

Members do their own thing

The AOPA Members Working Group met at White Waltham in February and as always covered a lot of grounds in discussions; Chris Royle was in the Chair for the last time – George Done or Martin Robinson will Chair the next meeting pending the selection of a replacement. Present were: Martin Robinson, George Done, Chris Royle, Kevin Churchill (a new member of the Group, a maintainer from Bournemouth who flies an AA5 on the N-register) Mick Elborn, Timothy Nathan, Pauline Vahey, Richard Warriner, Pat Malone, James Chan, Nick Wilcock, John Murray and Peter Barron.

The discussion ran from mid-morning to mid-afternoon and the salient points are covered in these reports. The Members Working Group is open to any AOPA member who wants to have his or her voice heard, and perhaps to take on some tasks on behalf of the Association. If you'd like to come along, please notify mandy@aopa.co.uk so they can make sure there's enough coffee.

Volunteers are needed for a couple of upcoming events – the AOPA Bonus Day at Duxford is on September 23rd, still a long way off but it's amazing how time flies; if you'd like to help out, email Mandy.

Martin Robinson reported to the Group that AOPA and the Goodwood Festival of Speed had come to an arrangement whereby, in company with Flyer magazine, AOPA will be running a promotion at the Festival on learning to fly. We'll need some help from members on the day. AOPA will also once again have a stand at Sywell during Aero Expo between May 25th and 27th, and members who can spend an hour or two on the stand are very welcome.



Left: the Members Working Group meets at West London Aero Club, White Waltham

the original deadline of April 8th was now meaningless. FCL rules will be incorporated into the new Air Crew Regulation, which will include the Authority and Organisation requirements. The European Commission has told member states there will be a delay to July 1st. The UK CAA have decided to implement the new rules on the first possible date. Around the Continent IAOPA is looking at what states intend to do. Martin has drafted a letter, the text agreed by members of the EASA Advisory Body, which had been sent to Mike Smethers, Chairman of the EASA Board of Management, asking states to publish details of how they intend to implement FCL. Places like Germany, Spain, and Greece were planning on April 8th 2013 as their starting point, but this posed its own problems because the regulation requires all licences to be converted by April 2014, so they will have less time to do the job.

This doesn't mean on July 1st we will have to have EASA licences; you can wait to 2014. If you have a JAR licence, this will become EASA next recycle time. If you have a UK licence you can convert to an EASA licence if you can show evidence of having done some radio nav. You'll be charged about £64, and it's valid for life. The CAA wants to run roadshows and has asked AOPA to help, and we will help them.

EASA-FCL is not all bad news. Medical standards are being amended to go back closer to the ICAO standards, and will be less onerous than those of the JAA. The CAA have been working on acceptable means of compliance material that will allow for GPs to produce a medical certificate for holders of the LAPL... unfortunately there is a lack of clarity from states, and there is a risk we will end up in a mess. ■ →



Where's the money coming from?

The CAA Bill, which shifts £24 million of costs from the Department for Transport to the CAA, will affect general aviation in unknown ways, Martin Robinson told the group.

"Ministries' overheads have been cut by 25 percent and they are desperate to shift costs wherever they can," he said. "The CAA aren't terribly happy about it but have no alternative but to go along with it."

An area of concern is how they will operate the Regulation Enforcement Branch, which at the moment is paid by the DfT. "We want to avoid a situation where pilots who might have fought a CAA prosecution and won decide instead to plead guilty for fear of an excessive costs bill.

The CAA Bill enlarges the remit of the CAA and creates new powers which will change the way they operate, Martin said. They will be allowed to take immediate action if they see an aircraft they consider unairworthy or

an organisation that's unsafe. "This could mean a financial sanction even before the issue gets near the court," he said. "We haven't got clarity on that.

"An Australian has been hired by the CAA to look at their business practices. His report to the Board has come as something of a culture shock, but they go along with it and will be moving to make the whole system more businesslike and efficient, to drive down costs."

As has often been reported in this magazine Martin has been on at them for years to make licence and rating issue electronic, so an examiner can effectively issue a licence after a successful test, without the enormous back-room work that currently goes into it. This poses serious industrial relations issues, however.

Martin outlined the main issues he was currently handling. Members had concerns over the implementation of EASA FCL, where

→ LAMPs going out all over Europe

EASA and the CAA seem to be worked at cross-purposes on light aircraft maintenance, with both organisations conducting separate reviews of its regulation.

Kevin Churchill reported that an EASA audit had found that the Light Aircraft Maintenance Programme, as supported by the CAA, was not compliant with EASA requirements, and the CAA

has come up with a generic maintenance programme (GMP) for light aircraft. People who have already incurred huge costs getting into ARCs are now faced with a

complete reassessment of the maintenance status of each aircraft. The CAA say they've consulted with industry on this. "I'm wondering how much consultation there was," he said. "My concern is that this is another nail in the coffin, as it will cost the earth to implement."

George Done, who also chairs AOPA's Maintainers Working Group, said the CAA did consult with some people – he was invited to a meeting at the CAA with members of the AOPA group. The CAA listened politely, and later announced this new system. "One maintainer, when he saw this, asked why we had bothered

going because they took no notice of anything we said."

At the European level there is a task force looking through Part M as it applies to GA aircraft, with a brief to investigate whether its extraordinary complexity and cost is necessary for GA. George said: "They are talking about a new GMP, but the EASA version is quite different from the CAA version."

AOPA has pointed out the need for a joined-up approach on this. More discussions are planned in the days to come. ■



Housekeeping corner

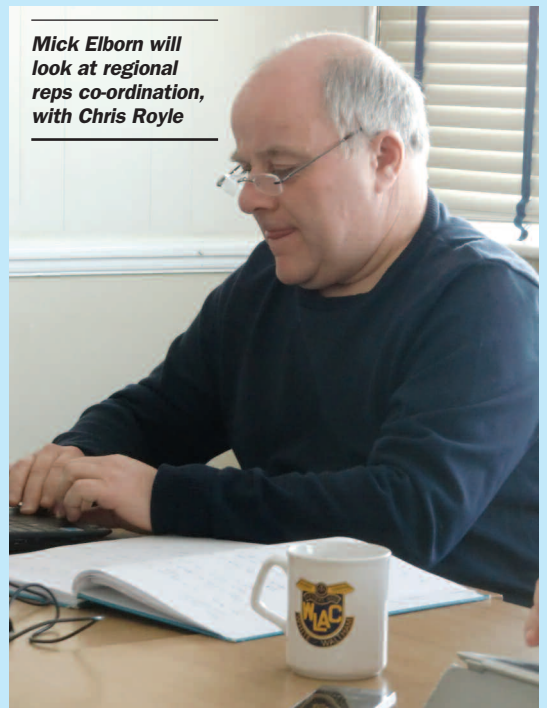
AOPA Members Working Group Chairman Chris Royle is stepping down from the role, and the change prompted an introspective discussion of how the Group could operate most effectively. It has scored some big successes, and has been at its most useful when it has had a goal – AOPA Chairman George Done mentioned the Mentoring Scheme, support for the Wings Scheme, and the Duxford bonus days. But Timothy Nathan thought group membership had ossified and wondered whether there were ways of bringing new people in.

Martin Robinson said continuity was no bad thing; progress had suffered when people popped in and out of involvement, especially when they had taken on work. Martin also said the tone of some meetings had been antagonistic and the inflamed rhetoric could usefully be dispensed with; robust discussion was one thing, abuse was another.

To coincide with the change of Chair, George and Martin had revisited the Terms of Reference and had added a new one, "to provide support and progress reviews for specific projects that benefit the membership at large". After discussion, the text was amended to read "specific projects and campaigns".

It was thought that where the MWG had not succeeded it was in large measure because of the failure to provide a committed co-ordinator for the airfield and regional reps. This pivotal position had not been properly filled, and it was fundamental to the success of all our projects to find the right person to do the job. While national meetings of reps was suggested, it was thought that unless there was follow-up driven by a co-ordinator, any benefit would be short term. It was thought Chris Royle and Mick Elborn could jointly take this on. The regional reps concept and network needed a relaunch. As a first step Martin, George, Mick and Chris are to meet to discuss what the reps' objectives are. Kevin Churchill asked whether we do not need two groups – one doing the talking, the other engaged directly in specific projects. Progress could perhaps be hampered by the fact that we were talking about so many things. This thought is carried over to the next meeting.

Mick Elborn will look at regional reps co-ordination, with Chris Royle



Excessive landing fees

James Chan and Martin Robinson are to meet again to discuss aerodrome charges, and the fact that they are economically counter-productive. Martin said he'd recently had a meeting at Bristol, where they'd agreed to freeze the landing fees, although there will be a small increase in air traffic service charge. James Chan pointed out the landing fee was £171, so it wasn't going to do much for their GA traffic. Martin said they were setting up a GA consultancy group at the airport.

John Murray said GA should be considered as useful for keeping regional airports viable until the upturn in commercial traffic comes back. Handling charges were a major disincentive in places like

Liverpool where you could be charged £70 for a minibus that took you ten yards.

Martin thought it might be time to start a campaign to impress upon airports the fact that the EC handling mandate permits self-handling. In the EC Directive, Article 7, it was clear that airports must allow self-handling. The magazine should publish the text of that directive. He would write to the DfT to remind them that self-handling is permissible – the text says: "shall be made available."

Martin thought he and James Chan could write to all the airports pointing up the self-handling provision. Some agents were charging for what they made available, not what they do. At Bristol the possibility of off-peak landing charges had been discussed – Timothy Nathan pointed out that a similar system is in operation at Manchester where the take-off fee could get down to around £25. ■

GARs coming to a head

John Murray is still working with police and Borders Agency on the GAR, and real progress is not far off. John stressed how close we had come a year ago to being forced to enter the UK via a designated or controlled point. However, as a result of proving to the authorities that an improved self-declaration system can be put in place, that had been avoided.

The issue of the 'domestic GAR' for all GA flights at Manston had moved on. John said he had spoken to Ramsgate police and had established that this was a locally-originated Special Branch idea. The Sergeant responsible said they had every right to do it. John had drafted a letter in response which he had sent to Martin for checking.

Martin Robinson said there had been a misunderstanding at Manston. Special Branch had been approaching airfields, who obviously wanted to have a working relationship with the police, and some had made local agreements. There was no legal requirement for the pilot to fill anything in. Where there were local agreements which an aero club had entered into with the local Special Branch, that club could explain the situation to the pilot, who is not



legally bound by it. It might be worthwhile, in order to be helpful, to comply. "We don't want the Old Bill going back to Parliament and reinforcing this 'GA is the soft underbelly' thing that is floating around again, courtesy of Lord Carlile," Martin said.

John Murray has been promised the police will be on board for the GAR, and he thought it unwise for general aviation pilots to accept any treatment they would not expect to get if they were travelling by train. No rail passenger would be asked for GAR-style data and it was wrong for individual police officers to feel able to ask pilots for it.

Martin said ACPO have put in place 900 police officers with a brief to take an interest in GA. "All we've ever said since 911 is that our members can be part of the solution, the eyes and ears of Special Branch at small aerodromes; we don't want hard and fast regulations being

forced on us, but let's be co-operative."

Chris Royle remarked that one of their members had put 'Mickey Mouse, Disneyland,' on

Left: John Murray makes a point as Nick Wilcock and Kevin Churchill listen



the documentation, then went for a cup of tea and had the police turn him over when he got back. Nick Wilcock said some airports were more security sensitive than others, and Manston, being closest to the Continent, probably thought they had good reasons to impose extra security requirements.

Martin added that it was important for police and customs to be clear on the fact that they can't take as much as a screwdriver to an aircraft; at ACPO they were surprised to hear this. He added that police interest in airfields had led to positive results in the apprehension of fuel and metal thieves. At Elstree, they had found two chaps interfering with a helicopter, and arrested two known drug dealers who'd downloaded onto their iPhone instructions on how to steal a Cessna and were trying to break into one. ■

Cologne Follies

Nick Wilcock gave an update on EASA issues. The CAA had originally left out of its response any modification to allow us to continue the IMC rating, but some mention of that had now been introduced; we hope this will bear fruit. There were many issues; PPL/IR's plans to offer non-FTO-based training were strongly opposed by the CAA; AOPA was neutral on the issue. There is some debate on whether the standard of meteorological forecasting is sufficiently accurate to support the En Route Instrument Rating, which allows instrument flying in the cruise but does not teach approaches. As with much of EASA's output, Nick said, there were over-convoluted descriptions of what will be allowed and what won't; their 'quick guide' is 12 pages long and would put you to sleep. Renewing a lapsed rating had become more convoluted – instead of leaving most of it to the discretion of instructor and pilot, there was some woolly text about what 'should' or 'shall' be taken into consideration. Characteristically, the Germans want it to be absolutely specified. But it has never been a problem; the change is not evidence-based, and represents heavy-handed nonsense.

The change from a 'registered facility' to an Approved Training

Organisation, with the attendant approvals and costs, filled him with foreboding. At the moment a charge of £1,200 was talked of, but what that covered, nobody knew; certainly it was enough to kill a lot of small operations stone dead.

Martin Robinson said there would be a requirement of the CAA to do all the preparatory work, to set up all the internal systems and processes, and to do a baseline audit. Each and every course would have to have approval from the CAA, for which they'd have to make a charge. They are producing a template document for ATOs that say what they can be audited against, so the ATOs can largely box-tick their way through it. AOPA would have to review that document with the CAA and check it rigorously.

Nick Wilcock mentioned the consultation on unified transition level at 18,000 feet. While this seemed positive on the face of it, there were downsides which would have to be addressed.

Nick also rehearsed the position on instructing for remuneration. To teach for the PPL (A) you need a commercial level of knowledge. To teach for the LAPL (A), you don't. This effectively creates two different types of instructor, one perhaps cheaper than the other. Conversion from LAPL to PPL therefore becomes important from a cost standpoint; you could do most of it with a 'cheap' instructor and transfer to the expensive model for the conversion. Curiously the LAPL (H) doesn't do the same – for some reason the instructor needs a commercial level of knowledge throughout.