



General Aviation

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April 2007

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Published by: Richmond Aviation,
The Studio, Kettys Close, Withiel, Bodmin,
Cornwall PL30 5NR. Tel: 01208 832975.
Fax: 01208 832995

Advertisements: Michael Downing,
Advertising Director, 11, Hollyhedge Road,
Cobham, Surrey KT11 3DQ. Telephone
01932 868516 and 07951 572301.

Design: David Tarbutt
Printing: Holbrooks Printers Ltd

Articles, photographs and news items from
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Material for consideration for the June issue of
General Aviation should be received by
1st May, 2007

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Published by AOPA, which is a member of the
International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot
Associations.

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Front cover:
Ikarus C 42
Photo: Keith Wilson

Chairman's message

AOPA cost benefit analysis

IAOPA (Europe) will have a stand at the forthcoming Aero-Friedrichafen International Trade Exhibition for General Aviation in the third week of April, as this is a major European event for pilots, owners and other interested parties from all corners of the broad field of general aviation. Although I am not personally involved in manning the stand, my experience on similar occasions in the past has been, when talking to members and non-members alike, that you need to be able to provide a concise answer to the question: "What has AOPA ever done for me?"

In this column in the February issue of *General Aviation*, I mentioned the struggle to maintain "no change" in the potential imposition of VFR charges. It is possible to enumerate in approximate terms the resultant financial saving that this successful outcome provided. Where route charges are imposed on aircraft of more than 2 tonnes flying IFR the cost is proportionate to the aircraft mass (strictly, the square root thereof) and the time spent receiving a service. It turns out that the cost is not too much different from the fuel burn cost, so if this were applied to a PA28 or C172 type of aircraft, you would be looking at something of the order of £50 per hour. What would the VFR charge, if it had happened, be likely to be? Ten or twenty percent of this? Well, quite possibly of the order of £10 per hour, a significant additional operating cost, especially when considering the benefit, which ranges from nothing to doubtful, at best.

If you fly 50 hours a year, say, the saving incurred on this basis by staving off this imposition would be of the order of £500 per year, or several times your annual AOPA subscription. So "no change" equates to a financial benefit worth achieving, dependent on how much flying you do. In Canada, pilots were faced with a proposal to raise navigation charges for all of GA some years back and ultimately agreed to pay a flat rate charge of (now) \$71 per annum, considered to be a fairly nominal sum. But now it is proposed to introduce additional charges for those who operate out of seven of the larger airports (so, yes, it was the thin end of the wedge). Another battle is going on in the USA, in which the airlines are attempting to change the pattern of funding, including that of the FAA, to their advantage and much to the disadvantage of GA (sounds familiar?) and this brings with it the possibility of in-flight charges, or user fees as AOPA US refers to them. These examples simply underline the importance of having got rid of VFR charges in Europe.

IAOPA (Europe) was instrumental in gaining this position, together with other colleague associations and bodies. Much groundwork had to be put in which involved attending the appropriate meetings, of course; but this is something that cannot be easily done without paid staff, such as we have at AOPA and one or two other organisations, although I would not wish to understate the valuable contributions made by volunteer representatives from other bodies. Beyond the committee meetings, much is achieved through informal discussion, based on mutual trust and possibly behind the scenes, between representatives from GA and the European organisation concerned, such as Eurocontrol or EASA. This is where apparently minor detail (the devil of which is in...) can be readily argued about. In drafting a regulatory document, a simple change to a key phrase or word even, e.g. going from "may" to "will", can make a huge difference to its final effect. AOPA members will be quick to notice that it has been their subscriptions that have made the outcome possible, but those pilots and owners who are not members similarly benefit. So who owes whom?

On another topic completely, it has been a pleasure to decide on the 2007 AOPA Awards for Achievement and Endeavour, described on later pages. The individuals, teams and organisations listed were selected largely by virtue of an outstanding testimonial having been submitted by a third person or group of people, and we congratulate them all. As it happens, for 2007 a strong safety theme has emerged, and also instructors feature significantly in the list of recipients. It is not often that a colleague association is overtly recognised through the awards, the last time being seven years ago with the engineering contribution of the PFA, and it was especially pleasing to be able to present the prestigious Lennox-Boyd Trophy, a silver cup first presented in 1953, to the Chairman of the British Business and General Aviation Association in recognition of its much valued collaboration with AOPA on European issues at the BBGA AGM in February.



George Done