

Letters to the Editor

Beagle in balance

Sir,

I greatly enjoyed Mike Jerram's article on the problems that Beagle and the Pup faced, because I went there after hearing an inspired speech by Sir Peter Masefield. Unfortunately, the government had already taken the decision that would end the UK light aircraft industry by permitting the import of American aircraft with FAA certificates and not obtaining reciprocal privileges for UK aircraft. As a result the B206 had to meet both BCAR and FAA requirements. Subsequent governments have continued that policy. I can remember when UK pilots used to win international microlight competitions using UK designed and built aircraft. Then everyone else liberalised the rules, but the CAA kept them on 'safety' grounds. Now, almost all small aircraft are imported.

In fairness to the CAA Beagle did not help itself, and gave me a fund of (now) amusing experiences. I had the privilege of working in the Project Office at the time of the Sea Beagle (now lost from official records) which I have used as a case study because it had almost all the errors one can make in project management. If you want a 'funny' on unwise regulation, I can write a true one about the arrester hook.

The Pup had a predecessor. There was a tendency to disparage any Miles work, so the project for a two and four seat light tourer/trainer began with a blank sheet. I did the weight and balance predictions and wrote an annex stating that all successful aircraft projects of which I was aware (including the B206) had gone into production 25 percent heavier than predicted, with engines up to 50 percent more powerful than originally thought necessary and with the centre of gravity some 20 percent aft of the first design position. Design of the new aircraft should be based on my figures with these 'safety' factors included. I was, understandably, severely criticised. Some time after leaving I had an occasion to be in Shoreham and dropped into the design office socially. One of my colleagues produced a sketch of a beautiful swept-wing trainer/tourer. "You were right, you know," he said. "We had to sweep back the wings to get the centre of lift behind the centre of gravity!"

Tom Geake.

Why we quit

Sir,

You ask in the August issue of *General Aviation* why 70% of new pilots fail to renew their PPL after five years, but the reasons appear in subsequent pages. It's not the cost or the weather - those are excuses, not reasons.

Most new pilots are successful middle-aged businessmen whose children have left home and who have time and the money to afford flying. They sense the freedom it would give them and dream of weekends in the Med, Bavaria, or Switzerland. After five years the average PPL has 200 or so hours TT and may own a share in an aircraft. Some of the reasons he gives up are:

- P.5. His licence has expired and must be

renewed every five years although his driving licence is good until 70.

- P.6. He is compelled to have expensive mandatory handling at many small regional airfields while his car is valet parked for free
- P.8. Little Hitlers in Germany demand full ramp checks on arrival
- P.10. Special Branch must be told when and where he wants to fly outside the EU even to and from British airports such as the Channel Islands, Ireland N & S, and Isle of Man let alone Switzerland
- P.49. Landing may be refused if he omits to request prior permission before he departs
- P.49. Cash may be demanded for fuel even at major airports abroad

So he decides to sell his share and buy a Porsche. It holds as much baggage as the plane and his wife is willing to travel with him. What killed his love of flying? Bureaucracy! Nothing else. He doesn't mind too much, because an Irishman or a Greek will meet his future needs.

John D. Ritchie

German welcomes

Sir,

Another super issue of *General Aviation* in August, so much better than the monthly pilot magazines because you deal with the serious issues while making the whole thing extremely interesting.

Your article Ausweis, bitte! reminded me of an experience I had while doing some casual flying around northern Germany last year. Having landed at a small German club airfield near Dusseldorf to visit friends, I expressed the intention of doing the usual Ruhr Dams tour, dropping into Munster. The airfield manager advised me against landing at Munster (Munster/Telgte 680m or Munster/Osnabruck 2170m not specified) because they were in the habit of "taking foreign visiting aircraft apart administratively". So I flew to another club airfield he recommended, Marburg/Schonstadt on the way to Koblenz, where they were so friendly we decided to stay overnight.

The basic message has to be - avoid both Munster airfields. I have found Stadtlohn/Vreden 980m EDLS 30 nm west of Munster on the German/Dutch border a very convenient and friendly watering and refuelling hole for transiting flights to the east. If Stadtlohn is the first stop out of the UK, check customs and flight plan notification with the airfield management. It should be relatively painless.

Tony Purton, Denham

Say again?

Sir,

Your current issue is jam-packed with vital stuff. Well done!

I agree with you that the number of zone infringements reflects adversely on all of us. On the Farnborough Radar frequency on my return from Alderney recently I was appalled at the standard of RT displayed by private pilots - stumbling transmissions, incomplete details, incorrect readbacks, you name it - and all this while the patient controller was under a huge workload. It's no wonder that getting lost is the natural consequence. Shame on us.

No doubt Martin and yourselves will be checking out the revelation that with the creation of controlled airspace around French entry airports, Mode S will be mandatory as from next spring. Do the French realise that

this could effectively end the majority of private aviation's traditional cross-Channel visits?

Perhaps the French Chambers of Commerce should be made aware of their potential loss of revenue.

Finally, condolences that Gillian Merron MP has been ousted in Brown's reshuffle. We got the feeling from your interview that she had got a sympathetic handle on the GA position. Now we have to start from scratch with the new man. When such matters could have such a profound effect on our flying futures, it seems criminal that knowledge in the job is considered less important than installing a so-called 'supporter' in office.

Keep up the good work.

John Dominic

RT is a serious problem for some. I had a student who had to give up flying because of paralysing 'mike fright'. Many provincial pilots avoid congested airspace because of RT requirements. And there's no need to ask why French pilots rarely visit south coast airfields. If anyone has a solution, let's hear it. - Pat Malone

Praise for Southampton

Sir,

I read with interest the article about the person who paid £181.37 at Southampton. Yesterday I flew from France into Southampton to drop off my wife and son before proceeding onto my home airfield of Turweston. We were transported by car to the office, filled in the customs form and then paid the charges. For my SR22 the bill was £28.62 including VAT. No handling charges, no transport charges. Brilliant and efficient service. I was even parked on an official stand between two commercial jets.

Any idea why the difference? Is it that Southampton have reconsidered things since the event you reported?

Prof Mike Glazer

See 'Southampton success', AOPA Working for You section

Sir,

Things have changed at Southampton in the last year. Whereas at one time they tended to refuse a crossing clearance if they had the vaguest whiff of commercial traffic, these days I find they are unfailingly accommodating and will fit in transit traffic if at all possible - a welcome change from the old routine. It would be uncharitable to think that the new regime under which controllers must furnish reasons in writing why they refuse crossings if they are challenged has anything to do with it. I prefer to think they are just being helpful - they are certainly always pleasant and positive. Well done, Southampton.

Bill Davey, Okehampton ■



Gillian Merron MP has been ousted in Brown's reshuffle. She appeared sympathetic to the GA position