

Briefings

New charges at Oxford



Disgruntled aircraft owners at Oxford Airport have won a small victory with the rescinding of a demand that they pay to park their cars while they are flying.

The airport has installed new surveillance systems in car parks, including automatic number plate recognition, and introduced charges backed up with fines and clamping threats.

While arrangements were made for some airport users to get free parking, aircraft owners and pilots are classified as 'visitors' who must park in a 'Pay and Display' car park, poorly surfaced and well away from the terminal, where clamps would be operating and where cars risk being impounded. Visitors are entitled to two hours' free parking, after which charges of up to £5 a day are imposed. The car park is free at weekends.

The new demands, introduced without discussion, have outraged owners, some of whom have corporate jets based at Oxford and

pay tens of thousands of pounds a year in hangarage and other charges. They come on top of cost increases estimated at 68 percent since last May for handling, hangarage or aircraft parking, a reduction in the number of free landings for resident aircraft, and the introduction of new charges for ILS use. The price of the monthly landing card has gone up from £84 to £120 and VAT has been added. In addition, the card now entitles the holder to only ten landings a month – any more must be paid for at £7.50 each. Since June, pilots have had to pay £28.75 every time they use the ILS, and some pilots have voiced concern that scud-running and discreet use of a partial ILS approach will lead to safety issues.

The new demand resulted in a barrage of letters from owners calling the proposals

Below: Oxford Airport has spent millions on upgrading its facilities



outrageous, ill thought-out, punitive and unreasonable. Some say they no longer feel welcome and are threatening to move their aircraft elsewhere. Owners who are paying more than £2,500 a month for hangarage alone characterise the latest demand as the straw that could break the camel's back. Some say that coming on top of hefty increases last year, the new charges leave the airport a great deal of work to do to 're-establish trust, goodwill and credibility'. A small number have taken their aircraft elsewhere.

Airport managers say they have invested some £15 million in the airport in recent years and it has to be paid for somehow. Users retort that much of the expenditure did not benefit them – 'how much does an automatic number plate reader cost?' asked one – and the demands placed on the airport by private owners are small; 'a bit of grass and a few minutes of ATC'. They added that to impose such swinging increases when aviation was staggering under the burden of the credit crunch was bad business.

As a result of the furious outpouring, Oxford has made some concessions on car parking. Manager Steve Jones, who said charges were introduced to stop non-airport personnel parking in limited space, has announced that 'individuals and/or syndicates with individual aircraft residency (not fleet agreement holders or tenants with property leases) will be able to park one vehicle per nominated pilot/owner free of charge.' Aircraft owners must provide names, car model, registration number and registration of aircraft to claim the concession.

He adds: "Please be assured that Oxford Airport does recognise that these are difficult times economically and that any charges must be sustainable. However, it also needs to be recognised that if the airport does not generate revenue to maintain its facilities to an acceptable standard and provide for some degree of profitability for its investors then it will not be immune from difficulties that would have far reaching effects."

Aircraft owners are now seeking a meeting with airport managers to discuss cost issues before they get out of hand.

*See Letters, page 45 ■

Brazier moves on Mode S

Shadow Aviation Minister Julian Brazier is keeping up the pressure on the government over Mode-S transponders, which he continues to maintain will do great harm to general aviation, particularly gliding. Responding to a series of questions from Mr Brazier, Aviation Minister Jim Fitzpatrick passed the buck to the CAA, which he said had consulted twice with industry and was preparing its response to that consultation. The CAA received more than 1900 replies to its consultation, one of the strongest reactions ever on any aviation topic. Brazier, MP for Canterbury, is a former TA paratrooper with a special interest in defence, and is especially concerned at the effect of Mode-S on the Air Cadets, as well as young would-be commercial pilots. "At a possible cost of £5275 per plane, many pilots feel they will be forced to give up flying, which has serious repercussions for groups like the Air Cadets and those training to become airline pilots," he says. "Mode-S would also be detrimental to the gliding community. The sport would be undermined by costly, heavy and cumbersome equipment."



Air racing challenge

Here's a new challenge for you. The Royal Aero Club Records Racing and Rally Association is once again looking for new race pilots, navigators and volunteers to work as marshals, timekeepers and judges during this year's air racing season.

Almost anyone can enter, and if you're uncertain about what to expect, there's an air race school at North Weald in April to iron out all your issues, flying or otherwise. You'll get background information on air racing and

organisation, techniques and navigation and, for pilots, the opportunity in the latter half of the day to fly with an experienced race pilot to see just what it's all about.

Air racing run by the Royal Aero Club is handicapped, which means that any fixed wing propeller driven aircraft capable of over 100 miles per hour in level flight can be competitive and pilots require no special qualification other than to complete a check ride and have over 100 hours PIC. The slowest aircraft take off



How to fly round Lee

Lee-on-Solent's Airfield Safety Committee is asking pilots to be aware of just how busy the area is and to make sure they're not stepping on anyone else's toes when they're transiting south of the Solent zone.

Jon Butts of the Safety Committee says the MoD ATZ at Fleetlands supports military helicopter test flights which increasingly are occurring not just on weekdays, but at weekends. "Recent ATZ infringements have highlighted the fact that pilots must route around or over the ATZ if not in radio contact with Fleetlands," he says. "Transiting pilots may enter the ATZ with the permission of Fleetlands, which provides a Flight Information Service on 135.7."

"The gliding site at Lee-On-Solent is very active, often up to seven days a week. As marked on the charts, this area should not be overflowed below 2100 amsl due to intense gliding activity, including winch launching."

As anyone who regularly tries to get a transit of the Solent zone will know, it's easier to pass a camel through the needle's eye, so a lot of aircraft are hugging the coast in Class G airspace south of the zone. The Lee on Solent people are asking everyone to avoid flying through Lee's 23 climb-out and 05 final approach, keeping clear of circuit traffic. Mr Butts adds: "The southern part of the Lee-on-Solent circuits are active daily with SAR helicopter, police, glider tug, and other rotary, fixed and flex-wing traffic on initial climb-out and final approach."

"Transiting pilots should not assume that if no traffic is heard on the Fleetlands frequency, Lee-on-Solent is not active. Lee-on-Solent traffic operates at Lee, and in and out of the western side of the Fleetlands ATZ, in accordance with local airspace agreements on 118.925." For the full picture, have a look at Lee's website www.eghf.co.uk

first, and if the handicappers have done their job well, everybody crosses the finish line like a swarm of bees.

Races are normally run over a 20 to 25 mile circuit of four or five laps. A typical race weekend comprises a practice session on the Saturday, a qualifying race in the afternoon and a championship race on the Sunday. The carriage of navigators is encouraged and the Air Race School covers the skills necessary. The term navigator is perhaps a misnomer – they are short legs, and it's more about roll-out points, staying on line and providing that extra pair of eyes.

There are some really spectacular trophies up for grabs, including the King's Cup, Schneider Trophy, and British and European Air Racing Championships. This is one of the few sports where private pilots flying normal general aviation aircraft can compete in a safe and regulated environment for prestigious prizes.

Race school is on April 16th or 17th. Have a look at the 3Rs website at www.airraceuk.co.uk
Pictures by Glynn Farrar ■

Helicopter fraud

Substantial components of a Hughes 500 that was written off in an accident in Kent in August 2000 ended up in a second write-off subsequently used to fly sightseers over Niagara Falls, according to court documents in America.

The engineer responsible for cobbling up the aircraft has been fined half a million dollars and sentenced to a year's house arrest in Missouri, USA. He has also been ordered to pay Niagara Falls tour operator Rainbow Air more than \$60,000 in compensation.

Prosecutors reserved some choice words for Robert A. Schlotzhauer, the 68-year-old owner of Falcon Helicopters Inc in Lee's Summit, Missouri, who was said to have "recklessly jeopardized the lives of pilots and passengers through this fraud," according to US District Attorney John Wood. "In order to boost his own profits, he flouted federal requirements for inspecting and repairing the damaged helicopters that he sold. He now faces the loss of his business, but we are just thankful there were no injuries or fatalities as a result of this scheme."

Schlotzhauer paid \$31,650 for the wreckage of G-SIVA, a Hughes 500E which suffered an engine failure near Dartford in 2000 and landed



heavily, injuring the pilot and passenger. He married G-SIVA up with an Australian Hughes 500E, also an insurance write-off, for which he paid \$35,000. Not only had the Australian aircraft crashed, but it had been submerged in salt water for several hours. He then sold the 'cut and shut' helicopter to Rainbow for \$450,000, and Rainbow put it to work ferrying unsuspecting tourists.

G-SIVA had had several UK owners, having first been brought into the country by Weetabix as G-TBIX in 1990.

In a separate fraud, Schlotzhauer was found to have sold an engine compressor from the Australian aircraft after falsely claiming the helicopter had suffered a hard landing, rather than having gone to the bottom of the Pacific. He was also convicted of wire fraud after playing fast and loose with a cashier's check he had obtained to pay off the victim of the compressor sale after being found out.

US Department of Transport investigator Michelle McVicker said after the case: "The sale of engine components damaged beyond repair for reuse on an aircraft is unconscionable, as it jeopardizes public safety – not only

of those in the sky but also those on the ground – for personal financial gain."

Schlotzhauer was ordered to surrender all his repair-related FAA certificates and refrain from any future involvement in the business of maintaining, repairing or rebuilding aircraft. Photo: Bill Teasdale ■

Biggin Hill invests in GA



Above: GAPAN Master Rick Peacock-Edwards opens the new Biggin Hill flight centre – VIPs include Cabair's Charles Henry and EFG's Singh Bamrah

Cabair's Biggin Hill School of Flying and EFG Flying School have moved into a new flying training centre at Biggin Hill.

Thousands of pilots have learned to fly at Biggin since the RAF gave it up in 1959, and while the flying there has always been fantastic, some of the buildings dated from the aerodrome's finest hour or even before and were looking well shabby. The new centre cost £750,000 to build, and it's heartening to see the aerodrome make such a substantial investment in general aviation training.

Jock Maitland, who opened up Biggin Hill as a civil aerodrome back in 1959, says: "In 1959 the airport had just closed as an RAF station and there was nothing here at all – it's changed a great deal since then. It's fantastic to see the place doing so well after having grown slowly over the years to become a very successful airport."

Spanhoe pays tribute

On 17 September 1944 thousands of paratroopers descended from the sky by parachute or glider up to 150 km behind enemy lines. Their goal: to secure the bridges across the rivers in Holland so that the Allied army could advance rapidly northwards and turn right into the lowlands of Germany, thereby skirting around the Siegfried line, the German defence line. If all had been carried out as planned it should have ended the war by Christmas 1944.

Unfortunately this daring plan, Operation Market Garden, didn't have the expected outcome. The bridge at Arnhem proved to be 'a bridge too far'. After 10 days of bitter fighting the operation ended with the evacuation of the remainder of the 1st British Airborne Division from the Arnhem area.

It has been more than sixty years since the end of the Second World War and yet we continue to provide enduring tribute to those

who fought and secured freedom on our behalf. Spanhoe aerodrome near Laxton in Northants was one of the key players in Operation Market Garden, providing home to the 315th Troop Carrier Group, and in September 2008 the airfield held an event to pay tribute to the bravery of those who fought and died. Surviving veterans of the operation kindly agreed to come to the event – no mean feat as they are all well into their eighties.

The airfield was covered with wartime military hardware and military re-enactment enthusiasts provided an authentic feel to the whole event, recreating one of the many battles that occurred during the

operation. Air support was provided by an array of period aircraft, with the show-stealer combination of Spitfire, Mustang and Me109 supported by a Dakota. Several more displays followed from a range of more modern aircraft including a Slingsby T67 and Pitts Special, as well as a display by the venerable Barry Tempest in the Steen Skybolt – all of this capped by an amazing display by an F86 Sabre, sadly its last display before being retired to a static role.

A huge thank you has to go to event organiser Steve Barker and his army of supporters. As the years advance there will be fewer veterans to attend these events, but I sincerely hope we continue to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice to give us the freedom we enjoy today. – Steve Copeland ■



CAA Safety Evenings

Here's an update on dates for David Cockburn's CAA Safety Evenings, well worth the investment of an evening of your time. Exact locations in some cases remain unspecified, but details can be had from the contact phone number.

Date	Location	phone
February		
17	Lee on Solent	tbd
18	Cardiff,	White House
19	Boscombe Down	tbd
23	Halfpenny Green,	Bobbington Village Hall
25	Fairoaks	Fairoaks Flight Centre
March		
19	Humberside	tbd
24	Shoreham	tbd
<i>Additions and amendments will appear on the CAA website www.caa.co.uk/ga.</i>		

Tiger Moth bursary

The de Havilland Educational Trust is inviting applications for two bursaries to help licensed pilots to convert onto the Tiger Moth. You need to have a minimum of 75 hours PIC in order to apply for the Fiona McKay bursary, but if you're selected you'll get ten hours' flying on a Moth at Cambridge Flying Group.

The de Havilland Educational Trust aims to encourage and support the continued operation of historic DH aeroplanes by helping to facilitate flying training on the Moth. Equally (or perhaps more) importantly it also provides engineering bursaries to aircraft engineers who are interested in the restoration and maintenance of vintage aircraft. If you are interested, or you know someone who might be, please email dhet@dhmothclub.co.uk for an application form. But step on it, they have to be returned by February 28th 2009.

Hampden mishap

Heavy snow has snapped a wing off one of the two surviving Handley Page Hampdens in the world – this one on static display at the Canadian Museum of Flight in Langley, British Columbia. It was restored over 20 years after spending 60 years at the bottom of a lake on Vancouver Island. The only other example is a long-term restoration project at the RAF Museum at Cosford. The Hampden was a frontline bomber at the outbreak of war but was outclassed from the start and was soon relegated. The late Colin Rawlins, an AOPA board member for many years, was shot down in a Hampden and spent four years as a guest of the Third Reich. The Canadian Museum of Flight is appealing for funds to help put the wings back on their example.



Damien Burke

Aero holds up

Little sign of hard times at Aero Friedrichshafen, the general aviation expo that will be held in Germany from April 2nd to 5th and has already posted a 20 percent increase in exhibitor bookings over the last show, held in 2007.

'In these turbulent times, it is evidently important for exhibitors to maintain their marketing efforts in order to create a basis for future growth,' says Aero's project manager Thomas Grunewald. The majority of new exhibitors, he adds, come from Eastern Europe, especially the Czech Republic. There has also been increased interest from the United States.

This year the show has been expanded to include helicopters and a 'green flying' exhibition of aircraft with electric motors, new solar technology, products by high-end battery manufacturers and innovative propulsion concepts.

Grunewald said he is seeing a rising number of bookings from Eastern Europe, especially the Czech Republic, as well as a sharp rise in interest from the U.S. From 2009, Aero Friedrichshafen will be held annually. ■

Branscombe success

Good news from Branscombe in Devon, where owner David Hayman has been granted permission to continue using the airfield, albeit with restrictions.

Despite a campaign by neighbours to have it closed down, the local council has allowed Branscombe 250 flights a year, with certain events outside that restriction. Unfortunately the limit means that passers-by are not wholly welcome, and David Hayman is imposing a discouraging landing fee. He is also seeking legal advice on some of the terms of the permission – it is a personal consent for the owners only, which makes life unpredictable for the businesses that rely on Branscombe. ■

Catch them young



Seventeen year-old Matt Davis became Britain's youngest PPL on his birthday in December, despite almost having his plans sabotaged by bad weather. Matt flew solo for the first time on his 16th birthday – December 18th, 2007 – and followed up with his final skills test exactly a year later. "A lot of my final training had to be rescheduled several times owing to heavy rain," he says, "but we eventually got to fly at the start of the week so that I was qualified by the day of my birthday."

Matt trained with Wellesbourne Aviation's Flying School – part of Cabair – at Wellesbourne Mountford, and has ambitions to become a commercial airline pilot when he has completed his A-Levels.

Wellesbourne Aviation general manager Chris Walton said: "Matt has ambitious career plans in aviation, and he made an ideal student. I hope we will be able to help him take his flying career forwards."

Above: Matt Davis with flight examiner John Richards

Cessna static port AD

An FAA Airworthiness Directive requires operators of certain piston Cessnas to check the alternate static air source selector valve to assure that the valve port is not obstructed by a part number identification placard. The FAA says that several aircraft have been found with blocked ports as a result of 'improper installation of the part number identification placard on the alternate static air source selector valve.' They are asking operators to check the port to see whether an obstruction exists, and if so, remove the placard. The FAA's notice says: "The actions specified by this AD are intended to prevent erroneous indications from the altimeter, airspeed, and vertical speed indicators which could cause the pilot to react to incorrect flight information and possibly result in loss of control." The AD covers a vast number of types including the 172, 175, 177, 180, 182, 185, 188, 206, 207, 208, 210, 303, 336, and 337 series.

Maypole 119.2

On January 1st the A/G radio frequency at Maypole Aerodrome near Canterbury changed to 119.2. Some pilots are still trying to contact the airfield on the old frequency, 119.4, and Maypole's proximity to Manston means that such confusion is particularly undesirable. ■

Historic aircraft



The Historic Aircraft Association (a corporate member of AOPA) invites all people who are involved with – or just interested in – historic aeroplanes to join. The website is www.haa-uk.aero.

The annual meeting, together with a Flying Forum, will be held at Old Warden, home of the Shuttleworth Collection, on Saturday, 14th March. There are many problems facing owners and operators of our aviation heritage and the HAA works hard to seek fair play, so the stronger the membership, the better. – David Ogilvy ■