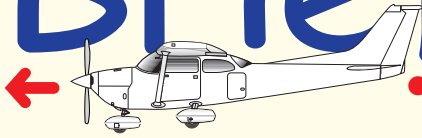


Briefings



initiative sought to tackle the high numbers of accidents resulting from stalling and spinning on the wire or in the immediate aftermath of a launch failure, which represent 80% of the fatal or serious glider accidents. Since the initiative began there has been only one serious accident of this type. Based on previous accident rates, ten serious or fatal incidents could have been expected over the same period.

Chris Finnigan, head of GA Flight Operations at the CAA, said: "The Safe Winch Launch initiative typifies the spirit of the GA Safety Award. Based on solid research and analysis and implemented with dedication and perseverance over a sustained period, the initiative has had a dramatic impact on glider safety and has undoubtedly saved lives. Hugh Browning and his team at the BGA are very deserving winners of the Award."

Also commended in the 2011 GA Safety Awards was SkyDemon Light for its graphical notam service. The free web-based tool allows pilots quick and easy access to current relevant notams at the click of a mouse while planning their flight. If you haven't used it, check out www.skydemonlight.com – easy to use and a great aid to flight planning. Jonathan Smith, Infringement Lead at NATS, said: "SkyDemon Light's simple, straightforward interface has been tremendously helpful in encouraging pilots to do their pre-flight briefing. This commendation is welcome recognition of the difference that innovative tools like SkyDemon Light can make in GA safety." ■



BGA launch team wins CAA Safety Award

The British Gliding Association's Safe Winch Launch Team has won the CAA's General Aviation Safety Award for 2011 in recognition of a major initiative to reduce glider accidents.

The BGA team has been running its safety programme for six years, during which time there has been a dramatic

reduction in the number of fatal glider accidents.

The Safe Winch Launch initiative was instigated by the BGA in 2004 in response to the numbers of accidents occurring at glider launch sites. Consisting of a major education campaign aimed at gliding clubs, pilots, safety officers and instructors, the

Test pilot Darrol Stinton 1927 – 2012

Darrol Stinton, the former Farnborough and CA test pilot and founder member of the Historic Aircraft Association, died on January 6th. His death marks the passing of one of the most influential personalities in air show and historic aircraft safety. Darrol died peacefully in hospital following surgery a few weeks after his 84th birthday.

His work in helping form the Historic Aircraft Association and in creating air display and pilot standards later enshrined in legislation, probably saved dozens of lives over the years. But that was only a small part of a varied life in which aircraft, ships and water equally dominated Darrol's interests.

His life in aviation began as an aeronautical engineering apprentice in 1944, with Blackburn Aircraft Limited of Brough on the River Humber. Blackburns taught him to fly before, around 1950 he moved to de Havilland at Hatfield, from where in Darrol's words he "escaped into the RAF" in 1953 via the RAFVR.

While still in the RAF, he trained as a Ship's Diving Officer RN. Urged on by the team of RAF divers in the sub-aqua club at Seletar, Singapore, he used them to found the now large Royal Air Force Sub-Aqua Association,

training the original team to work with the Navy in the event of aircraft accidents in water.

In 1959 Darrol was accepted for the Empire Test Pilots' School, then crossed the Farnborough runway to join the Royal Aircraft Establishment. His work varied from pure research and development to in-flight accident investigation and being a guinea-pig for the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine. In 1964, Darrol was awarded the MBE for his experimental test flying at Farnborough.

Darrol retired from the RAF in 1969 and joined the Air Registration Board, later to become the Civil Aviation Authority, as a certification test pilot on light aircraft. The work was extensive and varied, from canard to conventional single and twin-engined aeroplanes, sailplanes, motor gliders and microlights, one of which he famously described as flying like "an animated beach umbrella".

His work included several visits to the Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-in at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. On the first occasion he returned to the ARB exhausted having tested 16 weird and wonderful homebuilt aircraft in a single week.



In the 1970s Darrol was test flying an increasing number of historic, classic and vintage types for which civilian owners were seeking Permits to Fly. In 1978, in answer to CAA concerns about the ability of private owners to properly maintain and display the aircraft, Darrol together with Hawker Chief Test Pilot Duncan Simpson helped found the Historic Aircraft Association, to monitor standards, share information and make appropriate recommendations to the CAA.

For more than three decades, Darrol worked as a Vice-Chairman of the Association and the excellent safety record of historic aircraft at air shows across the UK is part of his fine legacy.

ROBINSON

Robinson on a roll



It might be some time before happy days are here again but Robinson Helicopter Company is once more on a serious upswing, with 2011 production numbers double those of the previous year and the sales backlog fattening up nicely.

During 2011 the company produced 356 helicopters – 212 R44s, 88 R66s and 56 R22s – compared to 2010's production of 162 machines.

While the 44 remains Robinson's top seller, the company says the response to the R66 turbine has been very strong. FAA certificated in October 2010 (but unlikely to be certificated in Europe any time soon) the 66 has attracted more than 360 orders so far.

At the turn of the year Robinson had a backlog of more than 400 aircraft orders and was laying plans to ramp up production once again. It laid off several hundred workers in after the 2008 crash but has recently been rehiring and expanding its manufacturing space with the aim of attacking the order book at a rate well above today's ten helicopters a week.

In November last year the company delivered its 10,000th helicopter, an R44 to a dealer in Brazil, and celebrated the milestone by breaking open the champagne on the production line. Company founder Frank Robinson, now retired, spoke briefly about the company's humble beginnings. The company was founded in 1973 and the first Robinson helicopter was delivered in 1979. Today, RHC manufactures more civilian helicopters than every other American manufacturer put together.



Bird on the wing



If you're at a loose end (and you have the requisite qualifications) there's a job going – the Breitling Wingwalkers need trustworthy help. Unfortunately, it's outside work; they've got enough pilots, thanks. They need one recruit to dance on the wing during the 90 displays they expect to do this year, all over the UK and as far afield (in the recent past) as China and Venezuela. As usual, Vic Norman leads the team, along with pilots Martyn Carrington, David Barrell, Steve Hicks, Al Hoy and Andy Wyatt. See www.aerosuperbatics.com

He helped create the system of 'Display Authorisation' which evaluated the performance of individual pilots and helped frame regulations which ensured that any potential display incidents were kept away from crowds.

In 1982, with CAA consent and retirement in sight, Darrol formed his own company of aeromarine consultants together with his lawyer-wife, Jacqueline. On leaving the CAA he continued as a freelance test pilot with the International Test Pilots' School at Cranfield, lecturing meanwhile on aircraft design as a Senior Visiting Fellow at Loughborough University.

Darrol once described his lengthy professional career as having "become cluttered with technical qualifications". He was the author of a number of text books and technical papers, he was awarded a Doctorate in Philosophy for his work on dolphin aero-and hydro-dynamics, was a Chartered Engineer, Fellow and past Vice President of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Fellow of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects, Hon Fellowship of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots in the USA, Liveryman of the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators. Gained many years before achieving all of these, he particularly prized his membership of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. – Steve Slater

Slater takes the wheel at VAC

Steve Slater became the new chairman of the Vintage Aircraft Club at their AGM at Old Warden in October. He was handed the controls by John Broad, chairman for the past decade, who will remain on the club committee as a vital source of knowledge and advice. Steve, whose day job is a motor racing commentator and writer, is a fan of low and slow tail-draggers, having first owned a VW-powered Luton Minor single-seater, then a Hindustan Pushpak – an Indian-built Aeronca. His current aircraft is Topsy Trainer G-AISA.

Steve is keen to ensure that people don't just think of the VAC as a club only for those who fly ancient or exotic machines. "The best thing about our fly-ins is the sheer variety of aircraft," he says. "Visitors arrive in everything from homebuilts to classic Pipers and Cessnas, Jodels and Austers. The club is as much about people as aeroplanes and we have got some of the best. That's what makes our fly-ins and events so much fun."

This year's fly-ins include Turweston, Fenland, Old Sarum, Leicester and the Isle of Wight. For more information on the VAC, see www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk
*Steve Slater writes on restoring a 1914 BE-2C replica in 'Being Biggles', page 22





When you have to get there...

How about this for illustrating the value of general aviation – a look at the data for Biggin Hill during 2011 showed that it connected with 747 towns and cities around the world during the year, three times more than do scheduled flights from all of London's other airports combined.

On top of that, business aviation traffic at Biggin increased by 12 percent during the autumn, despite the recession. The airport's managing director Jenny Munro says: "Taken together, these indicators show that business aviation plays a key role in getting business executives to and from an extensive range of preferred destinations, well beyond city airport hubs, with London as a main focal point."

The airport is planning a major new study this year to establish the value of business aviation to the town of Biggin Hill and the surrounding area.

'File a Flight Plan Day' a success

Nearly 800 flight plans were filed by pilots as part of the 'File a Flight Plan Day' test-run for the Olympics in November, providing excellent data and feedback for both pilots and organisers.

The Airspace and Safety Initiative, a joint GA – CAA working body, had encouraged

GA pilots to file a test flight plan to familiarise themselves with the process and learn what they need to do next year to continue flying during the Olympics with the minimum of disruption.

At a special facility set up at NATS' Corporate and Training Centre at

Swanwick, nine RAF personnel processed 788 flight plans during the four-hour practice. Next summer Atlas Control, the RAF's air traffic service for the Restricted Zone, will be staffed by 50 controllers and 50 air traffic assistants.

Dawn Lindsey, from the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy, said: "The response from pilots was excellent and I'd like to thank everyone for their efforts and feedback. Some people were so eager to participate that we had 12 flight plans submitted before the test even started!

"We learned some really valuable lessons around the RAF flight plan processing system, the automated flight planning systems currently available such as SkyDemon Light and some common flight plan errors that we can work on."

All 788 flight plans received will now be analysed and full feedback will be provided later this year. Plans are being developed to repeat the exercise again before the Games. ■

Manchester CTA changes

The CAA has approved changes to the boundaries of the Manchester Control Zone which will reduce the size of the CTR and change the shape of the overlying Control Areas while improving departure routes. Perhaps the most important change for GA is the raising of the upper limit of the Manchester Low Level Route (LLR) to 1300 ft amsl. It's only an extra 50 feet, but every little helps.

According to the CAA, the scope for further raising of the upper altitude is limited by current Liverpool ATC radar vectoring practices. In announcing the changes, they say: "Current practice may be modified in the future as a result of changes to local airspace arrangements arising from the emerging Northern Terminal Controlled Airspace (NTCA) project. This could in turn generate scope to further amend the LLR."

Trig backs Pitts Pair



Trig Avionics, the chaps who make the small Mode S transponders among other things, are sponsoring the Pitts Pair Aerobatic Display Team for 2012. The Trig Aerobatic Team of Richard Grace – son of Carolyn and Nick – and Dave Puleston will fly their liveried Pitts Special S-1D biplanes at air shows and fly-ins across Europe.

Richard says: "We are really excited to have the support of Trig Avionics, who recognise the value of general aviation and are passionate about flying. Our aircraft are particularly significant as private pilots can learn aerobatics in a Pitts, so the Trig Aerobatic Team will act as a genuine inspiration to others to take to the skies."

Both aircraft will be equipped with Trig TT22 Mode S transponders, which illustrates the fact that the Trig transponders are pretty compact – once you're pressure-fed into a Pitts there's barely room for your Mars bar and a small bottle of water. They also have to be pretty robust, too, because they'll be subjected to +6 and -4G.

Andy Davis, CEO at Trig, says: "We're pleased to support Richard and Dave. It's clear that their professionalism and pursuit of first class aerobatic display flying mirrors Trig's own desire to provide all pilots with the best quality and affordable avionics to enhance flight safety and flying pleasure." You can follow the team's progress on www.trig-avionics.com