

Briefings



Gulf Cirrus school



The third-biggest air show in the world after Farnborough and Paris? Dubai, they say, and the tenth anniversary show, held in November, was the biggest and most successful ever. More than 900 exhibitors set out their stalls, and sales of some 530 aircraft were announced. General aviation was well represented, with a large number of corporate jets and an increased complement of light piston trainers on display.

Gulf region airlines are expanding rapidly, with Emirates, Etihad, Qatar Airways and new low-cost start-ups ordering hundreds of aircraft. Given the buoyancy of the petro-dollar economies they may be better placed than most to ride the downside of the aviation industry cycle, although the enormous volumes of passenger capability they plan to put into the sky could stretch even their pockets if and when things turn rocky. For the moment, the rapid growth of airlines in the Gulf and on the Indian sub-continent means that pilot shortages are a growing problem, and creating new pilots has been exacerbated by the fact that in the aftermath of the events of 9/11, training in the USA is no longer an option for many aspiring commercial pilots from Gulf countries. In order

to meet the unprecedented demand for professional pilots, new flight schools are springing up across the region, and one of the most ambitious, the Dubai Aerospace Enterprises Flight Academy, was unveiled at the show. The Academy will use the Cirrus SR22 as its primary trainer – the first two were delivered and on display at the Dubai show. Operations at Ras Al Khaimah airport will start in March 2008, with a planned fleet of 50 aircraft within three years. Besides the Cirrus, advanced training will be carried out on a fleet of very light jets, the order rumoured to be going to Eclipse. The curriculum will be based on JAA European requirements rather than FAA, opening up the potential for substantial job opportunities for UK and European instructors. – *Mike Derrett* ■

Guernsey Rally

A note for your diary – the Guernsey Aero Club Air Rally 2008 will be held from September 5 to September 7, and it's well worth applying early to participate in this popular event. As we never tire of pointing out, AOPA membership entitles you to a five percent discount on fuel in Guernsey (and Jersey).

This is the 37th such rally, and as usual offers the chance to participate in a navigation competition over France. You can find full details on www.guernseyaeroclub.com, or call the Air Rally director Colin Ferbrache on 01481265267.

Danes slow on VAT

Denmark has yet to act to close the VAT loophole which allows aircraft to be imported into Europe at a zero rate. The Danish government debated an amendment to the law, requested by the European Commission, on January 8th, but it is unlikely that there will be any change in the current situation before April 1st.

Hundreds of aircraft owners have saved millions of pounds in recent years by importing aircraft through Denmark, where they are effectively zero-rated. They can then be registered and used in any EU country as VAT-paid. An industry has grown up around VAT avoidance, but it is threatened by a proposal to introduce a 25 percent VAT rate on aircraft.

Tax lawyer Lasse Rungholm, chief executive of the most successful VAT avoidance company Opmas and chairman of the Danish

Right: Lasse Rungholm of OPMAS with sales assistant at AERO expo in June

TAG takes Farnborough

TAG Aviation signed the head lease in 2003 and has now acquired the freehold for Farnborough Airport (EGLF) from the Ministry of Defence. Farnborough has become the major business aviation hub for London and TAG have ambitious plans for it. The Farnborough Air Show will not be affected. TAG says it will invest in the airport to transform it into a full-service business aviation center under a plan to be made public in 2008. Also in 2008, TAG will begin to operate European air-taxi service Blink Ltd's 30 Cessna Mustang VLJs as they are delivered. ■

Farnborough has become the major business aviation hub for London



Aeronca fly-ins

Got an Airknocker, or want to see some? The Aeronca Club of Great Britain has published its list of fly-ins for 2008, and they cover a large swathe of the country. They're flying to Ireland, too.

All events are PPR, so please use the numbers printed here. If in doubt, contact Pete White at the Aeronca Club on 01752 406660 or 07774 017704, or email him on pete@aeronca.co.uk
 Saturday May 3: Bodmin, Cornwall. 01208 821419.
 Saturday/Sunday May 17/18: Hullavington, Wilts. 01752 406660
 Saturday/Sunday June 21/22 North Weald, Essex. 01752 406660
 Saturday July 5: North Coates, Lincs. (TBC) 01472 388850
 Saturday July 26: Branscombe, Devon. 01297 680259
 Friday – Monday August 22–25: Ireland (Aeronca Club on Tour) 01752 406660
 Saturday September 13: Enstone, Oxon. 01608 677208

For more details see www.aeronca.co.uk

GA trade industry organisation, appeared before a tax sub-committee of the Danish parliament to argue that the VAT imposition should be less stringent and should not be introduced overnight, as it will have a devastating effect on GA in Denmark.

In the meantime, Customs have confirmed that new VAT rules will not be backdated, and any contracts entered into before the law is changed can be completed under the old regime, even if the aircraft is not delivered and paid for until later. For full details see the Opmas website at www.opmas.dk ■

