

# Briefings




Keith Wilson

## Girls allowed

### What can the GA industry do to make itself more attractive to women? **Pat Malone** reports

A comprehensive survey of women's attitudes to learning to fly has produced an action list designed to get more women into general aviation, and to keep them in once they start. While it's an American survey, a lot of its findings would seem to translate across the Atlantic. The number of women in aviation in the US at six percent of the total, is abysmally low, and similar to that in the UK. Although we don't have any statistics here, the Americans have found that even more women drop out during training than men. The bottom line is that general aviation seems to be making it unnecessarily difficult for half the population to participate, and needs to do better.

Some of their action points are pretty obvious and not gender-specific – for instance, it's too expensive. The survey's author suggests creating low-interest loans for women; good luck with that. Others would bear close scrutiny by instructors and flying schools.

The top ten barriers that stop women flying are deemed to be:

1. No money.
2. Instructor-student communication incompatibility.
3. Instructors leaving to take airline jobs.
4. Lack of female mentors and support systems for female students.
5. Personal lack of confidence in their ability and a 'fear of flying', especially stalling too early in the training process.
6. Lack of experience with and knowledge of mechanical systems.
7. Lack of map reading experience and orienteering skillsets.
8. Flight schools perceived as indifferent to female students.
9. Famous female pilots largely unknown as role models to non-aviator women.
10. Lack of emotional support from family and friends, who perceive flying as 'too dangerous'.

Some of the action points merit particular attention. One says: 'Develop

"Female Friendly Flight Training" with more simulator-time and increase women's confidence level by building on what they already know instead of going strictly by the (FAA) curriculum steps. Flight schools, instructors and the FAA need to recognise women and men have different learning styles and strengths. Instead of the one-size-fits-all flight training syllabus, the sequence of instruction needs to be flexible to recognise this difference in learning styles. One style is not better than the other, they are just different.'

Caroline Gough-Cooper, Chairman of the British Women Pilots' Association (BWPA), says it's legitimate to say that women and men learn differently. 'More research into this area would be welcome,' she says, 'perhaps with a view to introducing additional flexibility into the syllabus. This is more than just a gender issue; the syllabus itself hasn't really been looked at for many years, and it's time to ask ourselves whether we're really teaching the PPL in the best possible way for modern times.'

The American study also highlights women's lack of experience of machines and lack of facility with the rudiments of navigation as barriers which can be tackled. While it's true that women are not generally brought up to understand the workings of the internal combustion engine, Caroline believes this is becoming less of a gender issue because boys no longer play with train sets, tune cars or rebuild engines in the way they once did. As to the old saw that women can't handle a map, there seems to be some truth in it.

Caroline, the former Ladies World Helicopter Champion, says: 'The male brain has been shown to be generally better-wired for spatial awareness, although airborne navigation can throw a lot of men, too. It may be that the way we teach navigation does not do enough to cater for differences, and again, more research is needed.'

The survey – and Caroline – bemoans the lack of female mentors. Caroline says: 'While modern women may no longer identify closely with the women of the wartime ATA who have been much in the news, we need to do more to promote the great female role models – people like Barbara Harmer, the first woman Concorde pilot, and Kirsty Moore, the first woman in the Red Arrows. Part of our raison d'être at the BWPA is to provide support for women pilots who can't really find it elsewhere.'

Which brings us to two more action points: firstly, women feel they are not made welcome in flight schools, where the testosterone level tends to be high and the atmosphere unhelpful. Secondly, family and friends tend to look on female students in a negative light – flying is perceived to be "too dangerous" for a woman. While there's not much the industry can do about that, there's a lot FTOs can do about making the female



Above: Hilda Hewlett and aircraft

student feel welcome. And some could make the male student feel a little more at home, too.

The full survey can be found at <http://www.teachingwomentofly.com/default.htm>.

Speaking of female role models, the BWPA is this year celebrating the 100th anniversary of the issue of the first pilot's licence to a British woman. The recipient, Hilda Hewlett, was a remarkable lady; she set up a flying school at Brooklands in 1910, and Tommy Sopwith had his first flying lesson there. Hilda got her own licence in 1911 at the age of 47 and taught her son to fly later that year – the first (and possibly only) time a British military pilot was taught to fly by his mum. Hilda's company went on to build military aircraft during the First World War, and to train women to build planes.

The BWPA's celebration will culminate on August 29th, Bank Holiday Monday, when they will have a nationwide 'Women In The Air' day. For details of that and other centenary celebrations this year, have a look at their website [www.bwpa.co.uk](http://www.bwpa.co.uk). ■

## Guernsey Rally change

The Guernsey International Air Rally, normally held in September,

has been switched to June this year because of major runway work at the island's airport which is due to start in July. This will be the 40th Guernsey Rally, and its reputation has grown every year. It's a fun weekend, offering great hospitality and just

incidentally, some of the cheapest avgas in Europe. Full details and an application form will shortly be available on the Guernsey Aero Club website [www.guernseyaeroclub.com](http://www.guernseyaeroclub.com)



## Scholarships and bursaries

The **Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators** has announced details of its 2011 scholarships and bursaries, which include several instructor ratings, one of them for helicopters, and a number of PPLs.

As well as the Guild's own charitable trusts and Benevolent Fund, a number of external benefactors have contributed to these scholarships, including the Weetabix Charitable Trust, which backs the rotary instructor ticket, and the Cadogan Charitable Trust and GAPAN Past Master Mike Grayburn, who subsidise the PPLs.

Bursaries are also available to flying instructors who wish to upgrade to IR instructor, where up to £2,500 is available, to aerobatics instructor (up to £1,750) and to multi-engine instructor (up to £3,500). Two jet orientation courses are also available, courtesy of EPST in the Netherlands.

Applicants have to be over the age of 17 on June 1st 2011, and full details can be seen on the Guild website, [www.gapan.org](http://www.gapan.org) – look under 'Career Matters'.

\*The **de Havilland Educational Trust** is seeking applications for the 2011 award of Fiona McKay Flying Bursaries and Engineering Bursaries.

The Trust will award bursaries to fund ten hours conversion and

consolidation flying on a Tiger Moth, either at Cambridge Flying Group or at the school of the applicant's choice. To apply you must have a UK licence appropriate to flying in command of a British-registered Tiger Moth and must have logged a minimum of 75 hours PIC at the time of application.

The aim of the bursary is to encourage pilots to develop an interest in, and the necessary skills for, handling vintage aircraft, which can be carried forward as an asset to the vintage movement.

The de Havilland Educational Trust also offers an Engineering Bursary designed to foster the skills required to keep these planes airworthy and in good condition. If you have an interest in the restoration, maintenance and repair of vintage aircraft and engines, take a closer look.

The Trust's literature says: "Applicants will be required to provide a plan for their advancement in this field and details of how the receipt of an Engineering Bursary would assist. Previous recipients have been funded to provide manuals, tools, association membership, licence fees, instruction courses and work placements."

Step lively – the closing date for receipt of applications is Monday 28th February 2011. Applications by e-mail or fax must be received no later than midnight GMT on Sunday 27th February. Application forms are available from:

The de Havilland Educational Trust  
Staggers, 23 Hall Park Hill, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2NH ■

## Longer legs for Sugar

Cirrus pilot, businessman and noted 'TV celeb' Lord Sugar – Alan Sugar as was – has taken delivery of an Embraer Legacy 650 business jet, the new longer-range version of the Legacy 600. Lord Sugar, previously a Legacy 600 customer, has placed the aircraft, G-SUGA, with Titan Airways Executive at Stansted. Lord Sugar said: "The Legacy 650 has a considerably longer range, it's fast, it has a very generous hold, accessible from the cabin and is ideal for the 300 hours or so of business flying I do every year. I looked at several aircraft types, but this was the one that fully met my needs. It's as quiet as the Falcon 7X." G-SUGA is configured with 13 seats and features Inmarsat's SwiftBroadband system for high-speed internet in-flight. It has a maximum range of 3,900 nm, which means it can make New York or Dubai non-stop from London. It is also cleared for London City operation.

