The official magazine of the Aircraft Owner and Pilots Association www.aopa.co.uk

AOPA UK

February/March 2025

Italian style and flare

P.28

As classic trainers age, Tecnam's new P-Mentor is poised to soar as the future of flight training, according to AOPA's **Dave Hirschman**

DON BATEMAN

The man who saved countless lives with his invention

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Important information about AOPA membership and how it will affect you in the near future. P.17

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We visit one of the friendliest airfields in the country that celebrates all things aviation. P.24

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Michael Powell has some essential advice if you're planning to use handheld radios. P.18

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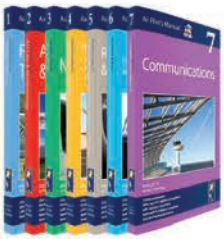

David Clark ONE-X Noise Attenuating Headset

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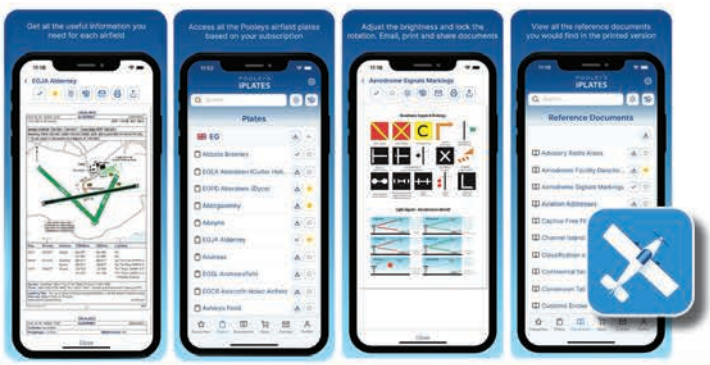

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THE NEWEST TRAINER AND LIFE SAVING INVENTIONS

THIS ISSUE is a true cross-section of all things aviation. We cover so much in the February/March publication from one of the busiest airfields in the country to the man who made aviation safer with his invention.

However, let's start with the cover story. David Hirschman of AOPA in the US was able get a flight in Tecnam's new training aircraft, the P-Mentor and believes that it could be a solid platform as a trainer for the future. Read all about this new game-changer on page 28.

Priyamvada Poyil and Blake Klapmeier's feature focuses on Don Bateman, the Honeywell engineer who invented the GWPS system. His invention has been in use for 50 years and saved countless lives. Blake himself said this about Bateman: "In my opinion – the greatest innovator in Honeywell's history, and according to all who knew him, an incredibly humble person who cared deeply about his entire team and inspiring them to reach further and to never stop innovating." Read all about it on page 38.

"In my opinion – the greatest innovator in Honeywell's history, and according to all who knew him, an incredibly humble person"

Up Front is chock full with flying advice, news on membership and how you could save money on Maintenance. Michael Powell tells an interesting tale and explains why you need to ensure your handheld radios are in correct working order.

Your Hero this month is the aerobatic Extra 300 which is loved by many and a great sports aircraft.

For Hangarchat I visited Headcorn Aerodrome. It's a fantastic airfield and well worth a visit. In the summer, Headcorn offers an array of thrilling spectacles, from parachuting and wing walking to hot air balloons and remote-control aircraft. There's something for everyone, so go pay them a visit! If you'd like a member of the AOPA magazine team to visit your airfield and share why it's a must-visit for pilots, email me at: editor@aopa.co.uk

There is also all the latest news from the world of GA. I told you it was a packed issue! Enjoy. ■

David Rawlings
Editor

AOPA UK

EDITOR
David Rawlings
editor@aopa.co.uk

ART EDITOR
Dan Payne
dan.payne@aopa.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS
Michael Powell, David Hirschman, Martin Robinson Mick Elborn, Priyamvada Poyil, Blake Klapmeier

PUBLISHED BY
AOPA UK
Lakeside Pavilion,
Chaucer Business Park,
Watery Lane,
Kemsing, TN15 6QY
+44 (0)20 7834 5631

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTIONS
AOPA UK
Lakeside Pavilion,
Chaucer Business Park,
Watery Lane,
Kemsing, TN15 6QY

HEAD OF ADVERTISING
David Impey
+44 (0)7742 605338

PRINTING
Ruddocks
56 Great Northern Terrace,
Lincoln LN5 8HL
+44 (0)1522 529591
www.ruddocks.co.uk

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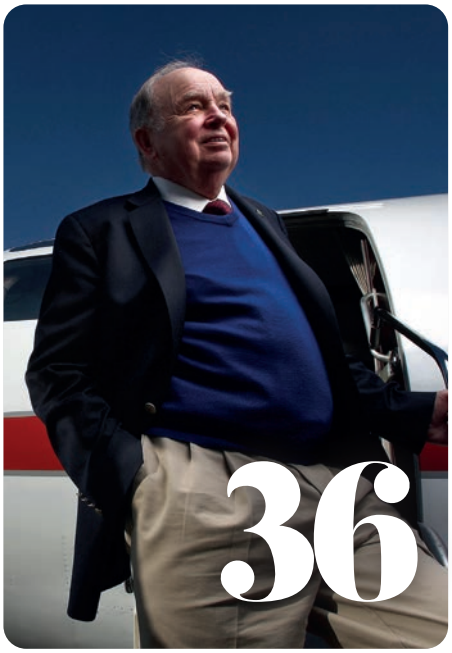
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WORDS & IMAGES Martin Robinson

"FORMULATING POLICY MEANS MAKING CHOICES"

The General Aviation sector in the UK is poised to encounter significant challenges in the coming years due to recent government reviews and policy proposals.

WTHE PREVIOUS Government initiated a review of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), also referred to as the Newman review, scrutinising its financial management and the utilisation of public funds. The report pointed to the role of public bodies and that they should not be making decisions that relate to the role of ministers BUT they must also 'appropriately' contribute to the Government's priorities, working as a team. The report found that the CAA model limited its ability to improve customer services and deliver greater efficiency.

A focal point of this review is the CAA's Scheme of Charges, which is seen as a use of public money. A particularly concerning issue relates to cross-subsidies, which under the rules is not permitted. The General Aviation Unit (GAU) currently benefits from a significant cross-subsidy, which predominantly support sport and recreational flying, and GA in general, which are integral components of the GA community. The review's outcome could lead to restructuring these financial arrangements, potentially impacting the affordability and accessibility of GA activities. The CAA has recently implemented an efficacy plan to reduce costs by 5% over three years by reinvesting the savings in customer service and modernisation.

Concurrently, there are proposals to establish a Single Airspace Design entity, designating NATS (En Route) plc (NERL) as the responsible body. This initiative involves amending NERL's operating licence to permit cost recovery, referencing the Transport Act 2000 and the 'User Pays' principle. Such changes could introduce new financial obligations for airspace users, including those within the GA sector, potentially leading to increased operational costs.

Concerns and objections have been raised regarding both issues, emphasising the potential adverse effects on the GA community. The Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS) consultation concluded recently, and the consultation on the CAA's Charging Scheme ended at the close of 2024. Engagement in these consultations is crucial for stakeholders to ensure that the interests of the GA community are adequately represented.

The previous government's approach to a GA 'road map' has been discontinued. According to a senior official, the current cohort of Department for Transport (DfT) officials lacks clear direction on GA and is unlikely to receive any soon, effectively placing the sector under the purview of the CAA. This shift coincides with government priorities focusing on carbon net-zero emissions, aircraft noise reduction, green energy initiatives, and the development of 1.5 million new homes.

Key infrastructures that support GA activities, such as aerodromes and airspace, are at heightened risk under current government policies. The emphasis on greenfield development and the utilisation of brownfield sites owned by local authorities may render existing flying sites vulnerable to repurposing for housing and other developments.

In response to these challenges, I believe that the GA sector must proactively align its narrative with government priorities. Emphasising contributions to innovation, high-tech job growth, and economic development can position GA aerodromes as integral to the solution rather than obstacles. Articulating the value of GA in terms that resonate with current policy objectives will be essential in safeguarding the sector's interests and ensuring its sustainability in a rapidly evolving regulatory and political landscape.

The aviation sector is witnessing unprecedented investment in the future of flight, yet GA sees relatively little of this funding. Discussions around airspace integration appear less focused on future advancements and more preoccupied with addressing the inefficiencies of the present. The CAA's conservative approach to aviation innovation slows progress, with the glacial pace of change exemplified by the delayed adoption of GNSS/GPS approaches at GA aerodromes.

Meanwhile, the drone community is aggressively advocating for the widespread implementation of BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) operations. The CAA may seek to contain these flights within Temporary Reserved Areas (TRAs), potentially converting them into Mandatory Transponder Zones (MTZs). This could result in fragmented Class G airspace, with disjointed MTZs creating a patchwork that could severely disrupt the operations of GA pilots.

The CAA needs to reconsider its airspace modernisation strategy, focusing on true integration across all airspace classes rather than imposing piecemeal solutions.

A coordinated national approach is essential. The NATS Open Air project holds promise, but must adopt a nationwide perspective rather than devolving into fragmented, regional solutions. The integration of all airspace users – manned and unmanned – requires

"As UAM vehicles such as e-VTOLs and air taxis begin to integrate with traditional aviation, the aviation ecosystem faces unprecedented challenges"

a cohesive strategy that balances innovation with accessibility.

Formulating policy means making choices. The aviation community must challenge the status quo and advocate for policies that enable equitable airspace access, technological advancement, and seamless integration.

FUTURE OF FLIGHT

In November 2024, Rome hosted the 14th SESAR Innovation Days (SIDs), Europe's flagship event for air traffic management (ATM) research and innovation. Over 600 researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders convened to explore the future of aviation, covering topics like climate-optimised trajectories, quantum computing, and digital flight rules. Among the event's highlights was a panel moderated by Robin Garrity of the SESAR Joint Undertaking (SESAR JU), examining whether current flight rules are fit to support the integration of new airspace entrants

I was honoured (representing AOPA UK) to be invited to join this panel alongside experts from Aeroporti di Roma, Eurocontrol, and Austrocontrol, and I extend my sincere thanks to Robin Garrity and SESAR JU for inviting me to contribute to this vital discussion. It was a unique opportunity to address the challenges facing the aviation industry as it evolves to accommodate new technologies and operational paradigms.

Robin opened the session by highlighting the growing complexity of airspace management. As UAM vehicles such as e-VTOLs and air taxis begin to integrate with traditional aviation, the aviation ecosystem faces unprecedented challenges. Panellists agreed that current flight rules are ill-suited to address the needs of new entrants, particularly those operating in urban environments or under novel conditions.

"New entrants will operate alongside traditional aircraft, and this coexistence must be seamless," Garrity said, setting the stage for a forward-looking discussion. The panel outlined how UAM vehicles will initially operate under VFR before transitioning to IFR as automation and autonomy develop. However, fully uncrewed operations will demand a new regulatory framework entirely, requiring innovation in rulemaking, technology, and implementation.

As the discussion turned to the evolution of digital flight rules, I raised concerns about the growing reliance on algorithms to ensure safety. I questioned whether the current levels of computing power and bandwidth are sufficient to handle the demands of highly automated systems. Algorithms, though powerful, are not infallible, and their ability to manage dynamic airspace environments raises critical safety questions. Any delay in communication could have catastrophic consequences. I stressed the importance of rigorous testing and redundancy in these systems to ensure safety remains paramount. The panel acknowledged that automation will be essential for integrating UAM and drone operations at scale. However, the limitations of existing technology remain significant barriers. Advanced technologies like quantum computing and sensing offer potential solutions, enabling more precise decision-making. These innovations could address the complexity of managing dense airspace while ensuring the safety.

Future frameworks must address the transition to IFR and fully autonomous operations, ensuring seamless integration across all airspace users. Robin underlined the need for collaboration, saying, "No single organisation can tackle these challenges alone."

The session concluded with a recognition of the European ATM Master Plan as a vital roadmap for modernising air traffic management. Panellists stressed the importance of synchronising technological advancements with regulatory frameworks to minimise uncertainties and maximise efficiency.

Participating in this panel was both inspiring and thought-provoking. My thanks to SESAR JU and Robin Garrity for such an engaging discussion. While the evolution of digital flight rules holds great promise, robust systems, supported by adequate computing power and bandwidth, must underpin these advancements to ensure safety. Together, the aviation community must work to address these challenges, paving the way for seamless integration and a sustainable, innovative future in European airspace. ■

Martin Robinson
CEO, AOPA UK
martin@aopa.co.uk

Cirrus has passed another milestone with its Vision Jet

MILESTONE

CIRRUS CELEBRATES 600 VISION JET DELIVERIES

Cirrus has recently rolled the 600th Vision Jet off the production line. A landmark moment that validates the VJL's popularity amongst private owners

CIRRUS HAS announced the delivery of its 600th Vision Jet, a major milestone for the company and a defining moment in the evolution of personal aviation.

As the world's first and only single-engine jet to receive FAA certification, the Vision Jet has redefined personal aviation by combining advanced technology, exceptional safety features and outstanding performance in a light, sleek design.

"We are proud to deliver the 600th Vision Jet," said Zean Nielsen, CEO of Cirrus Aircraft. "This achievement not only reflects the commitment from our team at Cirrus Aircraft, owners and stakeholders but also our relentless dedication to advancing the personal aviation industry. The Vision Jet has brought jet ownership to a broader audience by redefining what is possible in terms of safety, performance and ease of operation.

"As we look to the future, we remain committed to expanding the boundaries of aviation and making flight more accessible for all."

"Since its introduction in 2016, the Vision Jet has become the best-selling jet in all of General Aviation"

The delivery of the 600th eight-seat, single-engine jet marks a significant achievement not only for Cirrus Aircraft but for the entire personal aviation industry. Since its introduction back in 2016, the Vision Jet has become the best-selling jet in all of General Aviation, and this milestone demonstrates the growing demand for innovative, accessible and safe personal aviation solutions.

The Vision Jet has opened the doors to a new category of aircraft, enabling a broader range of pilots to transition into jet ownership and elevating the standards for what is possible in personal flight. ■

HALFPENNY GREEN INLINE FOR MAJOR UPGRADES

HALFPENNY GREEN in Wolverhampton will be disrupted for a short period as it undergoes major upgrades.

From the 15th of January to the 7th February 2025, there shall be essential infrastructure upgrades taking place airside. This will have major restrictions on airside operations.

During this period, the aerodrome will be unlicensed and all taxiways and runways will be unserviceable.

There will be an impact on fixed wing traffic. No fixed wing traffic shall be permitted to operate during this period. Indemnity flying (flying after hours) shall also not be permitted to operate.

Rotorcraft will also be affected. Rotary traffic will be permitted to operate, however, there shall be restrictions on how rotary operations are conducted during this period.

There is some good news though, Amelia's Bar & Restaurant shall be operating like normal. ■

Halfpenny Green is undergoing a huge facelift

FLIGHT DESIGN FILES FOR INSOLVENCY

LIGHT SPORT manufacturer Flight Design has filed for insolvency in Germany, stating it has run out of cash because a major customer hasn't paid its bill. The company announced the move with a notice on its website. "The insolvency application became necessary because, on the one hand, an international customer has not yet paid undisputed claims in the mid-six-figure range and another payment in the mid-six-figure range was also delayed," the website notice said. Flight Design has aircraft all over the world and is one of the most common Light Sport aircraft in service in the US. Marcello Di Stefano was named the insolvency administrator and appears confident the company can emerge with some short-term financing. "The company's order situation is good and the products have a very good reputation, and the outstanding debts are manageable," he explained. Di Stefano says he'll be looking for bridge money while going after the unpaid accounts. "This would make it possible to finalise the existing orders and hand over the aircraft to the customers." The company is based in Germany but 70 of its 100 employees are in the Czech Republic. ■

Non-payment from customers has caused Flight Design's issues

SpaceX explodes

SpaceX's seventh launch of its starship mega rocket ended with an "unscheduled disassembly." While the first-stage booster was successfully caught, the upper stage appeared to break apart as it neared space.

New rocket makes space

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched its New Glenn rocket recently, making history as the first private space-launch company in the Western world to reach orbit on its very first attempt.

China certifies electric plane

China has certified the Liaoning RX4E, a four-seat electric aircraft under its Part 23 regulations. Making the aircraft the first to qualify for commercial operations beyond just flight training.

AIRPORT REPRIEVE

NOTTINGHAM AIRPORT ALLOWED TO STAY LONGER ON SITE WHERE OVER 1,000 HOUSES COULD BE BUILT

The popular airport has been given a stay of execution mainly thanks to the work of Nottinghamshire County Council

A NOTTINGHAM airport has signed a new contract to stay on land which could have over a thousand houses built on it in future. Nottingham City Airport could eventually have to relocate amid plans which could see up to 1,600 houses built on its Tollerton airfield home.

Yet one of the site's co-directors previously cautioned that development was probably years away and Nottinghamshire County Council has now confirmed that a new lease has been signed. Truman Aviation, which runs Nottingham City Airport, occupies acres of the county-council owned land off Tollerton Lane.

The new lease, announced in late June, will allow the airport to continue operations after the previous lease expired on December 6. The terms of the new agreement have been kept under wraps due to commercial confidentiality.

It comes despite the plans for housing on Tollerton airfield still being considered, with an initial phase of 400 houses being submitted for planning permission earlier this year. The latest plans, being considered by Rushcliffe Borough Council, would entail the demolition of the café and air traffic building at the airport, as well as the removal of its runway.

Nottingham Airport will be here for a while yet

"We will still be flying in two years' time. Things, I believe, cannot happen as quickly as people think"

As part of the hybrid application, developers are also seeking outline planning permission for phased works on the airfield site, to knock down existing buildings and the wider runway, build further 1,200 homes, a primary school and create new sports pitches. Outline planning permission would mean the development can be built 'in principle', but that more detailed plans must be put forward in the future, typically to do with the access arrangements and intricacies of the development.

Brian Wells, the co-director of Truman Aviation, previously said: "My guess is that we will still be flying in two years' time. Things, I believe, cannot happen as quickly as people think. [We're] always looking to find an alternative if that is possible."

The Truman Aviation co-director confirmed that he and others are looking for an alternative site, but that they do not have a specific location in mind at this stage. Mr Wells previously said that the airport would be "disappointed" if it had to leave its current site. ■

LEGAL NEWS

CAA SETS OUT ITS AI STRATEGY

The CAAhas released its plan for utilising and regulating Artificial Intelligence technologies

THE CAA has set out its thinking on how it will oversee the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the UK aviation industry. The regulator lays out a two-pronged approach to enabling the aerospace sector's use of AI and using the technology to support the performance of its own operations.

The new strategy addresses both the challenges and opportunities, with a focus on trust from passengers to pilots. It sets out the steps that will guide the regulation of AI within the aerospace industry and aim to enable innovation while also protecting people.

By safely adopting AI, aerospace could potentially see:

- Changes in how we control the skies using real-time data and predictive modelling to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of air traffic controllers.
- Better pilots than ever, trained on adaptive, data-driven simulations.
- Fewer delays through airports and air traffic control having use of AI tools that are able to foresee operational delays and conflicts.
- Opportunities where AI can make booking, checking in, boarding and arrival procedures more efficient, leading to reduced costs for consumers.
- More fuel-efficient flying as technology on board makes planes go further with less.
- AI assisted flying that analyses real time data to make routes quicker and more efficient, using weather data and flying conditions to maximum advantage.
- Cutting time spent at airports as AI streamlines the processes behind the scenes that get you from your home to your holiday.

As AI technologies advance, they also raise issues that need to be addressed, including reliability, trust and safety, all with appropriate regulatory oversight. The UK Civil Aviation Authority will introduce a roadmap so that the strategy set out today will enable the innovation of tomorrow. This supports the wider UK Government move pro-innovation to next line to get rid of the widow.

The regulator is working with organisations in the aerospace sector to identify emerging AI technologies and models. Engagement and collaboration with the sector, and passengers, is essential. By talking to the people it most effects the UK Civil Aviation Authority will continue to enable innovation and maintain the highest levels of safety and security. ■

Artificial Intelligence is changing the world's digital landscape

AURA AERO RECIEVES EASA CERTIFICATION FOR INTEGRAL R

JUST SIX years after its creation, AURA AERO certifies its first aircraft, INTEGRAL R, a two-seater training aircraft with an aerobatic capability.

"We are very proud to have obtained the CS-23 type certification for INTEGRAL R. This is the materialisation of five years of relentless work and most of all, the recognition of our credibility as a full aircraft manufacturer with DOA/POA approvals and certification", emphasises Jérémy Caussade, Co-founder and President of the company.

The certification of INTEGRAL R marks the culmination of a test campaign, on the ground and in flight, which lasted 4 years. The first aircraft of the INTEGRAL family designed and manufactured by AURA AERO, INTEGRAL R performed its first flight in June 2020, at Toulouse-Francazal airport. The tests, as part of the certification campaign, were completed on 8 November, after 250 hours of test flight, 100 technical files and over 12,000 pages produced.

"We worked in close collaboration with EASA for the past years to get INTEGRAL R certified. I am very proud today of how far we have come. But there's more to come! We are now aiming for FAA certification for the US market", says Wilfried Dufaud, Co-founder, Executive Director and Head of Airworthiness.

Now that INTEGRAL R has obtained approval from EASA, production will ramp up, to deliver the first customers in early 2025. The manufacturer aims to deliver some 15 aircraft in 2025. ■

The INTEGRAL R is now being delivered

CHANGES ON THE WAY FOR MEDICAL DECLARATIONS

MAJOR CHANGES to the Pilot Medical Declaration (PMD) are on the way, according to the latest review by the CAA. The changes, which affect 14,400 existing PMD holders, include:

- Remove the 5,700kg aircraft max weight and restrict the PMD to 2,000kg or less.
- A requirement for a pilot to confirm that they hold a UK driving licence. If a pilot does not hold a UK driving licence, they will be required to submit a declaration from a GP to confirm that they meet the DVLA Group 1 driving licence standard.
- Introduce five yearly renewals from the date of a pilot's first PMD until the age of 60.
- Introduce two yearly renewals from the date a pilot turns 60.

Some of the above bullet points directly contradict what respondents stated during the consultation period.

So what's the CAA's response? "We will be introducing a requirement for a pilot to confirm that they hold a UK driving licence."

The CAA justified its actions saying, "We need some assurance surrounding the fitness to fly and holding a driving licence demonstrates that an individual has sufficient vision, hearing, cognition, and motor skills that are required to operate a machine like an aircraft." ■

Pilots will be needed

According to thee major airlines, pilots are set to be in high demand. This is driven by the fact that more than 17,000 mandatory retirements are projected to happen before the end of this decade.

Drone hits fire fighter

A CL-415 waterbomber battling the Los Angeles wildfires was damaged when it collided with a drone. The plane sustained a hole in the leading edge but landed safely.

Emirates hits out at AI

Emirates is hitting out at content creators who have produced AI-generated videos depicting one of its A380 and an A330 with exploding engines crashing, killing hundreds of people.

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MONEY BACK 30 DAYS GUARANTEED

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

WORDS Martin Robinson **IMAGES** Various

MEMBERSHIP FEE CHANGES

AOPA offers exceptional value to its members, but occasionally, as is the way of the world, we must make adjustments to keep everyone flying

AS YOU may know, we continuously strive to provide exceptional value for our members while navigating the increasing costs of operating our association.
From 1 April 2025, membership fees will see a modest increase of £25 per year – equivalent to just over £2 per month.

This adjustment applies to all payments made after 1 April 2025, including intermediate payments by two-year Direct Debit payers paying by annual instalments and one-year members paying by monthly subscriptions.

To be sure AOPA is still able to keep delivering, membership fees need to rise

WHY THE INCREASE?

This hard decision reflects the increasing costs faced by businesses across the board.

However, we remain committed to delivering unmatched value, whether through our advocacy efforts, safety resources, or the sense of community and representation that membership brings.

FREEDOM TO FLY

At the core of AOPA's mission is the preservation of your freedom to fly. Your membership supports vital initiatives that ensure the voice of General Aviation is heard where it matters most – whether influencing policy, safeguarding pilots' rights, or shaping a sustainable future for aviation.

BENEFITS FOR YOU

A key benefit of AOPA membership is the support we provide to individuals when faced with legal or commercial challenges. Whether it's navigating complex regulatory matters, addressing disputes, or resolving commercial issues, we stand by our members to offer expert guidance and representation when it's needed most.

YOUR ENJOYMENT

In a world where regulatory and operational challenges are ever-present (and increasing), our work at AOPA enables you to enjoy the skies with confidence, knowing that someone is working tirelessly to protect your passion and your freedom to fly.

Here at AOPA, we deeply value your continued support and trust. Together, we can safeguard the freedom to fly for today's pilots and the future generations. Thank you for being part of this vital journey. ■

UPDATED RATES (EFFECTIVE 1 APRIL 2025)

- Student Membership: Free
- Associate Membership: £105
- 1-Year Pilot or Instructor (Card Payment): £135
- 1-Year Pilot or Instructor (Direct Debit): £130
- 2-Year Pilot or Instructor (Card Payment): £300
- 2-Year Pilot or Instructor (Direct Debit): £145 per year
- 1-Year Pilot or Instructor (Monthly): £12 per month

WORDS Stu Blanchard

THE UK CAA'S SUSPENSION OF MY PRIVATE PILOT LICENCE – AND HOW AOPA IS HELPING ME

AOPA member **Stu Blanchard** lost his pilot licence due to an infringement – here he explains the pains he's going through

ON JUNE 24th 2023, I inadvertently flew my Fournier RF4D into a temporary restricted area where an air race was under way (I had not consulted the NOTAM for the day). I was aware of all aircraft, there was no avoiding action taken, and race continued; the organisers clearly believed it was safe to continue.

The organisers nevertheless made an official complaint to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and on August 8th my licence was suspended. There was no discussion, no possibility to offer any explanation, or mitigation.

I need to know what they [the CAA] intend to do going forward. To that end I have engaged a lawyer who has attempted to speak to the CAA's legal team on many occasions. I have written to my MP who has had no response, and I have spoken to AOPA on many occasions, with no response from the CAA even at the highest level. On June 7th of last year, in response to yet another enquiry via their complaints department, the CAA finally stated that it was 'not justifiable to re-instate my licence pending the reported outcome of this criminal process'.

It is now more than 18 months since the alleged infringement took place. The CAA has deemed this a 'criminal matter' but I still don't know the charge, whether there will be a court case, when that court case will be, or what punishment lies in store. Meanwhile, I have to hangar three aeroplanes which I cannot fly, all my ratings have lapsed, and I have lost interest and motivation in several restoration projects of unique aeroplanes, to the point where I have offered them for sale, and given up my workshop.

The CAA's typical response is that the matter cannot be discussed while a prosecution is under way, or that because the matter is with the lawyers, they cannot interfere. The CAA is also on record, saying that it will try and reduce costs wherever possible, and it will treat people "justly and fairly" – the very same Just Culture principals that I had adhered to during my Display Authorisation training. Neither of those things are remotely evident here. The CAA should be reminded that under the rule of law in this country nobody should be punished until they know what they being punished for, and that due process has to involve both parties.

"We are making this particular issue public in an attempt to force the CAA to engage with the pilot concerned and resolve the outstanding matter."

AOPA'S RESPONSE AND SUPPORT

Since June 2023 this member has had their pilot license privileges suspended by the CAA legal department following an allegation of an infringement of a temporary restricted area. To date our member has heard nothing regarding the unfreezing of the restrictions or whether or not the CAA intends to pursue a case for prosecution. AOPA has tried to raise the matter with the CAA and have had no response! The member's lawyer has written a number times seeking clarification and the lawyer has received no response. This is unacceptable. Regardless of the allegation, the individual needs to be treated fairly. If there is to be a prosecution, then so be it, but at least inform the individual concerned as to the action you are planning on taking. We are making this particular issue public in an attempt to force the CAA to engage with the pilot concerned and resolve the outstanding matter. AOPA is openly asking the CAA to respond as it expects higher standards from the its legal office.

This is just one example of how AOPA membership supports the pilot to ensure they'll be able to fly again. ■

WORDS Michael Powell **IMAGES** Various

HOTEL DISCOUNT FOR AOPA MEMBERS

Stay at a wonderful aviation-themed hotel Close to stunning beaches of Bulgaria

NESTLED IN the stunning Albena Resort on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, one of the most popular and scenic destinations in the country, Maritim Hotel Amelia 5* stands out with its deep-rooted connection to Amelia Earhart, the legendary aviator whose pioneering spirit still inspires pilots around the world.

The resort, known for its golden beaches, rich flora, mineral waters, and highly developed sustainability policy, is the perfect getaway for a family summer holiday.

Located just 90 metres away from the beach, Maritim Hotel Amelia 5* features strong aviation themes, intertwining elements of general aviation and the life of the legendary Amelia Earhart. From flight-inspired décor implemented in the hotel rooms, through historical pieces of Amelia's personal life and career, Lady Lindy restaurant and the Canary lobby bar will not leave you indifferent to the life of a pilot! Do not forget to brush up your skills by flying on our custom-built Flight Simulator and finish the day with a cocktail in the clouds, served in 99's Club – the hotel's executive rooftop bar & pool! Several outdoor pools, including mini aquapark for the youngest ones, wellness and spa centre, mini club and more than 40 sport activities are waiting for you in Maritim Hotel Amelia 5* and Albena Resort, Bulgaria!

"The resort, known for its golden beaches, rich flora, mineral waters, and highly developed sustainability policy, is the perfect getaway for a family summer holiday."

The local GA airport, Balchik, is just eight kilometres away

The aviation-themed 5* resort is well worth a visit

After staying at the hotel last year during an IAOPA regional meeting, AOPA's Martin Robinson described his visit as "terrific", highlighting its close proximity to the local aerodrome, where staff and pilots enjoy welcoming other GA pilots from across Europe.

DISCOUNT FOR AOPA MEMBERS

For a 30% discount on reservations made through the hotel's website, use promo code **AOPA**

Visit the hotel via commercial flight to Varna Airport, 30km away from Albena resort, Or arriving in your own aircraft, the GA Balchik airport is only 8km from Albena resort! ■

WORDS Michael Powell **IMAGES** Various

DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM?

In Part 16 of his series on *What The Pilot May Or May Not Do*, Licensed Engineer **Michael Powell** talks about the potential problems of handheld radios

FLYING DOWN to Challock from Norfolk was always one of life's pleasures, and this time was no exception. The route was well known as I had flown down to Challock to carry out glider tugging duties on several previous occasions and there was little chance of getting lost and having to call up the distress and Diversion Cell at NATS. Although I can recall a previous flight when failing to do this and landing without permission at RAF Benson cost me a cheque for nearly £400 made out to the CAA, and a firm wrap over the knuckles. Yes, I was lost!

On my flights to Challock it was my practice to call-up Southend, which I used as a waypoint, to let them know that I proposed (with their agreement) to fly through their overhead and across the Thames Estuary before turning leftish for Challock. So far so good!

Southend called me back asking if I had a problem! Well, most of us have problems of one kind or another but I couldn't think of anything that Southend would be interested in at this particular date and time. "That's negative Southend". This was followed by a further enquiry from ATC. I could do with a pee but there was not much Southend could do about that – or so I thought at the time.

"Negative Southend" followed by (from Southend ATC) "Victor Juliet runway is clear for you and emergency services have been alerted". Yay! The whole of Southend all for me and Victor Juliet!

With such generosity there was nothing for it but to land and resolve the 'problem' – it would have been churlish to just carry on and ignore such hospitality. In any case Southend Tower may know something I did not!

After landing Victor Juliet and I were pursued down the runway by a large red fire-engine which stopped close-by when we reached the tower. Seeing that there were no flames/smoke the Fire Chief agreed that there was no obvious 'problem' but remarked that the front tyre could do with some air!

Why did the tower think we had a 'problem'?

The standard procedure to carry out basic communication in the event of a radio carrier audio failure is one blip for yes and two blips for no. This is achieved by pressing the transmit key once or twice depending on whether a YES or NO transmission is required. Thus if ATC ask a question then a YES or NO response is possible.

So why did ATC think we had a problem?

I was using a hand-held radio (the panel radio was inop) and the ICOM battery was getting low. The drain on the battery is greatest on Transmit whereas the drain on Receive is relatively low. So what was happening? Southend's transmissions where being received but when I transmitted a response the battery could not meet the demand, and all Southend ATC got was a single carrier blip i.e. a YES. Since I was unaware of the battery situation, I failed to transmit two carrier blips to confirm that there was no problem other than the radio carrier audio loss.

The lesson learned? If you intend to use a hand-held radio, then make sure it is fully charged and in full working order. And if you lose radio carrier audio then the one blip, two blips, is useful.

As a footnote to this epistle, never enter controlled airspace without clearance and always do a full radio check with a local ATC before take-off. If you use a hand-held radio, make sure it is fully charged. Better still, have a socket fitted in the cockpit so that the radio may be plugged into the aircraft supply. ■

Firecrews were on hand to chase down Michael and ensure he was safe when he touched down

IMAGES: Zajcmaster / Red Bull Content Pool

YOUR HERO

WE HIGHLIGHT THE AEROBATIC EXTRA 300

UNLESS YOU'RE intimately familiar with the company and its goals, German manufacturer Extra Aircraft's model designations can be confusing.

These no-compromise aerobatic beasts were developed primarily for competitions and intense manoeuvring, but they can be remarkably docile as well.

Designed and built by Walter Extra, who founded Extra Aircraft in 1980, the company has since become known for producing some of the most popular aerobatic aircraft of modern times. The 300LP is the base model with a Lycoming AEIO-540-L1B5 300-horsepower engine, two seats, and a steel tube fuselage.

The first two-seat Extra 300 made its maiden flight on 6 May 1988, with German type certification following on 16 May 1990. The Extra 300 is stressed for ±10 G with one person on board and ±8 G with two. Some Extra 300s are registered in the experimental category under a Special Certificate of Airworthiness in the U.S., while others are type certified in the aerobatic category.

One owner said that they find their 300L thoroughly enjoyable and that it is comfortable as far as aerobatic machines go, visibility is excellent (a little less so if mid-wing) and is down-right fun to fly. And It's useable as an everyday plane. It would be my choice. ■

Send Your Hero to **editor@aopa.co.uk.** It doesn't have to be your own aircraft... own it or admire it from afar, either way we want to know what's Your Hero and why. Just send us around 100 words, your top 6 'fast facts' and we'll do the rest to show off your favourite aircraft.

RAMP APPEAL

You'll get plenty of attention when you land at an airfield in an Extra

STRONG PEDIGREE

The Red Bull Air Race used the Extra 300s for their feeder series and put the aircraft through its paces on a regular basis

UPSET RECOVERY

Despite the extreme nature of the Extra 300 it can be docile and is very good at upset recovery – perfect for training

STRONG ENGINE

The Lycoming AEIO-540 is a beast of an engine and has proven itself over thousands of hours of performance flying

VERSATILE

Although it is an out-and-out aerobatic aircraft, it can be used to amble around the skies in relative comfort

INNOVATIVE

The design of the wings means that the Extra 300 will generate as much lift upright as it will inverted

WORDS Martin Robinson **IMAGES** Various

TRYING TO EASE THE COSTS

How AOPA and its Maintenance Working Group is trying to reduce costs

AOPA, through its Maintenance Working Group has proposed a forward-thinking strategy to tackle longstanding challenges in light aircraft maintenance for the UK's GA sector.

Following the UK's departure from EASA, the CAA highlighted maintenance as one of three critical projects in CAP2146, published in 2021. However, progress has been limited. AOPA's proposal offers a cost-efficient, safety-first approach to modernise GA maintenance while reducing burdens.

Key recommendations include extending Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC) intervals for lightly used aircraft, enabling biennial ARCs to cut costs for low-utilisation operators. It also calls for expanding pilot-owner maintenance privileges, allowing owners to perform basic tasks like oil changes under a pre-approved checklist. To address supply chain challenges, AOPA suggests simplified approval processes for equivalent parts in older aircraft. Condition-based maintenance policies, which prioritise component condition over rigid schedules, and online tools for tracking further highlight the proposal's innovative edge.

"To address supply chain challenges, AOPA suggests simplified approval processes for equivalent parts in older aircraft."

AOPA is planning to help save members' money on maintenance

AOPA urges a proportional regulatory framework and collaboration with the CAA through a pilot programme to validate these measures. This approach aims to sustain UK GA's viability, ensuring safety, cost efficiency, and long-term growth for the sector.

On first contact with the CAA, it appears to have been well received but we know there is a long road ahead. With the assistance of the CAA the next step is to engage with maintenance providers to ensure we have support. ■

Are you due for an Instructor Refresher Seminar?

DON'T LOSE YOUR INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE

You may attend a refresher seminar at any time during the validity of your FI or CRI certificate. The AOPA Instructor Seminar is also open to aspiring flight instructors

2025 DATES FOR AOPA INSTRUCTOR SEMINARS

18/19 March, 7/8 May, 12/13 August and 11/12 November
To be held at the AOPA HQ in Sevenoaks
The cost for two full days seminar for non-members is £325
AOPA members benefit from a £50 DISCOUNT

TOPICS COVERED INCLUDE

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

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

THE ESSENTIALS HEADCORN (EGKH)

DETAILS

A: Headcorn Aerodrome, Headcorn, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9HX
T: +44 (0)1622 891539
W: www.headcornaerodrome.co.uk

VISITING PILOTS INFO

Headcorn Aerodrome is also known as Lashenden. ICAO designator EGKH. Visiting pilots please note that Headcorn is PPR in order that pilots can receive an aerodrome briefing. Non-radio aircraft are accepted (again strictly PPR). Customs facilities are available from 0900 to sunset for aircraft going to or returning from the continent.
Headcorn is the base for one of the most active parachute centres in the south of England with jumping taking place up to 15,000 feet. It is therefore prohibited to join overhead the airfield. The parachute Drop Zone is located 300 metres northeast of runway 21 threshold therefore go-arounds on both runways should be conducted straight ahead or to the South of the runway. Circuit direction is left hand on both runway 28 and 10 with a circuit height of 1,000 feet AAL. After landing taxiing is to the South of the runway as soon as possible, parking where available. Runway designators are not provided.

AIRFIELD DETAILS

Elevation: 72 feet AMSL
Location: 8 nm South of Maidstone 51 09.42N 000 38.50E
Radio: A/G 122.210 Headcorn Radio
Hours: Winter/Summer 0900-SS and by arrangement
Customs: Available 0900-SS
Fire Fighting Cat: RFF Cat 1

FEES

Single Engine Landing: £20.00
Twin Engine Landing: £30.00

WORDS David Rawlings **IMAGES** Oliver Myburgh

A GEM IN THE GARDEN OF ENGLAND

Headcorn is located in the heart of the Kent countryside. It's a friendly, well-run and busy airport well worth a visit if you're a fan of all things that fly

HEADCORN AERODROME is surrounded by farms, fields and nestled alongside the stunning River Beult, and if you're travelling along by road, you could easily miss it. But Headcorn is one of the busiest hubs of aviation in the South East of England.

As soon as you arrive at Headcorn you're aware that it's a busy, and old, airport that is loved by many. And the best thing about it is that it's clearly a General Aviation airfield, but it's not just for single engine pistons. There is a skydiving school, hot air balloons, helicopter operations, and one edge of the field is for RC aeroplanes. Aero Legends also have some aircraft based there so if you're lucky the occasional Spitfire might fly over.

LONG ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY

Headcorn has been home to an airfield for many years and is rumoured to be one of the oldest licensed airfields in the UK. It has a long on-and-off history with aviation since the First World War.

After 1918 the airfield, known as Shenley Farm was handed back and returned to agricultural land.

In 1927 the farm was bought by Edward Freeman (Great Grandfather of current owner, Jamie Freeman). He was asked to start the bidding by an army friend who was forced to sell due to The Depression. Edward's opening bid of £6,000 – a fair starting price, he thought – was the only bid! Edward's youngest son Mark was said to be a pilot, and was instrumental in re-introducing flying at the farm, with a BE2 bi-wing WWI bomber.

In 1942 the Airfields Board requisitioned Shenley Farm and used rubble from The Blitz to fill in ponds that form part of the runway in use today. Tracking and coconut matting were put down to form an all-weather structure that was held down by steel spikes. The RAF named the aerodrome Lashenden, which was an attempt to confuse the enemy, Lashenden is to the southwest of the field! During WWII the airfield was used by the Royal Canadian Air Force, the United States 9th Air Force, then taken over by the 100th Fighter Wing, 19th Tactical Air Command, 9th Air Force using Shenley House as its headquarters. There were 3000 ground crew supporting 70 aircraft and after the conflict the airfield closed once again.

After the war, the airfield was handed back to the Freeman's. Now in the hands of Chris Freeman and his wife Diana, they transformed the

site into the amazing aviation venue it is today.

Parachuting began in the 1960s before Thurston Helicopters arrived in 1989. Skybus Ballons arrived in 2000, then in 2013 Aerolegends landed, bringing their historic aircraft with them.

And let's not forget all the private owners and training aircraft that currently fill the three hangars.

TODAY'S HEADCORN

I went to visit Headcorn to see how busy it would be. To my surprise, even in even in the frosty winter weather there was plenty of activity. I met Julie Kelly the Ops manager and Dave Evens who was manning the ground tower on the day. It was an exceptionally warm welcome and I could appriciate why it was a popular airfield.

"It seems once someone comes here, they intend on staying," explained Julie, adding: "Our core group of instructors have all been here for a long time, four of which which have been here for more than 20 years."

They have a unique setup at Headcorn allowing the instructors more freedom in the way they train. "Weald Air Services – the actual flying club – has its own DTO, but all of the instructors have their own DTO, so they're responsible for their own students and rent the plane from Jason Freeman. It allows them more freedom.

"We also have had lots of young pilots who have learnt here, left and come back to instruct, then eventually spread their wings to become commercial pilots. My old Sunday boy is now flying for BA City Flyer. And they still try and come back and

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN Being close to the coast, visiting aircraft can often be spotted; the hangars are all full; there's a play spot for the kids; and plenty of seating for visitors

do some training – we don't normally let people escape!" said Julie.

LIKE VISITING OLD FRIENDS

The atmosphere is exceptionally inviting, but I was told that I must visit in the summer. The airfield is rammed with all things aviation. "All of our hangars are full with private owners. Aerolegends have half a hangar, which isn't enough for all of their fleet, but we get to see lots of lovely aircraft. We have a helicopter company, who have been here for years, the wing walk company, which is good to watch, the parachute club, hot air balloons and RC model aircraft. We even have Chinooks come in every now and then," said Julie.

Dave Evans is one of the people at Headcorn who often chips in and helps. He flies the Stearman for the wing walkers, the Caravan jump ship for the parachute club and is also an instructor at Headcorn. "I arrived in 1990 and never left," he states.

Dave was monitoring the tower the day I arrived and we discussed some of the difficulties of a grass strip. "We are pretty much at sea level and right next to the River Beult. Having said that, we have had a lot of drainage gone in. They feed into the river, but as the river level rises, the drainage stops. It all depends on the weather. If we have heavy snow, we can lose three weeks. But most of the year it's good."

Headcorn is surrounded by farmland and provides brilliant viewing from the cockpit. "If there's no traffic, we let the sheep on the field and they can cut the runway for us."

Flying into Headcorn is easy as well. "We're quite lucky here. Southend extended their airspace some years ago, so if you go up to North Kent you have to be careful. EasyJet was at Southend, so they extended the airspace. They're no longer there now, but the airspace restrictions have remained. However we do get a lot of visitors who stop here to refuel before hopping over the channel and we're also the first stop for people coming the other way, so there are often plenty of foreign aircraft here.

Headcorn is well worth a visit, especially in summer when there are plenty of activities going on in the skies. "You can come and sit out there all day and see everything to do with General Aviation. It's a wonderful community we have here," concluded Julie. ■

Visit AOPA .co.uk for more **airfield help and info**

"Aerolegends have half a hangar, which isn't enough for all of their fleet, but we get to see lots of lovely aircraft."

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN
A student celebrates after his first solo; parachutists are a familiar scene, and the military often pop in and play some games during the summer.

"You can come and sit out there all day and see everything to do with General Aviation. It's a wonderful community we have here."

WORDS Dave Hirschman **IMAGES** Courtesy of Tecnam

Italian style and flare comes as standard

With traditional trainers getting older and older, Tecnam's P-Mentor could be the training aircraft of the future according to AOPA's **Dave Hirschman**

THE MEDITERRANEAN Sea is placid, and the evening air is still as our two aeroplanes start a series of lazy orbits about 800 feet over the water and the islands with their craggy hills serving as a backdrop for this memorable photo flight.

This is my first flight in a P-Mentor so I'm taking in every detail—and right now, the flying part is pretty effortless. The P-Mentor's controls are crisp and harmonised, visibility is excellent, and the Rotax engine and constant-speed MT propeller provide instant acceleration and deceleration.

But the unknowable question

The signature style of the Italian designers is immediately apparent

about the aeroplane itself is how it will stand up to the brutality of the flight training market for which it's intended. The P-Mentor's paint seems too lustrous; its leather interior too refined; and its two-screen, IFR, Garmin panel too advanced and tightly integrated for the ceaseless punishment it's sure to receive as a primary, commercial, and instrument beast of burden.

Cessna and Piper set a torture standard worthy of the Marquis de Sade with 152s, 172s, Warriors, and Archers that somehow soldier on, day after tyre-squealing day, through seismic landings, abrupt power changes, side-loaded touchdowns, locked brakes, turbulence, and massive temperature swings. Yet these resilient relics somehow manage to absorb the abuse for decades on end.

STRESS TEST

I arrive at Tecnam's production centre and gleaming steel and glass headquarters about 25 miles north of Naples where Lorenzo De Stefano, the company's chief experiment test pilot, gets right to the flying.

"I've been deeply involved in testing and modifying the aeroplane throughout the process," said De Stefano, a former Italian Air Force F–104 pilot. "I'm too close to all the details. You're free to evaluate what we've done with a fresh perspective."

Up close, the metal aeroplane has some notable brawn. The metal wings with carbon-fibre leading edges are held together by sturdy button rivets with protruding round heads instead of more aerodynamic and labour-intensive flush rivets. The fuselage and control surfaces employ pull rivets that simplify construction. The thick nose gear has its own shock absorber as well as a 5.00 by 5 tyre just like the main landing gear.

FAST FACTS

117
MAX CRUISE (KTAS)

959
EMPTY WEIGHT (LBS)

950
RANGE (NM)

The P-Mentor is based on the P2002, a light sport, low-wing aircraft, and the new version retains the low wing, side-by-side seating, sliding canopy, and stabilator. The main differences are the P-Mentor's bigger size and greater fuel capacity, wings that contain far larger slotted flaps, a constant-speed MT propeller, and Rotax 912iS engine.

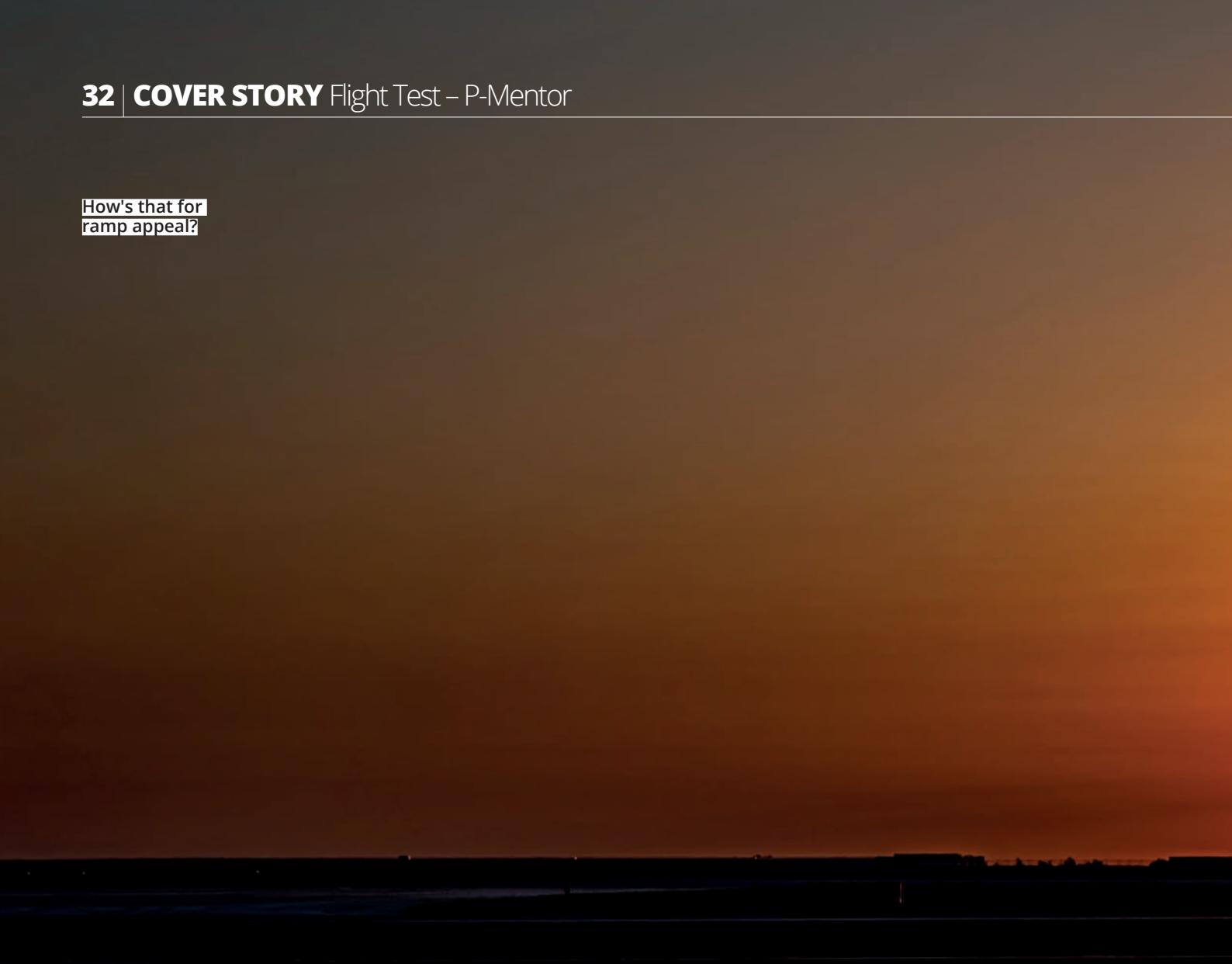
Climbing in begins with a big step up onto the wing, then lowering yourself into the cockpit while stepping on a carpeted pad just in front of the leather seats. The seat adjusts fore and aft and the rudders are fixed. The seating position is comfortably upright, and the placement forward of the wing leading edge enhances downward visibility.

Slide the canopy forward and lock it with three metal latches, left, centre, and right.

The cockpit is 42.5 inches wide (about the same as a Cessna 182 Skylane). Each pilot has a floor-mounted control

1. Wing loading on the P-Mentor is around 2lbs lighter than a Skyhawk's
2. The cockpit is roomy and well-appointed
3. The stable nosewheel provides for easier taxiing

Dave saw some of the best sights in Italy seated inside the roomy P-Mentor



How's that for ramp appeal?

stick, and a shared throttle and propeller control are mounted on a pedestal at the centre of the instrument panel.

The all-Garmin panel in this high-end example has a pair of 10.4-inch G3X displays, a GI 275 backup instrument, a GTN 650 nav/com, and GFC 500 autopilot. The only accessory it lacks is an airframe parachute, and Tecnam officials say about 90 percent of P-Mentor buyers opt to skip the chute.

Stress test number one for the P-Mentor is simply taxiing to the runway and taking off. The narrow taxiway at Tecnam's home airfield is rough and uneven, and it leads to a lumpy turf runway with clumps of tall grass interspersed with barren areas of gravelly dirt. The P-Mentor's steerable nosewheel makes for precise taxiing, however, and its stiff shock absorber keeps the two-blade prop well clear of the weeds.

With flaps set at 15 degrees for takeoff, I pull the control stick full aft for a soft-field takeoff. With the throttle full forward, the non-turbocharged, 100-horsepower Rotax whines at 5,800 rpm while the prop turns at about 2,400 rpm and acceleration is moderate.

The stabilator becomes effective at about 20 KIAS and lifts the nosewheel smartly off the grass, and I relax back-pressure to keep from over-rotating. The main wheels break free of the rutted ground in 10 seconds at about 55 KIAS.

"The aircraft also is equipped with a gear warning system that blares if/when a student reduces power to near idle"

Once airborne, I hold a 10-degree nose-up pitch attitude as the aeroplane accelerates to 70 KIAS. Raising the flaps at 500 feet AGL allows the P-Mentor to accelerate to 80 KIAS and establish a 900-foot-per-minute climb. The outside air temperature is 85 degrees Fahrenheit, the density altitude is about 2,000 feet, and the aeroplane with two adults and 20 gallons of fuel is about 250 pounds shy of its 1,587-pound maximum takeoff weight.

I raise the landing gear handle just because it's there, but the move accomplishes nothing mechanical. The P-Mentor has fixed landing gear, and the handle – as well as three red/green gear position lights – is simply there

to imbue students with the habit of raising and lowering the landing gear handle and checking the lights at the right moments. (The aircraft also is equipped with a gear warning system that blares if/when a student reduces power to near idle with flaps deployed and the landing gear handle in the up position.)

I reduce prop rpm to 2,250 by pulling back on the blue knob and level off at 1,500 feet. Indicated airspeed settles in at 105 KIAS (115 KTAS) while the engine consumes about five gallons an hour of unleaded fuel.

The hazy summer air is choppy as we turn south toward the distant outline of towering Mount Vesuvius and the ruins of ancient Pompei.

The P-Mentor's wing loading of 12.4 pounds per square foot is about two pounds lighter than a fully loaded Cessna 172S Skyhawk.

The P-Mentor doesn't have rudder or aileron trim, and a rocker switch atop the stick grip (not a manual trim wheel) adjusts pitch trim. The aeroplane's inherent stability and well-balanced controls give the impression that it's a much larger and heavier aircraft than its actual empty weight of 959 pounds.

Our photoship takes us through a series of left- and right-hand orbits, and the P-Mentor makes following those manoeuvres second nature. The bubble canopy provides an expansive view, and pushrods make the ailerons and stabilator seem friction free. Sharply angled metal tabs affixed to the control surfaces provide aerodynamic centring. There are Roman ruins and much to see in this region and De Stefano, who was raised in nearby Naples, provides a fascinating narrative. After the air-to-air photo session, it's time to visit the corners of the P-Mentor's flight envelope, and we break off to manoeuvre over the airport.

"The aeroplane's inherent stability and well-balanced controls give the impression that it's a much larger and heavier aircraft"

At 100 KIAS, a series of full-aileron-deflection banks from 45 degrees left to right and back again show a maximum roll rate of about 60 degrees per second. There's no noticeable adverse yaw, and stick forces are moderate and linear.

At only 5.5 US ga of fuel burn per hour, the P-Mentor is an economical trainer

Slow flight is remarkably steady and sedate whether the electrically actuated flaps are up, partially down (15 degrees), or fully down (30 degrees).

Unaccelerated stalls are almost impossibly benign, and they're preceded by an attention-getting aural warning ("Stall! Stall!") as well as a flashing red annunciator light at the top/centre of the instrument panel. Holding the stick full aft at idle power results in the nose dropping about 10 degrees below the horizon at 46 KIAS (flaps up) accompanied by a slight chatter in the stabilator but no lasting disruption in airflow over the wings. The same is true of power-off stalls with flaps down, except the bobble takes place at 43 KIAS.

Power-on stalls with flaps up or approach flaps and a 1-knot-per-second deceleration are also yawners. The nose nods and the stabilator buffets, but airflow over the wings never completely separates—and there's no wing drop whatsoever.

Approaches and landings are genteel affairs. The P-Mentor settles into its groove on final approach at about 65 KIAS with full flaps, the prop set to high pitch, and the landing gear handle down to avoid the horn sounding. The fuel/air mixture setting is automatic so there's no M in this GUMP check.

Cross the threshold, flare in ground effect, pull the throttle to idle, and hold the stick full aft to keep the nosewheel off the washboard runway as long as possible. The main wheels touch down at about 56 KIAS, and the nosewheel meets the turf at about 48 KIAS.

Press lightly on the hydraulic Beringer toe brakes to stop and then raise the flaps and slide the canopy open to draw in fresh air. Two cockpit vents keep the air circulating while the aeroplane is flying, but it's not enough on the ground on a warm summer day.

Whether you're flying visually or making an IFR approach by hand or via the Garmin GFC 500 autopilot, the P-Mentor responds with a pleasant mix of stability and precision. It's a forgiving aeroplane that will do its utmost to resist inadvertent stalls and spins. Yet it obediently responds to pilot inputs with ego-stroking accuracy.

"Press lightly on the hydraulic Beringer toe brakes to stop and then raise the flaps and slide the canopy open to draw in fresh air."

SEXY FOR A REASON

The P-Mentor's main attraction on paper is fuel economy. Its highly computerised Rotax engine consumes about five gallons of unleaded fuel per hour at cruise. That's about 60 percent the fuel burn of a traditional four-cylinder, air-cooled, 160-to-180 horsepower engine that uses much more costly leaded avgas. In 250 hours of flight training, that's about 1,000 gallons of fuel savings compared to most legacy trainers.

The P-Mentor's non-turbocharged Rotax 912iS is fuel injected and not

1. The controls make the P-Mentor feel larger and sturdier than its weight suggests
2. Tecnam have purposely designed the P-Mentor to look appealing and eye-catching
3. The P-Mentor is already proving popular, with more than 140 already sold

susceptible to carburettor ice, an important consideration for an aeroplane designed to fly in clouds.

The P-Mentor's manufacturer, Tecnam, isn't particularly well known to U.S. pilots, and the company is quite a story in itself. The privately owned Italian firm with a 75-year history is deeply committed to piston general aviation and is making major investments to expand and refine its piston product line.

Tecnam is the world's third-largest builder of FAA-certified piston-engine aeroplanes (behind Cirrus and Textron), and it's in the midst of a self-funded project aimed at adding 100,000 square feet of manufacturing space to increase production well beyond the 230-or-so airframes its 540 employees currently make annually.

Tecnam's product line covers a wide range of missions including flight training, personal ownership, commercial travel, and military patrol or aerial surveillance. Tecnam makes about 85 percent of the parts used in its aircraft, and about the only components it buys are engines, propellers, avionics, fuel selectors, and tyres.

The P-Mentor received European EASA approval in 2022 and the company anticipates FAA certification in the fourth quarter of this year. About 140 P-Mentors have been sold to date, and customers include four U.S. flight schools that have made fleet purchases.

The P-Mentor is meant to compete squarely against new primary, commercial, and instrument trainers. Its value proposition is fuel efficiency – both in low consumption and the ability to use unleaded gasoline. It's tempting to compare the P-Mentor to the sleek European category of sub-600-kilo "ultralights" – many of which contain similar engines and avionics. But those sporty, fast, mostly retractable-gear aeroplanes aren't trainers, and they're not certified under more stringent FAA Part 23 standards.

"About 140 P-Mentors have been sold to date, and customers include four U.S. flight schools that have made fleet purchases."

The P-Mentor faces competition from the aging fleet of legacy trainers that are currently racing to meet demand for future airline pilots. Those aeroplanes generally carry lower acquisition prices and higher operational costs – yet they appeal to flight schools because they're known quantities that mechanics know how to fix.

Tecnam says legacy trainers lack modern avionics, safety features, automation, and good looks that attract young pilots seeking airline careers. Tecnam also states that its trainer is tough enough to hold up to the rigors of flight training while its aesthetics appeal to new students.

"The P-Mentor is sexy for a reason," says Fabio Russo, Tecnam's head of research and development. "New pilots have got to feel drawn to it. It has to appeal to them, and we're convinced the P-Mentor's looks will be a major advantage in today's marketplace." ■

TECH SPEC Tecnam P-Mentor

PRICES
£290,000 starting price, IFR II.
£300,100 AP GFC 500.
£318,000 with parachute.

SPECIFICATIONS
Powerplant: 100-hp Rotax 912iS
Propeller: 2-blade MT Constant Speed
Length: 22.1 ft
Height: 8.2 ft
Wingspan: 29.5 ft
Empty Weight: 959 lb
Max Gross Weight: 1,587 lb
Useful Load: 628 lb
Fuel Capacity: 37 US gal
Baggage: 66lb
Crew: 1
Capacity: 2

PERFORMANCE
Takeoff Distance: 1,017 ft
Landing Distance: 650 ft
Range: 950 nm
Ceiling: 13,000 ft
Fuel Consumption: 5.5 US gal/ph in cruise
Max Cruise: 117 KTAS
Stall (Flaps Down): 44 KCAS

The P-Mentor's was intentionally designed to attract new pilots

Don Bateman was one of Honeywell's most innovative engineers

WORDS Priyamvada Poyil, Blake Klapmeier **IMAGES** Courtesy of Honeywell

DON BATEMAN'S brainchild still saving lives after 50 years

Honeywell's inventor extraordinaire has saved countless lives since he invented the GPWS system over half a century ago.

ALASKA AIRLINES Captain Brian Moynihan doesn't mince words when he talks about legendary Honeywell engineer Don Bateman's best-known aviation safety innovation.

"Don's pioneering work in ground proximity warning system (GPWS) technology has saved countless lives worldwide and played a monumental role in reducing the fatal accident rate over the past 50 years," said Moynihan, who also chairs the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) Safety Council. "ALPA is immensely grateful for Don's inventions, which provide pilots with timely, accurate terrain and obstacle alerts."

ALPA isn't alone. In Bateman's obituary, The Seattle Times declared, 'Don Bateman saved more lives than anyone in aviation history,' and the *New York Times* reported that the GPWS "likely saved thousands of lives." Bateman, who retired in 2016 after 65 years with Honeywell and its legacy companies, died in 2023.

Bateman conceived the GPWS in the late 1960s at a time when controlled flight into terrain (CFIT) was the leading cause of fatal aircraft accidents in the U.S., according to Brad Miller, Honeywell Senior Chief Engineer for Surveillance and Data Communications technologies.

"A CFIT accident occurs when an airworthy aircraft under pilot control is unintentionally flown into the ground, a body of water or other obstacle," he said. "With the GPWS mandate by the FAA in 1974 and the development of the enhanced ground proximity warning system (EGPWS) in the 1990s – which Don also led – CFIT accidents involving commercial aircraft have become almost nonexistent."

Senior Technical Fellow Yasuo Ishihara has been working on EGPWS for much of his 28-year Honeywell career and is now focused on adding new capabilities that will take the system far into the future. "Aviation is already the world's safest mode of transportation," he said. "I'm proud to work for the company that conceived and funded the research and development of the first ground-prox system and continues to innovate ways to make EGPWS more effective."

HOW GPWS WORK

The original GPWS used a radio altimeter to measure altitude and distance from obstacles directly under the aircraft. It also considered the aircraft's configuration and flight path and warned flight crews if their aircraft was in

immediate danger of flying into the ground, water or another obstacle.

The EGPWS incorporates terrain mapping data and three-dimensional GPS information to provide forward-looking capability and advanced aural and visual pilot warnings telling pilots to "Pull Up!" or take other evasive action. These warnings arrive about 20 seconds earlier than with the earlier-generation systems. EGPWS was mandated starting in 2005 for turbine aircraft carrying six or more passengers.

Now, Honeywell is adding runway alerting features to the EGPWS, which Honeywell insiders sometimes call "the magic box," according to Thea Feyereisen, Senior Technical Fellow. She was a long-time member of Bateman's "team of mavericks," which was known for its drive and innovation. Other Honeywell maverick team members including Ishihara, with Steve Johnson and Kevin Conner also playing critical roles in the development of ground-prox technology.

"Don was professionally persistent," Feyereisen said. "If he were still around, I'm sure he'd be proud that we're adding runway safety features to the EGPWS, but he would also ask, 'What's next?' He was passionate about aviation safety and was always pushing the envelope and looking for continued safety improvements and encouraging practical solutions that could be hosted within EGPWS."

"Our team included a diverse and clever group of engineers and pilots," Feyereisen said. "We were known as a close-knit team that was extremely curious and passionate about safety and helping pilots. Don instilled that mindset."

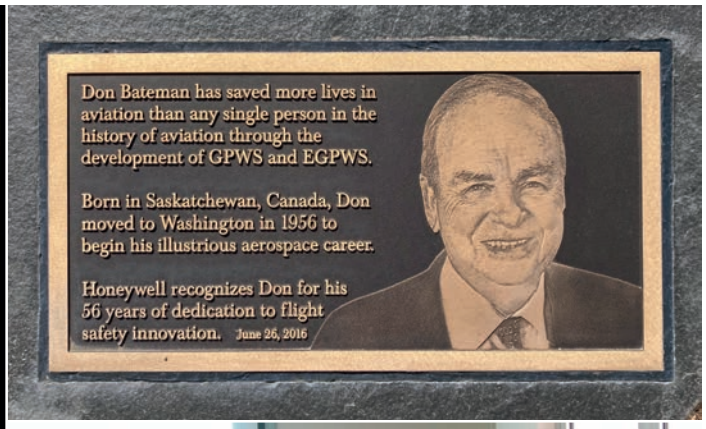
ROOTS OF AN OBSESSION

Bateman's safety obsession dates to his childhood in Saskatchewan, where he and a friend witnessed the aftermath of a midair collision from their schoolroom window and bicycled over to investigate. The incident left an impression on Don, who would go on to an engineering career centred on improving flight safety.

"Bateman's enthusiasm for aviation safety – and life in general – was contagious"

Bateman's enthusiasm for aviation safety – and life in general – was contagious, his daughter Katherine McCaslin fondly remembers. "Above all, he prioritised his mission to make flying safer," she recalls. "He had stubborn determination and persistence throughout his career, which was part of the reason that he worked so long."

Bateman held more than 40 US and 80 foreign patents for terrain avoidance systems and other innovations. He was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2005 and the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2024. In 2010, he received the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, which was presented by President Obama. Honeywell has produced nearly 60,000 EGPWS systems to date. ■



1. Don's invention indicating safe zones on the dynamic map
2. A tribute to Don outside the offices of Honeywell
3. The inventor dedicated his life to aviation safety

Bateman's legacy has earned him a place in the Aviation Hall of Fame

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