

Radio stealth tax to hammer GA

The Treasury's discovery of a new target for a stealth tax is going to cost aviation dear unless some common sense can be injected into the debate. The government has latched on to the idea of selling radio spectrum to the highest bidder, and as heavy users of radio, aviation is firmly in its sights.

The idea of taxing safety aside, some of the prices it proposes to levy on radio aids are utterly ridiculous. Every DME, for instance, would carry an annual price tag of £126,000. Every ILS would be priced at £115,000, every VOR at £115,000. This would be levied on the provider of the service, who would be left to recoup it from users. The airlines would be faced with massive cost increases – not good at a time when they're going bankrupt right and left – and as far as general aviation is concerned, the bill would accrue to the pilot.

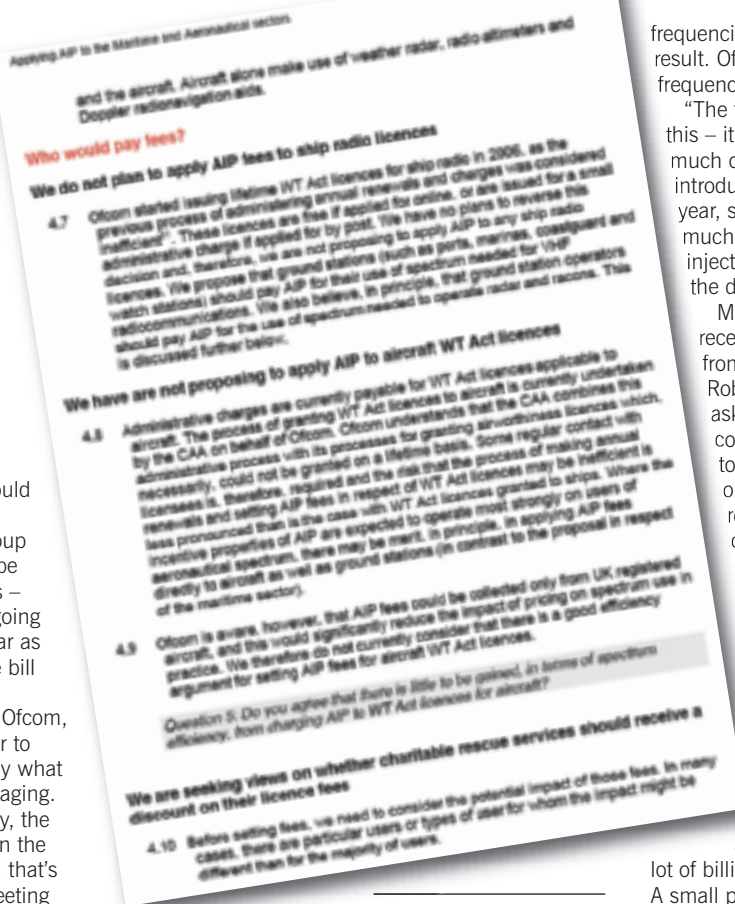
AOPA has held a meeting with Ofcom, who are driving the issue, in order to make sure they understood exactly what the situation is. It was not encouraging. Firstly, Ofcom won't get the money, the Treasury will – and at a time when the government is desperate for cash, that's not a promising situation. At a meeting between Ofcom's Michael Richardson and AOPA CEO Martin Robinson at AOPA's offices in Victoria, the chief executive was left with the impression that Ofcom's understanding of aviation radio was next to nil, and its purpose was simply to dig up money for the Treasury.

Ofcom proposes to charge £4,950 a year for the use of a .25 MHz radio frequency. Martin Robinson told the Ofcom representative that this would probably lead to the abandonment of A/G radio at small airfields and a reversion to a signals square, with the consequent degradation of safety. That, said Mr Richardson, was exactly the point – if an airfield could do without a frequency, that meant it was not being efficiently used and ought to be taken away. The fact that the radio exists solely for the safe separation of aircraft cuts no ice.

The level of sophistication of the Ofcom argument was shown up when Martin Robinson asked why they proposed to charge £4,950 for a 25 MHz frequency, but £1,650 for an 8.33 MHz frequency. 25 MHz was three times 8.33, he was told.

Seminar change

Instructors please note – the timing of the next AOPA Flight Instructors Refresher Seminar has had to be altered. The seminar will now be held (at the same venue, the TA Centre at Booker) on Monday, December 1st and Tuesday, December 2nd. We apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause, but it has been necessary as the Territorial Army require the Centre on December 3rd. – John Pett



Above: one of the 94 pages of the Ofcom report

Those hardest-hit would be those who make the greatest use of such life-saving aids as weather radar, ELT, and transponder frequencies. Radalt would attract a fee of £32,000 a year, a microwave landing system the same. The charge would be levied on the Department for Transport, and passed on to NATS or the CAA to recover from industry.

Martin Robinson says: "This is a fundamental safety issue. If because of government desperation for money we end up with fewer ILSs, fewer approach aids, less weather radar and fewer air-ground

frequencies, people will be killed as a direct result. Ofcom should ask itself not what a frequency is worth, but what a life is worth.

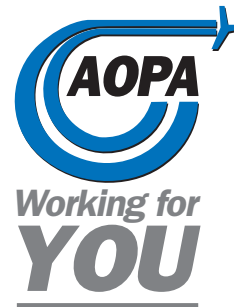
"The fact is that UK aviation cannot afford this – it really has the potential to kill off much of the industry. Ofcom wants to introduce spectrum pricing from March next year, so we don't have much time to try to inject some sense into the debate."

Members will have received an email from Martin Robinson in August asking them to contact their MPs to seek clarification on this issue and register their objections. This is not something

AOPA asks often because it causes a lot of people in government a lot of work and can sometimes prove counter-productive, but the consultation will be over by the time you read this.

Radio spectrum pricing is a hot issue all over the world. At the IAOPA World Assembly in Greece in June, IAOPA's General Secretary John Sheehan warned: "A lot of billion-dollar companies want spectrum. A small part of the spectrum in the USA has been sold for \$5 billion, and commercial concerns are licking their chops at the prospect of more." The International Telecommunications Union is meeting to debate the issue in 2011 and IAOPA is lobbying the ITU to ring-fence safety frequencies.

Ofcom is also looking at spectrum sharing, where frequencies are shared between different users. AOPA believes there should be absolute proof that safety would not be degraded before frequency sharing is contemplated. Martin Robinson says: "We should not simply stand against spectrum sharing. If it can be proved that safety levels can be maintained, then we should welcome it. It's not worth dying in the last ditch for. ■



Faction-fighting on terror

The GA Excellence group, which has been meeting to liaise with police forces, customs and anti-terrorism organisations, is falling apart because of the fractured nature of law enforcement in the UK, something that makes it very difficult to get a consensus among police forces on how to implement the law.

The group was set up by ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers, which represents the most senior men in the 52 UK constabularies. GA's representatives are Martin Robinson of AOPA and Terry Yeoman of the BBGA, and other members come from organisations like the CAA, HM Revenue and Customs, immigration authorities and government departments. But not only do the constabularies act independently, there also

seems to be a level of rivalry between them – and that rivalry is magnified where outside organisations are involved.

Martin Robinson says: "It has come as something of a surprise to me to see at first hand how the constabularies and other law-related organisations fight to protect their fiefdoms, implement policies differently and find it difficult to get along. The GA Excellence Group has done some good work in helping these groups to understand GA, and to see how they can co-opt GA into the prevention of terrorism, by developing a 'community watch' system which was supported by AOPA, but there are simply too many rivalries for it to continue."

There is no legal mechanism for ACPO to

mandate anything, so co-operation between forces is vital – and there isn't enough of it. The police are prepared to train between 250 and 300 officers to implement Schedule 7 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which provides 'stop and search' powers covering aircraft.

They believe they can do this with a one-day training course for officers, and don't want to fund any further training. And every constabulary seems to want to do it differently. Some of them want GA to register all its activities with them; others say they intend to dismantle aircraft if they suspect there's something fishy going on. Martin Robinson says: "To his great credit, Ian Weston, head of the CAA's Enforcement Branch, has told the police that if they take so much as a screwdriver to an aircraft, they could be committing a criminal offence.

"The fact is that there is enthusiasm for co-operation at the top of every organisation, but as you move down the hierarchy to the implementation levels you find all sorts of bureaucratic reasons why something cannot be done. Some are legitimate, some are perverse, but the end result is that the best of intentions are lost in an operational morass. A number of group members are as disappointed as AOPA at the demise of the group, and it is recognised that there is no significant threat from GA." ■

Lee on Solent progress



Huge progress has been made at MCA Daedalus (Lee on Solent). The aerodrome, formerly HMS Daedalus, was sold in 2006. Immediately prior to sale Hampshire Police Authority were granted a one-year lease on the

operational area, including the runway. Hampshire Police immediately embarked on a policy of removing civilian users. Portsmouth Naval Gliding Club were first to go, and only got back in after intervention by the Secretary

Chief executive's diary:

Radio pricing and other Turkeys

I've been to Turkey for my holidays – fantastic, thanks. I hear you had some lousy weather in August. Second bad summer in a row, not good for business. Turkey has an AOPA, too, but it's very small and largely confined to military pilots. I've met their people often at IAOPA-Europe regional meetings. I tried to arrange an informal get-together with them while I was there, but one way or another we couldn't pull it off; I was lying on a Mediterranean beach, they were off flying in the mountains somewhere.

I got back from Turkey just in time to attend the final meeting of the GA Excellence group on September 1st – there's a separate story on that in these pages, so I'll just say that trying to get all those organisations to speak with one voice is beyond the wit of man. In the afternoon of that first day I met with Michael Richardson of Ofcom to discuss their outrageous proposals on radio spectrum pricing, a subject that again is dealt with in a separate story here. Between them these two meetings constituted a rude reawakening to the realities of general aviation life, and by the end of the day I'd forgotten all about the beaches of Turkey.

On September 2nd we had a meeting of ACEP, the body charged with educating pilots to the provisions of ATSOCAS, the new system for air traffic services outside controlled airspace. As you know, the CAA and NATS have funded the publishing of 50,000 CDs explaining ATSOCAS, and you'll be getting yours before the end of the year.

I went along to a meeting of the General

Aviation Strategic Forum on September 3rd. This group has been meeting for two years now, and it hasn't exactly made stunning progress; in fact it's been talking around in circles so much that I stopped going. It was set up by the CAA to progress Sir Roy McNulty's Strategic Review of GA, and Sir Roy has been getting impatient with the fact that all the talk is not moving things forward, so he's asked for an interim update. True to form, the GASF produced a report which ran to 39 pages and largely reiterated what it started with, and spent the meeting going through it line by line. But that's not the name of the game. As I said at the meeting, the fact is that Sir Roy McNulty leaves the CAA next year, and we need to give him some achievable targets he can win in his remaining time. He's not going to read a 39-page report. He needs a list of bullet points for action, and we must be sure they are points which are within Sir Roy McNulty's gift – it's no good waffling on about wind farms or government policy on aerodromes, because he can do nothing about them. We need to put the ball squarely on his head in the six-yard box, and let him do the rest. I'm sure he wants a legacy – he wants to be able to show how he has improved the outlook for general aviation as do we. So there's not much time left to cut the cackle and give him the ammunition he needs. Thankfully, at the meeting the CAA's David Chapman undertook to write the interim report, using no more than two sides of a sheet of paper.

September 4th was my first full day back



in the office, and there was a lot to catch up with. You can't turn your back for a second, because the EU, the EC, EASA, the CAA, NATS, the DfT, ICAO and a dozen other acronyms are all churning out paperwork, consultation documents, proposals

for implementation, strategic studies, and it all has to be read carefully because the devil is in the detail. Much of the time the problems only become clear when you put two or three of these documents together and see how they affect each other – the law of unintended consequences trumps all. There was the best part of a Scandinavian forest in my in-tray, and I've been ploughing through it ever since.

I had a meeting with Ian Waller of Flyer magazine on the 9th to discuss areas in which we can co-operate, and in the afternoon I went to a meeting of ASIGS, the Airspace Safety Initiative Steering Group. This is the top-level group for ATSOCAS and reports directly to Sir Roy McNulty, and is the parent body for ACEP.

On September 10th I flew to Sywell with AOPA members David Tang and Simon Lester in their EC120 for a Safety Day organised by the Helicopter Club of Great Britain. The HCGB is an excellent organisation, and if you've got a helicopter you should think about joining. They run a large number of social events, but increasingly they're morphing into a serious lobbying organisation for the helicopter owner and pilot. They're lucky to have as Secretary Jeremy James, a professional pilot with foresight and energy who works hard to keep the regulators honest. The HCGB is

of State for Defence. In mid-2007 operational restrictions were introduced on private aircraft, preventing use on Wednesday afternoons and at weekends. This killed off two established flying schools – one ceased operations and the other moved to another airfield. A maintenance organisation also moved, losing jobs and investment to the local economy.

In October the closure of the field to GA was announced.

Lee Flying Association had been formed to fight first the restrictions and then the closure and were supported throughout the campaign by AOPA. John Walker, a member of AOPA's Executive Council, was assisted by Mike Cross.

The closure decision was first delayed and has now been reversed. With support from CAA and MoD, AOPA produced a new Aerodrome Manual and Operating Procedures that were accepted by



the Police, CAA, and MoD (who are responsible for the Fleetlands ATZ that covers much of the Daedalus site).

There is now a new Air Ground Communications Service on 118.925, callsign

Lee Flying Association was formed to fight the closure

'Lee Radio'. A Letter of Agreement covering the airspace is in place and the CAA have issued a Rule 45 exemption permitting flight in the part of the Fleetlands ATZ lying to the west of the disused Gosport railway line without the need to talk to the Fleetlands AFISOs.

Mike Cross admits that there is still a long way to go. "The runway is controlled by the police but the parking and hangarage are owned by South East England Development

Association (SEEDA). Anyone wanting to use the aerodrome has to pay the police for use of the runway and SEEDA for parking or hangarage. There is a

crying need for the landowners (SEEDA and DfT) to get together and agree a co-ordinated approach. The police are currently proposing charges way above market rates but we're working on that."

More details on the LFA website at www.eghf.co.uk

also a corporate member of AOPA.

On the 11th I went to a meeting at the Department for Transport of the ad hoc group that compares notes on EASA, and comprises representatives of every facet of aviation. I can't pretend to be enamoured of EASA; our great expectations have been confounded, the 'Balkanisation' of the aviation industry continues, and costs are being driven up by unnecessary new regulation. It's not just a problem for GA – at the meeting, British Airways complained about EASA's intention to force all cabin crew to undergo Class 2 medicals, something Lufthansa says will cost it 25 million euros a year. Why? As BA says, there has never been a serious case of incapacitation of a cabin crew member leading to a problem, so why the imposition? It's hard to find out who's driving EASA sometimes. One proposal the airlines have been able to track back – the plan to mandate new child restraints. It turns out that a manufacturer of child restraints has wound up a German mother-and-toddler group, and EASA wants new child restraints to be installed despite the fact that there has never been a problem with the current system; the only winner will be the manufacturer who started the ball rolling. And remember, these airlines are very good at looking after themselves – if they have problems, how much worse must it be for GA? We also discussed the deadlines for Flight Crew Licensing changes, which simply cannot be met. Until EASA has published its proposals on Ops, nobody can work out how it affects FCL. So the deadline has slipped by four weeks, and will certainly slip further.

Consultation at EASA is a flawed process which can never work. They produce Basic Regulations, for which they allow a ridiculously short consultation period, and if you raise any concerns they tell you they can be addressed at the Implementing Rules

stage. Then when you get to the IR stage, they tell you they can't make changes because it's in the Basic Regulation, and therefore can't be changed. So they end up steamrolling through nonsense like the Part M maintenance requirements, which are causing consternation all over Europe. The intention never matches the reality. If you take FCL, the consultation document is 647 pages long, it's sent to 27 states to distribute to their aviation industries and regulators, each is supposed to file their observations which are then co-ordinated by EASA, and all within four weeks. Then EASA is supposed to go through them line by line before initiating a second round of consultation. But they don't. They can't. So we get stuck with things like the proposals on foreign-registered aircraft, which aim to drive N-registered aircraft out of Europe without addressing the reason why they're here in the first place – something EASA initially promised to do.

At the time of writing I've just got back from Frankfurt where I had a meeting on the 12th with Dr Michael Erb of AOPA Germany and Jacob Pedersen of AOPA Denmark, basically to get our story straight ahead of a European Parliament discussion on general aviation on September 18th – too late to be reported in this magazine. Looking at my diary, I see that you'll also have to wait until the December issue for news of AOPA's AGM, our plans to join with Cabair to run a GA stand at the Boat Show, a discussion on tax at Her Majesty's Treasury on the 17th, the MCASD at Culdrose, the Members Working Group on the 20th, a Helios avionics meeting on the 22nd and an EC Industry Consultation Body meeting in Brussels on the 29th – so by the time you get to read about them, it will only be nine months to my next holiday!

Martin Robinson

New chart waypoints

Pilots will see a small number of additional IFR waypoints appearing on VFR charts after the CAA responded positively to an AOPA request to make NOTAM more user-friendly.

AOPA has had a long-standing complaint that airways waypoints used in NOTAM scoped for VFR could not easily be plotted on a VFR chart. Mike Cross, who represents AOPA on AIS matters, has argued that such points should be related to some feature on a VFR chart, rather than being given only as lat & long.

Mike says: "Typically these are used to define low-level temporary class A to protect flights at aerodromes that are not connected to the airways network. It doesn't help visualisation if you use a point that does not appear on the CAA VFR chart."

Now, the Airspace Utilisation Section of the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy has agreed to add five frequently-used waypoints to charts at the next reprint. They are MALBY, MOSUN, RETSI, NITON and CPT. These are designed to help pilots avoid CAS (T) originating from Farnborough and RAF Lyneham.

Mike Cross, an IT expert who has been instrumental in improving NOTAM delivery since the first difficult days of the AIS website, says: "This will undoubtedly make flight planning easier and more accurate. If a pilot doesn't know where the waypoint is, the lat & long should enable him or her to find it pretty quickly without the need for full plotting – just find which square it's in and look for it. In time people will get to know where these points are, just as they know the location of existing airways waypoints on the VFR chart such as ORTAC, NEDUL and GARM1."

Can't quite figure out why the CAA included CPT, which is the Compton VOR and is already fairly clear on VFR charts – but hey, we'll take it.

Towards a better AIS

There have been many changes to the AIS website, and many more are in prospect. **Mike Cross**, AOPA's representative on the AIS Consultation Group, reports



AIS Consultation Group meetings provide an excellent forum for information to be exchanged between people who work within the AIS world as well as with users. At the last meeting, the CAA fielded Steve Hill and Geoff Parks from DAP, who are responsible for regulation of AIS. David Grove and Shirley Wilkinson from DAP/AUS are responsible for most of the Nav Warnings and temporary airspace restrictions. MoD fielded Al Bodkin, who is the Military AIS Officer and from EAD, who are the new provider of the UK AIS website, we had Guido Haesovets. From NATS we had Steve Harben, Head of UK AIS, Colin Potter, NOTAM Team Leader, Linda Scott, Quality Manager, Ian Souter, Customer Services, Alan Burril, Manager Information Systems from NATS IT and Tim Williams, also from NATS IT.

Hopefully you all know by now that the UK NOTAM office successfully migrated from their old database (ADIMS) to the European AIS Database (EAD) shortly before the whole organisation moved out of the old Control Tower Building at Heathrow and down the road to Heathrow House on the Bath Road, just off the north east corner of the airport. This move was necessitated by the pending redevelopment of the central area at Heathrow. During the

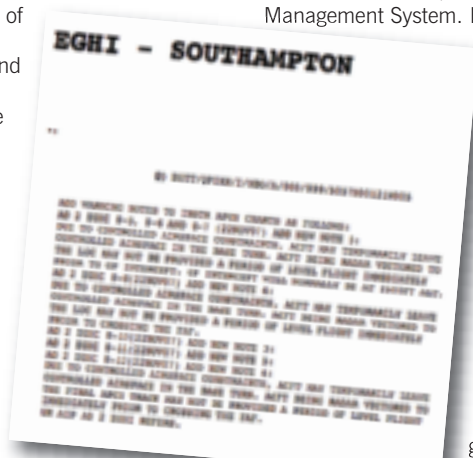
Raw PIB data should allow the use of filtering software

changeover both systems ran in parallel for some time and the changes were promulgated by NOTAM. Nevertheless a number of third-party software authors were caught out. The NATS broadcast services previously used by commercial users have now been phased out and those users have migrated to EAD. For that reason commercial users such as British Airways, Avbrief and Bytron who normally attend the consultation meetings were absent.

AIS is moving within NATS to reflect deeper changes. There is a move from being simply a Service Provider to the concept of AIS Information Management (AIM). This is extremely important. It is no longer enough simply to produce paper versions of static (e.g. AIP) or dynamic (e.g. NOTAM) data. The data needs to be in a form that can be readily transmitted and reproduced electronically for use by commercial concerns such as the airlines and data providers like Jeppesen or Garmin, who incorporate it into their own publications. UK AIS is therefore moving from NATS En-Route Ltd (NERL) to NATS Services Ltd. There is also a very important new technology being developed by Eurocontrol and the FAA. This is AIXM (AIS Information

Exchange Model), an xml based system for describing AIS data, including geographical entities. UK AIS has already started moving over from using Quark Express, which is a standard publishing tool, to Frame APS, which is an AIXM tool for publishing static data. This will eventually permit things like aerodrome and approach charts to be transferred as entities rather than as a picture on a page. The follow-on from this will be xNOTAM, which will for the first time allow for detailed graphical representation, allowing the correct shape of the activity to be overlaid onto a standard map. If you Google either AIXM or xNOTAM you will turn up more information.

As a result of the move to the EAD, UK AIS no longer has any involvement with foreign NOTAM, which are now input directly into the EAD by participating states or are picked up by EAD subscribing to the state's NOTAM via the AFTN in the traditional way. EAD is now attracting users from outside the EC, including Canada and Morocco. UK AIS also no longer holds paper copies of foreign AIPs that are available via PAMS, the EAD Published AIP Management System. However they will still



be able to assist you if you need the information. You are welcome to call in or to phone them on 020 8750 3773/3774 for advice. They'll usually be able to give you a web address where you can get the information or fax you a copy of the page you're after if it's not available on the Web.

The Freephone Line giving details of all temporary airspace restrictions and upgrades for the day has been enhanced and can now handle ten simultaneous calls instead of five. The number is 0500 354802 from within the UK. If you are outside the UK you can get it on +44 20 8750 3939.

The backup Fax on Demand service has been discontinued due to lack of use. If you need help or a briefing and you can't get it by other means call 020 8750 3773/3774 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

Aims

My list of aims includes:

Various improvements to the new site. During the transition quite a lot was lost, including such things as detailed help and user guides, usage statistics and various bits of other information that were not transferred across. The 0500 freephone number is not shown on the new site and the link to the backup site is well hidden. It should be prominent on the front page if users are to make a note of it. I've asked for these to be restored.

Data input validation is the subject of an ongoing formal complaint by me and I'm



Pre-flight Information Bulletin data is not easily found on the NATS website

continuing to press for improvements. Rod Bailes-Brown, who represents LAA/BMAA, and I have also asked if the route that has been input can be displayed on a simple map. This will help avoid mistakes. A classic example occurred recently where a pilot put IW (the Bembridge NDB) in his route. He was not aware that this had been withdrawn from service earlier this year (it is still on the half mil but there is a chart amendment covering it). As a result his route took him via the nearest point with an ICAO indicator 'IW' which happened to be the ILS for runway 22L at JFK New York. The result was a route that took him across the Atlantic and back, giving him a load of strange NOTAM and very little for the route between his departure and arrival fields. It is not sufficient to dismiss problems like this as "user error". If the problem is known and there is a simple way to reduce its incidence it is up to AIS to implement it.

I'm also arguing for better education for pilots (user guides and articles). AIS are keen on the idea of talking directly to pilots at events, and have for example been sharing the CAA stand at Aero Expo. They are happy to consider requests for group visits or to consider visiting your club if you have something going on that would provide an audience. I welcome this but have made the point that it is expensive to do and does not reach a lot of people. Far more people can be reached at lower cost by other means such as publications, either on the Web or in paper form.

I had a go at AUS regarding the use of IFR waypoints that do not appear on the UK VFR charts in NOTAM (typical are MIMBI and KENET, which are used in temporary airspace restrictions). They do put in the Lat/Long but I told them (again) that that is insufficient and we need something better (e.g. 2 miles W of Newbury). I told them that I'd be very happy to stand up in defence of anyone who got prosecuted and tell the judge that the matter had been repeatedly brought to their attention and that nothing had been done. Eventually I hope they'll get fed up with me continually beating them over the head with this one and do something about it. They've certainly not produced any good reason why it should not be done.

I've also raised the matter of a proper feed of raw data to allow the use of software that will allow the user to filter and display NOTAM data in a form that suits his/her needs better than the traditional PIB (Pre-Flight Information Briefing). This is an activity that was overtaken

by events due to the change of systems and the move from the Heathrow central area. I will be working with EAD, CAA and NATS to try to bring this forward. Previously I had asked some of the software developers to help by producing a written safety case for the data to be provided but met with a disappointing response. Two developers had been invited to the meeting but were unable to attend. This lack of engagement is disappointing.

The results of the online survey produced by David Adams of fly.dsc.net were produced and commented on by Rod, and I have forwarded them on to Linda Scott, Quality Manager at AIS for distribution.

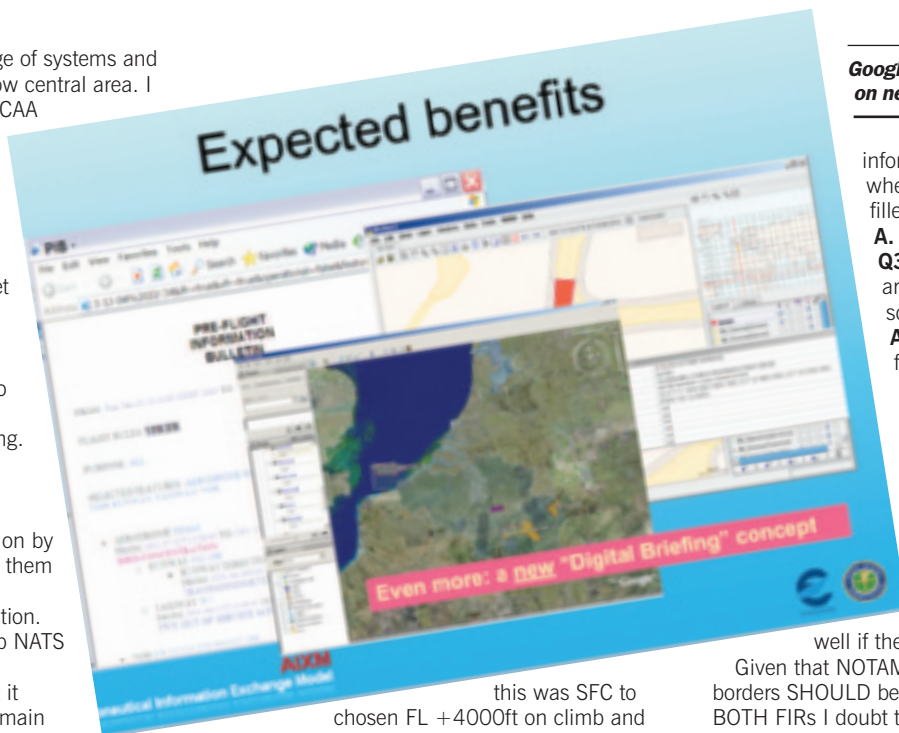
I've asked for the backup NATS site to have better user information explaining that it should only be used if the main site is unavailable and that the data is not "live" and may be up to four hours old. The PIB data is also not easily found from the home page at www.nats.co.uk (it's at www.nats.co.uk/text/109/preflight_information_bulletins_pibs_.html)

Questions

I also asked for clarification on some points:

Q1. How does the height filtering work?

A. The brief will return activity affecting the route from SFC to the chosen FL. (Previously



this was SFC to chosen FL +4000ft on climb and descent legs and +/- 4000ft of the chosen FL on intermediate legs.) The option to insert "VFR" as a FL is no longer there (it was equivalent to entering 120).

Q2. Using a Narrow Route Briefing the old site would not return NOTAM for any FIR that you crossed if you had no route waypoints in it (for example if flying from the UK to Belgium through French airspace). To get the information it was necessary to include the FIR in the "Additional Crossed FIRs" boxes. This appears to be no longer necessary and the

Google xNOTAM for information on new graphical displays

information is returned whether or not the boxes are filled in?

A. That is correct.

Q3. If that is the case, why are the boxes still on the screen?

A. The only use of the feature would be to return NOTAM whose influence extended beyond the FIR boundary, e.g. if you were remaining within French Airspace but flying near to the Belgian border then inputting the Belgian FIR code would allow NOTAM for that FIR to be displayed as well if they affected your route.

Given that NOTAM for activity that crosses borders SHOULD be notified by NOTAM for BOTH FIRs I doubt that these boxes have any useful function and will be investigating further to see if they can be removed. It is worth noting as an aside that the insertion of an alternate a/d will only return a/d NOTAM, it will not give you anything for the diversion route as the site does not know at what point on your route you may choose to divert. If you are worried by this I'd suggest adjusting your route to include your alternate within the Narrow Route corridor (e.g. by increasing the Narrow Route Width. Default is 10nm, 5nm either side of your track). ■



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PR review for AOPA

The AOPA Members Working Group has embarked on a strategic review of the Association's communications with a view to refining its messages and targeting information in a more effective way.



The proposal for the review – and the offer to do the spadework on it – came from Richard Seth-Smith, a public relations executive with a lifetime's experience in the media. In an appraisal of AOPA's current position he praised this magazine but pointed out that it could only preach to the converted. The monthly AOPA page in *Pilot* magazine was also effective, he said, but more could and should be done.

"What we lack is a strategy," he said. "We must decide what AOPA wants to communicate, to whom, and how. I would like to do a strategic review, in order to set guidelines, identify the messages, and identify the different targets for the different messages. Communications is far easier in modern times – there's lots more media to use. We need to plan how we intend to use it."

Members agreed that in communications as well as in other aspects of its work, AOPA was often in the position of fighting fires as they broke out rather than setting the agenda. In addition, when it was attacked it was felt to be slow to respond. Richard Seth-Smith will begin by discussing his proposals in detail with Martin Robinson and others.

Seth-Smith's plan served to highlight the huge range of disciplines represented by the AOPA Members Working Group, and what a reservoir of expertise the Association can call on for help. The group, which met at White Waltham in July, includes journalists and PR men, company directors, IT and systems experts including a software company owner and a builder of large computer networks, a telecoms company owner and the former IT Director of FTSE 100 companies, a magistrate, a biomedical scientist and laboratory manager, a fast jet pilot and a military air traffic controller, an underwater survey consultant, a carpentry company owner, a local authority public health executive and management consultant, and a transport logistics expert. Some are professional pilots with thousands of hours, others are low-time GA people, but all are united by a desire to ensure the future of

general aviation, and some have given over significant portions of their time gratis to that end.

Mentoring scheme

Timothy Nathan had gone to the AOPA Instructors Committee on July 9th to present to them his plan, backed by the MWG, for a 'mentoring scheme' to encourage and help pilots stay in aviation and improve their skills. He reported that the committee welcome it wholeheartedly, with some reservations about liability and command issues. There had been some disquiet about the term 'mentor', and there was support at the MWG for the idea that mentor was not the right word, but no consensus on what the right term should be. It is important that whatever word is used, it is clear that the commander is the commander and is responsible for all decision-making.

The group agreed that we have to look at liability, but felt that rather than try and duck it we should investigate insuring against claims. After a good discussion, it was agreed that we

The AOPA Members Working Group meeting at White Waltham



will launch an initially VFR-only mentoring scheme in time for the 2009 flying season. The scheme will be launched at a meeting for mentors, and once the date and location is decided, there will be a substantial publicity campaign, using all channels, to recruit mentors and to start informing potential beneficiaries that the scheme is on its way. Once we have learned lessons from the VFR scheme we will think about how to launch the IFR scheme.

Steve Copeland represented AOPA on the Met Office Users Forum Working Group, while Mike Cross is the Association's representative in the campaign to save Lee-on-Solent for GA as well as looking after members' interests with the AIS service, where he has been instrumental in revamping the AIS website to make it more user-friendly. (See separate stories on these issues elsewhere in these pages).

Wings Scheme

The AOPA Wings Scheme came in for much discussion. Mark Stock, an IT manager with the London Stock Exchange, has been posted to Hong Kong and is unable to continue promoting the scheme. Roger Keen and Greg Dolph have picked up the baton, and intend to address some fundamental issues in order to increase the uptake of the scheme. It is designed to give pilots something to aspire to when they might otherwise be drifting away from GA for want of a challenge. Roger Keen

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thought the 50-hour flying requirement between bronze and silver might be a little onerous given that most PPLs fly so little, but it was thought that the requirement was about right – not too easy, but attainable. Adrian Orchard, who flies the Royal Navy Historic Flight's Sea Fury in his spare time, put his finger on the problem when he asked how many people around the table had got their wings – none had. Until we could answer the question 'what's in it for me?' clearly and succinctly, pilots would not feel a compulsion to get involved. This task now falls to Greg Dolph and Roger Keen.

It was pointed out that most of the MWG's initiatives mesh into each other; the mentoring scheme, the Wings scheme, and the AOPA local representatives all stood together and were effectively, mutually supportive. Getting the local representative network up and running was seen as a priority.

Andy Reohorn has been doing the work on local representatives – members at individual airfields who are willing to act as AOPA points of contact, putting up information on notice boards, encouraging students to take on free membership and pilots to apply for their Wings, and feeding back to AOPA local issues and problems for action. Some 20 local reps have signed up, from as far afield as Fife and Bodmin, and Barrie Humphries has agreed to help Andy administer the programme. If you would like to be an AOPA local representative for your airfield, FTO or Club, contact Andy on andy.reohorn@gmail.com.

Business at hand

Martin Robinson gave the MWG a run-down on the current position relating to EASA FCL, SESAR, Aviation Duty, and radio spectrum pricing. Much of the same information was in the August issue of *General Aviation*, but Martin added that Ofcom is pricing each MHz at £610,000, valuing the aviation sector at £12 million. Rumbblings were that each of the 10,000 aircraft on the UK register would be charged £1,000 a year to use the radio. The Ministry of Defence, he added, was keen on the scheme because it wanted to sell spectrum it had been allocated, but had never used. AOPA has emailed members and asked them to contact their MPs to raise this issue. He also skimmed over issues relating to EASA's plans for foreign-registered aircraft and the use of GA training as a pawn in a protectionist trade game.

The Members Working Group met again in late September at White Waltham, too late for a report to appear in this issue. ■

Going foreign on an NPPL

AOPA has been asked to clarify issues relating to the validity of the NPPL in other European countries, chiefly whether the licence is valid for flight in those European countries with which the UK has a reciprocal agreement. As with much else in aviation regulation, the answer is "yes but no but."

The Air Navigation Order, Schedule 8, Section 3, page 17, says: 'Flight outside UK airspace. *He shall not fly such a SSEA or microlight aeroplane outside the UK except with the permission of the Competent Authority for the airspace in which he flies.*'

This has led to some confusion because microlight pilots had reciprocal agreements with other countries which pre-dated the NPPL and therefore enjoy 'grandfather rights', but countries have been extremely reluctant to extend concessions to the SSEA NPPL.

If an NPPL SSEA holder wishes to fly to Calais, French ATC cannot legally give permission – only the DGAC (the French CAA) can do so. AOPA has repeatedly approached senior officers in the DGAC through IAOPA and at JAA meetings, but has been stonewalled – a situation which is all the more perverse when one considers that the French *brevet de base*, which allows solo flight with passengers at a lower experience level than the NPPL, is not

only promoted in France but is being adopted by EASA.

It is also clear that when UK NPPL holders phone Calais, the controllers are quite happy to give them permission to come in.

AOPA's Pam Campbell says: "Most European countries are not happy with having our sub-ICAO pilots flying in their airspace. The important point to get across to NPPL SSEA holders is that if they want to fly to a European destination, they have to personally get permission from the competent authority in that country."

The situation is almost comical in Ireland, whose CAA will only allow a UK NPPL holder to fly in Irish airspace if they ring up personally, and then on a once-only basis. If, for example, they are going to Ireland on holiday, they can be given permission to fly in Irish airspace during the period of their stay.

This leads to problems for pilots flying in Northern Ireland, which is UK airspace in which the NPPL is valid. Flying from Enniskillen, right on the border with the Republic, pilots actually take off from one runway straight into Irish airspace. NPPL holders must therefore negotiate an early turn to keep clear. What happens in case of an EFATO? Let's hope we never find out. ■

Microlight pilots had reciprocal agreements with other countries and enjoy 'grandfather rights'



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Training from unlicensed aerodromes

By David Ogilvy

The well-intentioned work of the Light Aviation Airports Study Group (LAASG) has left many questions unanswered.

There have been many misconceptions about the Civil Aviation Authority's proposals to allow ab-initio pilot training to be conducted from unlicensed aerodromes.



Without doubt the aim was to reduce cost and bureaucracy, which must be applauded. In fact, the idea originated within AOPA, but when it was put forward many years ago the CAA considered that the time was not ripe.

Unfortunately many people – and some organisations – have leapt to premature conclusions and have even accused AOPA of standing in the way. I have heard people jump immediately to the idea that it must be good and that we should all give it an unconditional hooray. At first, briefly, I thought on similar lines. A study of the various implications, though, provides a different picture and clearly shows a need for caution.

There are several issues to consider. Liability is one that could hit the headlines. Whilst the LAASG has produced a code of conduct, this is

not enshrined in the law of the nation and who would ensure that it is followed? Responsibility for whatever fire and rescue facility is required could fall between two or more competing organisations. If flying school A was the duty provider and an aeroplane operated by flying club B had a nasty mishap on the aerodrome, who should do what? If A pulled out a student from B and the latter was hurt in the process, think of the likely litigation that might generate goodies for the lawyers but misery for the people involved.

Another point that has been given sparse treatment concerns the operational and planning aspects of any aerodrome concerned. This is a subject that may be foreign to some people, but within AOPA we have handled substantially more than 600 such issues since 1988 when we started keeping records. Here the local planning authority is in the driving seat rather than the CAA, for much revolves around the number of movements allowed and the permitted hours of operation. Most small aerodromes or airstrips have severe restrictions on both and any request for an increase in either tends to result in refusal. It is possible to appeal, but once the local residents are aware

the whole case for using an aeroplane for either business or leisure travel is severely dented

of what is going on there is a raft of objections and almost always this leads to a public inquiry. This can cost the site owner many, many thousands of pounds, but would (s)he be likely to fund an appeal when the prospective financial return from a small school or club would not justify any heavy outgoing?

Then we have the case of an existing licensed aerodrome which, if in the CAA's special category, might relinquish the licence to reduce costs if a neighbouring site intends to branch out into training activity. This would

lead to loss of viability and, in the worst case, the closure of both places.

Already we have an overall shortage of aerodromes readily available for GA use and, without a geographical spread of

facilities within reasonable reach of all centres of population, industry or commerce, the whole case for using an aeroplane for either business or leisure travel is severely dented.

As AOPA has been involved on the planning front with more than 400 airstrips, we have a fair idea of their physical layouts. While almost all are suitable for use by experienced pilots who become accustomed to the site's shortcomings, very few would be unconditionally safe for use in the training role. Rightly the LAASG calls for approach and side slopes to comply with the figures laid



Left: if an aeroplane had a nasty mishap on the aerodrome, who should do what?

down in the earlier editions of CAP 428 (Safety Standards at Unlicensed Aerodromes) but who would confirm that these apply and continue to apply? Even now we receive requests for help for airstrip (and aerodrome) owners who have problems with trees growing under (or in!) their approach patterns, so what would happen in the case of a site used for training?

It is important for all sections of GA to understand that AOPA does not object to the principle of allowing flying training from suitable unlicensed aerodromes; however, the Association's possibly unrivalled experience in dealing with small aerodromes and with pilot training, has brought to the surface the many problems involved. If all these could be resolved, the picture would be rosier, but, regrettably, some very extensive work needs to be carried out before the proposal can be implemented safely. ■

Andy Martin

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What is AOPA?

The AOPA Members Working Group has suggested that the background of AOPA be explained from time to time in this magazine because there are a lot of misconceptions about what the Association is and who runs the show.

AOPA is a not-for-profit organisation that is owned entirely by its members and owes nothing to any corporate body or agency of government. If anyone asks you who owns AOPA, you can say that you do – presuming of course that you've paid your subs.

AOPA's stated aim is to defend all forms of general aviation from unreasonable restriction from whatever source, and to make the best possible case for its members who may find themselves in conflict with the authorities. It also mediates between owners and engineers, airfields and pilots, flying schools and students – any aviation-related matter.

AOPA, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, is the trading name of the British Light Aviation Centre Ltd. This is a company limited by guarantee, which means it has no shareholders. Instead, its members guarantee to contribute a maximum of £1 each to the creditors should the company fail.

The Articles of Association set out, among other things, who can become a member – a qualified pilot, a flying club, an associate and so forth – what the voting rights are, how the Board is elected and dismissed, how members can be expelled, the objects of the Association, the protocol at meetings etc. The Articles give

the members, through elected representatives, control of the organisation and explain in some detail the required operating procedures. These Articles are governed by law and can only be amended with the consent of the membership. They're on file at Companies House.

Some elected representatives are Board members, others sit on such bodies as the Instructor Committee and influence AOPA's actions that way. Board members, who are unpaid, have traditionally been people with

enough of an interest to give their time to the corporate governance of the Association.

The origins of AOPA go back to 1928, when the Council of Light Aeroplane Clubs was formed as a subsidiary of the Royal Aero Club, which had extensive social as well as aviation interests. The Council split from the Royal Aero Club after the Second World War and became independent as the Association of British Aero Clubs and Centres. In 1966 it merged with the Aviation Centre of the Royal Aero Club to form



Letters to the editor

General Aviation

Sir,

I was sorry to read, in your latest edition, the outspoken criticism of General Aviation. As a journalist, in one form or other, for more than 40 years, including time in Fleet Street and being Editor-in-Chief of organisations employing several thousand media people, I reckon I can recognise a publication that is 'fit for purpose'. General Aviation does 'exactly what it says on the tin'. I read it from cover to cover, feel fully informed about how AOPA is spending my membership fees and always marvel at the dedication of those who spend their lives battling with bureaucrats and red tape in an effort to preserve the wonder that is General Aviation. Sorry Mr Wellings, you took a shot at the wrong target this time!

Julian Mounter

Sir,

I was head down reading GA on a recent train journey and thinking how particularly useful and informative the August 2008 issue was. Then, having re-read several of the pieces including the Mode-S traumas by the guys heading for the Baltic I hit Martin Wellings' disapproving letter. Just loved your bottle in using the headline 'Crap magazine'.

Like most AOPA members I also enjoy reading Pilot, Loop etc, and with the growing complexities of our big passion, flying, in the current climate of regulation from within and outside the UK they seems to combine very well with your magazine to provide a comprehensive overview of exactly what's going on. Yes, the others might adopt a more whizzy approach in content and presentation terms and not every piece in GA will appeal to every reader but I look on your editorial as gold dust – even the gloomy news.

So carry on enlightening and informing. You're doing a great job.

John Dominic, PPL Denham

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the British Light Aviation Centre. BLAC still exists today – AOPA is its trading name.

In 1967, AOPA in the United States suggested BLAC Ltd should become AOPA UK. Increasingly, aviation was controlled internationally, and it was important to be able to influence the development of standards on an international level. Eurocontrol had been up and running since 1963 but the main target was ICAO, which had been setting international standards for aviation since 1947. ICAO was willing to recognise AOPA as the voice of general aviation if it could show that it represented six countries. Thus, International AOPA was born, and today it has 66 national AOPAs in membership.

Apart from accepting common rules, the national AOPAs have no control or influence over each other. The rules say there can only be one AOPA in each state, it has to be

autonomous and free-standing, and it can not accept any government funding or control.

Many important figures in the aviation world have helped to build AOPA. Professor George Done, AOPA's current chairman who also deals with members' engineering queries, is a world-renowned expert on flutter and helicopter aerodynamics. He was an aerodynamicist on the Delta Dart project and is a former Dean of the Aeronautics Department at the City of London University, where he still lectures part-time.

CEO Martin Robinson brought a new dimension to AOPA when he began helping out as a volunteer in the office in 1991. A City broker specialising in pension loanbacks, he left to become a commercial pilot before getting sidetracked. He is AOPA-UK's only full-time employee. Martin brought the benefits of his commercial background to AOPA and has made innovations which many members today

take for granted. He added legal services and started sitting in on CAA interviews with accused members, and revamped the members' magazine, which used to be called *Light Aviation* and appear in black and white three times a year. Now, as *General Aviation*, it is published bimonthly and sets a high standard for aviation publications everywhere. He has encouraged member participation, and set up the Members' Group.

Nationally and internationally, AOPA today is in a stronger position than it has ever been. Through AOPA, general aviation's voice is heard from ICAO in Montreal to EASA in Cologne, Eurocontrol in Brussels and in countless other forums. Internationally, AOPA-UK is part of an organisation with 460,000 members, including 23,000 in Europe.

If you have any questions about AOPA's structure or how it is run, email them to pat@richmondaviation.co.uk. ■

Isle of Man, Dundee join Strasser Scheme

The Isle of Man and Dundee airports have become the latest to join the Strasser Scheme, under which aerodromes waive fees in case of genuine emergency or precautionary landing. They bring to 196 the number of airfields operating the scheme, although 14 still decline to participate.

Charles Strasser, AOPA's Channel Islands Regional Chairman, says: "We welcome these two airfields to this life-saving scheme, and congratulate them on adding their names to the list. The Strasser Scheme aims to remove cost from the equation when pilots are trying to make diversion decisions, often in stressful circumstances."

Some years ago the CAA recommended in CAP 667 9.2(c) that airfield should not charge GA aircraft making an emergency or precautionary diversion landings, but the Authority refused to implement its own recommendation. Charles Strasser took the job on and has persuaded almost all UK aerodromes to join, including every military airfield. Heathrow, Gatwick and London City are the only airfields that have not been asked to sign up.

This concession applies to genuine emergencies and diversions to airfields other than the destination and the filed alternate airport. Rules are strict, and Charles Strasser is asked to mediate in cases where there is a dispute. Because the scheme could be compromised if the impression was given that pilots could use it to avoid legitimate fees, he adopts a zero tolerance policy where there is doubt. In a recent appeal he ruled in favour of Farnborough after a pilot diverted there because he ran short of fuel after taking off without enough to safely reach his destination. Farnborough has accommodated emergencies with free landings in the past despite being severely capacity-limited.

The 160 civil airfields in the scheme, in alphabetical order, are Aberdeen, Aberporth, Alderney, Andrewsfield, Ashcroft, Audley End, Bagby, Barra, Barrow, Barton, Belfast-City, Belle-Vue, Bembridge, Benbecula, Beverley, Blackbushe, Blackpool, Bodmin, Bourn, Bournemouth, Brighton, Brimpton, Bristol-Intl., Brough, Bruntingthorpe, Caernarfon, Cambridge, Campbeltown, Chalgrove, Charterhall, Clacton, Compton Abbas, Conington, Coventry, Cranfield, Cromer, Cumbernauld, Davidstow, Denham, Derby,

Dornoch, Dunsfold, Duxford, Eaglescott, East Midlands, Eday, Eddsfild, Edinburgh, Elmsett, Elstree, Enniskillen, Enstone, Fair Isle, Fair Oaks, Farnborough, Farway-Common, Fenland, Fife, Finmere, Fowlmere, Full-Sutton, Glasgow, Glenforsa, Goodwood, Guernsey, Hanley, Hardwick, Haverfordwest, Hawarden, Henstridge, Hinton/Hedges, Inverness, Islay, Isle of Gigha, Isle of Man, Isles of Scilly, Jersey, Kemble, Kingsmuir, Kirkwall, Lamb Holm, Lands End, Langar, Lasham, Headcorn, Leeson-Solent, Leicester, Little Gransden, Liverpool, Londonderry, Ludham, Lydd, Manston, Maypole, Netherthorpe, Newcastle, Newquay, Newtownards, North Ronaldsay, North Weald, Nottingham, Oaksey Park, Oban, Old Sarum, Old Warden, Oxford, Panshanger, Papa Westray, Pembray, Perranporth, Perth, Peterborough-Sibson, Plymouth, Popham, Prestwick, Redhill, Retford-Gamston, Rochester, Sanday, Sandtoft, Seething, Sheffield, Sherburn-in-Elmet, Shipdham, Shobdon, Shoreham, Sleaf, Southampton, Southend, Stansted, Stapleford, Stornoway, Stronsay, Sturgate, Sumburgh, Swansea, Sywell, Tatenhill, Thruxton, Tiree, Top Farm, Truro, Turweston, Walton Wood, Warton, Wellesbourne, Welshpool, Westray, White Waltham, West Freugh, Wick, Wolverhampton, Wombledon, Woodford, Wycombe Air Park,

Yeovil, York Rufforth.

And all 36 MoD airfields - Benson, Brize Norton, Colerne, Coltishall, Coningsby, Cosford, Cottesmore, Cranwell, Halton, Henlow, Honington, Kinloss, Leeming, Feuchars, Linton on Ouse, Lossiemouth, Lyneham, Marham, Newton, Northolt, Odiham, St.Athan, St.Mawgan, Scampton, Shawbury, Valley, Waddington, Wittering, Woodvale, Wyton, Culdrose, Yeovilton, Dishforth, Middle Wallop, Netheravon and Wattisham.

Airports which have declined to implement the recommendations in CAP 667 9.2(c) are Belfast-Intl., Biggin Hill, Birmingham, Cardiff, Carlisle, Exeter, Filton, Gloucestershire, Humberside, Leeds/Bradford, Luton, Manchester, Norwich, Teesside.

The full CAA CAP 667 9.2(c) recommendation states: "There were a number of fatal accidents where a timely diversion or precautionary landing could have avoided an accident. In the UK there is a culture of pressing on and hoping for the best rather accepting the inconvenience and cost of a diversion. This culture needs to be changed, firstly by educating pilots and secondly by persuading aerodrome owners that there should be no charge for emergency landings or diversions. It is recommended that all aerodrome owners be persuaded to adopt a policy that there should be no charges for emergency landings or diversions by general aviation aircraft." ■

ANTHONY JOHN GYSELYNCK MBE FRAeS 1920 – 2008

Tony Gyselynck died on August 6th this year at the age of 87. He had experienced a life-long career in aviation and until about ten years ago he had been involved in many AOPA activities, with an especial input to the Association's Technical Committee.

From 1940 – 1945 Tony served in the wartime RAFVR as a Sergeant Fitter in both Fighter and Bomber Commands, and in 1944 he was awarded a Mention in Despatches. Later, he was a flight engineer on BOAC's Constellations, Comets and VC-10s. In 1967, though, he settled in the GA world, becoming Chief Pilot and Company Secretary to Wycombe Air Centre which he had founded. From 1961 Tony was a Director of Airways Aero Association and he was MD between 1977 and 1984. All these activities were centred on Wycombe Air Park (Booker to most of us) which was operated as a subsidiary of British Airways. When Tony retired, much of his work was taken on by his son Richard.

Tony gained a PPL in 1960 and an instructor rating the following year, and in 1964 he was appointed an examiner. He added an Irish commercial pilots licence in 1964 and a UK CPL-IR in 1966, and in 1971 was appointed a type rating examiner on single and multi-engined aircraft. He was awarded a Queens Commendation for valuable service in the air in 1974. A Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, he was awarded an MBE for services to aviation in 1991.

Tony Gyselynck was a product of the old brigade – solidly reliable and always known to make sensible decisions. I was privileged to work with him on several issues of concern to the GA world and always I will remember his valuable, practical, common sense. – *David Ogilvy* ■