

# Letters to the Editor

## Fatuous piffle?

Sir,

I have been an instructor member of AOPA for many years. While I sometimes disagree with certain specific aspects of its work, I consider that AOPA plays a vital role, not only in supporting those freedoms to which I subscribe, but also in promoting safety in general aviation. However, the article entitled 'The shame of EASA and EGAST' (GA, June 2011) seriously misrepresents the contents of the safety leaflet to which it purports to refer. The author castigates the clause "even an Instrument Rating could only be regarded as a minimum skill to get you out of trouble if you accidentally lose visual references completely ignores the vital first part of the sentence "unless you are in regular instrument flying practice". Having recently renewed my own Instrument Rating I was reminded of the truth of that statement and I would be astonished if any member of the AOPA instructors panel would disagree.

In addition a highlighted 'quote' stating: "EGAST assumed pilots will never be caught out by bad weather" is completely without foundation. The leaflet itself warns: "Weather does not stay constant and often does not act as the forecast predicts. It can deteriorate very fast". It correctly advises European GA pilots (none of whom have the benefit of the IMC rating) to be prepared to encounter bad weather and avoid it. EGAST's website [www.easa.eu.int/essi/egast](http://www.easa.eu.int/essi/egast) already publishes several safety videos, not only on weather avoidance, but also one to help pilots safely control their aircraft for a limited period if external references are unexpectedly lost.

Finally, the writer should also have known that EGAST, like other teams in the European Strategic Safety Initiative ESSI, is hosted by EASA but is not 'EASA's Safety Team'. Its members are mainly drawn from European industry and aviation organisations, including IAOPA, and its sole purpose is to promote safety in European general aviation.

I believe the author has done AOPA a considerable disservice. Had he checked his facts and considered the leaflet carefully, its implicit recommendations could have been cited in reasoned support of the UK's case for an IMC rating, which supposedly was the intention of the article.

**David Cockburn**

**CAA GA Safety Promotion Officer**

*David finesses the fundamental difference between recognising and avoiding bad weather and being caught out by it. Avoidance is one thing, dealing with the reality of inadvertent flight into IMC when (not if) it happens is another. I'm sure many pilots will be aghast at his reassurance that EGAST has put on the EASA website a video "to help pilots safely control their aircraft for a limited period if external references are unexpectedly lost". What an appalling substitute for an IMC*

*rating! For EGAST to earn its corn it would have to be clearly and unequivocally supportive of the IMCR. Too many people in a position to enhance safety lend too much weight to political considerations. An IMC rating is the minimum skill required to get you out of trouble if you accidentally lose visual references, and if more people of influence had openly supported that position at the beginning of this sorry saga we wouldn't be in this mess now. No greater disservice has been done to the cause of GA safety than the silence of those who should have spoken. Implicit support is not worth the leaflet it's printed on. – Pat Malone*

## Driving you mad

Sir,

This is a tale of modern bureaucracy! In 2005 when I reached my 70th birthday my driving licence expired and I had to apply for a new one. The DVLA rules are that if an over-70 year-old wants to continue to drive C1/D1 class vehicles he has to apply separately for a lorry/bus/minibus driving licence (on Form D2) supported by a DVLA Group 2 ('HGV') medical certificate from his GP (on Form D4). Having an ICAO Class 2 PPL medical at that time, I asked the DVLA to accept it in lieu of the DVLA Group 2 medical certificate. My request was refused on the grounds that the DVLA Group 2 medical was 'stricter' than the CAA's ICAO Class 2 medical. I paid my GP £76 to sign me up for a DVLA Group 2 medical and I got my C1/D1 driving endorsement.

After age 70 a driving licence has to be renewed every three years. In 1978 my driving licence was automatically renewed including the C1/D1 endorsement.

Early in 2008 I lost my ICAO Class 2 medical and resorted to the NPPL licence supported by my GP's DVLA-type Group 2 certification to continue flying a PA28. I recovered my Class 2 medical status soon afterwards.

In September 2008 the CAA issued General Exemption No.711 allowing PPL licence holders who fail the ICAO Class 2 medical to continue to fly on a 'self-certified' DVLA-type Group 1/Group 2 GP-authorized medical certificate on CAA Form SRG 1204 – the advice to the GP on the back of the form makes it clear that the GP is not being asked to assess the applicant's fitness to fly, but his fitness to drive a car (Group 1) or a lorry (Group 2).

In April this year, at age 76, I was required by the DVLA to reapply for my driving licence. I also applied to the DVLA on Form D2 for the renewal of my C1/D1 driving endorsements on the grounds of my current and 'clearly superior' ICAO Class 2 PPL medical (issued June 2010). My application was refused, saying that it must be supported by my GP's DVLA Form 4 medical certificate. When I demanded under the Freedom of Information Act to know why, I was told that as my ICAO Class 2 medical certificate was more than four months old it was not valid for the application. When my ICAO Class 2 medical was renewed in June this year I reapplied to the DVLA for my C1/D1 driving licence endorsement – and they have just given it to me!

So, for any other PPL approaching age 70 please take note. An ICAO Class 2 medical certificate (less than four months old) is a valid substitute for a DVLA Group 2 Form D4 medical certificate. If the DVLA demur you can quote my case.

**Tony Purton  
Denham**

PS: Curiously, my 'grandfather' right to drive the most powerful motorcycles has never been challenged – but I feel safer driving a 7.5 ton lorry or flying a PA28!

## Lee on Solent

Sir,

I read with considerable interest the article on the future of Lee on Solent which has been saved for GA operation and which at last is assured of a future as an airfield. Good luck to all who are based there. Having flown into Lee myself some 15 years ago to visit the Fleetlands Flying Club and the Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club, I know that the site is ideal for GA. It is only due to the efforts of all concerned that various alternative proposals have been thwarted.

It is perhaps appropriate mention some of the early history leading up to its remaining operational as an airfield. The debates over its future certainly go back to before its decommissioning in 1996. AOPA was involved several years before any other body showed any interest. There were early negotiations with the Navy before they vacated the airfield, the then Airfield Manager (a serving RN Lieutenant Commander) being keen to see the place retained as a base for flying.

Perhaps more importantly, Gosport Borough Council was interested in buying the aerodrome for GA use. They sought advice, which AOPA was keen to provide. Unfortunately, due to a change of officers and councillors this idea failed. David Ogilvy made a number of visits to Lee to help to ensure its future for GA. Too many airfields were being lost at this time, including Ipswich, Leavesden, Hatfield and West Malling to name but a few.

There was a difference of opinion between the two local authorities, Gosport and Fareham, each with planning responsibility for a part of the site and having differing ideas about its future. One proposal had included the erection of an old peoples' home at the end of the only available runway. This would have virtually ensured the closure of that runway and consequently the airfield as a whole. Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club was the principal non-service user at this time.

The saga of Lee only goes to prove how local pro-active support has to lead the way in any battles to ensure the future of threatened flying sites. Perhaps some of the other sites might have been saved with more local support plus the assistance of AOPA HQ?

**Jack Wells**

\*For everything you want to know about flying into Lee on Solent see the Lee Flying Association's website [www.eghf.co.uk](http://www.eghf.co.uk). Lee is a fascinating place to visit and you're assured of a warm welcome. ■