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Newsletter of the LAA Bristol Strut

MARCH 2024

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Message from the Chair

Well – we may be moving out of winter and towards spring, but the weather just seems to be permanently set to ‘wet and windy’ at the moment, with only very occasional blue skies. I was very grateful to those members who turned out for February’s meeting, fighting their way through torrential rain (and floods in some cases) to listen to a really fascinating presentation by our regional Border Force General Aviation liaison team. There’s a report on the actual presentation later on in the newsletter, but it was quite eye-opening when we got to the case studies – and lots of useful advice relating to the requirements surrounding General Aviation Reports.

There’s also a lot to think about in terms of challenges to the future of General Aviation – with fuel availability and having airfields to fly from probably being at the top of the list (or at least very close)! Whilst fuel may not be something we can affect directly, the recent articles in *Light Aviation* have made for reading that is both fascinating and sobering, and made me wonder what our individual plans are for coping in the future. Airfields are probably an area where we can have more of a voice, and the recent publicity around the future of Popham, together with hangarage being made unavailable at both Bicester and Old Sarum (effectively eviction of a number of aircraft owners), should be a call for action in terms of thinking about how we can effectively lobby for the preservation of general aviation within the UK.

Don’t forget in March we have not one but two great events on! Our next weekday meeting is on 5th March, when (in a bit of a rejig of the programme) Rob Gratton from the CAA will be coming to talk to us on the subject of airspace infringements. Some of you may remember Rob from one of our online meetings during lockdown, and his engaging style, wide knowledge – and understanding ear – I am sure will make for a session that will be both interesting and useful in terms of ensuring we don’t inadvertently cause problems for those looking after controlled airspace! And then on Saturday 16th March we have Rob Hart from SkyDemon coming to talk to us about the very latest changes and plans for this most-popular of VFR flight planning and navigation packages, as well as taking us through helpful hints and tips. I know last time he came we had considerable interest and all those who attended found it extremely useful.

Safe flying,

Neville

Contact Information

Strut Chairman:
Neville Parton
01666 502147
chairman@bristolstrut.uk

Treasurer/Membership Sec:
Alan George
treasurer@bristolstrut.uk

Secretary:
Mary Leader
01275 541572
secretary@bristolstrut.uk

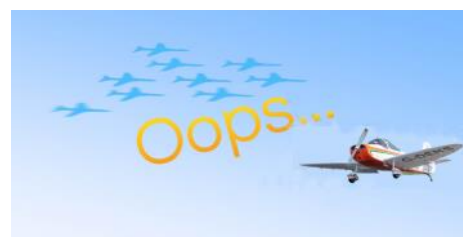
Newsletter Editor:
Trevor Wilcock
newsletter@bristolstrut.uk

Editorial address:
17 Vowles Close
Wraxall
Bristol BS48 1PP

Webmanager:
John Leather
webmanager@bristolstrut.uk

This month's meetings

Yes, more than one! Our regular programme has exchanged the March and April meetings so on Tuesday 5 March we have Rob Gratton, CAA lead on airspace infringements. He did talk to us on Zoom during lockdown, but now we can have a full interaction with him on this important topic. Infringements in 2023 were at the same level as 2019 pre-Covid – and we really ought to be doing better, with all our navigation aids (see the next March event!). 19:30 in BAWA Room 4 as usual. Bring your logbook if you would like a sticker to register your attendance (could help towards claiming a Wings Award – have you forgotten about that?)



And as a bonus this month, at 14:00 on Saturday 16 March, also in BAWA Room 4, Rob Hart of SkyDemon will demonstrate SkyDemon Tips and Tricks. I attended a previous presentation by Rob, and found it very useful – even though I use EasyVFR rather than SkyDemon! Don't forget to bring your SkyDemon device to the presentation as it is interactive.



Last month's meeting

We were briefed by a team of three from Border Force – two field intelligence officers plus the Bristol Airport GA lead – on their role, particularly in relation to GA activities. Their task is to secure the border and promote national prosperity by facilitating the legitimate movement of individuals and goods, whilst preventing those that would cause harm from entering the UK.



From the aviation perspective, they have to consider some 130 landing sites within the Avon & Somerset and Gloucestershire areas. Threats include national security, drugs, clandestine entry and modern slavery/human trafficking. They monitor passenger and freight traffic, meet a variety of flights, alert the police and security services to people of interest, look for anomalous behaviour which might indicate illegal activity. It is important for them to develop and maintain good working relationships and a visible Border Force profile with the GA community. Of importance is also the part that we can play in alerting them if we have concerns. To this end [Project Pegasus](#) is an initiative set up to get people involved in aviation or living near airfields to join the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The dedicated phone number for aviation is 0300123 7000.



The team also briefed us on changes to the General Aviation Report for flights from and to the UK. Please see the following item for details.

Submitting a General Aviation Report

No doubt for some of you, like me, your last overseas flight was pre-COVID. And there have been changes in the GAR procedure:

- a GAR is now required for both outbound and inbound flights and the flights must use an airport designated as a customs and excise airport or an airfield having a Border Force (BF) Certificate of Agreement.
- the preferred method of submission is by the BF's digital application 'Submit a GAR' (sGAR), explained [here](#), including how to register for sGAR and a list of approved airports/airfields.. There are several third party applications (including RunwayHD, OnlineGAR, SkyDemon) which are also accepted, and at present (but see below) it is also possible to submit a GAR by email to ncu@hmrc.gov.uk.
- the GAR must be submitted no more than 48 hours and no less than 2 hours before departure.
- on submission of a GAR a Response Message will confirm whether an individual has a valid permission to travel or if you need to conduct a manual check for a visa.—see [here](#).
- the pilot is responsible for ensuring the acceptability of passengers and that appropriate documents (eg passports, visas) are carried.
- ◆ the 2024 regulations being introduced from 6 April mean that an email submission to NCU will no longer be accepted; all submissions must be through sGAR or one of the approved third party apps. If you are on the LAA distribution list you should have received an email on this, which also mentions that Border Force will be operating a civil penalty regime and that failure to comply with the regulations *may* result in a civil penalty of up to £10,000 per breach! If you have not received this email please contact me and I will forward it.

There are some variations in the above for flights involving the Irish Republic, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man which can be explored in the various links above.

Note that our April speaker, Dave White, will be talking about flying abroad. He maintains a [useful guide](#) on various matters, including but ranging more widely than the above.

Popham airfield — repeat of last month's message, but there is still just time to respond.

Arguably UK's top recreational and sporting airfield, it is threatened by Basingstoke Borough Council's housing plans. There is significant discussion on the Flyer Forum [here](#), and I particularly draw your attention to arguments at messages #1194270, 1994304, 1994422, 1995286, 1995452, 1995539. The opportunity to comment on the current plans is mentioned in #2006091. It is noteworthy that the plans nowhere mention that Popham is an active airfield and a valuable leisure, recreational and sporting asset with regular events open to the public. While the National Planning Policy Framework is referenced, the Plan omits to mention that NPPF section 110(f) recognises the importance of maintaining a national network of general aviation airfields.

Please provide your comments on this proposal to Basingstoke by 4 March as detailed [here](#).

PS: further suggestions just in on the Flyer Forum [here](#).

Information from the CAA and elsewhere

Last chance: The money is still there, but time is running out: the DfT-funded Electronic Conspicuity rebate scheme application window closes on 31 March 2024. [The scheme](#) aims to improve airspace safety by encouraging the adoption of EC devices that enhance situational awareness for pilots. Eligible applicants still have an opportunity to claim a 50% rebate on the purchase cost of an EC device, up to a maximum of £250.

There is a call from the CAA [here](#) for inputs on the better alignment of UK Flight Information Services with ICAO standards, particularly in respect of VFR and IFR services in Class G and E airspace. There is frequent criticism of the UK's different approach compared with, for example, FIS elsewhere in Europe, so now is the opportunity to comment.

[CAA Safety Notice SN-2024/001](#) is worth reading re the clarification on safety messages which should be provided by an Air Ground Communication Service.

The CAA has developed [this consultation](#) on stakeholder views regarding the main challenges pilots face in obtaining an active CO detector, the role that maintenance plays in combatting CO, the importance of protecting passengers from CO, and whether active CO detectors ought to be mandatory for some operations. The consultation closes on 20 March 2024. Unfortunately the questionnaire gives hardly any space for open answers, just a fixed selection which may limit the opportunity to explain responses. While the use of active CO detection is eminently sensible and affordable, unnecessary regulation should be avoided.

The Airspace and Safety Initiative has produced a new guide to [flying in the Stansted area](#) in view of a trend for airspace infringements in the area.

Good news: the CAA has improved the way they publish CAA Publications and other documents on their website. It should be easier to find specific titles or related information.

The next AIRAC update is on March 21st; don't forget to keep your electronic databases current.

A Good Read

Chris Wright has offered a few suggestions:

First – 'Think Like a Bird' by Alex Kimbell, an account of army flying in Beavers, around rather than over trees. I rate this highly, up with 'First Light', 'Fate is the Hunter', 'Sagittarius Rising'. Made me think about my flying.

Second – some of you may know Tizi Hodson of what was Tiger Airways, Gloucester Airport. She is a very good instructor and has recently published 'To Live is to Fly' – VERY entertaining.

And finally: Pooleys offered free postage on the recent edition of 'The Skyway Code' (until 5th Feb). This is hard copy of the bits and pieces I've read elsewhere, reminding me of all I've forgotten since doing my PPL and much, much more. Excellent value, absolutely packed with bedtime and preflight reading!

I'll add one of my own. I recently read 'Howard Pixton, Test Pilot and Pioneer Aviator'. Written by his daughter Stella Pixton, but in the form of his autobiography, it provides a perspective on the very early days of aviation, particularly at Brooklands, where the poor performance of powerplants could lead to a descent into the sewage farm off the end of the runway!

Your recommendations welcomed for future newsletters.

Where to go in March

Light Aviation vouchers: No further vouchers pending appointment of a new LAA Advertising Manager.

Flyer vouchers: Spanhoie, Strathaven. There may be a couple more, but waiting for confirmation.

Puzzle Picture

Nigel P gave us the correct answer to last month's picture—"It's a device that was used to allow the testing of the wing mounted machine guns in this P-51."



But for this month, how about this?



Tailpiece



H&S tip: Remember that it is important to use the correct staging when working at height.