament to the structural strength of the aircraft and the trailing link undercarriage that no damage was found after an inspection, just damage to my confidence.

When is a 'firm' landing more correctly described as a 'heavy' landing? The forward airspeed may be less than 40 knots (depending on type) but the final vertical speed is what matters and where the damage may take place.

The aircraft may actually be stalled before touching the ground and contact with the ground may give rise to

a vertical G-force of 3-4G. If the aircraft weighs around 1,000 kg then the vertical force experienced by the undercarriage will be up to 4,000 kg. Enough to put a severe instantaneous load on the undercarriage structure.

I recall observing a Tiger Moth landing and it was remarked by other club members at the time that the pilot was known for his 'firm' landings, this being one of them! This leads on to how a heavy landing can cause damage not immediately visible or the cumulative damage caused by a series of heavy landings.

The vertical forces generated by a heavy or a cumulative series of heavy landings is transferred to the airframe and the energy

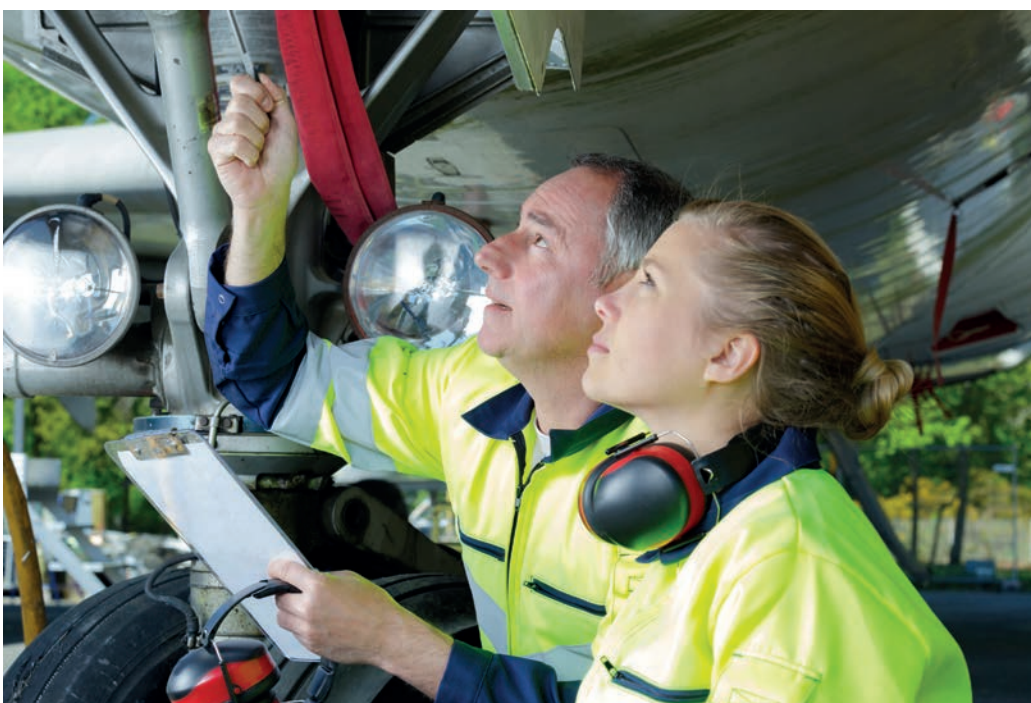
“With a wood and fabric aircraft the results of heavy landings, or series of heavy landings, will be visible ripples in the fabric”

dissipated by distortion of the airframe. Following what the pilot accepts was clearly a heavy landing, what should they expect to find on examining the airframe and particularly the undercarriage and local structure? With a wood and fabric aircraft, the results of a heavy landing will reveal ripples in the fabric around the area where the undercarriage is attached to the fuselage due to distortion of the fuselage structure. In the case of metal-welded aircraft look for cracked welds and rippled skin around the undercarriage attachment area.

Metal aircraft with metal skins should be inspected for loosened rivets which may show signs of grey/black deposits around rivet heads. Piper and similar types use the main spar to attach the undercarriage assembly and this area should be carefully inspected for loosened rivets and/or cracked castings. It will be necessary to remove inspection panels to do this.

If there are any signs of structural damage then it is time to call in a licensed engineer and ask them to investigate. Be thorough with the inspection – heavy landings generate a lot of energy and it has to go somewhere!

Finally, if you have accumulated a few heavy landings it may be advisable to carry out a thorough inspection for peace of mind. An undercarriage failure will be more expensive to fix! ■



Check the undercarriage after your aircraft has connected to the ground a little harshly

AOPA AGM

The 58th Annual General Meeting of the British Light Aviation Centre Ltd trading as the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association of UK will be held at Lakeside Pavilion, Chaucer Business Park, Watery Lane, Kemsing, SEVENOAKS TN15 6QY and online on Wednesday 21 August 2024 at 2.00 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. To confirm the Minutes from the 57th Annual General Meeting
3. To receive and endorse the Directors' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2024
4. The election of Directors to the Board of Management.
5. To appoint as Auditors Messrs Venthams, at a fee to be fixed by the Board of Management.
6. The amendment of the Articles of Association by Special Resolution:
7. "That the existing articles of association in their entirety be removed and substituted for the new articles of association *herewith"
7. The amendment of the Memorandum of Association by Special Resolution to add this additional object:

"(P) To provide training, education and resources, both independently and in collaboration with other organisations, in order to ensure the standardisation of such mandated learning resources in the interests of safety and best practice. Additionally, to provide training for pilots and others as AOPA may from time to time see fit."
8. To conduct any other business that may properly be dealt with at an Annual General Meeting.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

Full details of the AGM and procedures are available here.

After the AGM there will an open discussion session, in respect of AOPA matters, led by Martin Robinson. CEO AOPA UK.

Please scan the QR code to view the revised Articles of Association



(or go to <https://www.aopa.co.uk/blac-ltd-revised-articles-of-association>)



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YOUR HERO

This month's hero is Evektor's **EuroStar EV-97** a low-cost, reliable, go-anywhere aeroplane

NOW DAYS we're spoilt for choice of lightweight two-seat, inexpensive aircraft from Central Europe. Not so back in 2002 when the launch of the EuroStar EV-97 microlight and its Group A sister, the EV-97A, took Europe by storm with its precise handling. The only real difference between the two is that the A version can weigh a bit more and requires an electric fuel pump – the microlight has to conform to the 450kg limit. In 2009 a Mandatory Permit Directive required all EuroStars to have the wing spar cap inspected following a wing failure. The problem was faulty metal from a supplier and Evektor's response was first-class. ■

Send Your Hero to editor@aopa.co.uk. It doesn't have to be your own aircraft... own it or admire it from afar, either way we want to know what's Your Hero and why. Just send us around 100 words, and your top 5-7 'fast facts' and we'll do the rest. ■



AFFORDABLE

The affordability of the plane enables the owner to make longer flights and has low operating costs

IMAGES: Adobe Stock



EFFICIENT

Cruising at 90mph, it burns about 11 litres of unleaded Mogas per hour



NIMBLE

The handling of the EV-97 is very precise and works well thanks to the stick control



ENGINE

You can't go wrong with a proven Rotax engine



CORROSION

Aluminium airframe has corrosion protection but dead insects on leading edges can penetrate. Wipe with anti-corrosion fluid

WORDS Malcolm Bird **IMAGES** Various (for illustration purposes only)

HOW AOPA KEEPS YOU FLYING

The AOPA Maintenance Working Group has handled many queries over the last couple of years from members regarding their aircraft

IT CAN be tough thinking you don't have anyone out there who can help you with your aircraft, but the AOPA Maintenance Working Group has been helping members with their aircraft issues for a number of years.

Here are reports showing how the MWG has helped.

CESSNA 182 MODEL R

240 hours after a zero-timed overhauls, metal found in engine oil analysis – subsequently found to be remains of a spring when the starter adaptor was replaced. Had engine repaired in Nov 2019. 10 hours later a crack was found in the crankcase – for which overhauler denied responsibility and charged for welding.

After 350 hours of flying, in June 2022, the Annual reported no problems (engine at 603 hours) – but just 53 hours later – whilst having an avionics refit, engineers found cam-shaft damage to the cam-gears, lifters and valves. This

problem was highlighted as a risk in the CSB05-8D dated 22/08/2018. See also SIL18-05 of same date.

Concern that overhauler and annual maintainer should have carried out checks and spotted impending problem. Their defence has been “a CSB is only advisory until a full Overhaul, and an inspection found no fault”. Provided some guidance that all maintainers balance caution and value.

CESSNA 210 CENTURION

“At the start of the annual in October 22, we were advised that one of the cylinders was down on compression, on investigation this was found to be cracked and replaced with a TCM OEM assembly. With other issues, including a further replacement cylinder (not a TCM) after the break-in flight during which there was a noticeable slight vibration from the outset which developed into a distinct roughness after about an hour, investigation revealed that the OEM cylinder originally fitted shows signs

“Concern that the overhauler and annual maintainer should have carried out checks”

of pick-up in the bores. The cylinder suppliers are requesting a new cylinder be paid for, and the manufacturers are trying to lay the blame anywhere except on their own doormat. Our maintenance organisation are satisfied, and have asked around for other opinions, that this is NOT an operating fault due to lean mixture etc.” Gave advice to suggest owners try and reach an agreement between all involved in as amicable way as possible. Suggested that some members of the MWG take a look at the parts and give an opinion but recognising that “fault” is likely to be difficult to pin down.

PIPER PA-28

Owner in legal dispute over maintenance invoicing, maintainer has held logbooks due to non-payment. AOPA was informed after dispute had reached lawyers and there is little we can do except remind people of our Code of Practice and the need for clarity of early communications. ■



Damage was found on a member's Cessna 182



The AOPA MWG helped one member with their 210 Centurion

Are you due for an Instructor Refresher Seminar?



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2024 DATES FOR AOPA INSTRUCTOR SEMINARS

19/20 November

To be held at the AOPA HQ in Sevenoaks

The cost for two full days seminar for non-members is £325

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TOPICS COVERED INCLUDE

- New/current rules/regulations, with emphasis on knowledge of UK-part FCL •
- Teaching and learning • Instructional techniques • The role of the instructor •
 - National regulations • Flight safety, incident and accident prevention •
- Teaching instrument flying • Legal aspects and enforcement procedures •
 - Navigational skills, new/current radio navigation aids • Airmanship •
 - Weather related topics, methods of distribution • Human factors •
 - Additional topics selected by the competent authority •



For further details contact the AOPA office on **020 7834 5631** or email **mandy@aopa.co.uk**.
You can also register for the seminar online at **www.aopa.co.uk**



WORDS David Rawlings
IMAGES Darren Harbar/Various

KEEPING HISTORY IN THE SKIES ABOVE THE UK

The Cambridge Flying Group is unique in the fact that it is the only training facility in the UK to offer ab initio to PPL training in a Tiger Moth. Based at Old Warden, surrounded by the Shuttleworth collection, the Group has plenty of historic and beautiful aircraft to keep them company

YOU MIGHT be confused by the name of the Cambridge Flying Group (CFG) due to the fact that it isn't based in Cambridge, or even Cambridgeshire, but this fantastic organisation has put down new roots in Bedfordshire. The CFG now calls Old Warden its home and it's the perfect place due to the Group's aircraft being in similar company to the Shuttleworth Collection of historic aircraft, ranging from pre-First World War through to the late 1950's.

The group owns and operates two Tiger Moths, G-AOEI and G-AHIZ, and because they are now based at Old Warden, they are surrounded by other classic

aircraft being used as they were intended by their original designers – they fly.

But what makes the Cambridge Flying Group unique is that it doesn't just offer flying experiences, or fly them at air shows, it offers full PPL training from ab initio on their two aircraft, and it is the only organisation in the country, and probably the world, to do so.

I went along to meet the CFI Mike Derrett to find out more about CFG, its new home and the aircraft they fly. Mike has been part of the CFG since 1986, when he was invited by an instructor friend John Clarke – who was already a member – to go flying in the Tiger Moth. "As soon as

I had flown, I was hooked," said Mike. "I was already an Instructor on Cessna and Pipers, but the challenge of the Tiger Moth was irresistible. After gaining a few hours experience, our CFI at the time, Bill Ison, allowed me to start instructing, but kept a watchful eye! It was the best flying decision I ever made. After several thousand hours instructing in the Tiger Moth, it has taught me more about flying than anything else."

CFG was originally set up by Bill in 1953. Bill had been a pilot in WWII and was a larger-than-life character who had plenty of stories to tell about his flying life, but when it came to flying, he set very high, RAF-inspired standards

"When it came to flying, he set very high, RAF-inspired standards and that ethos remains in the group"

and that ethos remains in the group, which is run completely by volunteers.

THE CAMBRIDGE FLYING GROUP

CFG had been operating out of Cambridge Airport (hence the name) since it was founded in 1953, but in 2022 the group had been looking to move for several reasons, but an announcement that the airport was to close and the site developed for housing, hastened the move. "We were not sure about a closure date," said Mike. "It might have been in three years, or longer, but operating out of Cambridge was becoming more difficult because of the hard runway which we can't really use because the tail skid on the Moth just slides over hard surfaces but digs in on grass. Presently there is only one grass runway, whereas when I started flying at Cambridge in '86, there were three. Perhaps the most important issue that limits the Tiger Moth is the crosswind. We have a maximum crosswind limit of 10 kts, so with fewer grass runways it really reduced the chances of flying at Cambridge."

The Group had thought about moving before, but with the threat of closure, it made sense. Old Warden was the obvious choice because of its connection with historic aircraft. Old Warden is a real treasure, even if you're just popping in for a cup of tea. Away from the displays – of which there are many throughout the year – there will always be something landing or taking off which is of interest. And that is mainly due to the Shuttleworth Collection. The collection is six hangars full of aircraft – the huge majority of which are still airworthy – including a Blériot XI from 1909, which is the world's oldest flying aircraft.

The aircraft in the collection are all maintained on site, as well as the Group's two Tiger Moths, so it's a perfect location for CFG to be homed. Another reason it suits the CFG is the quality of the airfield itself with the main grass runway 02/20 very well drained. There is also one cross grass runway which can be used when the cross wind is out of limits on the main runway. Even with the atrocious weather we've had in the last six months, the Group has managed to meet its flying hour targets.

The Group has been at Old Warden now for just over a year and in that time, has grown exponentially with increased demand for flying and currently has over 50 members. Since moving, the instructing team has grown from eight to 16 instructors with a variety of backgrounds including RAF and the airlines. All bring a wealth of experience and know-how to fly classic aircraft and crucially know how to deal with people.

THE AIRCRAFT

As you might imagine, the aircraft have plenty of history, and even though they've been in the club for 71 years, they had a life before.

G-AHIZ was built for de Havilland by Morris Motors in 1944, it saw service with the RAF (military s/n PG624 RAF) from 1944-46. G-AHIZ was acquired from Panshanger by Bill Ison for the Group in 1956.

G-AOEI was Built by de Havilland in 1939. It saw service (military s/n 6946) with the British Expeditionary Force in 1939-1940, leaving France within a couple of days of Dunkirk.

The two aircraft have a target to fly between 150 to 200 hours a year each. "We currently have around 15 ab initio students and we have a bursary scheme for one ab

THE ESSENTIALS OLD WARDEN AIRFIELD

DETAILS

A: Old Warden Airfield (Shuttleworth)
Biggleswade
SG18 9EP
T: 07875 028876
W: oldwarden
aerodrome.co.uk

ARRIVAL INFORMATION

All visiting aircraft must have received PPR confirmation by email.

CIRCUITS AND RUNWAYS

Only the main runway 02/20 is available to visiting aircraft however all runways and airfield surfaces may be in use by resident aircraft. When operating 'unmanned', visiting pilots must assess the wind conditions and circuit traffic before making their own mind up as to which runway is appropriate to use.

In general, in no wind or 90deg cross wind conditions runway 20 is preferred for

landing due to the slight up slope.

All circuits are to the East. LH for Rwy 20 and RH for Rwy 02. Circuit Height is 800ft AGL. However, keep a look out for based vintage aircraft using a tight, oval, circuit at approx. 500ft with a continuous 'finals' turn from the downwind leg to land.

Visiting aircraft are strictly not permitted to carry out multiple/training circuits, touch and go's or multiple flights in and out of the aerodrome without written permission.

PARKING

Please park clear off ALL the runways and adjacent to the fence line between the Tower and the Fuel Kiosk or to the south of the Tower and not between Fuel Kiosk and Hangar fence (see map below, the blue boxes mark the parking area).



initio training per year. Due to COVID-19 we have a backlog of five bursary students, three self-funding ab initio students and many more who already have a licence and are converting,” said Mike. Despite their age the Tigers are very robust, and all the maintenance is done on site by Old Warden Engineering.

The Tiger Moth does create its own unique set of issues that student and instructor have to overcome. “You have to develop a sixth sense when instructing in a Tiger Moth,” explained Mike. “When you’re sitting side-by-side in a traditional trainer, you can see what the student is doing, how tightly they are holding the stick, how they are with the map and navigation. In the Tiger Moth, you’re completely separate from the instructor in the forward cockpit with only a small mirror to see the face of the student. It used to be

harder before the days of the electric intercom because you used a Gosport tube to talk, which made it even harder to understand one another.”

Whilst at the airfield I also met Ian Kershaw who is currently converting to the Tiger Moth. He has tailwheel and tandem experience, but says the Tiger is like nothing else. “It is a very humbling aircraft. It shows up every little mistake and needs to be flown all the time. And being out in the elements is a huge difference. You stick your head slightly out either side and it’s buffeting badly. It’s easy to fly, but hard to fly well,” said Ian.

“With the pilots training to get their PPL there is another issue. While the syllabus is the same as with tricycle aircraft, the solo cross-country is quite demanding,” explained Mike. “Mainly because we need someone at each of the

“We have a training course for prop swinging, and pilots and ground crew must be signed off to do it”

airfields to be able to prop swing. We’re very particular about that. We have a training course for prop swinging, and pilots and ground crew must be signed off to do it.

“It’s hugely impressive that ab initio pilots can learn to fly in the Tiger Moth – many hundreds of thousands of pilots have since 1931 when the Tiger Moth was first introduced, and was the main basic trainer in World War Two. The Tiger Moth is excellent for teaching the basics of flying an aircraft. It also builds situational awareness and the art of airmanship. There are no brakes, flaps or an electric starter, although we do have modern radios, ADSB out and Mode S transponders that are powered by a small wind turbine generator. All-in-all we produce aviators, not aircraft drivers,” Mike concluded. ■



The club offers courses on starting their Tiger Moths



The CFG’s modest, but perfectly functional club house



Old Warden is home to the Shuttleworth Collection

*“It’s hugely
impressive that ab
initio pilots can learn
to fly in the Tiger
Moth”*



AOPA NEWS

Local
councillors
are behind
Staverton

AIRFIELD UPDATE

"STAVERTON MUST STAY" SAYS COUNCIL

The ATC staff shortages at Gloucestershire Airport continue to affect operations, but councillors say it has to stay open

A KEY decision about whether to sell the "vital" council-owned Staverton airport is back up for debate in Gloucestershire.

Plans to sell Gloucestershire Airport, which is jointly owned by Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council, were announced at the end of 2023.

But after the Liberal Democrats took over the city council in May, they said they want to gather more information before making a decision.

"We've got to make sure the airport continues, we've got to protect all the businesses and the people who operate [there]," said

council leader Jeremy Hilton.

The site, in Staverton, has been run by Gloucestershire Airport Ltd since 1993, and both councils have a 50% shareholding.

Mr Hilton explained that the Liberal Democrat manifesto his party won the local election on stated that they will continue to help maintain the site "as an important aviation and high-tech business hub", the Local

Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) reports.

"There are about 400 to 500 jobs directly related to the airport there.

"There are quite clearly some skilled aviation-based jobs so that's our concern," he told the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Hilton said there were discussions at the end of 2023 about parties interested in purchasing the site.

The airport is mainly used for private flights, training and clubs - and brings in more than £50m each year to the local economy.

"At the moment we are gathering as much information as we possibly

can before we decide whether we actually make a decision on whether to put the airport up for sale," Mr Hilton continued.

"If it went up for sale, we would have to see what came back and what the offers were and whether they were reasonable offers.

"It's vital for the economy of the county," concluded Mr Hilton. ■



Staverton is "vital for the economy," says councillor Jeremy Hilton



CATS ANNOUNCES 'PAY AS-YOU-GO' ATPL COURSE

ATPL THEORY provider CATS has announced a new pay-as-you-go subscription model for its theoretical knowledge training courses.

The package, which uses CATS' existing course content, will now be available online and via iPad for £222 per month. CATS claims that this 'risk-free' approach will enable those

with less financial freedom to study for their ATPL theory without paying large sums up-front.

Dr Stuart E Smith, Head of Training and Founder at CATS said, "We are really pleased to be able to offer a financially inclusive solution to commence ATPL theory training with one-click and cancel anytime."

Students will be charged £222 per month for ATPL theory course access. They can manage their subscription or cancel it anytime. The anticipated nine-month course is priced no differently to CATS' full-price course, with the student able to spread the cost and start studying instantly. ■

Female Pilots Up by Third

The CAA has seen an increase in commercial and private pilots licences issued to women over the past few years, but says there is still a 'mountain to climb' in getting more women into the flight deck and closing the gap.

10k SRs Delivered

At the opening of Oshkosh this year, Cirrus announced that it has delivered its 10,000th aircraft and released a special edition at EAA AirVenture to honour the milestone.

2.4m People Needed

According to Boeing's 2024 Outlook, commercial aviation will need 2.4 million new aviation professionals over the next 20 years to cope with demand.

BIGGLES RETURNS TO THE SKIES

THE VERY first Biggles book, *The Camels Are Coming*, is one of 16 titles that are to be reissued in hardback form over the next two years.

Rights to the books, written by former WWI pilot W E Johns, have been acquired by publisher Canelo which has already reissued 12 of the books.

"The newly acquired titles include Biggles' adventures in the First World War," Canelo said in a statement.

"They feature breath-taking dogfights above the trenches, some of Biggles' adventures between the world wars, and some classic World War Two Biggles adventures."

The titles will be

published in four series (Biggles' World War One Adventures, Biggles Between the Wars, Biggles' World War Two Adventures and Biggles, Special Air Detective), which will each have their own identifiable branding.

They will be issued in hardback, two every spring, summer and autumn, across 2024–2026.

Join Biggles as he takes to the skies for the first time over the trenches and battlefields of France in World War One.

Flying in his trusty Sopwith Camel fighter with the men of 266 Squadron, Biggles duels German aces, leads daring raids on enemy aerodromes



The 'new' books have traditional cover art

and helps British spies complete their missions in a series of classic adventures.

We also meet Algernon 'Algy' Montgomery Lacey, who appears here for the first time, as does Colonel Raymond and Captain Wilkinson.

And Biggles also meets the love of his life, Marie Janis, when he crashes behind the lines. ■

Cliff Hawkins
(R) and Roger
Scholes with
their Pipistrel
Velis Electro

ELECTRIC AIRCRAFT

FIRST ELECTRIC AIRCRAFT COMPETES IN SCHNEIDER TROPHY

The Royal Aero Club's historic race saw several firsts

THE RACES were hosted by Goodwood Aerodrome with the actual racecourse over the Solent, reminiscent of the original Schneider course.

This 2024 race weekend saw 10 aeroplanes take part, but they had three extraordinary participants. A World number one: the first ever electric plane to participate in the Schneider Trophy or any other UK or Worldwide air race.

Cliff Hawkins from Airbourne Aviation, based at Popham airfield, in his Pipistrel Velis Electro, together with his navigator Roger Scholes, raced at a handicap speed of 90kts. This first flight of an electric aircraft in the Schneider Trophy was filmed by Jon Hunt, The Flying Reporter, and will be released on YouTube in due course.

RAF Squadron Leader Ben Polwin dreamt of racing

for the Schneider Trophy after he completed the build of his Vans RV7. Ben dedicated this race to his best friend Sqd Ldr Mark Long who sadly passed away in a Spitfire crash four weeks prior. Ben and Mark had spoken at length about British Air Racing and Mark had intended to participate too. Ben carefully applied Marks name to the tail of his race plane '777'. But what made the event even more poignant is that Sqd Ldr Ben Polwin along with his wife Sophie as navigator actually won the Schneider Trophy with a handicap speed of 175 kts. Ben said that he was honoured that he could win the Schneider Trophy for Mark Long.

The Flying Reporter, Jon Hunt also competed, navigating for Jonathan Willis in his distinctively coloured RV6 – Race 23, at a handicap speed of 169

“This first flight of an electric aircraft in the Schneider Trophy was filmed by Jon Hunt, The Flying Reporter”

kts. Jon Hunt navigated for Jonathan Willis last year in an air race at Sherburn in Elmet and made a YouTube video about his experience, and Jon was eager to experience another weekend of air racing and fun.

The pair came in second place for the Saturday Merlin Trophy and third place in the Schneider Trophy race. If you are interested in the British Handicap Air Races please get in touch via their web site: www.BritishAirRacing.org/become-a-racer. ■



Jonathan Willis and Jon Hunt receive their Schneider Trophy



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Aviation

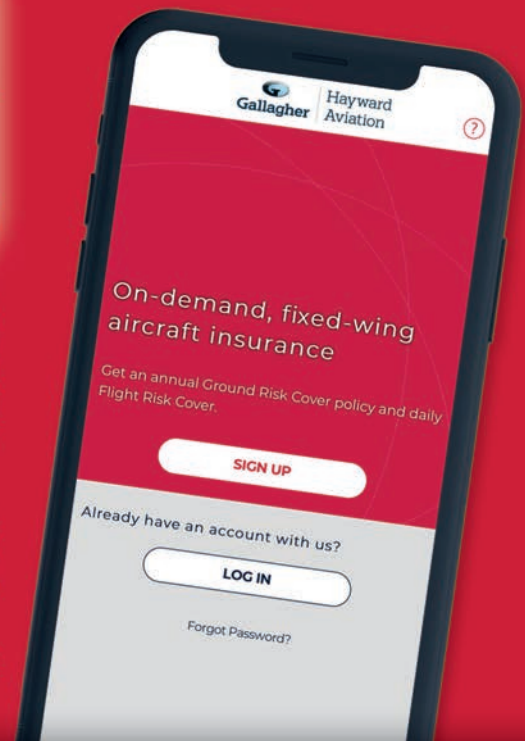
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OBITUARY

CHARLES STRASSER OBE SBS TJ MSC FCIM 1927-2024

AOPA are sad to hear of the passing of aviation legend Charles Strasser, vice-president of AOPA UK on 10 June 2024

CHARLES'S AVIATION related activities included, being Chairman of the Channel Island region of AOPA UK, a member of and past Vice Chairman of the Jersey Aero Club, a Director of and past world President of IFFR (International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians), a member of the PPL/IR Network and a past St John Ambulance Air Wing volunteer pilot and Midland region coordinator for the transportation of human kidneys for transplant.

He personally initiated and progressed on behalf of AOPA bringing into being the CAA CAP 667

9.2(c) recommendation that, to reduce the incidence of fatal GA accidents, airports and aerodromes should not charge any fees for emergency and precautionary diversion landings - the Strasser Scheme.

Charles was born in Czechoslovakia but moved to the U.K. with his parents in 1938, aged 11. By the age of 18, he was a dispatch rider with the Czech Independent Armoured Brigade and led a convoy of allied troops into Kasejovice. He was made an honorary Czech citizen in 2021.

He became a successful

"An active pilot for many years, his Piper Seneca was a well-known visitor to many airports and airfields throughout Europe"

businessman on his return to the U.K. and was actively involved in many charities. Charles was the regional coordinator for the Midlands St John Ambulance Air Wing. He was awarded an O.B.E. for humanitarian services in 2000.

An active pilot for many years, his Piper Seneca was a well-known visitor to many airports and airfields throughout Europe and beyond. He held an FAA

CPL and IR.

Charles made a significant contribution to general aviation and pilots will benefit for many years to come from his efforts to get a better deal for GA pilots. Charles was a tough but fair negotiator, not easily accepting bureaucracy and red tape.

AOPA has lost a member and the aviation community in general has lost much more. ■

ALL YOUR NEWS ON THE MOVE

CHANGED YOUR EMAIL or recently set one up? Let us know via the AOPA UK website (*Membership, Change of Details*), and keep up-to-date on all the latest news and more.

Update us now at membership@aopa.co.uk

AIR LEAGUE LOOKING FOR NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE AIR League is there to help thousands of people from around the UK, typically from disadvantaged communities, receive exposure to aviation and aerospace and ensure that careers in these sectors and indeed in other STEM areas – are genuinely open and available to all.

And now the organisation is looking for a new inspirational

leader to become Air League's next CEO. They will lead the very small but effective team, working with the Board of Trustees and Council, to capitalise on the relationships and deliver our mission.

The role is based in Central London managing a small team. This can be flexibly arranged

according to the CEO desires, but there is an expectation that two days minimum per week would be required at the London office with home-based working/ external events for the remainder of the role.

To apply for the position, visit www.airleague.co.uk ■



ASG NAMED AS AUTHORISED SERVICE FACILITY FOR TEXTRON PISTON AIRCRAFT

AIRCRAFT SERVICING Guernsey (ASG), a subsidiary of Pula Aviation Services, has been named as a Textron Aviation Authorised Service Facility (ASF) for the Cessna and Beechcraft piston engine series range of aircraft.

With 30 years of experience and expertise in maintaining Cessna and Beechcraft piston engines at its facility in Guernsey, services provided at ASG's MRO facility include new aircraft warranty repairs, scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, avionic upgrades and pre-purchase inspection support.

"We are pleased to be named an ASF to support Cessna and Beechcraft piston aircraft owners with the best aviation experience. This enhances our service offerings and is a valuable addition for



ASG is now authorised to work on Cessna and Beechcraft pistons

our customers," said Gary Phillips, Head of Technical Services. "Situated in Guernsey, Channel Islands, our location is ideally positioned for UK and European aircraft owners and operators."

ASG is focused on delivering services in support of aircraft ownership, management, operation and special

missions to customers within the business, general, executive and airline industry. Through the diverse capabilities of its businesses ASG, can provide MRO, Aircraft Sales, FBO, Medical and Special Missions, global aircraft parts supply and distribution services to customers throughout the globe. ■

Astles Wins Aerobatics

British/French pilot Melanie Astles is the first British Open Aerobatics Unlimited Champion following the inaugural event which was held at Sywell Aerodrome in July.

Brit eVTOL Starts Tests

Bristol-based Vertical Aerospace has begun testing its second full-scale prototype of its VX4 eVTOL vehicle. The tests include propeller balancing and spinning tests to measure weight distribution of each propeller.

UL Powers War Bomber

General Aviation Modifications achieved another milestone in developing its unleaded aviation gasoline, G100UL, when it powered a World War II-era bomber, the Douglas A-26.

Andy Thompson

On a day in the life as a pilot for the London Air Ambulance



Captain Andy Thompson

Andy Thompson started his career in the Royal Navy. Since leaving in 2004, he has worked in San Francisco as a flight instructor as well as with the police and news crews. Before joining London's Air Ambulance, he spent five years flying to oil rigs and boats in the North Sea for Bristow Helicopters.



Q How does your day typically start?

A Perhaps surprisingly, my working day doesn't start at our helipad on the 17th floor of Whitechapel's Royal London Hospital. After pouring myself a strong coffee, I'll leave home and head instead to RAF Northolt in Ruislip on the very edge of Greater London, where our helicopter stays overnight.

Q What does the London Air Ambulance fly?

A At present we're flying MD902 Explorer helicopters, G-EHMS and G-LNDN. This model was specially selected for its suitability in an urban environment; they are small, with no tail rotor, which allows us to operate safely in an area as complicated as London. They are getting on in years now, so we're set to replace them with two brand new Airbus H-135's in the Autumn of 2024, which will present an exciting new challenge for us pilots.

Q So, how does your day start at Northolt?

A Upon arrival at Northolt, we'll do our standard pre-flight checks, including a look at the day's weather. Whilst the Air Ambulance service operates all year round, poor visibility or extreme weather can make it effectively impossible for our aircraft to do its job on certain days. If the conditions aren't great, our medical colleagues will use our service cars to keep the service operational whilst we wait at the airfield, ready to spring into action if we get a good window of weather.

Assuming all is well, we'll take off and make the 15-minute flight from Northolt to Whitechapel. As commutes go it's pretty spectacular, as we fly West to East, passing the many skyscrapers of the City of London before landing and being greeted by our fire crew at the helipad.

Once we've landed and checked in with our medical team, we're ready to begin our operational day. We operate from sunrise to sunset, meaning our working hours are longer in the summer and shorter in the winter. How busy those days are can vary quite considerably – on some days we might only get called out once or twice, but the service attended nearly 2,000 incidents over the course of 2022 so as you can imagine some days are very full on.

Q What happens when a call comes in?

A Invariably this always seems to come in almost immediately after I've brewed myself a fresh coffee. Speed is of the essence from as soon as the callout comes through. We are only ever called out to the most severe trauma cases in London and a delay of even a few minutes can be the difference between life and death. As a result, our team move towards the helicopter rapidly and we aim to take off within a couple of minutes of the job coming to us.

Q How does London airspace work for you?

A We get priority across London airspace for our missions, meaning that we can

get to the patient as quickly as possible without needing to make any diversions to our route. We've even landed at Heathrow several times, which has resulted in some aircraft far larger than our relatively small helicopter making way for us.

Once we're in the sky we can make rapid progress across London – our average flight time is just seven and a half minutes. Whilst the actual flight is usually straight forward, landing in a city as dense as London can prove more challenging. As pilots we require an area of around 80 feet by 80 feet to land – about the size of a tennis court – and finding appropriate spots requires patience and good teamwork between yourself and the co-pilot.

Q What do you do on the ground?

A As pilots our job on the ground is to support the medical team however we can. Sometimes this can be as simple as making sure they've got all the kit they need so they don't keep having to go back and forth to the helicopter, but we're also available to relay information back to the helipad and speak to any other services that might be attending the scene. Once the medics are done with their work, we'll make the necessary preparations to fly back to the helipad in Whitechapel.

Once we get back, we're waiting for the next callout. If you're lucky you might get a bit of downtime, you can't control when the next callout will come in. ■

"Once we get back, we're waiting for the next callout. If you're lucky you might get a bit of downtime"



Keeping the story alive

How **Aero Legends** made sure the heroes of D-Day were celebrated 80 years later

Drag 'Em Oot drops
the 75th Battalion over
Normandy during the
celebrations

WORDS David Rawlings
IMAGES Wayne Davey

FAST FACTS

1,500

PARACHUTE DROPS

8

DAKOTAS IN TOTAL

18

MONTHS PREPARATION

THIS YEAR was the 80th anniversary of D-Day, one of the most auspicious operations of WWII. It is something that should be commemorated, but when it appeared that little was happening from a UK point of view, Keith Perkins of Aero Legends decided that the heroes of WWII needed to be honoured.

Keith is the Founder and CEO of Aero Legends, one of

the UK's leading providers of aircraft experiences in historic and vintage aircraft. But Keith isn't just interested in what these aircraft are capable of today, he is deeply invested in using these aircraft because of the way in which they were originally designed. And when AOPA was invited to meet Keith to discuss his D-Day celebration plans, I jumped at the chance, especially if I was going to see some WWII aircraft at North Weald.



HOW WE GOT HERE

Keith had the nucleus of an idea for Aero Legends more than ten years ago. He owned a single-seat Spitfire, but was working abroad and couldn't fly it. In addition, running a Spitfire will cost around £100,000-£130,000 per year, so Keith came up with an idea of how he could recoup some of that spend. "We started Aero Legends in June 2014," said Keith when I spoke to him at the Rosey Lea café at North Weald Airfield. "I set up a little business to help with the operating expenses. At that point you weren't allowed to charge for flights in a Spitfire for hire. So, we combined the experience of a World War Two trainee pilot, so people would be able to get a flight in a Tiger Moth, then a Harvard and then finally in a Spitfire. We had to hire in a two-seat Spitfire to begin with."

The company sent out a press release expecting a small number of people to respond,

but they were bombarded by more than 2,000 enquiries (many of those were due to a mistake in The Times saying you could fly a Spitfire for £300!). "We converted 60 of those calls to the experience – which I thought was quite a lot at the time. So, in 2014 we did 60 experiences and this year we'll have a 1,000 flights in the Spitfires alone," said Keith.

The company covers all types of flying. Their fleet is 25-strong and at the time of writing and the appetite for experiences just keeps growing. The aircraft range from pre-war biplanes to military jets. In fact, when we were at North Weald, the company's two Strikemasters went up for a flight with guests.

You don't have to talk to Keith for long before realising if it has an engine, he loves it, but the Dakota is very special to him. "Dakota's have always been a personal passion for me," he said. "I first flew down to Normandy in a Dakota in 2011 and I fell in love with

"I first flew down to Normandy in a Dakota in 2011 and I fell in love with them and the whole story of them"

them and the whole story of them."

It was at that moment that Keith knew he wanted to own one, so started looking. There weren't many available, and those that were for sale weren't in great condition. "When you're looking for a rare aircraft though, word gets around," said Keith. "Paddy Green, who owned Drag 'Em Oot, rang me one day and said 'I'm selling it', and he had identified me as the number one candidate who could run it and keep it flying. His worry was that someone could buy it and then not be able to afford to run it, keeping it grounded. So, I said I'd buy it there and then on the phone."

The pair met at Duxford and didn't even negotiate on a price and in 2017, Keith became an owner of a Dakota. He then bought Pegasus in 2019 so he now has a US and UK Dakota.

D-DAY MISSION

Keith's Dakotas are largely original. Drag 'Em Oot



1. The silhouette of the Dakota is instantly recognisable
2. Drag 'Em Oot has 43 bullet holes up and down the fuselage from strafing during WWII
3. The static line jumpers from America who also took part in the celebrations

Keith's pride and joy,
Pegasus and Drag 'Em
Oot, the two WWII
Dakotas



During the D-Day
celebrations
more than 1,500
parachutists
were dropped



completed lots of missions during the war. So much so that it has 43 bullet holes in it, including one in the pilot seat from Arnhem. It was sprayed. "When we completed the annual this year my team spotted an issue with corrosion. We had to take the tail and the rudder off to check the support pillars and when we cleaned it up we found two more bullet holes. There is no more authentic example of a C-47 that's completed a few combat tours," Keith stated.

So the question is, why get involved in something as mammoth as organising a re-enactment of parachute drops over Normandy for the 80th anniversary of D-Day? "Because if we didn't do it, nobody else would have," explained Keith. "Nobody else in the UK could've organised it, as they don't have the infrastructure or team size. It was a huge undertaking."

The plan was for the two Dakotas to fly to Normandy and Arnhem for the anniversary

whilst dropping parachutists as part of the celebration.

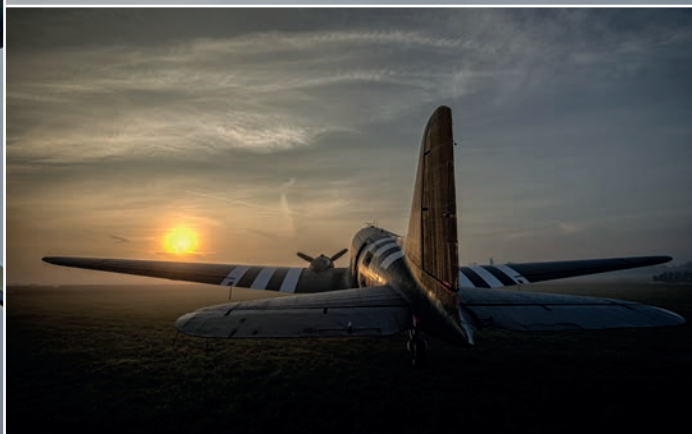
It wasn't always easy for the team. There were days where they questioned themselves, but the biggest challenge was trying to work out the budget. "Our goal was to not end up with a huge debt – we broadly achieved that, whilst also trying to make it for the jumpers from the Dakotas," said Keith. "We tried to price everything cheaper than before. The jumpers were a lot cheaper than they were five years before at the 75th anniversary. So, we never had any complaints of pricing, but that put us at risk in terms of trying to recover the costs."

Keith had to be careful with offering too many jump spots and not having enough aircraft, and he was right to be conservative. The team were talking to the D-Day Squadron in the US about 18 months before the event. They promised 10 or 12 C47s and 10 or 12 DC3s, but that turned

"We found two more bullet holes. There is no more authentic example of a C-47 that's completed a few combat tours"

into two of each. "We could have sold probably five times the amount of jump spaces, but we chose not to. And that was a wise decision."

Planning the logistics was tough as well. There aren't too many airfields that have space on the apron to house six Dakotas, but North Weald were very accommodating. They also needed to ensure there was enough fuel and an airfield in France where they could land. Cherbourg was very helpful in that regard. And then there was the need to find 100 hotel rooms, all of which was organised. But there were unforeseen issues as well. "Drag 'Em Oot had to have an engine changed and that turned up a couple of days late, but we did it and it's already done 35 hours since," said Keith. "Another issue was getting approval from the French authority for those aircraft to operate in their airspace, which is highly restricted. Those approvals



1. Just before the celebrations were due to take place, Drag 'Em Oot needed an engine replaced
2. There isn't a finer example of a combat veteran aircraft
3. Keeping these multi-engine warbirds flying comes at a great expense, but to Keith, it's worth it

were literally coming through the day before we were due to fly. So, we were planning all of this, but didn't have the written approvals to go and fly, which is a challenge, when you've got so much hanging on the back of that. I was pretty relaxed, I knew it would come through, it was just a bit lastminute.com."

For the flying at the celebrations, the two Aero Legends aircraft along with the two Dakotas from America dropped about 1,500 parachutists into Normandy, including current serving military and the 75th Ranger Battalion.

It's easy to see why Keith is proud of what his team has achieved, and he believes that he needed to do it to save face. "I think it would've been embarrassing if the UK hadn't done anything. Especially as the US was making so much effort to honour those of WWII."

THE FUTURE

Keith says the main focus now is to continue to use the Dakotas for static line

parachute dropping – what they were built for. But they need to be used more to keep them working properly. "We intend to increase the usage of them, which is better for the airframe. The best Spitfires are the ones that are being used. The more they are used, the more they're looked after and the more recent and current the pilots are," said Keith.

The Dakotas are both taken every year to Normandy and Arnhem, which are the two big hitters. "We are using them more, we doing display drops at air shows and more film work."

But Keith is hoping that the Dakotas will be able to get SSAC (Safety Standards Acknowledgement and Consent) with them. It's the regime that is authorised for Spitfire passenger flying. "We are hoping to be able to do that shortly which will give us the revenue stream to keep the machines running," Keith said, before going on to explain further issues. "Crew is a big challenge for the Dakotas. Pilots are getting older and the

"Crew is a big challenge for the Dakotas. Pilots are getting older and the number of them is shrinking. And because it's a commercial aircraft they need a type rating"

number of them is shrinking. And because it's a commercial aircraft they need a type rating. We're the only company in the UK that has the ability to offer a type rating on a DC3. We're increasing the qualified number of pilots, but to support an increased pool we need more flying hours and that's why we need the SSAC regime."

Insurance is another issue when it comes to the Dakota. A lot of underwriters won't go near old, multi-engine aircraft. "If you have an old aircraft that carries lots of people, they're not interested," said Keith. "We are focused on the training aspect and we run the organisation professionally. The aircraft are not toys for me to play with. We are focused on safety, safety, safety. We have a good track record and never take it for granted."

Looking even further ahead, Aero Legends aspire to have a third Dakota based in France and to be able to offer aerial tours over Normandy. It all hinges on them achieving SSAC for the Dakotas. ■

TECH SPEC C-47B-DK

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed: 224 mph (360 km/h, 195 kn) at 10,000 ft (3,000 m)
Range: 1,600 mi (2,600 km, 1,400 nmi)
Ferry range: 3,600 mi (5,800 km, 3,100 nmi)
Service ceiling: 26,400 ft (8,000 m)
Time to altitude: 10,000 ft (3,000 m) in 9 minutes 30 seconds

Wing loading: 26.3 lb/sq ft (128 kg/m2)
Power/mass: 0.0926 hp/lb

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Powerplant: 2×Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90C Twin Wasp 14-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engines, 1,200 hp (890 kW)
Propellers: 3-bladed constant-speed
Crew: 4 (pilot, co-pilot, navigator, radio

operator)
Capacity: 28 troops or 6,000 lb
Length: 63 ft 9 in (19.43 m)
Wingspan: 95 ft 6 in (29.11 m)
Height: 17 ft 0 in (5.18 m)
Wing area: 987 sq ft (91.7 m2)
Empty weight: 18,135 lb (8,226 kg)
Gross weight: 6,000 lb (11,793 kg)
Max takeoff weight: 31,000 lb



Pegasus is Keith's
second Dakota - but
possibly not his last!



WORDS & IMAGES Raju Vulla

AROUND THE EDGE OF THE UK

Raju Vulla and a group of friends from Norwich recently completed their breathtaking "Britain Coast-to-Coast Challenge" over four days, navigating the stunning coastal landscapes of Britain in a Piper PA28 Cherokee 180



I HAVE 200 flying hours as PIC and wanted to celebrate with a unique trip around the British coastline. I decided to bring some friends along as well – Rama Gontla, a student pilot with 20 hours of flight training and Gautam Avvaru, an aviation enthusiast with a passion for photography.

We decided on a five-day adventure starting from Seething Airfield and flying anti-clockwise. This is our story and what we learned along the way.

DAY 1: 22 JUNE 2024

The first leg of my flight from Seething to Eshott took nearly three hours. Initially, the plan was to head next to Inverness. However, a quick call revealed that the Inverness airfield would be closed by their estimated arrival time. The helpful ground staff at Eshott recommended diverting to Perth instead. Taking their advice, we have decided to alter plans. On our second leg we took off for Perth at 16:00 and landed in Perth at 17:20, concluding the second leg of our journey.

We learnt a lot on the first day, including being aware that excitement can blind us to issues. Beware of 'Get-home-itis' syndrome on every flight. One of the tyres was under-inflated which I misjudged as acceptable. Just before departure from Seething, a club member kindly pointed it out and it was rectified before leaving. We delayed our departure and resolved the issue. The Lesson: look deeper for data/issues that show you are not ready.

After my first leg I planned to take fuel at Eshott. In a rush

to reach Perth airport I misjudged the required fuel and left. My progress from Eshott to Perth was slowed down due to strong headwind. When I landed at Perth, we were left with less than 45 minutes of fuel remaining, which was just legal, providing a valuable lesson on fuel management.

DAY 2: 23 JUNE 2024

On day two we had planned to leave Perth early and arrive at Wick airfield for lunch. However, Wick airfield informed that they were operational on Sunday between 14:00-



Gautam, Raju,
Rama and Alfie –
the aeroplane

16:00hrs. As a result, we delayed our departure from Perth. The helpful crew at Perth suggested Kirkwall as an option instead of Wick. Taking their advice, we departed Perth by 11:00. to Kirkwall, flying over the Aberdeen coast, Lossiemouth, Inverness and Wick airfields. The journey between Wick and Kirkwall was particularly challenging, with heavy mountain waves making it a bumpy ride. We touched down at Kirkwall at 13:50. The next leg of the journey was initially aimed for Oban. However, upon learning that our ETA will be outside the office hours at Oban, we reconsidered alternate options and instead headed for Prestwick Airfield. We landed at Prestwick International at 19:20 where we stayed for the night.

With no prior experience of flying over mountains it is important to speak to other aviators on their experiences. Local knowledge in particular provides a wealth of information. Expect bumps in

the road. Our route to success is seldom what we think it will be and you need to be ready to adjust and refocus.

DAY 3: 24 JUNE 2024

We arrived at Prestwick Airfield at 08:00, anticipating an early take-off. Our initial plan was to fly to Londonderry in Northern Ireland. However, we faced unfavourable weather conditions across NI which necessitated a change of plans. Prestwick was enveloped under IFR conditions until midday. Around mid-day conditions improved, allowing us take off from Prestwick. Adapting to the new circumstances, we rerouted the flight plan to Welshpool in Wales. The flight from Prestwick to Welshpool offered a fresh set of challenges and scenic views. By 15:30 we had arrived at Welshpool Airfield, situated in a picturesque setting between lush green hills. Once again I was grateful for the local knowledge I had received due to marginal weather conditions

“With no prior experience of flying over mountains it is important to speak to other aviators”

on route to Welshpool testing personal comfort zones, particularly when navigating mountainous terrain.

On day three we learned the importance diligence. This was due to the fact that I tasked the pre-flight external checks to a passenger who is a low hour student pilot. Later during power checks, we both realised that the Pitot cover was not removed, reinforcing the importance of procedural diligence and critical handovers.

DAY 4: 25 JUNE 2024

The plan was to fly from Welshpool to Land's End, a renowned landmark at the southwestern tip of England. We arrived at Welshpool Airfield at 09:00 eager to take to the skies. However, the weather had other plans, as murky visibility and thick clouds delayed our departure.

About an hour into the flight, an unexpected challenge arose where we suddenly lost radio communication with



- 1. The stunning Gairloch from the skies
- 2. Day one, and they're off on thier adventure
- 3. Alfie, the team's trusty steed

Flying over
Stevenston in
West Scotland



Girvan, a burgh
and harbour town
in Carrick, South
Ayrshire, Scotland

London FIR. After performing several emergency checks, our radio communication did not restore. As we were flying over mountain terrain and with no other options, I decided to divert the flight to the nearest airport which was Haverfordwest in Wales. I switched to the emergency transponder code 7600 and made an unscheduled landing.

This was my first such experience since learning to fly, prompting a reflection on theory versus practical application and the importance of practicing emergencies. Keep checklists handy and comply to procedures. Remember the order: aviate, navigate and communicate.

The staff at Haverfordwest were incredibly supportive and introduced us to Jonathan and Patricia, skilled flight engineers with a well-equipped workshop. After thorough testing, Jonathan found out the cause of the RT failure (stuck PTT on Pilot) assured everyone that the radio was functioning

correctly, and we were cleared to fly.

We took off from Haverfordwest at 14:00, setting a course for new destination of Newquay. The flight to Newquay lasted until 17:00, during which time we were treated to stunning aerial views of the rugged Cornish coastline.

After refuelling in Newquay and taking a short break, we departed again, this time heading towards the Isle of Wight. The journey to Sandown Airfield on the Isle of Wight was marked by breath-taking coastal scenery. We arrived thrilled to be nearing the completion of our adventure.

DAY 5: 26TH JUNE 2024

Following refuelling we departed from Sandown at 10:15. The journey included some of the busiest airspaces in the southern England. After a scenic journey via the south coast and Southend, we touched down at Seething at 12:50.

“Throughout these challenges, each day provided valuable lessons in preparation, resilience and the adaptability required for safe flying”

Throughout these challenges, each day provided valuable lessons in preparation, resilience, and the adaptability required for safe flying. As a low hour GA pilot, I was feeling the signs of fatigue on day five. However, the excitement of completing the coast-to-coast and the adrenaline rush was forcing me to move on.

It takes courage to stop and intervene when the pressure is on, and it's always best to stop than risk disaster.

My journey was more than just a series of flights; I think it was an inspiring tale of exploration and discovery beyond the confines of my 9-5 routine. The coastal flight over Great Britain and Northern Ireland offered a unique perspective, learning opportunity to witness the beauty like never before.

I now have two challenges I would like to complete. The first is to fly from the UK to Africa and back, and land in all 28 EU states by 2026, so far I have managed four. ■



1. Final turn into Kirkwall
2. In Perth and getting Alfie ready for his next flight
3. The team – from Left to Right: Gautam, photographer; Raju, PIC and Rama the student pilot



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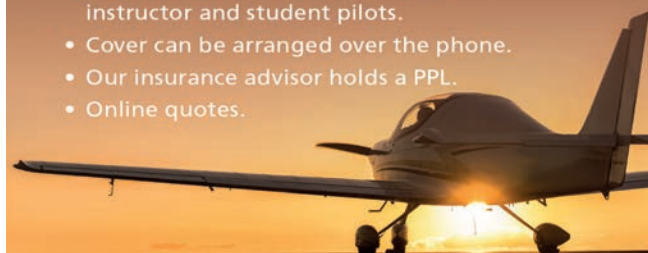


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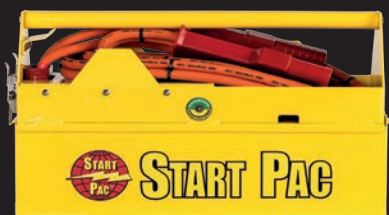
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