

The 'poor relation' speaks out

AOPA finally got its chance to put the case for general aviation to the Transport Select Committee in January, when Martin Robinson joined other GA representatives in the House of Commons to make a presentation on GA's perspective on the work of the CAA.

The level of dissatisfaction with the CAA was made abundantly plain to the committee, who were left under no illusion that the CAA's charges and regulatory regime were in excess of what general aviation needed or could afford.

Martin Robinson was one of three GA representatives called as witnesses before the committee. The others were Mark Wilson of the BBGA – formerly GAMTA – and Paul Draper, chairman of PPL/IR. Both are AOPA members. Also present was Mike Steeden, Director of Civil Air Transport for the SBAC. Committee members addressed questions to individual witnesses.

The hearing was not a comfortable one for the CAA. Mrs Louise Ellman, Labour MP for Liverpool Riverside, pointed out that CAA chairman Sir Roy McNulty had earlier admitted to the Committee that he "had not paid sufficient attention to general aviation" and said that was going to be put right.

Committee chairman Gwyneth Dunwoody, Labour MP for Crewe and Nantwich, began by asking what the contribution of general aviation was to the UK economy. Martin Robinson responded that there was a study currently under way in conjunction with the Department for Transport, and offered to make the preliminary report available to the Committee.

Asked whether GA believed it was getting value for money from the CAA, Mark Wilson said the CAA was not the organisation it would be if it was solely there to regulate GA, and that GA was called on to pay a disproportionate sum for an organisation whose primary purpose was to look after airlines.

"Just having a one-size-fits-all level of regulation such as exists for

commercial operations today is not useful," he said. "It is not sensible for somebody who wishes to operate pleasure flights round a beach during the summer to have to approach the same document as British Airways."

In answer to Eric Martlew, Labour MP for Carlisle, Martin Robinson said he did not think the CAA's six percent return on capital was justified, and Paul Draper added that while the CAA should be self-funded, the six percent "profit" was a tax on safety.

Fielding a question from Eric Martlew, Labour MP for Eltham, Mark Wilson said he believed general aviation did pay its way, and was in fact disadvantaged by disproportionate regulation which meant small companies were hit harder by CAA charges. Martin Robinson referred to the Helios Report, commissioned by AOPA at the time the CAA was pushing through its recent massive increases it charged for GA, saying its findings bore out a lot of what Mark Wilson had been saying about

smaller companies.

Mark Wilson proposed the development of a policy on general aviation, while Martin Robinson suggested that Sir Roy McNulty's promise to pay more attention to GA was "too little, too late" with EASA coming on stream. EASA head Patrick Goudou had said in an interview with AOPA's *General Aviation* magazine that it is their intention to reduce the burdens on general aviation, of which they are very aware. "He also goes on to say that we need general aviation in Europe, and we need to promote it because it is weak," he added. "If we could get our own Civil Aviation Authority to come out and say words like this, it would be such a boost to our community." He called for the National Audit Office to audit the CAA.



Sir Roy McNulty
"had not paid sufficient attention to general aviation"

Louise Ellman MP asked whether there was a danger that 'light touch' regulation might compromise safety, but Martin Robinson answered: "Not if it was risk-based."

Robert Goodwill, Conservative MP for Scarborough, said: "I am getting the impression that general aviation seems to be the poor relation and everything seems to be focused on the airlines, and you are a bit of an add-on. Would that be a right

impression?"

Mark Wilson replied that the small proportion of aircraft flying outside GA – the airlines – had the greatest attention. Paul Draper added that general aviation was being shouldered out of airspace while paying for the privilege of being funnelled into ever-narrower corridors, and the problems would increase as the airlines increased in size.

Martin Robinson raised the issue of the Hampton Report on reducing administrative burdens. "There is a need for the Civil Aviation Authority to understand the outflow of that report and to look at things like Regulatory

Impact Assessments, small business impact tests, and competitive analysis," he said. "A good example of where that would have been useful was the introduction of JAR-FCL which has had a huge impact on general aviation – there are fewer instrument rated pilots and there are

fewer multi-engine pilots.

"The reality is that general aviation is in a decline. Ten years ago we were issuing 40 per cent more licences than we are today. Activity at airports is down between 25 and 37 per

cent. Access to regional airports is extremely difficult as the pricing policies of these airports keep general aviation operators out. Taking a light twin to Bristol Airport, one of our members recently faced a bill of £180. The problem for general aviation is that it is being sucked up into the commercial area, when what is needed is a fresh look at how it can continue into the future."

The CAA was slow to introduce new technology, he added. "If we saw a GPS-based approach being introduced to more airfields we

would have more opportunities for general aviation to fly safely into a greater number of airfields and not need to come into the regional airports."

Clive Efford MP raised the issue of the JAA instrument rating, which was picked up by Paul Draper, who said: "The requirements of JAA instrument rating acquisition now are so difficult, and a private pilot cannot afford to set aside three months or more to obtain a rating if they are in business. It takes a great deal of effort and money. Alternatively, under the American system – to which most of them have migrated as a result – they can obtain an instrument rating much more easily, yet it does not make any difference to the standards of being required to fly. They are operating in the UK with an American registered aeroplane, equally as safely as a UK instrument rated pilot. If there was any question that they were not as safe the CAA would have to do something about all the American pilots coming in on commercial entry forms."

In answer to Mr Efford's question as to why airlines should subsidise general aviation in terms of safety standards, Martin Robinson said it actually worked the other way round. "The general aviation community, and those people who seek flying careers, actually take a huge subsidy into the airline with them, somewhere between £50,000 and £100,000," he said. "Unless you come from a very wealthy background or have parents who are prepared to finance your training through remortgaging their house, it is extremely difficult to pursue a career as a professional pilot. Flight training organisations form the nurseries for the airline world ultimately. The Regional Airline Association has said on numerous occasions, 'Please do not pull general aviation, they supply our pilots'. It's like a house of cards with GA at the bottom. If you start to pull at the bottom cards, ultimately the whole lot will tumble down."

"Our members do pay charges and they pay for everything that the CAA has a charge for. If there is an element of cross-subsidy it is not totally clear to us where that cross-subsidy actually lies."

Paul Draper added: "We do not have a level playing field. Commercial airlines save £800 million a year in fuel duty and £2 billion a year

in VAT, whereas general aviation pays fuel duty and VAT and has no means of recouping it."

Finally, Mr Efford asked whether the CAA's new cost structure had any impact on safety. Martin Robinson replied:

"Ultimately, private individuals fund their flying from their taxed income, and they will have a proportion of income available for flying. The higher charges, the fewer the hours they can fund. The best safety device on any aircraft is a well-trained pilot, and safety is enhanced by having pilots flying, not just by pure regulation."



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Where will the pilots come from?



A leading international bank has warned that Ryanair's ambitious expansion plans are likely to be hamstrung by an increasing shortage of pilots.

The report, by airline industry analyst Andrew Lobbenberg for ABN-Amro Bank, suggests that other UK airlines are likely to find their businesses increasingly hampered by a demand for pilots across the world. Even British Airways, which the report says is not expanding, will have to find a substantial number of new pilots this year to cope with a bulge in retirement.

In an analysis of Ryanair's growth plans, the bank calls into question recent claims that flight cancellations have been solely due to aircraft shortages. (The Boeing strike had left Ryanair effectively four aircraft short from September to March.) It points out that there were additional cancellations due to crew shortages – and even if unlimited numbers of aircraft had been unavailable, there would not have been enough pilots to fly them.

The report reflects AOPA's concerns at a time when UK pilot numbers are falling and increasing impediments are being put in the way of new recruits. AOPA chairman George Done says: "When finance is included it can cost upwards of £120,000 to do an integrated ATPL course and type rating – that's a lot to

Chief executive's diary:

Counting the cost of inclusion

This is not for the faint-hearted. General aviation may be asked to stump up 250,000 euros a year to be part of the SESAR project, which is designing Europe's future airspace system. Where do we find that kind of money? Answer – we don't. We've got to stop this idea in its tracks.

As members will know, IAOPA has already underwritten a 750,000 euro investment in the definition phase of SESAR, but we're likely to get most of that money back from EC funds if the work is done properly. The definition phase ends in 2008, and the implementation phase begins – and the EC, keen to make the project self-funding, is suggesting big payments in order to get onto the Administration Board. For Airbus the bill could be 10 million euros – for GA's representatives, 250,000.

SESAR, formerly called SESAME, is part of the Single European Sky project and takes a clean-sheet approach to air traffic management. We won't see the results until 2020, so we're investing a lot of money with nothing to show for it – yet. But it's vital that GA be at the heart of the decision-making on SESAR, otherwise the big boys will squeeze us out. AOPA is the only GA organisation that's joined SESAR, and once again the financial burden falls on our members. But we can't afford the EC's high-stakes game, and in fact, the UK Department for Transport is backing us on this. I'll keep you posted on developments in this column.

The year opened with a welcome opportunity to put the case for general aviation to the House of Commons

Transport Select Committee, which I did in company with two other GA representatives, Mark Wilson of BBGA and Paul Draper of PPL/IR. While each of us spoke from our own perspective, it's worth mentioning that all three of us are AOPA members, contributing to the cost of AOPA's work. If more pilots would follow Mark and Paul's example we would be able to do so much more. As I've said before, all it takes is work and money.

A report of the Select Committee hearing appears elsewhere in this magazine, so I'll just say here that when I was asked whether the CAA's 6% profit – or 'return on capital' – is justified, I said an emphatic no, pointing to the industry-funded Helios report, a copy of which was given to the committee. In trying to guide the committee on the subject of EASA, I referred to the comments made by Patrick Goudou about the need for GA in Europe. When questioned about the idea of a 'light touch' regulation for GA and asked if it would compromise safety I replied, "No – not if it was risk-based," a comment that was endorsed by Paul Draper.

The Committee referred to the Hampton report, which opened the door for comments about the concerns that AOPA has for our sector of GA and the need for proper regulatory Impact Assessments. Unfortunately a lot of time was taken on questions about ramp checks on business aircraft. I was able to get a few points over on the issues surrounding flight training, and I also stressed that higher CAA charges would result in fewer hours being flown – and the best safety device on



any aircraft is a well-trained pilot. Both Mark and Paul acquitted themselves with honour.

Two days later I was at an Airspace Strategy Group meeting at CAA House for more discussion on the future of UK airspace. Our main concerns relate to Single European Sky proposals on the simplification and

harmonisation of the classifications of the airspace. On January 23rd the new chairman of SRFAC, John Perry, held a meeting with industry representatives to discuss issues such as the 6% profit and how best to approach the discussion with CAA.

The CAA Strategic Review is motoring on, and we had another meeting on January 26th. I'm very impressed with the chairman of this group, Alex Plant, who is at times trying to steer a boat through treacle. I have been working on the SES issues, labour supply and access to airspace.

On January 28th the AOPA Members Working Group met at Booker, and I am very grateful for the support provided by Shari Peyami at Wycombe Air Centre. In the past David Coe at White Waltham has been equally supportive. I'm most appreciative of the members themselves, who all have talents, abilities and energy which they're willing to devote to helping AOPA. Andrew Sinclair, Ian Harnett and Chris Royle have been the backbone of this group, and I am extremely grateful for their dedication and commitment. On the Saturday they gave up for this meeting, we discussed a wide range of topics from CAA charges, the N-reg situation and how to increase AOPA's membership and funds.

On the following Monday I was in Brussels for a Eurocontrol planning meeting

ask of a young man or woman fresh out of university.

"It's all right for British Airways to say they'll probably have to take their pilots from abroad in future because young Britons aren't coming forward, but what they should be doing is getting involved at the ab initio stage, and discouraging the CAA from hammering the flight training industry with excessive new regulatory costs."

In its analysis, Lobbenberg's team looked at the week of February 6th, in which it said Ryanair did not operate 365 flights, or 7.5% of its schedule. It was suggested that 55% of the flight 'drawdowns' were due to aircraft shortages, and 45% to crew shortages. The report says: "But were Ryanair not suffering the aircraft shortfall, we still don't believe it would have operated any more flights as it is currently short of crew. Thus, we argue that aircraft shortage is a coincidence, and the root cause of the current flight drawdowns is crew shortages."

The report goes on: "The scale of pilot recruitment for the next two years is unprecedented. There have been crewing challenges this year, with growth of 16 aircraft. Next year, Ryanair plans to grow its fleet by 31 aircraft and by a further 27 the following year. Assuming an annual 5% attrition of pilots, we



estimate Ryanair will need to recruit over 730 new pilots over the next two years – at March 2005, it employed 840 pilots."

The airline itself maintains there is no shortage of pilots applying to join Ryanair from a wide range of carriers including easyJet, charter carriers and flag carriers such as Air France and SAS. The ABN-Amro report says that Ryanair pays its pilots well relative to other 737 operators and the failure of a major European airline such as Alitalia could ease the constraints of the pilot recruiting market, but it adds: "Absent bankruptcy, we are sceptical about pilots joining low cost carriers from network carrier in significant numbers. For a few pilots who want a stable base to see more of their family, it may represent an interesting lifestyle choice. However, whilst the path to getting a 737 captain's role might be

quicker at Ryanair than at a flag carrier, the path to getting a long haul 747 role still looks a great deal quicker at the flag carrier, in our view. These high-paying, still somewhat glamorous jobs remain the career ambition for many pilots.

"We see the greatest challenge to Ryanair being the sheer scale of recruitment required."

The bank estimates that Ryanair needs to recruit around 380 new pilots in each of the next two years. While the airline is involved in cadet training schemes at CAE Flight Training in Amsterdam and SAS Flight Academy in Stockholm, they were effective only in producing First Officers. "The greatest challenge in recruiting is Captains, who can partly be sourced through internal promotion," the report says. "However, Ryanair's rate of growth and hence the relative inexperience of many of its First Officers means that Ryanair also needs to source 20-25% of its Captains from external sources. Finding around 75 direct entry Captains per annum (for growth only, excluding attrition) is the greatest challenge."

The report goes on: "Extensive pilot recruitment is being undertaken in an environment where many of the cockpit crew shed by the major airlines following 9/11 have



for Aviation Day, and I went on to EASA in Cologne on the Tuesday to lead a joint GA-CAA group in discussions with EASA. AOPA is concerned to ensure that relations between EASA and the CAA are as cordial as possible, because GA tends to be the meat in the sandwich when they fall out, and we will do everything we can to make sure there are no misunderstandings. This meeting was hosted by Claude Probst, the Agency's rulemaking director, and lasted for nearly a full day. Both parties agreed that the dialogue had been extremely useful, and I know the CAA's Dave Chapman, chairman of the General Aviation Consultative Committee, thinks we should keep that dialogue going.

On February 1st we had a Eurocontrol workshop on the simplification and harmonisation of airspace classifications. This is part of the SESAR initiative, and although the sticking point we've been grappling with over the lower division flight level has been put to one side, it has not gone away.

Two days later I met with representatives of Nexus Cars, who are planning a new programme under which AOPA members can achieve substantial savings when buying a new car. More details anon.

On February 7th I was back at Eurocontrol for a meeting of the Industry Consultation Body. The main issues for GA are the Charging Regulation and the governance of SESAR. Two days later we had a meeting of the CAA's Regulatory Review Body, where again the work is moving along. I've asked AOPA members before if you have any specific instances where they believe CAA regulation to be overly-bureaucratic, costly or unnecessary – so if you want to add an issue to the log, get in touch now. Email your issue to martin@aopa.co.uk.

I went back to Cologne on the 17th for another meeting with EASA, this time in company with Michael Erb of AOPA

Germany, and Mark Wilson of ECOGAS. Discussion centred on the Part 21 aircraft implementing rules for maintenance and the European proposal for a Recreational Licence.

The CAA's Strategic Review Body held another meeting at Gatwick on the 20th. The deadlines for delivering are nigh, and I think that the scope of the work is so large that the group needs to re-focus on the essential items that need to get into the report.

Then it was back to Brussels for a series of discussions with unions representing air traffic controllers from all over Europe. I gave a presentation on behalf of IAOPA on the concerns that we have over SESAR. We have a lot of interests in common, and we are formulating a Europe-wide 'fly a controller' campaign as a result of this meeting. We have suggested this to other aviation organisations, and they say they will join in. What's clear is that air traffic controllers have less and less knowledge of what pilots are doing. Controllers don't get PPLs any more, they don't even get experience flights – and increasingly they're talked of as 'air navigation service providers', which is changing the emphasis of their jobs. To my mind, their prime purpose is safety. They ensure separation. In the eyes of others, however, they provide a 'service' for which a charge can be made. More news on the 'fly a controller' campaign next time.

On March 1st AOPA chairman George Done and I had a working lunch with Lord Stevens, our President, to discuss some of the concerns that we have on many of the topics reported in GA. Lord Stevens is an extremely keen aviator and a huge asset for the Association. I know that he is keen to assist at the highest possible levels of Government in getting the GA message across.

The following day brought another meeting of the CAA Regulatory Review

chaired by David Chapman. Again, progress is being made and the group is likely to deliver its tasks on time.

On March 3rd I went to the DfT for a meeting to discuss EASA, and in particular concerns over the Agency's budget and work plan. The Agency is planning to cut its tasks in line with the funds available. However, this is likely to be unacceptable to the Board of Management. In the matter of future fees and charges, the Advisory Body on which IAOPA sits is split, and unlikely to reach a common position.

During the afternoon the meeting moved on to SESAR, specifically to discuss the governance and Joint Undertaking agreement, and the associated costs mentioned at the head of this diary. It's good to know that the DfT is on side on this one.

On March 7th I went to the BBGA Conference. Mark Wilson, the CEO of BBGA, and his staff organised an excellent industry conference with speakers who included Sir Roy McNulty, Patrick Goudou and Lembit Opik MP, who would make a great after-dinner speaker. Mark Wilson has done a great job in guiding the evolution of BBGA from its GAMTA days. We have an excellent working relationship at both European and national level. Many of Mark's members provide services to AOPA members so there is a synergy between AOPA and BBGA that works well.

A few days later I met with the organisers of Fly! The London Air Show to refine AOPA's involvement in the event. We are strong supporters of Fly! which we see primarily as an opportunity to introduce new people to general aviation. It is, of course, a fascinating event for established aviators, and well worth a visit. Come to the AOPA stand and say hello.

Martin Robinson

been reabsorbed into the industry and where many other carriers are recruiting pilots: in Europe Air France, KLM, Iberia and Virgin are growing fast, whilst British Airways, which is not growing, is still recruiting pilots as it faces a bulge in retirements. The Gulf carriers have a continuing appetite for pilots and the phenomenal air transport growth rate in India is also pulling in expatriate cockpit crew. We

therefore think Ryanair is facing an unprecedented need to recruit pilots at a time when the pilot market is tightening."

Nor was Ryanair alone in facing this hurdle. The report says: "Although we do not believe easyJet employs pilots on contracts, it too suffers pilot attrition and its growth rate will require very high cockpit crew resources. We estimate around 250 new pilots will be

needed in each of the coming two years." easyJet might find recruitment even more difficult than Ryanair, it adds, given its less stable pilot rosters, its unionised labour force and its split fleet of Boeing and Airbus aircraft, which reduced productivity.

ABN-Amro says that cockpit crew recruitment should not derail the Ryanair business model, stop it growing or destroy

Aerodromes: To close or not to close?

AOPA is heavily involved in a matter of government policy that could lead to the closure of several active aerodromes. For many years, Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) have provided advice for local authorities, developers and others relating to a range of subjects such as noise, transport etc. PPG3 has related to housing, and this contained a footnote exempting the open land elements of airfields from being classed as brownfield sites that would be available for building development. PPGs are being progressively replaced by Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and the draft of PPS3 omitted this exemption, effectively turning the active part of an aerodrome from a greenfield to a brownfield site – that is, from one that could not be used easily for house building to one that is ripe for building development.

Some aviation people have claimed that this is an intentional move by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to find available space for John Prescott's massive house-building programme.

Although this has been denied and, at the time of going to press, there is talk of the footnote being reinstated, we will not relax on this until the situation has been made unchallengeably clear.

The seriousness of the situation has been picked up by many organisations and individuals throughout the UK, including some that are not in any way connected with aviation. An entry in Private Eye, for example, ends with: 'If the change does go ahead, many flying and gliding clubs fear that owners of airfields will be unable to resist the riches their land is suddenly worth to developers.'

Gerald Howarth MP has taken up the fight and, on behalf of his colleagues on the Parliamentary Aviators Group, he has sent the following letter to John Prescott:

'Dear John

Further to our brief conversation in the tea room tonight, I write on behalf of the informal Parliamentary Aviators Group which consists of three MPs (Nigel Griffiths, Lembit Opik and me) and four Peers (Viscount Goschen and the Lords Trefgarne, Rotherwick and Stevens – former Met Police Commissioner) all of whom are current pilots.

We have received many representations from people in General Aviation (which covers recreational flying, flying training and all commercial flying outside the airlines) expressing concern that the new proposed PPS3 guidance to replace PPG3 will remove an exemption under which airfields are currently specifically excluded from the definition of 'Previously developed land'.

A number of journalists have contacted your office who have assured them that it was not the department's intention to change the policy, and that the omission of airfields was an 'oversight' which would be rectified.

The case for retaining the existing PPG3 exemption is overwhelming. However, since your officials have said there is no intention to change the policy I shall not rehearse the arguments here but simply request your confirmation that there is indeed no policy change intended, and that PPS3 will make clear that the rules governing airfields under PPG3 will remain and that the PPS3 guidance will be amended to make that absolutely clear.

Yours ever, Gerald

We hope to be able to publish more in the June issue. – David Ogilvy



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profits or value creation, but represents a growing challenge for the management.

The backdrop to the report is an increasingly unfriendly UK environment for flight training in which regulatory cost is skyrocketing, largely at the behest of airlines who pay nothing towards ab initio training, and restrictions on general aviation training operations are increasingly onerous. Some in the airline industry recognise that the situation cannot continue indefinitely. Mike Ambrose, director general of the European Regions Airline Association, says: "Europe cannot afford unreasonable restrictions on General Aviation. It is too valuable in helping European air transport to meet future pilot needs."

AOPA's George Done says: "The CAA has an obligation to foster the financial health of the commercial air transport section, but has no such obligation to general aviation. It should realise that the two are so inextricably dependent on each other that its recent "redistribution of wealth" from GA to the airlines is disastrous short-termism which will come back to haunt the whole industry."

Spreading your AOPA Wings

The PPL is oft quoted as a licence to learn, but the learning path post-PPL can be patchy and vague, or at worst disconnected and expensive. How does a pilot develop from the point he or she receives the coveted JAR 'poo-coloured wallet' through the 1,000 hour barrier and beyond, learning the skills, both hard and soft, that turn an *ab initio* pilot into a competent aircraft commander across a wide range of diverse weather and aviation conditions? This article discusses what AOPA UK's Wings Scheme has to offer, and how we can all make use of it.

Having passed my skills test I was left wondering. I had burnt up the best part of the price of a small car on getting this far and yet it seemed as though there must be "Shurley shum mistake". I duly sent off for my licence and, while patiently waiting, I began to think a little deeper. Was it really so that now I could hire an aircraft and zoom off into the great blue VMC, across country boundaries, seas, oceans and mountain ranges? Well, sort of yes and sort of no!

My licence arrived and off I went to the flying club waving it in glee. The first hurdle was a currency flight with an instructor; fine, we can do that. Having been signed off to hire

Merlin Flight Sim Design Competition

By again providing a prize for the winning team, AOPA is supporting the 2006 Merlin Flight Simulation Group's Aircraft Design and Handling Competition to be held at the Royal Aeronautical Society's premises in London in June.

Teams of students from ten UK universities will have their designs 'flown' on the Merlin simulator, and the flying and handling qualities assessed by ex-Harrier Chief Test Pilot John Farley and Dave Southwood, from the Empire Test Pilots' School at Boscombe Down.

For each aircraft design, many of which are GA types, the handling is assessed for various phases of flight, including in particular the take-off, cruise, approach and landing. For the members of the team whose aircraft is judged to be the best overall, AOPA provides up to an hour's flying (depending on the size of the team) with one of AOPA's flight training corporate members. The prize has proved immensely popular with the students, giving them the opportunity to experience at first hand the practical element of flight.

Last year, the University of Hertfordshire won the prize with a canard configuration V/STOL heavy lift military transport aircraft design. Some of the team flew with Cabair at Elstree, and the team leader, James Hardman, flew with Seawings at Southend Airport, including a landaway at Headcorn. James' instructor was George Capon, who is a member of the AOPA Instructor Committee and also a commercial pilot.

By supporting the competition through donating a prize, AOPA seeks to raise the profile of aircraft design as an activity, and encourage some young people into this area as a career. The pursuit of flying as a personal means of transport relies not only the more obvious infrastructure such as accessible flying sites, and a sound safety culture that applies to training, licensing and airworthiness in parallel with regulation that is no more than is absolutely necessary, but also on a supply of new aircraft designs. In other words, this is something that contributes to the future health of general aviation in years to come.

James Hardman after his flight with Seawings



I did just that, but – and here is the nub of the issue – I wasn't so convinced that the weather was satisfactory, so I sensibly abandoned the plan. On the next occasion the same thing happened. The next weekend, CAVOK, I headed for the club, planned my flight to the Nth degree, climbed in and during power checks I am sure I heard something strange with the left magneto, so chose sensibly not to depart. The next week luckily the aircraft was late returning from a previous flight and I was saved the heart thumping moment of solo flight once again.

Do you see the pattern forming here? I had created for myself a set of personal minima that included a clause that I should remain less than three feet AAL at all times. The long and the short of it was that my confidence had gone – or had it? Was I really sure that I ever had it. Was I sure that I could take off, fly and

land, cross-controlled airspace, file a flight plan, cross an FIR boundary... was I really sure that I even had the confidence to telephone for PPR, was I really sure I could command an aircraft?

What I needed was a structured approach, complete with some supportive mentoring. Not instruction *per se*, rather to spread my wings with a fellow aviator, someone who had done before what I wanted to do now, following a loosely defined set of objectives that would explore and expand my competencies in a safe and enjoyable way. I was fortunate that I met with a pilot who gave advice in just the no frills way I prefer and had a few thousand hours total time, a vast proportion of which was flying as a GA commander in controlled and uncontrolled airspace and no small amount in his earlier life as an ATPL flying the UK's VIPs around the



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world. We arranged a date to undertake a little general handling so that my competence level could be assessed and we could work out a development plan.

Three years and over 60 or so hours later we have covered a majority of the areas where I am sure I must have been taught but either forgot, or didn't register it as important, or I was so overloaded that my brain entered bypass mode. We have flown many sorties with me either commanding or as a passenger, carefully logging all the little tips that all make life a bit safer and more relaxed in the air. Navigation now starts with a straight line and the working assumption that any crossings will be forthcoming but this is balanced by a healthy amount of common sense and a load of 'Plan Bs. FPLs now get faxed from my PC as does Gen Dec documentation. My pre-flight



is not done by the checklist, rather by aircraft system; the checklist remains to confirm all the items have been covered. Having mastered the basics of flight under VFR I took the IMC rating and night qualification courses. This took me a formal step further and has again been supplemented with approximately 10 hours more instrument mentoring which is still going on and has taken my down to IR minima, quite legal for an IMC rated pilot, allowing me to build up a healthy respect for IMC. On a recent flight back from Sherburn-in-Elmet, a place that only figured to me on charts a few years ago, I accompanied a fellow pilot and we were unlucky enough to end up flying through the results of the Hemel Hempstead fire whilst transiting the London City zone inbound to Biggin. It went rather black, and whilst officially VMC I was comfortably heading for the avionics to dial-up 109.35 MHz and Thames Radar, who placed us on a long final

for 21 with no fuss or bother. The pilot I was with said she would never have attempted the flight without another pilot to help out in the trickier moments.

Mentoring in this structured way has taken me from a nervous PPL who struggled nervously to fly Redhill to Redhill via Bewl Water on a clear summer's day to a cautious low hours pilot with a share in a group-owned light single with a night and instrument qualification who flies down to IR minima but still realises he is still somewhere at the bottom of the aviator's learning curve. Looking back, I felt I had achieved several personal flying objectives, and so applied for my AOPA Silver Wings, which duly arrived together with my certificate of achievement.

It will come as no surprise if I say I am now aiming for my AOPA Gold Wings.

– Andrew Sinclair

George Done comments: I congratulate Andrew on his achievement, and look forward to his Gold Wings application form. To date, AOPA has awarded nearly 40 Wings, of which eight are Platinum, five are Gold and eight are Silver. Andrew's zeal was so exemplary I felt compelled to overcome my inherent laziness and apply for the Gold Wings myself, and I hope there will be many members who will check out the information on the web, www.aopa.co.uk, and also apply. The most recent pilot to receive the Platinum Wings Award is our very experienced aviator and President, Lord Stevens.

New Ground Instructor and Radio Nav certificates

Details of the revised AOPA Ground Instructor Certificate are now available from AOPA.

The Ground Instructor Certificate is a qualification attainable by an individual who undertakes to give instruction in the ground subjects associated with the JAR-FCL PPL(A) or the UK NPPL (SSEA). The purpose of this certificate is:

1. To improve the status and quality of instruction and training in the technical subjects for the PPL(A).
2. To provide a qualification which can be accepted by the UK CAA as a credit towards other JAR-FCL instructor qualifications issued by the UK CAA such as the Class Rating Instructor (CRI), the

Instrument Rating Instructor (IRI), or the Flight Instructor (Aeroplane) Rating (FI(A)).

3. To provide a qualified status for the Flight Instructor who may have lost his/her licence for some reason, e.g. on medical grounds.

A candidate wishing to qualify as a Ground Instructor will need to meet the following requirements:

- (a) Normally should hold (or have held within the last 10 years) at least a PPL(A).
- (b) Have attained the age of 18 years.
- (c) Completed a Registration Form for the AOPA Ground Instructor Certificate and send it with the registration fee of £35 to AOPA.
- (d) Pass a pre-entry examination for the Ground Instructor Course.
- (e) Satisfactorily complete a Ground Instructor Course covering teaching techniques and the technical subjects.
- (f) Pass an oral examination in Teaching and Learning and in the technical subjects.
- (g) Send a completed Registration Form for the Ground Instructor Certificate to AOPA.

Upon satisfying the above requirements the candidate will be issued with an AOPA Ground Instructor Certificate. The period of validity of the certificate is three years.

Radio navigation

Details of the Revised AOPA Radio Navigation Certificate are also now available.

AOPA has redesigned this Syllabus of Instruction in order to encourage pilots who hold either a JAR-FCL PPL or UK NPPL to obtain formal training in radio navigation procedures for use under Visual Flight Rules in accordance with the privileges of their licences.

Additionally, for holders of a JAR-FCL PPL issued by the UK CAA, the course of training can be taken as a progressive step towards obtaining a UK IMC Rating. To this end a JAR-FCL PPL holder who has qualified for the AOPA Radio Navigation Certificate may be exempt from up to five hours instrument training at the Applied Stage of the IMC course (without time limit).

A candidate wishing to obtain this certificate can commence the course at any time after qualifying for a Private Pilot's Licence and a Flight Radio Telephony Operator's Licence. There are no minimum pre-entry hour or calendar time requirements, nor is there a calendar time requirement to complete the course of training.

A fee of £15 will have to be paid to AOPA to cover the cost of administering the issue of the

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certificate. However, if the candidate is a member of AOPA this fee will be £10.

To obtain the Syllabus and Record of Training for the AOPA Radio Navigation Course, and for full details of the Ground Instructor Certificate, contact:
The Administrative Secretary
AOPA
50a Cambridge Street
London, SW1V 4QQ
Pam Campbell

Fly! The London Air Show

AOPA has once again thrown its support behind Fly! The London Air Show which takes place this year from April 21st to 23rd at Earls Court in London.

Fly! is the best chance general aviation has of getting its message out to the tens of thousands of people in the UK who ought to be thinking about aviation as a sport, a business tool or a career, but who we are failing to reach.

Its first two years were hugely successful for exhibitors and the industry, and the third year promises to be even better. There are more than 120 exhibitors this year, and some 50 aircraft are expected to be on show. AOPA will of course have a stand, and will be welcoming members and non-members alike. See you there.

Cirrus, now the world's largest manufacturer of light aircraft, is making an appearance for the first time, while Diamond has confirmed its attendance for the third year. Liberty Aerospace – first-time exhibitors here – will be launching a new aircraft at the show. From the same design team that created the Europa range of aircraft, the Liberty XL2 has been designed to



meet the requirements of clubs and flying schools while offering the private owner and operator a first class touring aircraft.

Cessna aircraft will also be on display, represented by their UK-based 'CSTARS' (Cessna Sales Team Authorised Representatives) – Wycombe Air Centre and CSE Aviation.

Helicopters on show will include Robinson, Enstrom, and MD, and the world's only airworthy Skeeter promises to be a major draw. Another veteran on display will be the Fairey Swordfish. In the microlight sector, Ikarus will be showing the C42.

The hugely popular Microsoft Sim City will be showcasing a vast number of simulators, while the RAF is bringing its Typhoon simulator for the first time, while British Airways will again be offering flights in its 737

sim. The Breitling Fighter Challenge returns, pitting combatants head-to-head in a dogfight. This was massively oversubscribed last year, but PPL holders and Breitling watch wearers will get priority queuing.

The Learn To Fly Zone will be the first stop for new and established pilots looking to get started or further their training. Experts will offer advice and suggestions on everything from the right flying school through to how pilots can get even more out of their PPL.

The Seminar Theatre, in association with AOPA, will give visitors an opportunity to hear speakers talk on a range of topics including 'Getting The Best Out of GPS', 'Making Better Landings' and 'How To Become A Commercial Pilot'. For the full timetable, and for tickets to the event, check out www.londonairshow.co.uk. ■

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