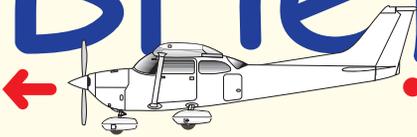


Briefings



Coventry rises from the ashes



In a major turnaround given that it lost its only passenger service in 2008 and its then operators filed for bankruptcy soon afterwards, Coventry Airport has announced grand plans for expansion which could create something on the order of 10,000 jobs.

Unlike too many such visions it does not rely on the provision of des res estates where once aircraft flew; owner Sir Peter Rigby is committed to developing the aviation side and returning passenger flights to Coventry.

Sir Peter, who made his money with SCH computers, is Chairman of Coventry Airport and has a portfolio of aviation interests, including Patriot Aviation and London Helicopter Centres, and is a fixed-wing and helicopter pilot. He's planning a two-pronged development, with the airport and its infrastructure on one side and a joint

Coventry Airport – the dark clouds may be lifting

venture to develop the environment around the airport on the other. The latter will apparently include a technology office and manufacturing park covering more than 200 acres, while the former starts with improvements to the airport's passenger terminal and cargo facilities. He also wants an airport hotel, restaurant, car parking, hangarage and a new access road.

Sir Peter, who acquired the airport in April last year, says Coventry would have the immediate capacity to serve one million passengers a year by re-starting airline operations, but the company stresses that general aviation is a primary focus and passenger operations are further down the line. ■

When you're in trouble...

'Stranded Flyer' is a new website that describes itself as 'a communal self-help breakdown service for pilots' and it looks like a very good idea indeed. Set up by pilots Nigel Charles and Tony Oliver, it allows you to register your whereabouts and your contact details so any fellow-pilot who is stranded in your neck of the woods has someone to turn to for help. While in the general aviation world you'll usually find someone to give you assistance if you need it, sometimes beyond the call of duty, it's a positive step to have the business formalised so helpers openly volunteer their services.

When you sign up, you input the skills and services you're able to provide – ground transport, accommodation, air transport, engineering help, Serbo-Croat spoken, whatever – along with a phone number. You'll be flagged up on the Stranded Flyer map at your home location, partly because aerodrome locations might get clogged.

Nigel, a retired BA long-haul captain, says almost 200 people have so far signed up. Tony, an IT specialist who formerly worked for QinetiQ, is in the process of making the site smartphone compatible, running trials on Android and iPhone operating systems so you won't need access to a laptop when you're stuck.

The website is at <http://sites.google.com/site/strandedflyer2/>

Putting the big in Biggin

Biggin Hill has been ranked in the top ten most popular business aviation airports in Europe, according to a league table by publishers Blue Sky Aviation News. The rankings are winnowed out of a pile of data and trends in business aviation across the continent, and as this segment of general aviation continues to grow quite strongly – up 5.5 percent during 2010 – Biggin is landing an increasing portion of the traffic. In 2002, the level of international arrivals as a percentage of the total was 31 percent. Today, the figure is nearer 50 percent.

Biggin's Managing Director Jenny Munro is very bullish about the ranking, and about the future. "This shows London Biggin Hill in its rightful place among the ten most convenient and valued executive airports in Europe," she says. "Our proximity to London and the full MRO and FBO portfolio offered by the leading industry service providers based here combine with choice, flexibility and a flawless service to achieve the right balance for the customer."

Well, that's good. If you're old enough to remember twelve or more light singles in the pattern at Biggin at the end of a sunny Sunday afternoon when everyone was rolling home replete from Le Tooks you might have mixed feelings about its success as a business hub, but it remains friendly to the lower orders of GA, and importantly, it has just (finally) joined the Strasser Scheme! (See story in 'AOPA Working for You' section).

Line up after the what? Today's traffic on the ramp at Biggin



See those green shoots yet?

Pilot poaching between airlines is on the rise, according to Boeing – an early indicator of a recovery in the employment landscape. At the Paris Air Show Boeing's Flight Services Vice President Sherry Carberry released the company's annual analysis of global air crew requirements, which predict that 459,600 new pilots will be needed over the next 20 years. Last year, Boeing predicted a requirement of 446,500 pilots. The predicted number of new technicians and engineers needed to keep the fleets flying has risen from 596,500 to 650,000 over the same period. That means the industry must train 23,000 new pilots and 32,000 new technicians a year. Most demand comes from Asia and is driven by growth, but there will also be significant demand in the west because of retirement.

Take him to the Tower!



Adrian Bringsome

Left: a previous 'Visit ATC Day' at Kemble

The powers-that-be are encouraging pilots to drop into control towers to see how the other half lives, and perhaps learn something to our mutual benefit. The Airspace and Safety Initiative (ASI), a joint effort by regulators, service providers and GA

groups which is supported by AOPA, is running another series of 'Visit ATC Days' where you can sign up to tour any of the dozen or so ATC units that will be opening their doors for a day or a weekend during October.

This is the third year the ASI has run this scheme, and it's an excellent chance to see life from an air traffic controller's perspective and to provide feedback that might be useful to the people on the other end of the radio. You have to sign up for a visit ahead of time, and you must be the holder of a pilot's licence – NPPL, PPL, BGA certificate etc – or a student. You'll have to show your licence, or evidence that you're learning to fly.

ATC units already confirmed include RAF Northolt, RAF Coningsby and RAF Linton-on-Ouse, as well as NATS units at Cardiff, Farnborough, Manchester, Belfast International, London City, Birmingham, Aberdeen and Stansted.

A full list, with dates when each unit is open for a visit and contact details for pre-registration, is on the ASI website at: <http://airspacesafety.com/content/news.asp>

More locations and dates will be added later. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. All the events are free of charge.



Food for the soul

Sierra India X-ray Charlie, one of Air Atlantique's pair of venerable Douglas DC6 propliners, has been finally grounded and turned into what is claimed to be Europe's, and is certainly the UK's, first and only aircraft diner. It is part of the Airbase 'Living Air Museum' at the airport but has its own entrance and is open into the evening.

The four-engine aircraft, built in 1958, first saw service operating covert flights in South East Asia with the backing of the CIA. In 1973 it was back in the US, registered to Southern Air Transport where it flew secret missions into Central America. Mike Collett, chairman of Air Atlantique, bought the aircraft in 1987 and used it in a variety of cargo roles until 2004 when it had just under 45,000hrs.

The aircraft is now a 40-cover restaurant and bar where you can have a Meteor Marinated Fillet Steak, Cloudmaster Mixed Grill and the Captain's home-made Lasagne. The diner has retained many of the original aircraft equipment, including the cockpit and even the call bells, which you can still press overhead to order drinks or get additional service. Details on www.classicflight.com

Air traffic control freaks

While the numbers of business jets in China continues to grow rapidly, hopes for an enlightened approach to airspace access for general aviation seem premature. The country's military authorities say there is unlikely to be much, if any, uncontrolled airspace in China, and they are laying emphasis on establishing systems for punishing infringements as much as for ensuring safe flight.

Flight plans will be required for all flights, and it will take five to ten years to get away from the current authorisation system which takes several days, sometimes more, to issue permission to fly. Airspace up to 3,000 feet will be split three ways, according to a report in the *People's Daily*. 'Restricted' will cover the immediate vicinity of airports, where all aircraft will be under positive control. Beyond that will be 'monitored' airspace where ATC can issue warnings where necessary. Finally there will be 'report' airspace, but the authorities stress it will not be equivalent to what they call the "haphazard free-for-all" in other countries.

As with almost everything else important in China, air traffic control is the responsibility of the People's Liberation Army. Cai Jun, head of the air traffic control department at Army general headquarters, told the newspaper: "Authorities will be stricter with the issuing of pilot licenses and assess the qualification of the aircraft and capabilities of those pilots who want to fly low altitude. A system to punish violators will ensure those who fly outside of pre-established boundaries will be punished." The purpose, he went on, is to "learn from the mistakes in the U.S."

While the lack of flying freedom may impinge on the lower end of GA, the top end it marching ahead. A Chinese leasing company is ordering 50 Gulfstream G650, G550 and G450 jets and expects to have more than 100 business aircraft under its control by the end of the year. Analysis expect the Chinese bizjet market to grow by 50 percent annually.

New Aberporth Danger Areas

The CAA has established additional danger areas in Wales to cover the testing of unmanned aerial vehicles under development at Aberporth. They cover a substantial amount of territory, stepping up from the surface around Aberporth to having a base at FL10 further east. The areas, known as EG D202 and EG D202A/B/C, will be activated by Notam, and a crossing service may be had from Aberporth Radar on 119.65. AIC Y 052/2011 refers.