

The official magazine of the Aircraft Owner and Pilots Association

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AOPA UK



The Luscious Luscombe

Charlotte Bailey speaks to Richie Piper to discover why this lovely **Luscombe Silvaire** is "Just His Type"

THE GA ROADMAP
What does the Department for Transport's 'General Aviation Roadmap' really mean?

WATTS NEW?
The latest developments in electric, hydrogen and hybrid-powered aircraft

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IT'S THE TIME TO BE OPTIMISTIC

ARE YOU an optimist or a pessimist? Winston Churchill said: "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty".

I'm beginning to feel optimistic on a number of fronts as the UK's vaccination programme begins to enable a slow return to normal life. In parallel, the economy is beginning to recover, exports to the EU are increasing after the immediate post Brexit January slump and the IMF is predicting an overall growth rate of 5.3% for the UK economy this year. Historically, the GA sector has always benefitted from a buoyant economy.

In the same week that the Department for Transport (DfT) issued its eagerly awaited GA Roadmap the CAA published a list of changes it intends to implement to support the British Government's oft stated aim to make the UK "the best place in the world for General Aviation".

Further detail and analysis can be found in a major feature later in the magazine and, of course, more details on all of these plans have yet to emerge and timing is always important. Sadly it may be too late for Coventry. The Government is supporting a new innovative Gigafactory at Coventry, which if it goes ahead will almost certainly see the demise of the airfield.

Fortunately, the new owners of Carlisle Airport see "significant opportunities for increased regional connectivity as economies recover"—let's hope there are more stories like this.

Commercial Air Transport (CAT) always fuels demand for pilots and facilities within GA and following the pandemic the industry is taking off (pun intended) once again. As I write these words 3,000 people were in the process of leaving Heathrow bound for Portugal. Pilots are being recalled and the publication of the Green list of nations to which travel is permitted is adding to everyone's optimism for a getaway this year.

Although the numbers will not reach pre-pandemic levels anytime soon an airline pilot shortage is already beginning to become apparent in North America with airlines recalling furloughed pilots and recruiting new ones. The post COVID-19 demand for aircrew remains high because, despite the downturn, there are still a significant number of pilots due to retire in the next twenty years.

So, it's not all bad. However, there remains a lot of work for AOPA UK to do as we continue to represent your interests whilst the DfT's General Aviation Roadmap is rolled out.

Now is a time of optimism. Whether you're a flying school or flight instructor optimistic about the return to training for both private and commercial aviation, or an aircraft owner or pilot delighted that we can now get airborne, there is much to look forward to.

Let's keep seeing the opportunities in every difficulty. ■



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Material for consideration for the August issue should be received no later than July 2021.

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JUST MY TYPE Charlotte Bailey meets Richie Piper at a windswept Popham airfield to discuss what makes the beautiful Luscombe 8 Silhouette 'just his type'.



EDITOR'S COMMENT

AS I SIT down to reflect on what has happened in the aviation world since my last editorial ramblings I feel compelled to comment on the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh. Prince Philip was an accomplished pilot who gained his RAF 'wings' in 1953, his helicopter qualification in 1956 and his private pilot's licence in 1959; achieving a total of 5,986 hours in 59 types of aircraft. He was a tremendous ambassador for all types of aviation and a huge supporter of innovation.

The latest technical push within the GA world is for ever 'greener' aircraft, which has led to huge advances in electric, hydrogen and hybrid powerplants. In fact, there is now so much news about such developments that we have introduced a dedicated 'Watts New' (sorry for the pun) section to analyse these announcements. There are myriad plug-in projects in various stages of development, but how many will reach production and will they really change our lives? Well, when I started editing aviation magazines two decades ago, the GA world was buzzing with promises of a Very Light Jet (VLJ) revolution. We reported that pilots would soon have access to small, private jets and manufacturers such as Adam, Diamond, Piper and many more promised cutting-edge designs.

Some reached flight testing, far fewer reached production and 20 years later the only VLJs that remain in production are the Embraer Phenom 100 and the Cirrus Vision SF50. Other companies dreamed of changing air travel and while their designs may not have reached production those 'dreamers' all contributed to the advancement of technology, had their own way of doing things and played a part in shaping the industry. One can only assume the same will happen within the 'electric revolution'; there will be an inevitable 'sifting' of designs – some ideas will fall flat, some companies will fall by the wayside

– but a few will float to the top and carve out a future for us all.

However, I will close with a word of caution. Many of these new 'eco' designs require battery packs, which in turn need to be manufactured in large factories such as the one proposed at Coventry Airport [see p16].

Coventry has a fond place in my heart; my first aeroplane ride as a child was from the airport, I attended my first airshow at the airfield and whilst at University, I would spend most weekends volunteering with the resident Air Atlantique Classic Flight (AACF). Many years later I would become AACF's Commercial Director and my heart is filled with dread at the possibility of losing this 85-year-old aerodrome. It was once home to numerous aircraft manufacturers and remains home to flying schools, private operators and the air ambulance.

The team behind the project says it is unable to hold a public exhibition or event "because of Covid restrictions" so if you have ever flown into Coventry – and/or would like to do so in the future – please can I urge you to visit [gigafactoryconsultation.co.uk](https://www.gigafactoryconsultation.co.uk) to lodge your comments about the proposal by **June 6, 2021!** When it's gone, it's gone.

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GA ROADMAP 'THE DETAIL IS IN THE DEVIL'

THE DEPARTMENT for Transport (DfT) General Aviation Roadmap [Ed: see p28], which sets out the British government's vision for the development of GA in the UK, states that it wants "the UK to be seen as the best place in the world for aviation and this starts with the grassroots".

The document's structure leads – correctly – with 'Policy and Governance' followed by 'Regulation', but it is the policy that underpins everything as all regulation should reflect government policy.

The government is planning to support GA activities through a working partnership with both the CAA and stakeholders. It is focussing on policy with funding support underpinned by meaningful engagement with the sector. Its aim with regard to regulating safety is to achieve this through a risk-based, proportionate approach along with a mantra we have heard before about regulating "only where we must and no gold-plating".

The report leads on to 'Airfield Protection and Airspace' reform and details how the government wants to inspire the next generation of aviation professionals through STEM and skills; BUT, as is always the case, the devil is in the detail. However, in this case you could argue that the detail is actually in the devil ...

MOTHERHOOD AND APPLE PIE

We can clearly support the vision statement as it is straightforward. As with most such statements it says things that we can agree on although some of the focus will be on long-term aspirations such as decarbonisation and the GAU work programme; the latter is focussing on what opportunities exist for UK GA after leaving the EU/EASA.

In the USA they would refer to it as a 'motherhood and apple pie' idiom (i.e. an issue which is universally agreed

upon just as no one would disparage 'motherhood' and – obviously – everyone likes apple pie).

However, many of the businesses that support and rely on GA activity may have wished to see more in the document about the recovery of activity and how costs could be lowered – not least the CAA's fees and charges.

RISK-BASED APPROACH

In adopting a risk-based approach the CAA will require good quality safety data to understand the risks it wants to regulate. It will need to specify what its approach to risk will be – this will vary with the activities: a single-seat paraglider that has little interaction with third parties will have fewer rules than those operations that involve third parties. These rules will be focussed on protecting passengers/people on the ground but how the CAA plans to prioritise its work through the GAU is not yet fully known or understood.

While it is important to teach STEM skills it is equally important that there are businesses out there that can make use of these skills. The report seems geared more towards innovation and emerging businesses based on new technologies like UAMs than existing businesses. However, there is still a shortage of light aircraft engineers and I do not find much in this document to address this issue.

HOLDING THE CAA TO ACCOUNT

I still have questions about the high-level aspirations of government, especially in respect of whether the CAA's own practices and procedures are aligned for achieving a risk-based, proportionate outcome?

Only time will tell, and readers may feel that I am being a bit unfair, but part of AOPA's role is to hold the CAA and government to account. If this means holding their feet to the fire then that is

what we must do.

I have seen many studies and reports over the years but the outcomes of most have resulted in extraordinarily little of substance. Having said that, the CAA did respond and deliver the AOPA-initiated NPPL system (as evidenced by the parliamentary Hansard of December 1, 1999).

In my opinion, we are moving towards a system that will further split certified and non-certified aircraft. AOPA members mostly fly certified aircraft where manufacturing support exists and these will continue to operate on ARCs for the time being.

Looking ahead I think that costs will continue to rise in our market segment, whereas the CAA is likely to continue to make non-certified aircraft more economical to operate. At the same time it is likely to increase privileges for them, to match those currently enjoyed by certified aircraft. Unless the rules are further amended to reduce the cost of manufacturing GA aircraft then we will eventually see the end of manufactured two- or four-seat light aircraft. Yet for international flying you still need an ICAO-compliant airframe unless there are bilateral agreements in place.

CHANGING FACE OF GA

The government's announcement that there will be no sales of new petrol- or diesel-engine cars from 2030 leaves me wondering if this will also apply to light aircraft sales?

It is inevitable that there will be a crossover at some point and over the next decade the shape and size of UK GA is undoubtedly going to change. However, rather than being totally gloomy about it, we need to investigate how we can seize the opportunity to see the wider use of electric aero engines. What will the CAA do with regard to the certification of this new technology? If we can help them to get

“Plans for recovering parts of regulated airspace that are underutilised are still being developed, but it’s likely to be a long process”

it right, we may yet see the manufacture of two- and four-seat certificated aircraft being continued.

So, in addition to STEM, maybe the government needs to direct the CAA’s focus towards decarbonisation? At some point there will also need to be a review of pilot training as electric engines come along and we have greater digitalisation in the cockpit.

Sophie O’Sullivan has been made head of both GA and RPAS as the CAA combined the two roles into a single unit recently. We congratulate Sophie on her new role and look forward to working with her and her team in meeting the challenges of the future. Our editor has secured an interview with Sophie [in early June] for the next edition of the magazine, so now is the time for members to put their questions directly to the regulator – send your burning issues to steve.bridgewater@aopa.co.uk as soon as possible.

EGNOS AND AIRSPACE

The loss of EGNOS Safety of Life (SoL) services looks inevitable from June 25, 2021 unless the government is willing to discuss a solution with the EU.

AOPA is part of a group that is lobbying on this issue, but the inside news is that there is tension between the political leaders on both sides.

A response is pending from the CAA/DfT regarding the legal position that may permit the development of LNAV and LNAV/VNAV approaches and the CAA/DfT lawyers are working on a reply. Whereas some groups have been saying “it’s LPV or nothing”, that has not been our stance at AOPA. However, the legal framework that enables the use of EGNOS signals needs to be clear.

The CAA has also started looking again at airspace modernisation plans with a view to delivering an updated strategy later this year. The original head of the project has left and has been replaced by Stu Lindsey, who I have known for many years, and I look forward to working towards a plan for modernisation of the UK airspace system with him.

The regulator recently held its first meeting to look at Lower Airspace Services. It is looking at USSP (U-Space Service Provision) and how to link air traffic management with unmanned traffic management to enable the future management of drones and manned aviation operating in the lower

airspace. There is even talk of a future need for VFR flights to file flight plans.

In summary, I do not believe that the current EC policy will enable safe integration with drones operating in the lower airspace.

SEGREGATION

In other matters, the CAA has amended the visibility rules for class D and is returning to the original ‘Rule 5’ legislation. Elsewhere, plans for recovering parts of regulated airspace that are underutilised are still being developed but, again, it’s likely to be a long process.

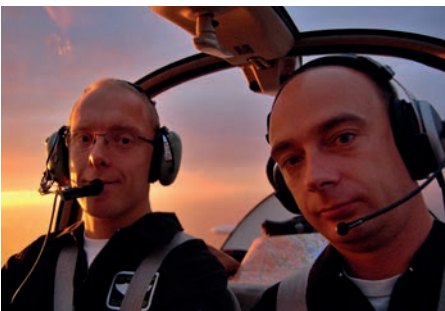
During 2022 we will see several drone trials taking place in the UK and Europe; these will see a rise in the number of TRA applications. One plan I have seen also suggests that TRAs may initially be needed to support Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations in the early stages, as the only safe way for BVLOS drones to operate is by segregation.

So, on one hand the plan is to claw back underused airspace; while on the other hand there are moves to segregate airspace for drone operations. I think segregated airspace will be with us for up to ten years – or until the autonomous system is tried and tested, then approved.

I’m pleased to report that the DfT/EASA Engagement Forum (now dubbed the Stakeholder Engagement Forum) has restarted and this will be another opportunity to engage regularly with the DfT on reform.

Finally, in terms of post-Brexit mutual recognition of licences: where pilots, instructors and examiners hold EASA and UK licences the CAA has agreed these will be allowed to exist alongside each other – the only issue is that you will have two systems to keep current and two sets of fees. We’re also hearing that possible changes to cost-sharing rules are being looked at but this is yet to be confirmed. We’ll report more when we know more. Watch this space...

Safe flying everybody. ■



The editor and a friend cost-sharing on a long (pre-COVID-19) flight. We’re hearing that possible changes to cost sharing rules are being considered by regulators.



M Robinson

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DO WE NEED A SKYWAY CODE FOR MAINTENANCE?

With the CAA seeking to simplify and rationalise airworthiness and maintenance, there is an opportunity to have our say

DURING THE latest Members Working Group meeting, discussion revealed some interesting information about the relationship between aircraft owners and their maintainers.

Based on about 50 participants, an online poll indicated that about half of those who owned or co-owned their own aircraft had managed engine maintenance flights during lockdown. We then asked how many owners performed some of their own maintenance under the guidance of their maintainer? The answer was about 20%, pointing to a strong reliance on the maintainer – a key factor in understanding some of the problems faced by owners and engineers during the pandemic.

A sound relationship between owner and maintainer is vital. However, even if you as a

pilot/owner do not need a thorough understanding of the legislation, liaison between pilots and engineers would be improved if the airworthiness rules and regulations were made clearer.

These are currently defined in Part ML – itself a less complicated version (aimed at light aircraft) than the original EASA Part M. The CAA's Skyway Code documents have been widely welcomed for their overall readability as well as use of straightforward language and attractive graphics. The need for clearer communication is what prompted the proposal to the CAA of a Skyway Code for Maintenance at one of the GAP (General Aviation Partnership) meetings in July 2019. The proposal was further debated at the following meeting in November of that

“AOPA can identify areas that would benefit from a Skyway Code-type treatment”

year and taken on board as a future project. However, the idea had a fairly low priority; but this thankfully changed towards the end of 2020 when the CAA launched the CAP 1985 consultation to solicit opportunities in UK General Aviation after leaving EASA. The responses to the document and resulting decisions were published in April of this year as CAP 2146.

Under the ‘Simplification & Rationalisation of

Airworthiness & Maintenance’ heading it was found that the topic was overall the third highest priority area. As there was no clear consensus on how best to simplify and rationalise, it was decided to take the task on as a strategic project, including undertaking more exploratory work.

Provision of feedback from the AOPA Maintenance Working Group is already assured, but the complete spread of maintainers can be covered by the CAA's own surveyors. As far as aircraft owners are concerned, AOPA is in a good position to identify areas that would benefit from greater clarity from a Skyway Code-type treatment. Many of the engineering problems experienced by AOPA aircraft owner members over past years have been requests for clearer explanations of existing rules, or simply difficulty finding what they want to know amidst the many pages of Part ML. Typical queries have included how the AMP (aircraft maintenance programme) is established, allowable pilot/owner maintenance tasks or whether or not GR 24 still applies in Part ML. There may be other non-regulatory items to consider such as the pros and cons of getting a pre-purchase inspection of an aircraft, and contracts between owners and maintainers.

We now have a great opportunity to improve the all-round understanding of what it takes to keep our aircraft airworthy, so if you have any items that deserve attention, email george@aopa.co.uk. ■



Owners can undertake some engineering tasks themselves – but do you know which ones?

WORDS Steve Bridgewater IMAGES Pexels Stock

GENERAL AVIATION SAFETY BENCHMARK GROUP

They say good safety is no accident and that's an ethos shared by the 25 airfields that have signed up to the newly formed General Aviation Safety Benchmark Group

THE GENERAL Aviation Safety Benchmark Group (GASBG) launched in February with the goal of improving airfield safety for GA users by making it easier to collate and share data across the UK.

The brainchild of Harry Harrad (Safety and Compliance Manager at London Oxford Airport and London Heliport Ltd) and Ben Spiers (Head of Safety and Compliance at London Biggin Hill Airport) the GASBG is a no-cost group open to airports and airfields which have a maximum Code C aircraft operation for passengers and a Fire Category of 6. This is to limit membership to GA operators.

According to Co-Chair Ben, the aim of the group is to "give a voice to GA airfields, who are often drowned out

by larger commercial airports at equivalent forums, to share best safety practices and to minimise risk."

Speaking in April, GASBG Chair Harry explained that the uptake for the group had surprised him. "Before now the safety and incident data we are recording was only accessible by the airfield where it occurred," he said. "It was our hope that getting aerodromes to work together would improve safety but Ben and I really expected it to involve our own airfields plus four or five others. However, just two months later we've got 25 aerodromes on board as well as the CAA. We are humbled that not only does the regulator recognise the legitimacy of the group but a member of its Airfield Advisory Group wants to be part of it."

"With 25 aerodromes signed up to the GASBG and recognition from the regulator, Ben and Harry seem to be onto a winning formula"

NINE INDICATORS

Membership of the GASBG involves airfields uploading data on nine specific safety performance indicators (SPIs). These are:

- Damage to aircraft
- Wildlife strikes and hazard management
- Significant FOD events
- Runway and taxiway incursions and excursions
- Near misses on the apron
- Airspace and drone infringements
- Airprox
- Laser strikes
- Air Traffic engineering failures such as ILS failures.

Ben and Harry have managed to secure the services of Centrik to securely host this data online in a way that makes it accessible to all, allowing the group to monitor trends as and when they develop. This enables them to see where they really need to focus their attention and allows them to work quickly to make any recommendations.

"As a provider of operational management support to aviation businesses across the globe, we are delighted to sponsor and work on this project for the GA community," said Andy Wilkinson, Head of Aerospace at Centrik. "Our existing, well established relationships with both London Oxford Airport and London Biggin Hill meant we were able to take a genuinely collective approach when developing the new General Aviation Safety Benchmark system."

The group has also secured the services of a human factors specialist, a wildlife and habitat



Pexels Stock Image

The GASBG is best placed to focus on factors that are under direct aerodrome control such as wildlife habitat management.

management expert and an airport operations specialist (with 27 years of experience at Heathrow) who have all volunteered their services completely free of charge.

As mentioned earlier, Ben and Harry are keen that this group focuses solely on the GA community of airfields. “The larger commercial airfields have their own safety management groups,” continued Ben, “but until now nothing has existed for the GA airfields. Even when those aerodromes do have a place at the table at those meetings they don’t have the budget, influence or loud enough voices to be heard. Commercial operators can invest millions to quickly implement major changes to safety methods and technologies but the GASBG is focused on how smaller airfields can collaborate to effectively manage safety.”

FIRST MEETING

The first GASBG meeting took place online and immediately saw aerodrome operators engaging in open two way dialogue, discussing problems and trends they had observed. “Skill fade was a very big topic with a lot of operators returning after the lockdown,” explained Harry.

“That applies to pilots returning to the skies but also to ground staff returning to work. Ops teams, fuellers, ground handling staff and ATC have all been on furlough and attendees received some great feedback from our human factors specialist.”

“It was refreshing to hear airfield operators speaking so candidly about scenarios and incidents that had happened at their aerodromes,” continued Harry. “They wanted to share the information to benefit the wider community, including how they’d undertaken their investigations and the root-cause contributing factors that they had discovered. That, for me, is brilliant. Operators were proud of the investigations



Are you clear to proceed? Runway and taxiway incursions and excursions are one of the group’s safety performance indicators.

they had made and the changes that had resulted. That collaboration is what the group is about. It’s about getting around the table and talking, sharing experiences and learning from each other.”

The aerodromes were able to input data ahead of the first meeting and the group analysed more than 100 different safety occurrence reports dating from January to April 2021. According to Ben, “this enabled us to grade the incidents and look at areas of priority. They were classified using the ICAO Event Risk Classification Matrix which generates an event risk scoring. Based on the cumulative scores we were able – as a group – to pinpoint the areas of highest risk as well as looking at where the highest number of reports were coming from.”

The result of that analysis saw Airprox incidents deemed as the highest risk area. Although there were considerably more FOD reports than Airprox occurrences, the Matrix system prioritised Airproxes as a larger cumulative risk.

“As a result of the meeting it became obvious that the

GASBG is best placed to focus on factors that are under direct aerodrome control,” said Harry. “These include things like FOD management and wildlife habitat management for which plans can be put into place to mitigate their effect. Moving forward, the group will predominantly focus on these factors and work collaboratively to create safety strategies that work for its member airfields.”

Ultimately, that collaborative approach should mean that no matter which of the member airports you visit, you will see the same safety notices and posters. It is hoped that a cohesive communications plan will get the message across more effectively than the often ad hoc systems currently in place from aerodrome to aerodrome.

“Events like Airproxes, which more often than not occur due to pilot error or air traffic error, are much harder for us to influence as a group,” concedes Ben. “That said, we are keen to work in conjunction with other groups and provide data from our members to help analyse incidents and help improve overall safety. Ultimately, we’d also like to

include representation from the pilot and air traffic control communities within the group to offer an insight into the thought processes and human factors within both the cockpit and the control tower.”

With airfields as diverse as London Biggin Hill, Blackbushe, London Oxford, St Athan and the entire Highlands and Islands group of airports already among the 25 aerodromes signed up to the GASBG (and – not forgetting – all important recognition from the regulator), Ben and Harry seem to be on to a winning formula. The free exchange of information and experiences combined with standardisation of safety management system training and communications can only make the group an invaluable resource to the entire industry in the future.

The GASBG plans to meet on a quarterly basis – either at a member airport or remotely. The next meeting is planned for July 2021 and any GA airport or airfield operator looking to join or to find out more about GASBG can contact the team on hharrad@londonoxfordairport.com or co-chair ben.spiers@bigginhillairport.com ■

WORDS Ian Sheppard IMAGES Awyr Archive

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE PROPERLY INSURED?

Insurance is like a parachute: if you don't have it the first time you need it, there's no second chance. In the first part of a new series we ask a broker why premiums are rising and what you can do to reduce your costs

AM I the only one that has flown in the United States and been taken aback every time by the amount of paperwork I need to do to hire an aircraft – and most of it insurance/liability-related?

It is a huge contrast to the situation in the UK, where on the surface it seems we are more laid back than the US; but in fact I have become increasingly concerned that businesses in the UK don't cover themselves properly. And neither, I suspect, do those hiring aircraft or taking air-experience flights with smaller flight schools: whoever checks the insurance cover until things go wrong?

Of course, much of the difference has to do with punitive damages in the US, and the notoriously litigious nature of its society. This does not mean similar nightmares can't unfold for businesses and aircraft owners/pilots in the UK – they can and do. Many times, a dispute pitches an aircraft owner against a maintenance provider, for example, and almost always there is one or more insurance providers involved: the underwriters that sign the contract, and very possibly the broker, and naturally some lawyers too!

A BROKER'S VIEW

It could be said that as a middle-man the broker's value is in getting you a good price, and – once the deal is done – they're just going to send you a reminder for your renewal.



Pilots have been breaking aeroplanes since the dawn of flight. But will your insurance fully cover you for the necessary repairs?

Your contract of insurance is with the underwriter rather than the broker, and often these are big-name firms, whereas the broker – although also FCA regulated – is sometimes a smaller company that has a speciality in aviation.

One such broker is Export & General Aviation Insurance (E&G), which having been in various niche insurance areas for many years, started to offer aviation insurance around five years ago – spearheaded by company chairman Chris Varley, a keen PPL holder with (at the time) a Piper PA-28 based at White Waltham.

Having met Chris when flying in Florida in 2016, I ended up flying with him a few times back in the UK. I

“The insurer wouldn't cover the cost as it had previously been a perfectly good ‘on condition’ engine”

saw him go through a difficult year after a student had a prop strike in his aircraft. Despite his background in insurance he was caught out by ‘betterment’: the company that stripped down the engine said it needed new parts, but the insurer wouldn't cover the cost as it had previously been a perfectly good ‘on condition’ engine. The same year, he received the aircraft back with a reconditioned engine but a student and instructor left the brake off on a Cessna 172 and it rolled into the PA-28 – meaning the empennage had to be extensively repaired and the engine stripped again!

This goes some way to explain why E&G started to get more involved in aviation

insurance. At the same time Chris, an AOPA member, got to know the General Aviation Awareness Council and saw there was also a possible 'niche within a niche' for offering airfield insurance. Having set up facilities within Lloyds of London, Chris came to realise that the real demand for insurance was coming from companies on airfields, as well as airfield owners and managers.

PREMIUM INCREASES

Suffice to say the past five years have made Chris a font of wisdom and experience regarding the insurance needs of aviation businesses.

He started off by explaining why there has been an increase in premiums over the past year: "Aviation has a restricted pool of insurers, so you need to allow more time for a broker like E&G to find you a better price. Sometimes underwriters leave the market and other times they come back in, and this affects premiums. When there are new entrants to the market, this drives the prices down; and conversely when underwriters leave aviation, prices rise. But either way, it will be more likely that we can get you a better price if you contact us well before your renewal date."

"This past year for General Aviation has been terrible from the viewpoint of leisure flying," continued Chris. "Even though some insurers have given a concession for the pandemic grounding aircraft, it's not been a significant enough return of premium to take into account price rises they've introduced."

Chris said that aircraft owners have been able to insure their aircraft for "ground risks only" to get a lower premium, and this is still the case. "Most insurance still allows for up to five hours

of maintenance flights, or repositioning – it doesn't allow for normal flying activities but can halve the price of your renewal until you're ready to start flying again."

AIRSTRIP INSURANCE

Recently, Chris has also been arranging quotes for airfields and has observed a certain level of ignorance or confusion relating to risks, and who should be getting cover for them. This can have implications for visitors should they have an accident or incident in their aircraft.

"This is another area that is becoming more important. For example, where pilots have leased the land from a local farmer for a small airstrip there can be a problem if they assume that the farmer is insured, while the farmer assumes the pilot has arranged insurance for aviation use."

He points out that Border Force is making more visits to small airstrips since Brexit, and the Government agency has been known to ask for evidence of insurance. He also says that keeping an aircraft in someone else's hangar can cause issues. "Pilots think their aircraft is insured for damage if it is in a hangar on an airstrip, but often an insurer paying out on a claim will look to recover against the hangar-keeper's liability cover. However, farmers often don't bother with such insurance. This may not be noticed if there are no issues, but it all comes out in the wash when there's a claim."

We'll be covering more on small-airstrip insurance in the August edition of the magazine, as well as discussing professional indemnity insurance for all manner of aviation businesses – anything from an aircraft maintenance company to an airfield café, aero club or flying school. ■

Ian Sheppard is a former editor of AOPA UK (then Aircraft Owner & Pilot) magazine and is communications adviser to the General Aviation Awareness Council (GAAC). He is also a part-time flying instructor at Redhill Aerodrome.



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WORDS Steve Bridgewater IMAGES Martin Leusby

COMMUNITY SPIRIT OUT & ABOUT WITH MEMBERS

In the first of a new series, AOPA members reflect on their return to the skies following the relaxation of lockdown flying restrictions

MONDAY MARCH 29, 2021 dawned bright, dry, calm and clear. It was a perfect day to take to the skies and after months of pandemic lockdown restrictions it really was the first 'flyable' day.

Needless to say, AOPA members were among the first to 'slip the surly bonds' that bright morning and we asked them to share their stories.

Tony Purton owns a Piper PA-28 at Denham and like many pilots has been undertaking engine maintenance flights throughout the lockdown. "Rather than ground the aircraft I have sought to keep it flying to stop the engine and myself from going rusty," says Tony, "This is thanks to the dispensation that AOPA's Martin Robinson secured from the DfT."

MAKING UP LOST TIME

During the first lockdown, Tony flew four one-hour, solo, non-stop engine health flights and when restrictions eased he made solo land-away flights to Headcorn, Goodwood and Sandown plus local flights.

"Rather than ground the aircraft I have sought to keep it flying to stop the engine and myself from going rusty"

"Starting in July 2020 I made up for lost time," continues Tony. Flying 'two-up' with fellow pilots or passengers I visited Fenland, Le Touquet (twice), Old Warden, Arras, Amiens, Abbeville, Calais, Sywell, Headcorn, East Kirkby, Goodwood, Damyns Hall, Compton Abbas (twice) Brighton, Wellesbourne and Halfpenny Green."

After the lockdown was reintroduced Tony continued to make his legal engine health flights between November 2021 and March 2021.

Since the regulations were eased he has resumed his land-aways and by early May

had already visited Sandown, Leeds East, Compton Abbas, Salcombe and Bolt Head.

"I've flown 43.5 hours since Covid struck" says Tony, "but now I'm looking forward to visiting France again when permitted and the Covid Passport arrangements are in place. I am 86 years old and have had my vaccine jabs. I also passed my delayed Class 2 medical in May and will be revalidating my SEP by the end of the month."

AIR SEARCH

Martin Leusby flies a Cessna 172 from Rochester and in addition to his regular engine health flights, he has been lucky to conduct some lawful flying during lockdown as he is a volunteer pilot for the Air Search organisation. "This meant it was legal for me to do some work for Kent Resilience Forum" he explains. "They needed photographs taking of the new Internal Border Facilities at Ashford, some motorway junctions and a prospective welfare site."

Since restrictions were lifted

at the end of March, Martin has taken his aircraft to Goodwood ("just for somewhere to go and for fuel"), Sleaf ("similar but I also met Ron Gammons from the Vintage Aero Club with his Leopard Moth"), Sandown ("twice for pizza!"), Holmbeck Farm ("because it's a friendly welcome with a cuppa"), North Weald ("for fuel"), Llanbedr ("as a good long-distance flight"), Turweston ("fuel, lunch and there's always lots going on"), Middlezoy ("a quirky, relatively new strip"), Lower Withial Farm aka East Pennard ("because it's near Middlezoy and I'd never been"), Wing Farm ("similar") and Thurrock ("to see my engineer"). ■

It's good to see members out and about again. Where have you been and what have you been up to? Send us some words and (ideally) a couple of photographs as well to steve.bridgewater@aopa.co.uk and we'll include as many of your stories as possible in the Community Spirit section of the next issue of AOPA UK magazine.



Over the mountains at 5,000 ft and a 130 kts ground speed en route to Llanbedr in North Wales.



Martin Leusby found this Fairchild Argus under restoration at Middlezoy. Apparently, it has been bought by a U-2 pilot.

WORDS John Walker

THE LATEST NEWS ON UK AIRFIELDS

UPDATES TO information published in previous issues of AOPA UK:

Andrewsfield has now been deleted from this list as the adopted Local Plan excludes the aerodrome site and the surrounding area from major development.

BOURN Earmarked for 3,500 homes in the 2031 Local Plan adopted by South Cambs District Council in September 2018. SCDC approved a planning application for the development on February 19, 2021 subject to the completion of prior conditions.

COVENTRY Site nominated by the West Midlands Combined Authority for a Gigafactory for the production of electric vehicle batteries. A planning application is expected by the end of 2021 and public consultation on the proposals requires feedback by June 6, 2021.

ELVINGTON York City Council's definitive Local Plan was submitted for public examination on May 25, 2018 and public hearings

commenced on December 10, 2019. Includes up to 3,300 homes occupying the middle section of the runway. Further Local Plan public consultation is due to take place between May 25 and July 6, 2021.

OAKLEY Aerodrome closed as landowner has leased part of the site for the development and testing of connected autonomous vehicles, for which a planning application was approved by Buckinghamshire Council on March 10, 2021.

PANSHANGER Homes England has bought the aerodrome from Mariposa Investments. A public consultation by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council into providing additional housing sites for the Local Plan ended on May 1, 2020. The schemes preclude a grass runway to the north of the previous RWY 11/29 proposed in the current draft of the Local Plan. The latest public hearings on the Local Plan ended on March 17, 2021 and an outline planning application to re-open the aerodrome has been submitted. ■



Artist's impression of the proposed Coventry Gigafactory.

AOPA INSTRUCTOR REFRESHER COURSES

For revalidation of an FI certificate, the holder shall fulfil two of the following three requirements:

- 1 At least 50 hours of flight instruction during certificate validity as FI, TRI, CTI, IRI, MI or Examiner;**
- 2 Attend a Flight Instructor Refresher Seminar within the validity of the certificate; and**
- 3 Pass an Assessment of Competence within the 12 months preceding the expiry of the certificate.**

For at least each alternate subsequent revalidation, an assessment of competence must be undertaken. In the case of a renewal you should, within 12 months before renewal, attend a Flight Instructor Refresher Course and pass an assessment of competence.

NEXT DATES

The next dates for the course are

July 6 – 7, 2021

November 23 – 24, 2021

Approval has now been obtained from the CAA to run these courses using Zoom during the current pandemic.

It is therefore imperative that any candidate is up to speed on using Zoom prior to commencing the course.

Further information can be obtained from Course Administrator, John Pett, on 07754 780335. Please book the course online at www.aopa.co.uk



To register for a place on any of the seminars please call the AOPA office on 020 7834 5631 or join online at WWW.AOPA.CO.UK.

The courses start at 0930 and end at 1700 each day.

AOPA NEWS



'MRS BEECH BLUE' SPECIAL BONANZA

Specially detailed Bonanza will mark the type's 75th anniversary

TO COMMEMORATE the 75th anniversary of the Beechcraft Bonanza – which has been in continuous production since 1947 – Textron is introducing a special limited edition variant for 2022.

The aircraft will be painted in 'Mrs Beech Blue', which was a

custom shade that Olive Ann Beech (who ran Beechcraft after her husband Walter died in 1950) adopted on the advice of one of the era's most influential fashion designers, Oleg Cassini.

Olive soon adopted the colour as her 'brand' and her clothes, office decor and

even her cars were painted in the same shade. The 75th anniversary commemorative Bonanza G36 will use 'Mrs Beech Blue' on the exterior paint scheme as well as for interior detailing. It will also include a 1954 'Bubble B' logo on the carpet, and Olive Beech's signature above the

cabin table and as a graphic on the aircraft's exterior.

Olive Beech was the first woman to head up a major aircraft company and in a career that spanned 50 years she grew the company from 10 to 10,000 employees. More than 18,000 Bonanzas have been produced to date. ■

COVENTRY AIRPORT – HOW TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD (QUICKLY)

AS WE reported in the last edition of AOPA UK, Coventry Airport is at risk of being closed and built on to create a giant 'Gigafactory' producing batteries for electric vehicles.

On May 11 – just days after pro-closure Andy Street was re-elected as the Mayor of

the West Midlands – airport tenants were informed that a formal consultation period and progression towards the closure of the historic airfield had begun.

The consultation document says, "Coventry Airport has been identified as the preferred site for a West

Midlands Gigafactory and an outline planning application is now being brought forward by a Joint Venture made up of Coventry City Council and Coventry Airport Ltd."

Feedback, comments and objections **must be made by June 6** and can

only be made online at gigafactoryconsultation.co.uk. The team behind the project, which includes the Rigby Group which operates the Airport, says it is unable to hold a public exhibition or event "because of Covid restrictions" so commenting via the website is essential. ■

CAMBRIDGE'S CESSNAS

THE CAMBRIDGE Aero Club – one of the oldest in the UK, having been founded in 1930 – now has three newly refurbished Cessna 152s on its fleet. G-CLNC is the latest to join the fold, arriving in April, and is now available alongside sister ships G-CLNA and G-CLNB for training and self-fly hire. “Whether it’s mastering a good landing or an affordable option for hour building, these nifty two-seaters fit the bill,” says the club in a statement. ■



Three Cessna 152s have joined the extensive Cambridge Aero Club fleet.

AERO FRIEDRICHSHAFEN OFF BUT SYWELL LAA RALLY ON

DESPITE BEING upbeat when interviewed for the February issue of AOPA UK, organisers of the Aero show at Friedrichshafen, Germany have now relented and cancelled the trade event for the second year running.

Aero had already been postponed from April to July but COVID-19 travel restrictions in Europe mean

it has now been cancelled completely. Plans continue for Aero 2022 next April and the European Rotors show in Cologne is still planned for November 16–18, 2021.

Meanwhile, the Experimental Aircraft Association has confirmed that AirVenture 2021 will go ahead as planned in Oshkosh, Wisconsin and the Light

Aircraft Association (LAA) has confirmed that the 2021 LAA Rally will take place at Sywell, Northamptonshire on September 3–5. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the LAA (and its PFA forerunner), and planned celebrations include special exhibits at the Rally along with some rarely seen aircraft from across the years. ■



The last LAA Rally took place in 2019 and attracted 779 visiting aircraft and 4,000 visitors.

AOPA NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

The SkyDemon

navigation app has won a second Queen’s Award for Enterprise for International Trade. The Somerset-based company was launched by Tim Dawson in 2009 and is now the market leader in its industry in Europe. “It’s been a real privilege to create a service that enhances safety for tens of thousands of European pilots every day,” said Tim.

The International

Aerobatics Club (IAC) has announced that it will be holding the inaugural National Aerobatics Day on June 26, 2021. IAC members will be organising activities to engage the public and general aviation pilots in aerobatics.

Subaru has filed for

a patent for a vehicle resembling a cross between a motorcycle and a tilt-rotor. It has conventional handlebars as well as wings that fold back against the side of the bike on the ground. Each wing has an electric-powered propeller. The motorcycle engine can be run in flight to charge the motor batteries.

Canadian Prime Minister

Justin Trudeau’s latest budget includes a proposed “luxury tax” on new personal aircraft. If enacted it will add between 10% and 20% to the cost of all new GA aircraft purchased in the country. At the moment there is some confusion about whether imported used aircraft will be taxed in the same way.

GREAT HUMAN-POWERED AIRCRAFT RACE FOR 2022

If you're feeling energetic there's £50,000 up for grabs for cycling the Channel...!

A SPECIAL pedal-powered cross-Channel air race is being organised to mark the 60th anniversary of the first flight

of a human-powered aircraft (HPA) by Derek Piggott in the Southampton University Man-Powered Aircraft (SUMPAC).

The Great Human-Powered Aircraft Race is due to take place in June 2022 and a cash prize of £50,000 is

being offered to the team that conducts the fastest crossing. A further £10,000 prize will go to the second fastest team, and £5,000 to the fastest female pilot.

Entrants from around the world are encouraged to take part and will need to complete the 35 km course from Folkestone to France. All aircraft will take off on the same day to ensure no team has an unfair advantage due to weather – but take-offs will be staggered. Teams will be followed by boats with rescue divers standing by.

The prize money has been donated by Anne Marsden, who was one of the three students who designed the SUMPAC back in 1961/62. You've got just over a year to design, build and test fly your machine – see thegreatrace2022.com for more details. ■



To date, the only HPA to successfully cross the English Channel is the Gossamer Albatross, which was flown by Bryan Allen in 1979.

BON VOYAGE – FRANCE SAYS “OUI” TO BRITISH AMATEUR-BUILT AIRCRAFT

FRENCH AVIATION authorities have issued legislation allowing British amateur-built aircraft to operate in its skies.

Prior to Brexit, British homebuilt aircraft were permitted to fly to France or via French airspace and were exempt from requirements to request prior permission from the French authorities to validate their airworthiness documentation. However, in the post-Brexit era, there was uncertainty regarding

future visits to the country. The new decree will come as a huge relief for operators of Permit aircraft who want to fly across France. It now means that British-registered homebuilt aircraft can now fly in French territory for a duration not exceeding 28 consecutive days in any one visit. A reciprocal agreement has been established with the CAA to allow European Permit aircraft to visit the UK once COVID-19 pandemic restrictions finally allow international flights. ■



Other European nations including Germany already have similar recognitions in place but now British homebuilt aircraft can visit France again.

THREE RS BACK FOR 2021

FOLLOWING THE obligatory pandemic hiatus in 2020, the Royal Aero Club's Records, Racing and Rallying Association (the so-called Three Rs) has announced a six-event season of handicap air races for this summer. The first was scheduled to take

place in late May and this will be followed by events at Haverfordwest (June 26–27), Sandown (July 24–25), Llanbedr (August 21–22), Leeds East (September 11–12) and Leicester (September 25–26). In a statement the club said they are "eager to welcome

new pilots this season and are happy to meet any pilot interested in using their licence to have the greatest time ever. You only need a basic PPL with a minimum 100 hrs PIC to take part and learn fantastic new skills." Visit britishairracing.org for further information. ■

MEMBERS WORKING GROUP TRIALS NEW HYBRID FORMAT

LOCKDOWN FORCED the AOPA Members' Working Group meetings to become virtual events and this has expanded their geographic spread and range of attendees. Although many members are keen to see this format continue, there are benefits from meeting in person. As such, the MemWG is planning to trial a hybrid approach for its next meeting on Saturday June 26 at Earl's Colne. Group Chairman David

Chambers says "This will involve positioning several cameras and passing an iPad around the table to give good views of the individual speakers. We'll also be investing in a higher quality microphone and speakers to ensure good sound quality with those offsite. No doubt there will be some technical glitches, so please bear with us as we learn what works best". The intention is that future meetings will be a

mix of either online only or this new hybrid format. All members are welcome to join either in person or online, but the number of onsite attendees will be limited so pre-registration is essential via david.chambers@aopa.co.uk. The meeting runs from 10.30 until 15.00 (with a lunch break) and topics are likely to include the GA Roadmap, regulatory changes, the WINGS scheme and any other issues that members raise. ■

LEGENDARY LUSCOMBE RETURNS

IT MAY have been designed in 1937 but the Luscombe 8 remains a popular aircraft [Ed: as evident in our Just My Type feature on p34 of this issue of the magazine]. As such, it should come as no surprise that the legendary design is set to go back into production.

The Luscombe Aircraft Inc has been created by New Yorkers Steve Testrake and Stephen Young who acquired the Luscombe assets in June 2019. Their initial plan is to put the aircraft into production as a Light Sport Aircraft but ultimately to certify it to FAA CAR 4a standard airworthiness



Luscombe Aircraft Inc also plans to help owners restore 'original' Model 8s by using factory tooling and blueprints.

requirements in the USA. Thousands of drawings have already been digitised and construction of the first four

LSA versions is underway at the company's 25,000 sq ft facility at Jamestown Airport in Chautauqua, New York. ■

AOPA NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

A Massachusetts senator has filed a petition to have the body adopt "an Act to mitigate the climate impact of private and corporate air travel". He is proposing charging \$1,000 for every landing by a private, corporate and charter aircraft in the state. The act specifically exempts "public aircraft, scheduled commercial passenger air transportation, freight or cargo aircraft."

Chris Heintz, founder of prolific kitplane manufacturer Zenair, died at his home in France on April 30. He was 82. He launched the company in 1974 and started to manufacture kits from his garage. Since then he has created a range of plans and kit-built aircraft including the CH 601 and the STOL CH 701 series. More than 10,000 of his aircraft are now flying.

In a sign that the air- travel market might be bouncing back, US-based United Airlines plans to train 5,000 pilots over the next ten years. The airline is committing to "half of the graduates being women and/or people of colour". Likewise, it says half of the instructors will also be female and from minorities.

Dassault Aviation introduced its new ultra-long-range Falcon 10X business jet on May 5. It is expected to have a range of 7,500 nm, a top speed of Mach 0.925 and ceiling of 51,000 ft. It will feature dual HUDs and a single 'smart' throttle for its Rolls-Royce Pearl 10X engines.

WATT'S NEW?

As so much of our GA news now relates to electric and other 'green' powerplants, AOPA UK is introducing this regular roundup of 'Watts New' in the world of alternative propulsion. This month includes aircraft from the UK, USA and Europe.

STARTING HERE in the UK, a new company has been formed at Old Buckenham airfield in Norfolk to create what it is referring to as an 'electric sky jeep'. Nuncats is basing its design on the tried-and-tested Zenair CH 750 kitplane. The aircraft is being designed for use in the developing world where strategies are in place to provide areas with micro-grid and off-grid power systems and provide lighting, refrigeration etc. Development is hampered by lack of transport infrastructure and Nuncats has been established as a UK registered Community Interest Company (CIC) to validate technologies that will provide sustainable transport solutions to these areas.

In a rural African context, solar systems can provide a reliable, environmentally sustainable power supply to charge an aircraft and the aim is to simply merge two technologies – existing electric power systems and established GA light aircraft. "This minimises product development time, significantly reduces costs and the extensive regulatory burdens on new aircraft," says the company.

In other UK-related news, US-based developer Ampaire is set to test its hybrid-electric aircraft in the Orkney Islands later this year. The modified Cessna 337 will conduct flights between Wick and Kirkwall in a programme supported by the UK government's Future Flight Challenge. It will later move to the southwest where it will fly between airfields in Exeter and Cornwall.

Ampaire is part of a consortium called 2ZERO (Towards Zero Emissions in Regional Aircraft Operations) which also includes Rolls-Royce Electrical, the University of Nottingham, Loganair and various airports. It has funding from the government's Future Flight Challenge to demonstrate hybrid-electric aircraft on regional routes.

Another project targeting inter-island flights in the Scottish Highlands is Project Fresson. In March, the team behind the all-electric Britten-Norman Islander announced a shift from hybrid-electric power to hydrogen fuel cell technology. The plan is to now modify the Islander with wing-mounted hydrogen tanks developed by Innovatus

Technologies. The so-called Scottish Hydrogen Fuel Tank (SHyFT) system uses patented cellular core composite techniques to reduce weight and it is planned to fill these with hydrogen created on Scottish islands such as the Orkney Islands.

The European Marine Energy Centre has already installed a hydrogen production plant on Orkney and this creates hydrogen from excess power produced by the tidal energy converters and from the island's numerous wind turbines.

SETBACK FOR ZEROAVIA

However, it's not all positive news as Cranfield-based ZeroAvia's ambitious programme to develop a commercially viable hydrogen-powered aircraft suffered a setback on April 29 when its Piper Malibu Mirage testbed was badly damaged. "Our R&D aircraft made a safe, off-airport landing in a field just outside the airport," ZeroAvia said in a tweet. "Aircraft has sustained some damage, but everybody involved is safe."

The reason for the off-airport landing was not released but the aircraft was

in the midst of preparing for its first cross-country flight from Cranfield to Kemble. The port wing sheared off and the fuselage, tail and undercarriage were damaged.

The news came just days after ZeroAvia had secured investment for a large engine project to produce a powertrain with a 2-megawatt capacity (roughly 2,600 hp). The system uses hydrogen fuel cells to deliver power to electric motors and has benefitted from £17 million of funding from organisations including British Airways.

EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

On the Continent, French-based Aura Aero continues with the development of its two-seat aerobatic aircraft in both Avgas-burning and electric variants. In March the company also announced plans to develop a 19-seat, all-electric regional aircraft to fly in 2024 and enter service in 2026. No further details are available at this time other than a statement that it aims to "offer affordable, low-carbon point-to-point mobility solutions [and] cargo transport capacity".

In Scandinavia, Norwegian airline Widerøe says it will



The Scottish Hydrogen Fuel Tank (SHyFT) system will carry the gas beneath the wings of the Project Fresson Islander.



Norwegian airline Widerøe plans to use the Tecnam P-volt on scheduled services by 2026.

begin offering scheduled services using electric aircraft by 2026 and expects to be emissions-free on all domestic flights by 2040. The airline is in collaboration with Rolls-Royce Electrical and Tecnam to develop the eleven-seat P-Volt for the 'short-hop' routes it flies (many of Widerøe's routes are 30 minutes or less of flight time, with some less than ten minutes). The P-Volt is based on Tecnam's P-2012 commuter airliner and will be fully electric, including propulsion, heating, air conditioning and anti-ice systems.

Even if Widerøe does succeed in beginning electric operations in 2026, it looks likely that they will be far from the first airline to do so. In Canada, Vancouver-based Harbour Air flew an electric-powered de Havilland Canada Beaver in 2019 and has now partnered with battery maker H55 (a spinoff of the Solar Impulse circumnavigation project) to certify the eBeaver for scheduled passenger service as early as next year.

Across the Atlantic, Colorado-based Bye Aerospace unveiled its new eight-seat eFlyer 800 all-electric twin in April. According to CEO, George Bye, the "turboprop class" aircraft is aimed at the air-taxi, air-cargo, regional and charter aircraft markets. Power will come from two wing-mounted electric motors with dual redundant motor windings and

quad-redundant battery. Mr Bye claims the operating cost for the aircraft will be one-fifth that of "traditional" twin turboprops.

SUPERCONDUCTING AIRBUS

Elsewhere, the Airbus Advanced Superconducting and Cryogenic Experimental powertrain Demonstrator (ASCEND) will explore the impact of superconducting materials and cryogenic temperatures on the performance of an aircraft's electrical propulsion systems.

According to the manufacturer, the introduction of superconducting materials can lower electrical resistance, meaning that current can supply power without energy loss. When coupled with liquid hydrogen at cryogenic temperatures (-253 degrees Celsius), electrical systems can be cooled in order to significantly increase the performance of the overall propulsion system.

The demonstrator will be built over the next three years and is designed to be adapted to use turboprop, turboprop and hybrid propeller engines. Airbus says results are expected to show the potential for component weight and electrical losses to be at least halved, as the volume and complexity of systems installation is reduced, as well as a reduction in voltage to below 500V compared to current systems.

Airbus has also released

details of its Racer high-speed helicopter project, which it is projecting will cruise at more than 400 km/h (approximately 215 kts).

The Racer has been developed as part of the European Research Clean Sky 2 project and is optimised to achieve the best trade-off between speed, cost-efficiency and mission performance. According to Airbus, fuel savings will be generated thanks to the "innovative Safran eco-mode hybrid-electrical system, which allows one of the two Aneto-IX engines to be shut down while in cruise flight".

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Racer is its 'biplane' wing profile, which has been designed by the British ASTRAL consortium (comprising AERNOVA Hamble Aerostructures and the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing at the University of Nottingham). The wing is optimised for aerodynamic efficiency and provides lift during the cruise. With the aim to contribute to the lower emissions objective of the Clean Sky 2 programme, the wings have been designed with high-performance ecological materials that help reduce the aircraft's weight.

EVTOL ANNOUNCEMENTS

The development of electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) and Urban Air Mobility (UAM) craft continues apace and the

industry received a large boost on April 8 when freight company UPS announced plans to purchase up to 150 Beta Technologies Alia-250 eVTOLs. The first ten aircraft are scheduled to begin arriving in 2024 and although they are currently flown by a single pilot, the Alia-250 is designed to eventually operate autonomously. The prototype has a cruise speed of up to 150 kts, a range of 250 miles, cargo capacity of 1,400 lb and a recharge time of 50 minutes. It completed its first interstate flight in March.

Elsewhere, air taxi developer Lilium unveiled a seven-seat version of its eVTOL craft in April. Aimed at the regional shuttle market, the 'Lilium Jet' is expected to have a range of around 155 miles. Lilium has already flown two- and five-seat versions and is planning a network of up to 14 'vertiports' in Florida with the goal of launching commercial operations in 2024.

While most eVTOL aircraft are aimed at the commercial or military operators, the ASKA flying car is billed as a 'private commuter vehicle' for personal ownership. The four-seater will be the size of a large SUV when on the road but in flight mode, the wing and four arms open to reveal six rotors. We could expend paragraphs trying to explain the unfolding mechanism – but the incredible animation on homepage at askafly.com sums it up perfectly. ■



Harbour Air's eBeaver could be in commercial operation in Canada as early as 2022.



The Airbus Racer helicopter has an unusual wing profile that was partly designed by the University of Nottingham.

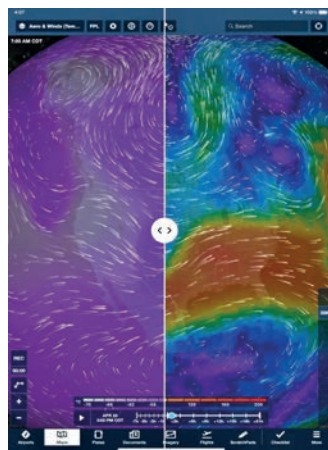
DYNAMIC WINDS, TAXI ROUTING & MUCH MORE

What ForeFlight 13.3 update **From** ForeFlight **Where** foreflight.com **Price** packages begin at £79.99 per year

THE LATEST Foreflight software update (13.3) includes all manner of new features but perhaps the most exciting is the dynamic wind and temperature display. Pilots can now view global forecast wind speed, direction and temperatures at multiple altitudes and times using animated weather layers. Both the 'Winds (Temps)' and 'Winds (Speeds)' features use colourful heat maps covering the globe to represent their primary forecast values at the selected altitude and time. Overlaid on each layer's heat map are smoothly-flowing particle animations representing wind direction and speed, providing an intuitive view of large-scale

weather patterns in relation to the layer's primary forecast value (wind speed or temperature). You can use a 'time slider' to view wind forecasts in a 24+ hour period, and move the 'altitude slider' to view winds from the surface up to 63,000 ft.

Depending on your subscription level, pilots also have the option to provide feedback on a number of 'ForeFlight Lab' projects before they become fully-fledged features. These currently include a taxi route capability, which enables you to chart a course to or from the runway with an interactive and contextually-aware 'bubble editor'. This allows you to



Dynamic winds show both speed and temperature

add, remove and rearrange route elements as your clearance is read out to you; your finished taxi route is displayed directly on the moving map.

The latest upgrade also

makes it easier to import documents and add them to custom binders using a drag-and-drop method, while the new '+' button allows you to add multiple files with a single click. Another feature is the ability to download charts and data with the app running in the background, allowing you to use other apps at the same time.

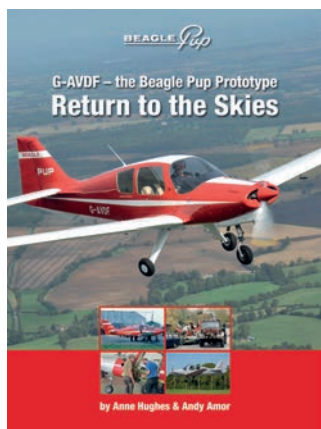
Finally, all customers with the Europe region can now access Rogers Data's new 1:500,000 VFR charts for the Balkans, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Norway, Romania, and Sweden. The new charts are automatically included in Rogers' 'Full Europe' combo package at no additional charge or as two new add-on regions. ■

PROTOTYPE PUP RETURNS TO THE SKY

What Return to the Skies **From** Anne Hughes & Andy Amor **Where** gavdfbook@gmail.com **Price** £14.99 inc P&P

FEW AIRCRAFT sum up the decline of the British aviation industry better than the Beagle Pup. It was beautiful, handcrafted and had excellent handling. It outperformed the competing US designs but was over-engineered and complex to build – costing more to produce than Beagle could sell it for.

Last year, the prototype Pup (G-AVDF) returned to the skies for the first time since 1969 after a mammoth restoration programme; this book tells its tale. It's more than a 'nuts and bolts' look at the restoration: it paints a picture of an industry and



the men who were driven to produce the perfect aircraft.

This excellent book is co-written by one of the volunteers (Anne) who helped return -DF to British skies. ■

YOUR FAVOURITE AIRFIELD ON A MASK

What COVID secure face mask **From** Map Shirt by Bright 'n Cheery **Where** etsy.com **Price** £23.49 inc VAT, plus P&P

YOU CAN'T share a cockpit with somebody who isn't in your 'bubble' without wearing a mask these days, but there's no need to wear a 'standard' one anymore. Map Shirts by Bright'n Cheery in Vermont, USA sells a variety of map-themed products – including face masks adorned with 1:500,000 aviation sectional charts.

Simply tell them which airfield or feature you want the map centred upon and they do the rest. There's a choice of a conventional face mask or a 'neck gaiter' type (illustrated).

Plus, if you really want



to complete the look, they can also provide matching iPhone cases and even print the map on T-shirts!

Just look for 'Bright'n Cheery' on etsy.com ■

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Advanced PPL and GA Upset Recovery courses are offered by organisations such as Ultimate High Academy.



Via Ultimate High

WORDS & IMAGES Steve Bridgewater unless stated

SUGGESTIONS FOR REFRESHING THE AOPA WINGS SCHEME

A group of AOPA members has a vision for the future of the WINGS scheme

DURING THE most recent AOPA Members Working Group, discussion turned to the AOPA WINGS scheme – launched in 2004, but perhaps no longer as successful as it might be.

A group of AOPA members including Martin Jones, Robert Hill, Nigel Willson, David James, Kevin Curreri and Paul Green stepped forward to establish a sub-group to compare it with similar programmes and recommend how it might be refined and promoted more effectively. They believed that awareness of the scheme was low and the take-up could possibly be better.

AOPA WINGS was one of the original models for the 2015 CAA PROUD (Pilot Recognition and Operational Up-Skilling and Development) initiative, alongside several other schemes which are also accredited as part of PROUD. These schemes are intended to give pilots a structured continuing personal development scheme and include national programmes run by the BMAA, LAA and RAF Flying Clubs Association as well as a number of local schemes run by individual flying clubs.

Since 2004, just 324 'wings' have been awarded by AOPA and around half of those issued were at Bronze level (i.e. for obtaining a PPL).

Of the 324 pilots who claimed their wings, fewer than 20

have upgraded their award to a higher level. A survey of 178 mainly PPL SEP-rated pilots (79% AOPA, 21% non-members) found that 64% did know of the AOPA WINGS scheme, whilst those who had heard of it did not know that awards are issued free to members nor how to apply. Likewise, pilots did not realise that this is not a scheme you 'join', you simply claim each award when you qualify.

The scheme is aimed at providing a framework to encourage pilots to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills. As such it allows for air touring experience as well as additional training and qualifications to broaden pilots' activities and interests. It also encourages personal development and flight safety awareness through aviation seminars. It is free for AOPA members to apply for a WINGS qualification, but a small fee of £10 applies for non-members.

CURRENT SCHEME

The current AOPA scheme has four levels with the first being given free to anyone – including non-AOPA members – who has gained a pilot licence (upon applying to AOPA). For the higher levels of award, additional criteria need to be met in terms of minimum flight times (both total and as non-commercial Pilot-in-Command), air touring experience, achievements and seminar

“Members felt the scheme was well structured but some tweaks could make it more relevant”

attendance. Applications can be approved by AOPA Corporate Member flying clubs or by AOPA HQ. They can take the form of an endorsement from the CFI (who will review the evidence) or by sending copies of your certificates, logbook etc. to AOPA directly. Recipients are posted an A5 laser-printed laminated certificate and a lapel pin alongside a letter from the AOPA CEO. The requirements for the various levels are currently set as follows:

Bronze – PPL

Silver – Total of 150 hours with a minimum of 70 hours PIC. Plus 300 nm total of touring flights flown at no less than three different aerodromes, two flying achievements and one seminar attended.

Gold – Total of 300 hours with a minimum of 200 hours PIC. Plus 500 nm total of touring flights (100 nm for helicopters) flown at no less than four different aerodromes including full stop landings at two different airfields (not the same as the departure site), four flying achievements and two seminars attended.

Platinum – Total of 500 hours with a minimum of 400 hours PIC. Plus 600 nm total of touring flights (150 nm for helicopters) flown at no less than five different aerodromes including full stop landings at three different airfields (not the same as the departure site), six flying achievements and three seminars attended. One single trip of 450 nm must be included in that 600 nm.

THE NEW PROPOSAL

Members of the sub-group felt that the current WINGS scheme was well structured but some minor 'tweaks' could make it more relevant to modern times. For example, the classroom-based activities are currently grouped with the seminars, which tends to make the achievement of the seminar attendance relatively easy as only one is required for each level beyond Bronze. With the significant increase in the number of online courses now available, it was felt this lacked any significant challenge. Furthermore, with the current frequent changes in regulations, being current is especially important and so more seminars or classroom learning should be encouraged.

The group has also suggested that given the range of classroom and virtual classroom based courses and seminars now available, the list is a little outdated. Again, crucially, there is currently no defined validity date

on any seminars so those from many years ago can currently be included – which is not in keeping with the intent to keep pilots knowledge up-to-date.

Overall the scheme is seen as sound and rightly challenging, although potentially some areas were considered too challenging for the typical private pilot. The group is therefore suggesting making Gold and especially Silver slightly easier to obtain whilst maintaining the high achievement levels required of Platinum, maintaining its status as a significant and challenging achievement. It has also suggested rationalising touring requirements and increasing the number of airfields required across the board.

In terms of achievements, the group has suggested reducing the number required, balanced with an increase in the seminars, and ensuring that those undertaken are conducted within the last year.

The group also recommends that the variety of follow-on PPL courses is updated to include all the available courses like the Advanced PPL, GA Upset Recovery, Farm Strip flying, Formation and Radio Navigation courses. It suggests that any course that includes an element of classroom-based theory/briefing and practical flight training should be considered acceptable. In terms of recognised activities, the group suggests other competitive or team events such as air rallies, expeditions and the annual Dawn-to-Dusk challenge be acceptable and should be mentioned.

Pilots who are following a local scheme at a club or airfield should also be encouraged to use the same achievements towards the AOPA WINGS award.

The hope is that these changes will make the Silver award easier to obtain while Platinum remains at the

“The sub-group will report back to the MemWG on June 26”

high level. It is felt important that the scheme gets people ‘hooked’ early and it is hoped that a more achievable Silver may well enable that. More radical schemes have also been contemplated and may have some merit but these will need to be subject to further work.

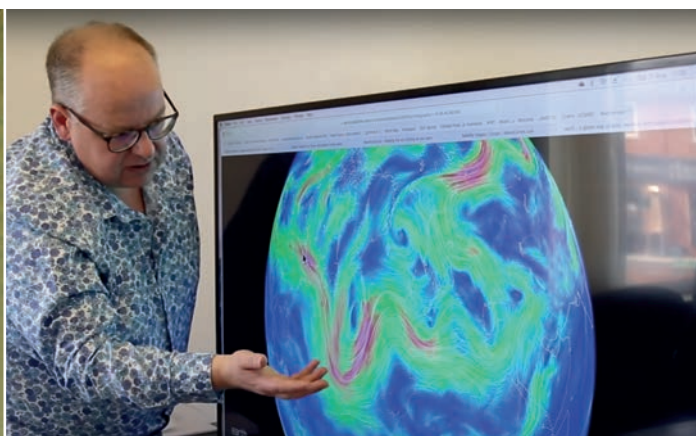
Crucially, group members felt that getting pilots to truly recognise the benefit of self-improvement was critical to the success of the scheme. This and raising awareness of the scheme could be achieved via various means, including social media, the AOPA website, newsletter, this magazine and other publications and websites. Much more work is required here right across the

flying community and this has been recognised by the CAA in its recent publication, CAP2146, and the group felt that AOPA should play a leading part in developing the thinking on continual development of pilot skills and knowledge.

THE NEXT STAGE

The proposed changes are to be discussed at the next Training and Education Committee, after which the sub-group will report back to the MemWG meeting on June 26 and review what further actions can be taken. Emphasis will be on how to increase participation rather than detailed further refinement of the qualification criteria. ■

Have you applied for your WINGS Award yet? They are free to AOPA members – just review the criteria on the AOPA UK website (aopa.co.uk under Training and Safety/ WINGS Scheme) and apply.



Via Simon Keeling

- 1: Aerobatics is a popular ‘add on’ for PPL holders and would count as an activity towards the award of a WINGS badge.
- 2: The sub-group suggests that any course that includes an element of classroom-based theory should be acceptable as a valid seminar. This is one of Simon Keeling’s Weather School sessions.
- 3: Could WINGS give you the impetus to convert onto a taildragger or add a new type to your logbook?



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WORDS & IMAGES Steve Bridgewater

THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT GA ROADMAP – WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

The DfT recently issued its much awaited General Aviation Roadmap; but what does this actually mean for the average GA pilot?

THE OPENING paragraph of the DfT's recently issued General Aviation Roadmap (GARM) document begins with the following words in bold: "We want the UK to be seen as the best place in the world for aviation and this starts at the grassroots."

The paragraph continues: "It [GA] provides the entry point for careers in aviation, as pilots, engineers, scientists and other highly skilled professions; includes a number of vital businesses and services that are vital to the aviation sector; and is an enabler of innovation. We want GA to be a flourishing, wealth generating and job-producing sector of the economy".

NATIONAL ASSETS

This is a positive start to the 16-page document, which comprises the government's vision, strategic priorities and forward programme of work to support the GA sector in the post-Brexit, post-COVID-19 "new normal".

Writing within the GARM, the DfT describes the UK's network of airfields as "a national asset" and goes on to emphasise that: "Airfields provide crucial

connectivity, both for business and emergency services, but also for leisure and sport flying. They offer potential for highly skilled, dynamic and innovative businesses to grow and flourish – be it for manufacturing and maintenance of aircraft, aviation services, flight training, and for research and innovation. Given their significant local and regional impacts, they are vital to levelling up.

"As demand grows and new technology emerges, and to support our climate aims, it is vital we have airspace that is efficient and works for all users, enabling integration and a wide range of flying activities."

With all eyes on a green future, the Government's focus on innovation and decarbonisation will require the testing and trialling of new developments in aviation technology and cleaner fuels. The Roadmap sees our airfields as a crucial element to ensuring that the impact of transformation across the aviation sector is fully realised. "It is key that we protect, enhance and innovate GA infrastructure," the report emphasises.



The Roadmap can be downloaded from [gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-roadmap](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-aviation-roadmap)

The Roadmap sets out priorities that will enable the short term recovery of the sector in the Post-COVID era and longer term plans to seize the opportunities of EU transition. These include working in partnership with the CAA and stakeholders on policy development and ensuring policy focus and funding is in place to support GA activity. It also wants to guarantee that regulation promotes safety and is "proportionate and risk based, enabling the sector to thrive, seizing opportunities for delegation, deregulation and

innovation; and developing strong international partnerships."

Crucially, the GARM calls for the protection of airfields "for the next generation" and the reforming of airspace to "ensure an efficient, safe, interoperable and integrated airspace for all users."

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

So just how does the government plan to fulfil the vision of making the UK the best place in the world for GA?

Well, a year ago the DfT set out an 'Action Plan' of strategic priorities that it felt were vital. The GARM proudly lists a series of "successes" within each of those areas, as follows:

• Policy & Governance:

Working in partnership with the CAA and stakeholders on policy development; ensuring policy focus and funding to support GA activity, improve governance and ensure meaningful engagement with the sector.

• Relevant Successes:

"1) Appointing a new GA Advocate, Phil Dunnington, to advocate for the sector.
2) Providing additional funding to turbo-charge the delivery of the CAA GA Programme where it can support GA.

3) Publishing the GA airfields survey which supports our aim to develop better evidence to support policy making.”

• **Regulation & Safety:**

Ensuring regulation promotes safety and is proportionate and risk-based, enabling the sector to thrive; seizing opportunities for delegation, deregulation and innovation; and developing strong international partnerships.

• **Relevant Successes:**

“1) Delivering the GA Safety Review to help improve the future approach to safety and regulation.

2) Publishing GA-specific COVID guidance and holding joint workshops with the CAA to support the recovery of the sector.”

• **Airfield Protection:**

Supporting the strategic infrastructure network and assets of GA for activities today and to secure it for the next generation.

• **Relevant Successes:**

“1) Launching the Airfield Development Advisory Fund to provide advice and support to help airfields thrive.

2) Supporting the establishment of an Airfield

Advisory Team to provide support to airfields.”

• **Airspace Reform:** The reforming and modernising of airspace to ensure it is efficient, safe, interoperable and integrated for all users.

• **Relevant Successes:**

“1) Directing the CAA to prioritise Airspace Change Proposals involving GNSS approaches and launching GNSS Phase Two.
2) Launching the Electronic Conspicuity device rebate scheme to support increased safety.”

• **Skills & STEM:** Inspiring the next generation of aviation professionals, incentivising innovation and green skills and the use of new technology, making aviation diverse, accessible and sustainable.

• **Relevant Successes:**

“1) Launching the Reach for the Sky aviation skills programme to improve diversity in the sector.
2) Appointing nine Aviation Ambassadors to help raise awareness of the sector.
3) Partnering with organisations to deliver outreach programmes to

“Here at AOPA we remain cautiously optimistic but would point out that, as always, the devil is in the details and their execution ...”

young people, particularly girls and those from under-represented groups.

4) Launching the Aviation Skills Retention Platform to support skills retention across the General Aviation sector.”

ASUGAU FORMED

On April 28 the CAA announced that it was integrating the GA Unit (GAU) and the Remotely Piloted Aircraft System Unit (RPAS) into a single combined organisation. The resulting Aircraft Systems Unit & General Aviation Unit (ASUGAU) will be headed up by Sophie O’Sullivan, who up until recently had been the Interim Head of the GAU.

Speaking at the announcement, she said: “Bringing the teams together over the past six months has shown there are many internal similarities on how the units run and huge benefits for the external communities in working collaboratively on shared challenges. These include the ability to collectively work together on airspace integration and collaborate on innovation through aspects such as the Future Flight Fund work and the Airfield Advisory Fund.”

The CAA reassured pilots that “how we make decisions within each team will not change, how we work with government will not change, there is to be no change in any amount of resource assigned to technical work and any independence will not be lost.”

The CAA agreed with the DfT that both GA and RPAS are recognised as economic growth areas for the UK over the coming years and says it is committed to continuing our ongoing working relationships in both areas.

The unit’s vision was also redefined as “clearly, proportionately and safely regulating and overseeing the UK’s GA sector”. The GARM goes on to say that the unit “fosters an active and inclusive GA Community with a deeply-embedded reporting and learning safety culture [and] strives to be a balanced and effective voice for GA in wider aviation matters.”

GAU PRIORITIES

The ASUGAU now oversees 469 organisations and covers most aspects of recreational aviation plus regulation of commercial balloon operations and oversight of air displays. It regulates non-complex aircraft including microlights, amateur built and historic aircraft, balloons, gliders, piston twins and singles up to 5,700kg MTOW and single pilot helicopters up to 3,175 kg. The GARM sets out key future



Roy Bridgewater

GA is vital to inspiring the next generation of aviation professionals. Seen on the right is your editor, aged 17 ahead of a trial lesson that would shape his life and career.



The principles of the GA Change Programme apply across all areas from licensing and flight training to airworthiness/maintenance, historic aviation (illustrated), the Rules of the Air, airfields, medical issues and the work the CAA undertakes with associations such as AOPA.

Among the DfT's "quick wins" has been restoring the VMC cloud minima in Class D airspace.



The DfT describes the UK's network of airfields as "a national asset" and has launched an 'Airfield Development Advisory Fund' as well as develop guidance to protect airfields.



The GARM sets out priorities that will enable the short-term recovery of the sector in the Post-COVID era and longer term plans to seize the opportunities of EU transition.



Credit here

priorities for the ASUGAU, including:

- **Inspiring** young people to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and aviation, to support and encourage career choices.
- **Enhancing** its engagement and safety promotion with the GA community.
- **Establishing** an international network for sharing best practice within aviation.
- **Improving** internal processes to ensure it manages responses to stakeholders efficiently and effectively.

• **A GA Change Programme** for 2021 and beyond, taking the feedback from the recent consultation *CAP 1985 UK General Aviation opportunities after leaving EASA* and building a programme which focusses on opportunities to make the UK a great place for GA.

Nearly 1,000 individuals responded to CAP1985 and the CAA is building a new programme based on the 9,700 data points and nearly 5,500 qualitative responses received. Some of what the DfT refers to as “quick wins” have already been actioned such as restoring VMC cloud minima in Class D airspace.

The guiding principles of the GA Change Programme will be to help the UK recreational GA sector thrive in a post-Brexit context. The ASUGAU plans to achieve this by exploring opportunities where it can safely simplify/rationalise regulation (by removing red tape/gold plating), streamline processes, offer more proportionate regulation, delegate (where possible, practical and wanted), improve clarity and guidance and encourage innovation, learning and a ‘Just Culture’.

These guiding principles apply across all areas from licencing and flight training to airworthiness/maintenance, historic aviation, the Rules of the Air, airfields, medical

issues and the work the CAA undertakes with associations such as AOPA.

THE ROAD AHEAD

To its credit the DfT admits that there is still more to do and points out within the GARM that it will be “continuing to implement a number of activities in the months and years ahead”.

COVID recovery is one area where work is ongoing and the DfT plans to continue supporting sector recovery by offering guidance, scenario planning, communications and advice. It will also continue to gather quantifiable data from the GA sector.

When it comes to policy and governance issues the GARM states that the DfT is committed to issuing “regular updates on progress to the GA community” and will also review existing governance and sector groups as well as conducting research to improve the evidence base (including airfields, diversity and skills). It will also collaborate on a CAA programme to establish an International GA Partnership.

Within the regulation and safety areas, the document

“We want the UK to be seen as the best place in the world for aviation and this starts at the grassroots”

pledges to support and engage with industry throughout the Brexit transition period and to work with the CAA to review consultation responses for post-EASA opportunities. There are also plans to eventually promote the operation of historic aircraft.

When it comes to airfield protection, the GARM pledges to launch an ‘Airfield Development Advisory Fund’ and develop guidance to protect airfields. There is also mention of “Research & Development into [the] role of airfields in supporting innovation and Zero Emissions ambitions,” but no timeframe is specified.

Recent concerns over the increase in controlled airspace and concerns over the

potential increase in urban air mobility (UAM) operators is also discussed within the GARM. The Roadmap therefore pledges to increase GA representation and engagement in airspace policy issues (including airspace modernisation) and discusses implementing new CAA procedures for reviewing the classification of airspace. DfT funding to the CAA to accelerate Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) approaches is pledged as well as ongoing research and trials of electronic conspicuity (EC) devices and extensions to the EC rebate scheme.

Mention is also made of the Airspace Change Organising Group’s “masterplan for airspace change and modernisation” but no timeframe is specified for this particular report.

Here at AOPA we remain cautiously optimistic about this Roadmap but would point out that, as always, the devil is in the details and their eventual execution.

Several CAPs will need to be changed in order to achieve these goals and we at AOPA will continue monitoring the situation as it evolves. ■



One of the priorities of the ASUGAU is establishing an international network for sharing best practice within aviation and GA.

WORDS Charlotte Bailey IMAGES Various

THE LUSCIOUS LUSCOMBE

Stylish, sleek and fun – **Charlotte Bailey** chats to Richie Piper about a real 'smile-on-your-face' aircraft



Andy Smith via Richie Piper



WITH WORLD War Two over and thousands of frustrated airmen returning home with a zest for flying, Luscombe redesigned its pre-war Model 8 in 1946 to capture the hearts of 'real' pilots. A stylish and accessible option for those seeking to take to the skies during peacetime, the Luscombe Silvaire remains incredibly popular 75 years later.

The type has a keen and loyal community of followers around the world and one such owner, keen to extol the virtues of this versatile, vintage steed is Popham-based Richie Piper.

So why the Luscombe? "For a small vintage aeroplane, it performs well and has great Art Deco style," explains Richie. "After getting your licence on Cessnas and Pipers, here is an aeroplane with a lot more character and enjoyed by an enthusiastic community

of pilots. On paper, it may be a high-wing, taildragging monoplane with an aluminium semi-monocoque fuselage and conventional landing gear, but it certainly feels like something special – a real 'smile-on-your-face' aircraft".

A TIMELESS CLASSIC

Originally designed in 1937, the Luscombe 8 originates from Kansas City, Missouri. Donald A Luscombe had previously designed the

'rag-and-tube' Monocoupe 90 but left Monocoupe Aircraft in 1933 to set up his own business producing all-metal monocoque designs. Thus the Model 8 was born – the company's most famous type and one which rightfully continues to charm enthusiasts to this day. Decades later, it still feels like a relatively modern aircraft – or as Richie puts it, "simple, but very well-built, and very elegant": a quality



Luscombe built a total of 5,867 Model 8s in all variants. The type is popular with owner/pilots or syndicates across the world.

of construction and ease of operation that has helped maintain an enthusiastic audience who, in return, remain committed to the type as well as their community.

During World War Two, the Model 8 was widely used in the USA's Civilian Pilot Training Program – with Luscombe maintaining production and securing reasonable quantities of aluminium for the wartime construction. However, the Luscombe proved eminently popular among these post-war pilots. By 1946, it's estimated the manufacturers were producing 15 airframes a day.

In fact, such was the Luscombe's share of the market that its nearest competitor at the time – Cessna – is alleged to have surreptitiously bought three airframes and subsequently brought its own Model 120 to market. Although Richie acknowledges the

Cessna 120 as being “a good aeroplane, with one or two period features”, they lack “the full period charm” of the Luscombe Silvaire.

The Cessna 120's yoke – reminiscent of a squashed car steering wheel and intended to make aviation more accessible – also didn't prove as popular as the more 'sporty' stick featured in the Luscombe.

ENTHUSIASTIC EXPRESSION

Despite the wind, drizzle and low cloud at Popham on this soggy Saturday morning, an inherently cheerful expression greets me – both from the aircraft I can't help but anthropomorphise, and its owner. G-BUAO is operated by a group of four at Popham airfield in Hampshire.

Richie has had a lifelong passion for aviation, having grown up near RAE Farnborough where his father was a senior scientist. Sadly, the need to wear glasses

“One Luscombe pilot even flies in his socks in order to better feel the brake pedals – although Richie confirms he can confidently keep his shoes on without problems”

meant an RAF flying career was stillborn, but a business career in IT funded the gaining of a commercial licence through the self-improver route.

His enthusiasm for older aircraft has led to his involvement in the Historic Aircraft Association where he is on the management committee. Richie is also a

Warden at the Honourable Company of Air Pilots (formerly known as the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators) and serves as a trustee of the Air Pilots Benevolent Fund and Chairman of Trustees of the Air Pilots Trust and the Air Safety Trust.

He's an accomplished pilot across many types, but the Luscombe is an aeroplane he especially enjoys. “It's not as good on short fields as a Cub, and it's not the fastest thing in the world, but it was never intended to be,” he explains.

G-BUAO is an example of the 'E' variant of the Luscombe – essentially an improvement on the 'C' with an increased gross weight, an electrical system as standard and wing-mounted fuel tanks. It's also the Silvaire Deluxe model, which essentially means it's the top of the range!

She's easy to prop swing and straightforward to fly and although flaps weren't



All Charlotte Bailey unless stated

Andy Smith via Richie Piper

- 1: Two wing-tank fuel gauges nestle near the roof of the cockpit. These were manufactured by Scott as the Aerogauge.
- 2: An Art Deco delight – even the badge on the tail incorporates some stylish 1930s-era design.
- 3: Richie, who is an accomplished formation display pilot, expertly positions G-BUAO for the camera-ship.

The Model 8 followed in the Luscombe tradition of using no wood in the construction. The monocoque fuselage allowed the company to build aircraft quickly and cheaply, without sacrificing strength. It was also more efficient than its competitors, cruising 10-20 mph faster on the same power.



DISPELLING THE DOUBTERS

ONE PREVAILING myth is that that the Luscombe is 'difficult to land', which Richie believes is an undeserved reputation. Many were imported to the UK in the 1980s by Cliff Lovell before being restored and resold, often to low-hour pilots who may have not

fully converted to a taildragger – and who were understandably out of their comfort zones. However, approached appropriately, the Luscombe is by no means unmanageable and although Top Gear's James May was dismissive of his Luscombe 8A – claiming "the only

dependable things in [his] life are an Italian car and a British motorcycle" – many beg to differ. This is an elegant, practical and stylish steed with which to savour the sky; long may the lovely Luscombe continue to charm her adoring audiences.

A small 'lip' on the bottom of the cowling helps cool the engine. At a time when competitors were still cooling engines by exposing cylinders to the breeze, Luscombe was the first to completely enclose the engine within the cowling.



KNOW YOUR LUSCOMBES

Luscombe Phantom	Two-seater with a 145 hp Warner Super Scarab radial engine (25 built)
Luscombe 4 Sprite	Simplified Phantom with complex compound-curved metal replaced by single-curved sheets (six built)
Luscombe 8	Initial variant with a 50 hp Continental A-50
Luscombe 8A	Model 8 with a 65 hp Continental A-65
Luscombe Master	Model 8A used by the USAAF as the UC-90 (one built)
Luscombe 8B	Model 8A with a 75 hp Continental A-75
Luscombe Trainer	Model 8A with steerable tailwheel and other minor changes
Luscombe 8C	Model 8C with increased gross weight and an 85 hp Continental C-85
Silvaire Deluxe	Model 8E with flaps and a 90 hp Continental C-90
Luscombe 8D	Model 8E with flaps and a 90 hp Continental C-90
Silvaire Deluxe Trainer	Tandem two-seat variant of the 8F for observation duties
Luscombe 8E	Model 8E with flaps and a 90 hp Continental C-90
Silvaire Deluxe	Tandem two-seat variant of the 8F for observation duties
Luscombe 8F	Produced by the Luscombe Silvaire Company in 2007 to meet FAA Light Sport Aircraft specifications. Powered by a 100 hp Continental O-200
Luscombe 8F Observer	Produced by Luscombe Aircraft Inc in 2021 to meet FAA Light Sport Aircraft specifications. Powered by a 100 hp Continental O-200
Luscombe LSA-8	Produced by Luscombe Aircraft Inc in 2021 to meet FAA Light Sport Aircraft specifications. Powered by a 100 hp Continental O-200
Luscombe 8F LSA	Produced by Luscombe Aircraft Inc in 2021 to meet FAA Light Sport Aircraft specifications. Powered by a 100 hp Continental O-200
Luscombe 10	Single-seat, low-winged sport aircraft built in 1945 using the wings, tail unit and engine section of the Model 8 (one built, destroyed in 1948 for tax reasons)
Luscombe 11A Sedan	Four-place variant designed in 1946 to specifications produced by the Flying Farmers of America. With the back seat removed, up to six milk churns could be carried (90 produced)
Luscombe 11E	Modernised 11A with a tricycle landing gear and a 185 hp Continental IO-360, developed by Quartz Mountain Aerospace in 2006 (15 built).

available until the 'F' model (by which time aluminium wings were sold as standard) G-BUAO sideslips satisfactorily.

As with all taildraggers, it's vital to set up and maintain the tailwheel assembly correctly. A worn, bent or damaged component can cause a lot of damage with 'shimmy' – and the Luscombe is no exception. However, specific settings are very much an area of personal preference. Many Luscombes have had their stern post rebuilt and reinforced, often incorporating a slightly bigger rear tyre. As for the 'age-old debate' as to how tight the steering chains are to the tailwheel – well, it seems that answer may never be universal.

ART DECO INSPIRED

Although arriving a little late to be a true Art Deco design, the Luscombe nevertheless remains close to its stylistic inspiration. G-BUAO wears a crisp cream and red colour scheme that wouldn't look out of place in a Clarice Cliff collection, including a double red coachline (I'm assured these do, in fact, serve as

“Simple, but very well-built, and very elegant ... the rudder echoes the graceful curves of its Deco origins”

'go-faster stripes') and the trademark stylized 'S' on each side of the cowling. The rounded rudder also echoes the graceful curves of its Deco design origins.

As we open the door and peek inside the cabin (it's certainly easier to climb into than a Cub), the glorious '30s-esque styling continues, with cream and scarlet leather 'sunburst' patterns adorning the door panels. The instrument panel is a single red pressed item in which original instruments nestle, including one central throttle and a stylish chrome pull-starter. (In fact, the only nods to the 21st century are the updated transponder and USB port).

The 8E variant sports an

85hp Continental C-85 engine and this horizontally-opposed, flat-four-cylinder powerplant was, in itself, a radical design. At a time when competitors Aeronca and Piper were still cooling flat engines by exposing cylinders to the breeze, Luscombe was the first to completely enclose the engine within the cowling. A small 'lip' on the bottom of the cowling helps keep engine temperatures at an optimum.

Early variants of the Luscombe sported one central 14 Imp Gal (64 litre) fuel tank enclosed in the rear of the fuselage, although later versions adopted two 12.5 Imp Gal (57 litre) wing root-mounted tanks instead. Not only did this increase fuel capacity, it also negated the need for an idiosyncratic take-off procedure. (In a climbing attitude, particularly on a cool day or with less than half a tank full, it was possible to position the engine fuel inlet above the fuel tank outlet – with the result that early variants weren't getting quite enough fuel through to their engine. Rather than directly

address the problem, the manual instead mandated the use of carb heat for take-off, thus preventing the engine from running quite so fast.) Thankfully, later tank relocations bypassed this problem entirely.

At the intersection of each wing root with the cabin, a 'Scott aerogauge' dial displays not only a fabulous font but also an accurate indication of capacity. A fuel load of 20 Imp Gal (91 litres) offers around four hours' flying time (with 20 minutes reserve); cruising at around 85 knots G-BUAO will burn around 4.6 Imp Gals (21 litres) an hour ("although best to plan for five").

A selector on the side wall of the cabin switches tanks, although Richie points out you're often operating the one on the opposite side of the cockpit with your feet!

BRAKE FROM CONVENTION

Talking of operating controls with one's feet brings us to the brakes. Just as many owners opt for different brakes, the Luscombe as a type is no exception to

personal preference. A previous example at Popham used disc brakes floating on castellations, which made a ‘tinkling’ noise while taxiing – described by Richie as “a bit bizarre”. As with all brakes, the most important thing is to maintain reliability without being too powerful (and therefore putting the aeroplane on its nose). In common with many of its day, G-BUAO has heel brakes (albeit only on the P1 side); these work well, with it “quite logical” to bring the heels in from the rudder pedals to cover the brakes during a landing. One “very well-known” Luscombe pilot even flies in his socks in order to better feel the brake pedals – although Richie confirms he keeps his shoes on without any problem.

As well as offering increased fuel capacity, wing-mounted tanks also allow a considerably larger space to stow kit within the main fuselage. This is of

“It’s a pleasant cockpit to spend time in, although the amount of glazing means it can get warm under sunny skies”

great benefit when ‘out and about’ with the enthusiastic community of Luscombe operators who are only too keen to meet up for fly-ins and even camping trips. With a slightly higher capacity than the Piper Cub (of which he’s also a fan), Richie confirms it’s perfectly possible to fit a tent in the back. Comparatively, the main cabin space isn’t dissimilar to a Cessna 152, although overall the Luscombe sits higher off the ground.

However, before packing

your camping kit for a long weekend away, a word of warning from Richie: “the biggest thing you can improve in a Luscombe is the seats”. With Don Luscombe’s original design resembling a bench seat on the floor – and not much height to fit a cushion in – here is one area with which you may wish to deviate from authenticity. Some owners opt for 152 seats, which can be adjusted fore and aft, whereas G-BUAO has an ‘enhanced bench’ comprising individual seats with a single backrest.

Once sitting comfortably, however, it’s a pleasant cockpit to spend time in. Although the amount of glazing (including a roof-mounted ‘skylight’) means the enclosed space can get warm under sunny skies, the visibility is worth it. Not only is this better than the average high-wing aeroplane, the additional two little side windows mounted into the

rear fuselage flood the cockpit with light. (Or at least, I’m assured they do when there’s not a deluge in process!)

ENDURING POPULARITY

Popham airfield alone is home to four Luscombes. Their all-metal construction means Luscombes can be kept outside – although the very first incarnations incorporated fabric-covered wings, aluminium was an option very early on, and subsequently became standard.

The type has a fond following, testimony to its enduring appeal. The Luscombe Foundation provides advice and spares and the European Luscombe community are a supportive and social crowd who enjoy sharing their passion for the aeroplane.

With summer on the horizon and restrictions lifted you can be sure to see enthusiastic Luscombe owners traversing the skies over Britain in the



- 1: G-BUAO has one central throttle and a very stylish chrome pull-starter mounted on its classy red instrument panel.
- 2: Stylish and sleek; the Silvaire sports stylish stripes and the trademark ‘S’ in a circular motif on the nose.
- 3: Don Luscombe began designing aircraft for Monocoupe but then left to create his own company. Just 25 of these radial-powered Luscombe Phantoms were built but they paved the way for the successful Model 8.

Dave Haines

Steve Bridgewater

The instrument panel is a single red pressed item in which original instruments nestle. The only nods to the 21st century are the updated transponder and USB port.





Next Issue

Coming up in the **August edition of AOPA UK Magazine***

JUST MY TYPE

Despite an undeserved early reputation as 'the v-tailed doctor killer' more than 18,000 Beech Bonanzas have been sold and the type remains in production after almost 75 years. We speak to Adrian Daley, the owner of an early V-Tail example, and ask what makes it just his type.



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

We look at the General Aviation Awareness Council's response to the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government's 'Planning for the Future' White Paper Consultation.



AOPA MEETS SOPHIE O'SULLIVAN

We speak to the CAA's new Head of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Unit & General Aviation Unit and ask her about her vision for UK GA. **If you have burning questions you would like us to pose to the regulator, email them to steve.bridgewater@aopa.co.uk as soon as possible** and we will try to get as many answered as possible.

AIRSTRIIP INSURANCE

In the second part of our new series we'll be covering more on small airstrip insurance as well as discussing professional indemnity insurance for aviation businesses — anything from an aircraft maintenance company to an airfield café, flying club or school.

A CATALOGUE OF ERRORS

'Good judgment comes from experience; experience comes from bad judgment' – or so goes to old adage. Using the power of hindsight, an anonymous pilot wants you to learn from their bad judgement in the hope that you don't make the same mistakes.



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