



General Aviation

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Luscombe
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Chairman's message

Good news in GA

Unless you are an unremitting optimist, it is hard to avoid the view that general aviation in the UK is beset by so many external influences threatening to limit its activity that its contribution to expansion of the internal market in Europe, one of the principal aims of the EC, may never be achievable. The current price of fuel and the avalanche of environmental requirements that appear about to hit us are two obvious cases. On the latter, just have a look at "Essential Requirements for Civil Aviation Environmental Protection", NPA 2008-15, which has very recently been released for general consumption by EASA. Mention of aircraft under 2000 kg and ultra-lights suggest its applicability to GA, but some of the terminology is not standard (e.g. 'aviation system' – what does that mean?) and the intentions are unclear.

Nevertheless, good news is always to be found, such as the welcome announcement, due to the persistent efforts of the Lee Flying Association and AOPA member Mike Cross in particular, that Lee on Solent aerodrome is at long last to be saved for GA use.

Another good happening occurred to me on reflection following what seems to be an annual event for AOPA CEO and Chairman, namely, the TopNav competition run by the Royal Institute of Navigation, of which AOPA is an Associate Member. This is a navigational exercise based on determining and plotting eight waypoints on the chart, then flying from point to point in as straight a line as possible having calculated the drift and speed correction from the estimated wind such that the ATA is spot on (ideally) the ETA. The route started and finished at White Waltham and circumnavigated the Gatwick zone, taking about two and a half hours. Each crew carried a data logger that enabled the organiser, David Cockburn, of Flight Safety Evening fame, to plot the exact track and altitude of each aircraft and whether or not it managed to fly over or near the waypoint. It's eyeball, chart and timer stuff, hard work, but a lot of fun too. Martin and I are ever hopeful of a podium finish, but on this occasion, although we reckon we hit the waypoints correctly, our tracking left something to be desired on a couple of legs.

The catalyst for the happy thought above was the penultimate leg of the TopNav route. The two waypoints were situated to the south and north of the Odiham MATZ with the correct track passing between the Farnborough and Odiham ATZs. Quite unusual, we felt, as routes in previous years avoided such complications, but 'new boy' David Cockburn had maybe wished to put his own special stamp on the competition. The extended CAS for the Farnborough Airshow practices was inactive on the Saturday afternoon of the competition. Listening in to Farnborough Radar en route prior to getting close indicated a very, very high degree of radio traffic, dealt with by Farnborough with complete equanimity and courtesy. The fact that they had to deal with umpteen aircraft on a particular routing through the MATZ, as well as all the other traffic, including in- and outbound jet traffic, made no difference to the efficiency of the service. AOPA awarded Farnborough Radar its Air Traffic Controller of the Year Prize in 2006, and it continues to be thoroughly well deserved. We now have a LARS East and North in addition to West from Farnborough Radar; this extended service is one of the recent benefits to those who fly in the vicinity of the large London airports.

Use of LARS helps in the avoidance of airspace infringements, and in this area there have been valuable changes. NATS is now the provider with the CAA remaining the regulator, and this move has led to a difference in the treatment of infringers. NATS, by enabling constructive dialogue to take place between the air traffic providers and users, and their member associations such as AOPA, has taken a much more enlightened view and has used infringements to provide a learning experience, not just for the guilty party, but for pilots everywhere through the excellent On Track website run by Irv Lee for GASCo. This is something else good that has happened and is bound to lead to an improvement in flight safety.

Finally, within this issue of *General Aviation*, is an account of the 24th IAOPA World Assembly that was held in Athens in June. Having the event in Greece has contributed to the opening up and easing of restrictions on GA activity in that country, a valuable gain. AOPA UK is one of 66 similar AOPAs from across the globe that form IAOPA and thus is able to contribute to the representation of GA at the highest level, such as ICAO, something to be pleased and proud of, I believe.



George Done