

Coaching Corner...

The (mis) information revolution

LAA's Head of Training, **David Cockburn** warns that when it comes to flying advice on the internet, or via the war stories of the 'aces', all that glisters is not necessarily gold, but your LAA wings could be!

We live in an environment where a vast amount of information is freely available to anyone who looks for it. This presents undoubted benefits, but sadly not all the information we may find provides the benefits we want.

There are of course, as the media reminds us, malicious people who disseminate misinformation, 'fake news' as a certain ex-President was inclined, rather too often, to say. Such misinformation can spread rapidly and cause serious harm to society, and I hope we are all wary of any such 'facts' which do not fit with what we already know to be true. However, even people with the best intentions can cause problems by spreading information which they believe is accurate, but which in actual fact is incorrect.

Covid and Brexit have presented ideal opportunities for the spread of incorrect information, although the CAA and Government have produced a lot of guidance on both subjects. Unfortunately, as instructors often experience, human factors indicate that people can, and often do, easily misperceive or miss a few details of the information presented to them. It is also a natural human reaction to wish to share what we have understood with others.

But misinformation is not confined to misunderstood official advice; it includes information which is not actually incorrect, but is inappropriate for the person seeking it. For example, telling (or showing) a student pilot on his/her first training flight that moving the control column backward with the wings level will cause the aircraft to descend (as it will during a stall) is likely to confuse him/her when he is trying to learn the basic effects of the primary controls.

I doubt if any pilot would think of passing advice to a novice which might place him or her in danger. However, electronic communications, even when video is included, does not provide the same feedback as a face-to-face conversation. How can a pilot who is chatting, or even deliberately offering advice on a web forum, know exactly who is receiving that advice?

Making an approach 10kt below the handbook's recommended speed might be something a very experienced pilot has managed to do in the past in order to land on a very short strip on a calm day, with no turbulence. However, advising a newly qualified pilot to do the same is not a good idea! Human factors suggest we easily miss important details; if our inexperienced pilot tries the technique in rough

weather, how is the advisor going to feel? And even if it wasn't formal advice, could our 'war stories' (which usually include a bit of exaggeration) lead to the same result?

Although they are not immune from mistakes, instructors are trained to make sure that the information they present is appropriate and properly understood. Even if you have a lot of experience in the matter, please remind your listeners or readers to check with an instructor before trying anything which isn't in the handbook. And if anyone tells you something different from what you were taught, discuss it with a Coach or other instructor before trying to do the same.

Renewing ratings

The Covid restrictions will undoubtedly have left several pilots with expired medicals and ratings, especially as England (at least) has not yet come out of lockdown. Class 2 medical certificates, needed for instructors to provide most flying training, have been difficult to come by, although most pilots should be able to make CAA medical declarations in order to continue flying in UK airspace.

It has been more difficult to maintain licence ratings, and once the restrictions are lifted, many pilots will need to renew these, rather than revalidate them. In most cases this will require a check with a Flight Examiner (FE) or Class Rating Examiner (CRE). NPPL holders must pass a General Skill Test (GST), and holders of PART-FCL or UK licences will need to pass a Licensing Proficiency Check (LPC) if they have not been able to revalidate by experience. If two or more ratings have expired, you need to pass a check on each class of aeroplane.

LAPL holders (only) may be able to comply with the alternative PART-FCL requirement. That involves completing at least 12 hours of flight time as PIC *or flying dual or solo under the supervision of an instructor* within the two years prior to exercising the licence privileges. This must include 12 take-offs and landings, and refresher training of at least one hour of total flight time with an instructor. Any Coach can provide the necessary instructional flying and solo supervision to top up the flying to the level needed.

LAPL holders, and other pilots whose ratings have not yet expired, but who believe they will be unable to complete all the revalidation requirements before they do, may opt to fly a LPC or GST rather than carry out a

lot of additional flying. If you're not sure what is involved, the content of a GST is laid down in the syllabus on the NPPL website, which can be found at: www.nationalprivatepilotslicence.co.uk and the content of a LPC can be read on the CAA form SRG 1157, although some parts of that refer to multi-engine and instrument flying which will not be tested. Basically, the difference between them is that the LPC includes some navigation.

Let me assure anyone who has not flown one of these checks before, that there is nothing to fear! Examiners all have to pass regular tests themselves and understand not only that skill levels fade when we are not current, but also that 'testitis' and a desire to do well can actually cause people to make mistakes. I advise that when you ask your examiner to test you, you explain exactly what experience you have, both overall and recent. The examiner may well suggest that you fly with him (or another instructor) on an instructional flight to gain confidence in the requirements before attempting the GST or LPC. That would certainly be advisable before attempting to pass a test in an aeroplane with which you are unfamiliar.

It can be seen from the profiles on the 'Find a Coach' part of the LAA website that around a dozen of our Coaches (including myself) can provide LPCs and GSTs on aeroplanes and/or motor gliders. Your local Coach or Strut should be able to advise as we are fairly well spread around the country, and willing to travel. Of course, any FE or CRE can examine the aircraft types he is qualified to instruct on, but LAA Coaches are

probably much more likely to offer to carry out the check on your own aeroplane, which means the advice you get on the debrief should be particularly useful for your future flying.

Even if your ratings are still valid, remember you are likely to have lost a lot of your skill, as well as your ability to anticipate problems, if you haven't flown as much as usual. Why not ask a Coach to help you back into currency? And if you can't find one, or don't want to use one, take everything very steadily and don't try to exercise all the skills you had when you were in full practice.

I and the other Coaches look forward to helping many of you regain your currency and ratings as soon as Government restrictions allow.

The Wings Award Scheme

As we remain in lockdown, members may like to take a moment to review the Wings Award Scheme. Unable to fly, why not run through your log books and check up on past achievements to see if you qualify for the bronze, silver or gold badges? To date we have awarded 107 sets of wings, 46 bronze, 31 silver and 38 gold, so isn't it time you became part of that tally? All the criteria can be found under the LAA Wings tab on the LAA website (www.laa.uk.com).

If you should need a Coach to maybe assist with attaining that last qualification, then do not hesitate to ask! Remember that we have 43 Coaches on our list and their locations are shown on the updated Google Map under 'Find a Coach'. ■

Achieve your LAA wings



BRONZE AWARD

Minimum 100 hours - 50 PIC

Completion of 1 Achievement, 1 Safety event,
1 Navigational challenge*

(*Total flight distance 200nm+. 2+ intermediate take-offs and landings).



SILVER AWARD

Minimum 250 hours - 200 PIC

Completion of 3 Achievements, 2 Safety events,
1 Navigational challenge*

(*Total flight distance 400nm+. 3+ intermediate take-offs and landings. OR a flight distance of 200nm with a sea crossing 20nm+ AND completion of the BRONZE navigational challenge).



GOLD AWARD

Minimum 500 hours - 400 PIC

Completion of 5 Achievements, 3 Safety events,
1 Navigational challenge*.

(*Total flight distance of 600nm+ with 4+ intermediate take-offs and landings. OR flight distance of 400nm with a sea crossing of 20nm+ AND completion of BRONZE and SILVER challenges).

Receiving your LAA Wings

Download and complete the application form at
www.laawings.uk.com

Check the required supporting documents, verified by an LAA Coach, LAA Strut Co-ordinator or Chief Flying Instructor, and mail together with your form to:

LAA Wings, Light Aircraft Association, Turweston Aerodrome, Northants NN13 5YD
Tel +44 (0) 1280 846 786

Free to LAA Members. £15.00 non LAA members.

Your LAA WINGS can either be awarded to you at your next LAA Strut local meeting, or can be sent to you by post.



Expand your skills and
Earn your LAA WINGS!

