

General Aviation

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Articles, photographs and news items from AOPA members and other readers are welcome. Ideally they should be on a disk, or they can be emailed to pat@richmondaviation.co.uk.

Photographs may also be emailed to this address. They should be high-resolution (300DPI). Alternatively, hard copy and photographic prints or slides can be posted to Richmond Aviation at the address above. While every care is taken with submitted material, we cannot make absolute guarantees that material will be returned in perfect condition.

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Front cover:
Cub on floats
Photo: Keith Wilson

Chairman's message

Big picture, little picture

It is through the pages of *General Aviation* that AOPA largely informs its membership as to what is going on in general aviation within the UK, Europe and the wider world beyond, where the threats to our freedom to fly are coming from, and what AOPA UK and IAOPA are doing about them. By definition, these are "big picture" subjects that affect many, most, or all pilots and aircraft owners; for example, the current issue of *General Aviation* is heavily concerned with the future of the UK IMC Rating. Other topics of wide influence include EASA Part M, EASA Ops, SESAR and other airspace issues, security, the future loss of VORs, for instance; plenty enough to have to keep abreast of. AOPA's work, together with that of colleague associations, in securing viable outcomes is largely behind the scenes, involving much committee participation and associated networking.

The real benefits that accrue are often not realised until some time later, possibly only after several years have elapsed. For example, the risk to the future of the UK IMC Rating has led to a recent re-appraisal of the safety benefits that it provided over

the decades since its inception. Other AOPA 'products', if this is the appropriate term, (the IMCR was proposed from within AOPA and guided through the CAA approval process by the late Ron Campbell and Peter Skinner) that benefit the wider membership include the Wings Scheme, the Aerobatics Certificate, the Flying Companion's Certificate and ultimately, once the legal and insurance wrinkles have been ironed out, the Mentoring Scheme. The first three of these products also benefit instructors and the flight training industry (leaving aside UAVs, there would be no aviation whatsoever without the student pilot) as they provide a valuable source of revenue beyond PPL training, and there are more specific offerings such as the Flight Instructor Refresher Seminars and the Ground Instructor's Certificate.

Complementary to all this, AOPA expends a significant proportion of its resources on individual members' problems. These form the 'little pictures' that are not generally reported in *General Aviation*; overall, the work involved remains unseen except to the immediate persons involved. Individual help, expert advice and assistance are provided through an accessible team of advisors and staff in areas that include aerodromes, engineering and maintenance, medical, and pilot licensing. On the latter two, help is provided to current or prospective NPPL holders, regardless of AOPA membership. One of the most important provisions is that of helping a member, not necessarily always a private pilot – instructors may equally be recipients – when there has been a transgression of the law or of regulated airspace. Either of these may lead to licensing action by the CAA, aside from anything that is dealt within a court of law, and this is where AOPA's experience in these matters comes to the fore, in seeking a just and appropriate outcome, especially where the effective removal of a person's livelihood (as in the case of an instructor) is involved. A case of this nature is highly personal to the perceived transgressor so confidentiality rules; nevertheless, to that person the guidance and actual presence of an AOPA official at a hearing (typically our Chief Executive, Martin Robinson) is of inestimable value at a time of great worry and stress.

As it happened recently and is fresh in the memory, and confidentiality is not an issue, another 'little picture' example was that of facilitating discussion within the AOPA premises on the future certification of the now 'orphaned' Stampe aircraft (the Belgian equivalent of the de Havilland Tiger Moth) between a small representative group of owners and the two CAA officials involved. Clearly, this is not a topic of interest to the wider membership, so it demonstrates the point. It also shows incidentally, probably mostly for those people who don't belong to AOPA, that we are not all about high end GA aircraft, fast singles, twins and the like, capable of long flights on airways to distant parts of the continent. We have plenty of aircraft owners and pilots in AOPA membership, myself included, who fly the more elderly aeroplanes that have pedigrees that rate more highly than the technical specifications!



George Done