

Members Working Group

The AOPA Members Working Group met at White Waltham at the end of November with Chris Royle in the Chair – his last outing in that role, as he feels that after five years it's time to get some fresh blood on board. Chris said the change of Chairman would be a good time to look at the future size and shape of the Members Working Group. He recapped on some of the group's achievements over the past six years –revitalising the Wings scheme, setting up of the regional representatives, the mentoring scheme, work on the database and website, the Duxford Bonus Day... it had also been a useful sounding board for AOPA. But will it in future morph into a project group? He thought the next meeting, which would be chaired by Martin Robinson or George Done, should discuss future strategy, including looking at the MWG's terms of reference.

The next meeting is set for February 11th at White Waltham; if you would like to come – and any member is welcome – email Mandy Nelson (mandy@aopa.co.uk) giving as much advance notice as possible.

Apart from Chris Royle, other members present included Pauline Vahey, Richard Warriner, James Chan, Nick Wilcock, Timothy Nathan, Peter Baron, Mick Elborn, George Done, Pat Malone, John Murray, and Saul Empson. As with other AOPA groups, the proposed En Route Instrument Rating came in for much discussion and was the subject of what's known as a 'free and frank exchange of views'. General topics discussed ranged from the upgrade of the AOPA website to the co-ordination of regional representatives, AOPA's corporate governance, a CEO's webcast and the advertising potential of AOPA's online and print presence.

Members Working Group – from left, Timothy Nathan, Nick Wilcock, Richard Warriner, George Done, Alan Cassidy, Saul Empson, Chris Royle, Peter Baron, Pauline Vahey, James Chan, John Murray



The En Route Instrument Rating

Nick Wilcock gave a backgrounder on EASA's NPA-2011-16, reiterating what was published under his name in the December issue of this magazine. The only contentious point is the En-Route Instrument Rating, which aroused strong passions on either side.

Peter Baron said that AOPA had failed in its ambition of having an IMCR equivalent at European level and thought AOPA should have a position on the EIR. It had previously had a position, articulated by Nick Wilcock, that it would support no instrument qualification that did not include approach privileges; why had that been abandoned? He considered the EIR to

be not an 'end-qualification', but a module in the IR.

Pat Malone said the EIR was dangerous and had no place in safety regulation. The idea that you could bet your life on a met forecast was fundamentally flawed. We wouldn't licence someone to fly without teaching him to land; why teach people to fly in IMC without teaching them to land in IMC? He thought anyone who flew into IMC without the skills and qualifications to fly out of it would be guilty of bad airmanship, and any regulation that encouraged it was to be deprecated. EASA had belatedly added a provision for the teaching of an emergency instrument approach, but

EASA's Matthias Borgmeier had repeatedly attacked the UK IMC rating on the grounds that people could not be expected to make an instrument approach with just 15 hours training. Now EASA proposed to teach them for a matter of minutes.

Instead of an EIR, the candidate (who would already have done all the written exams for the full IR) should do the remaining ten hours of dual training and get a full IR. If the syllabus was turned on its head and the last ten hours of dual, which included instrument approaches, was done first, the EIR made sense. Otherwise, it didn't.

Saul Empson said that Nick Wilcock had characterised the EIR as a hard thing to use for IFR, a VFR-only instrument rating, →



→ unusable on a marginal day, and it was difficult to see what the point was. The EIR looked like a solution searching for a problem. The thing that prevented people from getting a JAA Instrument Rating was the theoretical knowledge requirement, not the flying. With the EIR, the applicant had to have done all the theoretical knowledge exams as for the full IR. Why would anyone settle for it when with a few more hours they would have a full IR with approach training, skills and privileges?

Nick Wilcock said the EIR was a VFR rating which was only there if you happened to run into cloud on an airway. Saul Empson said the idea that it was hard to get and wasn't very useful anyway was a poor reason to support it. What was the point if you could only exercise it in VMC? Timothy Nathan interjected that it afforded the pilot the protection of controlled airspace. Saul Empson thought that without approach privileges it was dangerous, and if it was only for use in VMC, there was no point to it. It was misnamed – if it was a fair-weather rating for use only in VMC, it should be renamed as a rating that simply gives you access to airways. That would be more correct.

Nick Wilcock said everyone agreed it

should not be called an Instrument Rating but no alternative had been proposed. Peter Baron suggested the 'Controlled Airspace Rating' or CAT. Saul Empson suggested the Controlled Regional Airspace Permit or 'CRAP'.

Pat Malone said he was worried that the CAA and EASA were being given the false impression that AOPA supported the EIR. IAOPA-Europe was discussing the rating and might support it, but – apart from in Poland – they didn't have an IMC rating and their safety records were many times worse than that of the UK.

Nick Wilcock said the CAA had confirmed it would try to keep the IMC rating, but Pat Malone said that was far from a copper-bottomed guarantee. George Done said the CAA CEO Andrew Haines had said to him that the CAA would continue with the IMC rating. Nick Wilcock said the CAA was mulling over how a mechanism would be created by which the IMC rating could be continued.

Saul Empson pointed out that if you had a JAR PPL with an IMC rating and it expired and had to be exchanged for an EASA PPL, the IMC rating would disappear. Nick Wilcock said there were other issues to be addressed and it was necessary to get

the CAA to finalise on them.

John Murray said that if the IMC rating existed there would be no point in the EIR. Could the two co-exist? Timothy Nathan said the EIR and the IMC rating were entirely different subjects which should not be discussed together. Pat Malone took issue with this; the EIR looked anaemic and pointless when compared to the IMCR – why else would its designer Jim Thorpe have attacked the IMC rating so uncompromisingly at FCL.008, the EASA working group that discussed instrument flying?

He was concerned that we had lost sight of our purpose, which was to improve safety. Instead we were creating political constructs and playing bureaucratic games. Political expediency had no place in aviation safety. Words like 'probably' should not be used when proposing safety legislation.

George Done said AOPA did not take policy positions because AOPA was a broad church and could not claim to speak for the membership. The AOPA Executive Committee had decided not to take a position on the EIR but to point out its concerns and ask the CAA whether it believed the standards of met forecasting were high enough to make it safe. ■

Airport charges – can we act?

James Chan presented some thoughts on airfield charges, which were continuing to force GA out of many of the most useful airports. He had learned to fly in the USA, where the concept of landing fees was unheard of except at the largest airports. GA was being priced out of places like Bristol, Edinburgh and Southampton, even though they weren't exceptionally busy.

He had been trying to get to the bottom of why airport managers were pricing GA out. There was profit potential in encouraging GA traffic into their shops as well as CAT traffic. Their attitude represented a major barrier to the business

use of aircraft.

He compared statistics for single-runway airports in the US and the UK. New York's LaGuardia had 15,000 GA movements, Gatwick had 19. LaGuardia charged a \$113 landing fees, Gatwick charged £796 for landing plus £221 for mandatory handling charges for a C152. Southampton charged £26 for a landing, plus £160 for parking plus £165 for mandatory handling fees. A Cessna 172 parking overnight at Southampton would pay at least £350, whereas a car worth twice as much, and weighing twice as much, could park overnight in a secure car

park in the centre of London for £40, and it would be washed into the bargain.

Other airfields like Cardiff and Southend were being encouraged to follow suit. Filton was closing, leaving Bristol the only game in town, and regulation should prevent it from using its monopoly position as a bar to GA. Unless action was taken, GA would increasingly be forced into remote grass airfields.

Price regulation was used in the telecoms and other markets where there was no competition, and should be applied to airfield costs. We also needed to look at safeguarding airfields, and where more could be built.

John Murray said mandatory handling was a licence to print money. Such unregulated power should not be put in the hands of monopoly providers. In Hampshire and elsewhere, the monopoly was reinforced by planning strategies which allowed no new airfields.

Pat Malone suggested AOPA should work to attempt to have GA users included in the definition of customers the Civil Aviation Bill coming before Parliament in the Spring, giving us the same access rights as passengers and other businesses. The Bill should not only protect the leisure flyers and holidaymakers who represented the vast bulk of the CAT traffic through main airports, but business flying, air charter and others whose business was general aviation. ■

The closure of Filton leaves Bristol in a monopoly position over a wide area



Simplifying the GAR

John Murray has been working hard to solve some of the problems associated with the GAR form, and reported that while a solutions often seemed tantalisingly close, closure still eluded him. While it had originally been intended to get an electronic system up and running before the Olympics, a cost-saving ban on new IT programmes had been imposed across much of government, starting after March 2012. This had led to some frantic activity to get existing programmes squared away, with eight meetings at the Home Office involving their IT contractors between October 6th and the end of November. They had invited John to speak to the yachting fraternity, which he had done, and there were clearly areas of common interest. Another stakeholder meeting was planned.

John said that although there was pressure from the spook fraternity at the Home Office to make pilots transit through designated airports, he believed there was now little chance of this happening. There were universal statements from many quarters which led him to believe the idea was no longer being actively considered.

They had been arguing about notice periods – now four hours from EU countries and 12 hours from the CTA. It was proposed to reduce the four-hour notice period to two, but it was probably going to come down to three hours. Work had also been undertaken to reduce the content of the GAR, so while it wasn't a

story of unalloyed joy, there was some movement, in the right direction.

Regarding the number of recipients of the GAR, when everyone was on the same system it would only have to be filed once to a central source. There were sensitivities because we were playing around with government servers, John said, but testing was due to be completed by March 12th. The system would be available to everyone, AOPA members or not, and

there would be a small charge for the smartphone app to cover software and server costs.

John agreed to check the situation at Manston, where it was said that GARs are being required even for domestic flights. He said he would obtain legal advice on how far airfields are entitled to go on this and through Martin Robinson would consult AOPA's contacts in the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Chris Royle thanked James for all the work he was doing. ■



Hawkeye Warriner saves the day

At meetings of the Members Working Group at White Waltham, early arrivals tend to take the seats which give them a view of the airfield, while latecomers are stuck with their backs to the action. Richard Warriner is an inveterate looker-out and has special powers to miss nothing in the debate while simultaneously missing nothing that happens on the airfield.

During the discussion of John Murray's work on GARs Richard abruptly changed the subject, saying he thought he had just seen a 172 taxi by pushing its towbar. There had been a brief red flash in the grass as the aircraft passed... he couldn't be sure and might end up looking silly.

By the time we got to the window the 172 was doing his power checks at the hold and the nose was hidden behind the fuel shed.

Chris Royle hurried to the tower, and they zoomed the threshold camera in on the aircraft's nose. 'Good god, you're right!' said the controller.

The pilot was advised to shut down and check his prop, which he did... and rather sheepishly he removed the towbar and stowed it in the luggage locker. Chris returned to the meeting to congratulate Richard on having saved what might have been a nasty accident. Some years before, Chris said, a great warbird pilot had been on short finals in a Mustang when onlookers remarked that his wheels weren't visible and he was told to go round; on landing he had put £50 behind the bar... we live in hope.



Recognition for Alan Cassidy

During the lunch break George Done presented the Lennox Boyd trophy to Alan Cassidy MBE, who attended with his wife Angela. George said the other AOPA awards had been presented at the AOPA Duxford Bonus Day, but Alan had been President of the jury at the World Aerobatic Championships in Italy at that time and had been unable to attend.

The Lennox Boyd trophy, he went on, is AOPA's oldest award, having first been presented in 1953; previous recipients had included our hosts West London Aero Club in 1955. It is awarded to a person, club, group or organisation who has contributed significantly to the furtherance of general aviation, flight training, club flying or piloting standards. The trophy is a cup in a special presentation box that was originally given to the Association of British Aero Clubs by the late Rt Hon Alan Lennox-Boyd PC CH MP (subsequently Viscount Boyd of Merton) in 1953.

The citation reads: 'Alan Cassidy is known throughout the GA community in the UK and beyond for his dedication to and promotion of aerobatics. He has won the British National Aerobatic Championship on four occasions and has taken part as a member of the British Aerobatic Team in seven World Championship competitions. He is well known as an instructor and writer of articles in the aviation press, and was made an MBE for his services to aerobatics. He has collaborated with AOPA to introduce changes to the long-standing basic AOPA Aerobatics Certificate in order to provide a better introduction to more advanced competition aerobatics.'

Alan Cassidy said the award was a great honour and he was grateful to all the people who suggested that he have it. Photo shows AOPA Chairman George Done (left) presenting Alan Cassidy MBE with the Lennox Boyd Trophy

