
Letters to the Editor

Blameless

Sir:

Dave Clews' letter 'Overcoming Anxiety' (*General Aviation*, August 2006) makes reference to a "very near miss" which occurred when he was flying as a passenger with two other group members. The pilot who reported this Airprox and Dave Clews, in his letter to your journal, are to be commended for their openness which is very much in the spirit of enhancing flight safety. Please may I comment on two points in his letter as published.

Firstly, the UK Airprox Board does not apportion blame. As we say on our website www.airproxboard.org.uk, "All language of blame is avoided and instead, straightforward statements are made on what took place with the emphasis placed on identifying lessons of benefit to all." I can recall the Board's discussion on the subject Airprox and can assure Dave Clews that there was no mention of blame.

Secondly, the report into this Airprox did not state that "as (they) had three PPLs on board (they) should have been performing a higher standard of lookout." The Airprox Board shared the reporting pilot's concern that the other aircraft had gone unsighted to all three pilots on board until the Airprox occurred. Board Members were not able to determine why no-one had seen the other aircraft before the incident. On this occasion, for whatever reason, 'see and avoid' in Class G airspace had not worked.

Yours faithfully

Peter Hunt
Director, UKAB

We love EASA

Sir,

I read your response to my letter in the August edition with interest and wanted to comment on a few of the points you made.

Rather than find things to charge for to make up income lost as tasks transfer to EASA, we are reducing staffing levels and are securing EASA funding for work they ask us to carry out on their behalf. Our budget has fallen by £1m this year rather than "rise by so many millions" as you stated.

Our UK charges alter only after detailed and searching scrutiny from the Finance Advisory Committee (FAC), a 12-week full consultation and ministerial approval. FAC members represent all who pay the charges.

We are supportive of EASA and want it to become a robust and confident regulator. That is why we continue to openly tell those in positions of influence what aspects of EASA's current arrangements need to be improved to help achieve this aim.

I am happy to reassure you that we are not pushing for a system to prevent EU-registered aircraft being domiciled in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

Padhraic Kelleher
Head of Airworthiness
CAA Safety Regulation Group

I love that second-last paragraph. Straight out of Yes, Minister

As to the finances, take it up with Mike Bell, who told me earlier this year the CAA's

budget would rise by £3 million this year, then begin to fall.

The idea that the FAC has a handle on the CAA's finances is interesting. The opacity of CAA finances is legendary – even the airlines say they don't know where the money goes.

As long as the CAA has to raise 106 percent of its costs from the people whom it can force to take its products it will continue to attract the opprobrium of the industry, and all its good work will be overshadowed. – Ed

Anson undercarriage

Sir,

The article on the Anson (*General Aviation*, August 2006) brought back happy memories because the Annie was the first aircraft in which I flew.

It was one sunny day 60 years ago and members of our Spotters Club were the guests of the Royal Air Force at Ford in West Sussex. The Anson was a Mk 10, registration MG673.

I had a chuckle at your reference to an ATC cadet winding the undercarriage. One of the pushy members beat me to the door and, of course, got the job. I had a good view from the navigator's seat and was, later, able to tell my mum that I had seen our house from the air.

Mention of Ford leads me to say that your article on aerodromes was most appropriate. I well remember the original in 1990 causing much comment at the time, but like many of our critiques, it was soon forgotten by the masses.

Raymond E Delves FRICS

Sir,

I picked up a copy of *General Aviation* at Wellesbourne the other day and I was delighted to read your feature on 'DA'. The mention of the 160 turns to raise the gear reminded me of the first display I did with Peter Thomas at Filton. Our part in the display was simply to do a fly-past along with a number of other aircraft and then land back as a static display.

We were slightly delayed on departure due to finger trouble on my part, but the flypast itself went satisfactorily. As we turned downwind I asked Peter to lower the wheels and he started cranking away. As I turned onto base leg there was no sign of the green knobs and I

asked Peter to look out on his side to see if the gear was on its way down. No, no sign of the wheels coming down, and no sign on my side either. At about this time the radio failed and I asked him to try a bit harder. On final there was no sign of the wheels appearing so I decided that it would be better to put her down at Staverton rather than make a spectacular arrival at Filton that would not enamour me to the display organisers. On the way back we discussed the problem and Peter had another attempt to lower the wheels. It was at that time he realised that he had been turning the crank the wrong way!

I think I was flying 'DA' in the smaller photo on page 37 and I may have been flying it in the formation shot from the Oxford, but I am not sure of that.

Malcolm Payne

Fighting anxiety

Sir,

I am a PPL with approx 1,000 hours flying, mainly Piper Cubs etc, and your article on anxiety in the air (*General Aviation*, June 2006) was very interesting as I had begun to experience an aversion to flying over 2500 ft. I had a feeling of being vulnerable, and this feeling had also had been affecting my driving, for example over a bridge with a very large drop either side.

My flying had developed into a routine of dropping into a friend's strip about 20 minutes away and I found that I did not want to fly into airports or fly between hills – I fly in North Wales. I altered my flying by gradually flying higher and made a point of visiting airfields and flying to sites in between the mountains.

Your article deserves a larger audience, as I believe that having spoken to other pilots over the years, they have had similar concerns,

Richard Davison

Balancing the argument

Sir,

While, as a Cirrus SR20 owner, I enjoyed Trevor Baker's article on his Cirrus, I was horrified to read him say "it has a great climb rate, even with four up, full fuel and luggage". Unless Trevor has somehow fitted an SR22 engine to his SR20, or is anorexic and has



Malcolm Payne in Anson DA. The undercarriage crank handle is to the right of the throttle levers, and the two green gear indicators are just forward, peeping from under their flaps.

three skimpy 16 year old fashion models for passengers, or is counting children in the mix, or my weight and balance charts are completely haywire, I would counsel him that he is taking a risk. With an average of four ten stone adults (those models, for instance) each having only 10 lbs of luggage, he is going to be right on the edge of the envelope. Change the mix to a more likely 170 and 140 up front (husband and wife and neither overweight) and two children in the back, aged over 12 and it is still looking marginal. Everyone must make his or her own judgement, but we find that three-quarter fuel gives much greater margins of safety in the event that we are taking passengers in the back and luggage... and it just means landing at another nice airfield on the way. The Cirrus SR 20 is a great aircraft and I too wouldn't change it for anything else I have flown, but my experience would say that like most other things that are great, it has some downsides. These, perhaps, Mr Baker has overlooked.

Julian Mounter.

Just too expensive?

Sir,

The AOPA Fly-In at Old Sarum was cancelled because fewer than 10 members said they wished to attend, but has anybody thought why? Yesterday was the first Saturday in August, the weather was good (for England), the cloudbase was above 2,500 feet, there was very little wind, the temperature was not too hot and the vis was probably better than 20 miles. All in all, a nice day to go flying.

I dragged the Pacer out of the hangar at Leicester, rang a usually friendly grass airfield down south for PPR and set off to an airfield

not far from Old Sarum, putting nearly three hours into my log book. Outside the circuit I saw no other aircraft and the LARS service was not overworked. Maybe the answer was because my trip out incurred a fuel burn of about £150, a landing fee of a reasonable £8.50, and aircraft ownership costs in terms of hangarage, insurance and maintenance which run at around £500 per month. If I were to go to Shaffren-Diest or some other Continental Fly-In, to support their event, it would cost almost £1,000 in fuel, landing fees, accommodation, taxis and meals, with the possibility of getting stuck due to poor weather. A similar cost would have been incurred by an AOPA member from northern England supporting our Fly-In.

I, like most AOPA members, have to consider what is a justifiable, even if affordable expense. I have 500 hours in my log book and no ambition to get an IMC, let alone a CPL, but at one time flying used to be rather expensive fun. When I started my flying the aircraft burned around 12 gallons an hour and shared a hangar with an Auster owned by a dustman, another owned by two garage mechanics, and you never saw a Jaguar in the car park – it was more likely to be a working vehicle.

I ask, has flying finally as a private owner, on a pension or average salary, become just too expensive, so that what is happening is



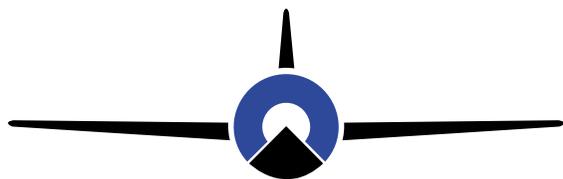
that pilots bash the circuit for an hour each month, without the expense of landing away unless a reciprocal arrangement exists? Is most flying now done in a club aeroplane costing £100 – £125 per hour, whilst waiting for better days, their major hobby having changed to golf or model aeroplanes or anything with lower justifiable expense?

If the Chancellor were to impose a £5 per metric tonne duty on Jet A-1 and use the money to remove duty from 100LL and CAA charges from aircraft under 2,700kg it would seriously alter the cost of flying. New young people would become involved and some of those might progress to fill the enormous hole in the pool of available CPLs which is going to occur in ten years time.

Bill Fisher

**It was quite fortunate that the Old Sarum visit was called off – the accompanying picture shows what happened when a squall hit the airfield during the afternoon, and an Ikarus microlight got in the way of it. – Ed ■*

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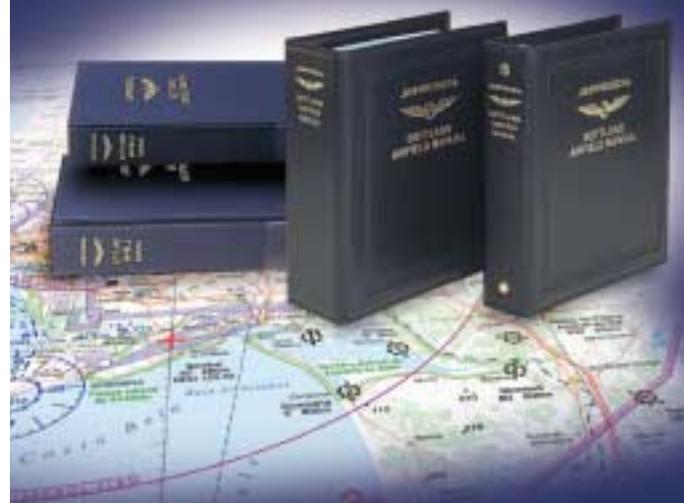
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