

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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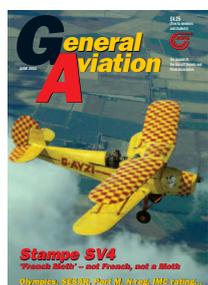
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Chairman's message

Safety and the value of AOPA

At flying events, exhibitions and meetings, I often find myself chatting to AOPA members about current issues affecting GA in the UK. Of course, the latest concerns the impact on businesses, and particularly the flight training industry, based at aerodromes affected by the Olympic airspace restrictions around the London zone and more widely in the South East, not to mention the difficulty of indulging in a bit of recreational flying. Previously, the main topic has been EASA and the way its various deliberations are making GA in Europe more complicated and expensive, without improving safety. Looking back through past issues of *General Aviation* at these Chairman's pieces, I note that EASA and its machinations has been by far the main topic of my attention.

As a change, a more introspective view is offered this month, reviewing the value of AOPA to our members and what it has to offer. AOPA is not quite like many colleague associations, such as the BGA, BMAA or the LAA, that promote, preserve and protect the particular interests and activities for which they were originally established. AOPA's work in exerting influence, i.e. lobbying, is without regard to the type of flying or flying machine owned or piloted. Much activity is devoted to providing assistance and advice to members on particular problems, of which more below. Of course, there is collaboration and interaction with other associations and institutions, including the CAA, and AOPA contributes to the GA infrastructure with the aim of bettering flight safety through schemes that foster improving piloting skills – indeed, it is fair to say that safety is at the heart of everything we do.

On the piloting front, the most notable longstanding beneficial aid originating from AOPA is the IMC Rating, the safety benefits of which have been recently re-confirmed following the threat of its EASA sponsored demise. Flight training and its providers, the flying clubs and schools, have always been a major interest of AOPA since without the student pilot there would be no GA, indeed, no commercial aviation either. The Flight Instructor Committee is responsible for initiatives in this area such as the CAA approved Flight Instructor Refresher Seminars, the Wings Scheme in its original form, the Aerobatics Certificate, redrafted in conjunction with the British Aerobatics Association, the Flying Companion's Certificate and the Ground Instructor's Certificate.

More recently, through the drive and energy of longstanding and dedicated members of the AOPA Members Working Group, several programmes have been significantly enhanced, the Wings and Mentoring Schemes and the AOPA website being prime examples. The first AOPA Bonus Day, effectively an activity led fly-in, took place at Duxford last September having been initiated and organised by members of the WG with background help from AOPA staff. It received excellent feedback and will be followed by the second on 10th September 2011. Keep fingers firmly crossed for good weather! If you would like to join the WG or to know more, please come along to Duxford and make yourself known to any of the organisers. It is mainly through the WG that views on how AOPA is perceived by its grass roots membership; it also provides a continuous stream of ideas aiming to benefit AOPA and GA in general.

When it comes to 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, the latter including help for current or prospective NPPL holders, regardless of AOPA membership. Individual pilot members who find themselves in the firing line following a serious airspace infringement are provided with advice, based on several years of experience, and AOPA attendance at interview, with a view to seeking a fair and appropriate outcome. On maintenance and engineering matters, valuable back-up is provided by the recently established Maintenance Working Group, described in last month's *General Aviation*, whose members are owners of and managers in aircraft maintenance businesses. The WG was set up to address, with a view to keeping GA viable, hugely burdensome and costly (compared with previously) EASA regulations governing maintenance and, to some extent, interpretation by our own regulator that ignores the fundamental requirement of the businesses to be self-sustaining financially. As in many GA areas, there is an optimal balance to be struck between safety and cost; with EASA Part M, the balance has been completely lost. On which note, I ask you to remind non-members that it is membership subscriptions that allows AOPA to continue to benefit general aviation in the UK, so please encourage them to join up!



George Done