



## Across the Pond #1: Dysfunctional EU Family

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By Liz Moscrop,  
Columnist

*Editor's Note: This week we introduce a new columnist, Liz Moscrop, whose monthly Across the Pond column will explore GA issues in Europe.*



Across The Pond

Imagine a family that aims to be the Waltons, but is actually more like the Bundys in *Married with Children*. Welcome to the European Union (EU). We might love each other (and need each other to survive), but we don't *necessarily* like each other all the time. Although Britain and France are only 20 miles apart, culturally they are polar opposites in many ways. In fact, every nation has its own pet peeves about the others,

but fortunately there are so many different languages spoken here that most of us never know when we're being insulted by the others.

That's the background. Add to that the inception of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in 2003. EASA regulates aviation across the EU and exists in parallel with the national aviation authorities of individual member countries. The agency is responsible for new type certificates and airworthiness approvals and helps the European Commission (EC) to negotiate international harmonization agreements with the rest of the world. It's a tall order, given the lack of harmonization under its own jurisdiction.

Plus, GA in the region varies widely. In the U.K., for example, the entire Civil Aviation Authority is paid for by the aviation industry. This means the cost of flight training here is the highest in the western world -- around GB£108,000 (US\$210,750) to get a student from ab initio into an airline. In other countries, the taxpayer funds the CAA.

However, there's nothing like a common enemy to galvanize a disparate group, and the latest issue uniting the GA community throughout Europe is outrage against an EC directive demanding that all states impose a minimum of €0.45 per liter (approx. US\$2.30 per gallon) in levies on avgas. It has rejected requests from France, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Malta, and Sweden to allow their current tax levels to remain. Revenues from the additional taxes will be marginal, and will cost more to collect than the cash raised from the exercise. There have been some salient points made: Sweden spoke of the need for access to remote communities and affordability in flying to maintain safety standards. The EC has so far dismissed every request. Several national AOPAs have scheduled meetings with their governments to try to limit the potential damage.

In more local harmonization, light sport aircraft (LSA) manufacturers in Europe have rallied together to ask for a new European aircraft

### About the Author ...



Liz Moscrop started out running a comedy club in Liverpool, U.K. She then moved

to the British Broadcasting Corporation's (B.B.C.) news and current affairs publicity department and was (un)fortunate enough to be the public relations gopher for the world's first big interview with Princess Diana.

Tired of gluing 300 feet of press cuttings to the B.B.C. archive file, she flew to Hong Kong. As this was pre-9/11, she was allowed into the cockpit en route and thus a love affair with flying began. In Hong Kong she worked for ehealthcareasia (E.H.A) as their Director of Corporate Communications. The company listed on the H.K.S.E. within five months of its launch ... Exhausted by the experience she flew to Long Beach, Calif., to learn how to fly ... which she's still learning how to do.

Now totally hooked on aviation, Liz is based in London, U.K., and earns her living writing about it, and helping flight training schools, conference producers and other industry players with their communications. She writes for aviation publications all over the world including AOPA magazine in the U.K., Flight International's Flight Daily

category with an upper weight limit of 750 kg (1650 lb), an increase on the 600 kg (1320 lb) limit in operation in the U.S. Industry executives met with FAA and EASA delegates in Prague at the end of last year to discuss the proposal. An EASA working group is now looking at a new rulemaking concept for recreational aviation, also governing certification, maintenance, licensing, and operation. There is a robust LSA manufacturing industry here; alas some of the latest models produced are destined for the US market since they do not meet current European weight limits.

News, BART International, Asian Aviation, Aircraft Interiors and World Air News. Liz is also deputy editor of Rotor Torque, the magazine of the Helicopter Club of Great Britain.

The good news is that there is a desire for dialogue, partly thanks to the explosion of GA at the higher end of the scale. EASA estimates the current European business aviation fleet will double to 30,000 aircraft over the next decade. The agency has consequently drawn up a discussion paper inviting stakeholders to comment on issues such as access to airports and airspace, the introduction of a leisure pilot license, fractional ownership, distinguishing between commercial and non-commercial aviation and environmental issues. April 1 is the deadline for comments, which should be directed to [Mikolaj Ratajczyk](#).

## Epic Journey

Politics aside, there are also heartening stories of what makes flying special. World-breaking British helicopter pilots Jennifer Murray and Colin Bodill are both enjoying great personal triumphs. The dynamic duo are well into their fresh attempt at a new world record -- crossing the world via the North and South Poles in a bright red Bell 407. They landed at the South Pole on the 30th January and are due back at Fort Worth, Texas at the end of May 2007. This means they have already bettered their previous distance of 2003, when they attempted the same feat and crashed in whiteout conditions two days after reaching the South Pole when they both sustained serious injuries. Despite their previous trauma, Jennifer and Colin are determined to complete the challenge this time round.



The Polar First flight team: Jennifer Murray, Colin Bodill and a Bell 407

The entire expedition will take around 175 days, covering over 36,000 nautical miles and making over 120 stopovers in 32 countries. They have already experienced the hottest and coldest places on earth during their trek. There is a full account of their trip and almost daily diary update on their website, which makes for compelling and entertaining reading. Here's a recent excerpt from Jennifer's diary: "The last two days have been *good*. At last the kind of flying weather we like -- clear skies all the way with zero threat of flat light, blizzards or whiteouts. With a fond farewell to Gonzalo and a big thank you to the Chilean Navy, we took off from Punta Arenas and headed northeast to Rio Galagos, just 101 miles away and our port of entry back into Argentina. I was all geared up with my list of aeronautical Spanish phrases for my first non-English speaking air traffic controller. However, contrary to expectations and advice, they all spoke English -- so there'd been no need after all for Colin to flatter me into letting him fly (it was my turn to fly) on the basis that he claimed my Spanish was better than his." For more information and pictures go to the [Polar First](#) web site.

## Where To Fly In Europe

For the not quite so adventurous, but for those still up for a challenge, one of the aims of this column is to offer suggestions of great places to fly for visiting foreign pilots. FAA pilot certificate holders can fly G-registered (U.K.) aircraft in the U.K. as long as you are within U.K. airspace. The only thing you need to do is to find a school or club that is willing to rent out an aircraft and get checked out. Bear in mind that radio procedures here are more formal and different from those in the U.S. and it is essential to familiarize yourself with them in advance.

A gem of a club that is very willing to rent out its aircraft is Old Sarum in Wiltshire in the U.K. The club owns a variety of aircraft including two Bulldogs, former RAF trainers, which are rare in the U.S. Says Simon Birt, business development manager: "We're more than happy to welcome foreign visitors, who might not have had the chance to fly a Bulldog. It's a relatively easy conversion, aerobatic, fun to fly and great to have in the log book." Operations staff members are happy to assist with flight planning and have a wealth of local knowledge useful to visiting pilots. It has even been known for friendly club members to take visitors out sightseeing for the price of a pint.

Old Sarum offers some of the most breathtaking sorties in the business. Local beauty spots include the Needles, the dramatic sea-ravaged chalk outcrops off the Western tip of Isle of Wight. In addition, catching sight of heavy metal at both the civil and military airfields in the vicinity is one of the more adrenaline-fuelled joys of flying from the field. Club members have seen "everything from Hercules, to Eurofighters to Harriers and Tornados."

There's plenty of interesting scenery to look at. One of the more interesting visual treats is the military caps insignia carved into the hillside at Fovant Down. In remembrance of their colleagues who died in the 1914-18 war, regiments posted in the area cut replicas of their cap badges into the Wiltshire hillsides, which provide a spectacular view from 2,000 ft. and above. Old Sarum is justifiably named. Leaving aside its mediaeval setting and the fact you can see an 11th century cathedral on short finals to Runway 06, the airfield is the second oldest continuously operational aerodrome in the U.K. Its history stretches back to 1917 when it was requisitioned from farm land for use by fighter and training aircraft. Closed as an RAF station in 1971, the original "Belfast" hangars are still in place, housing maintenance facilities and a variety of enthusiasts tinkering with interesting machines.

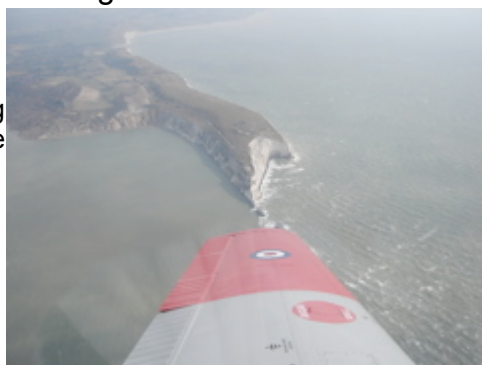
It's a great place for spotters. As well as the chance to see modern militaria buzzing around in the air, there's a great sense of history on the ground. There's a beautiful Moraine Saulnier 230, with maintenance instructions engraved into a bronze plaque on the left hand door and a half built home built -- a self designed floatplane under construction by an ex-Colditz prisoner of war now in his 80s. A Bulldog costs GB£180 (US\$350) per hour dual and GB£150 (US\$290) per hour solo rental.

## And Finally

British entrepreneurs Mike Crisp and Tom Hanks (not that Tom Hanks) have launched [Mile High Flights](#), a service for couples wishing to get amorous at 5,280ft. Flights on their Piper Lancer will depart and return to Staverton Airport in Gloucestershire. They say they have chosen the aircraft, as it is "renowned for its long endurance and stable handling." However, a note on their website cautions that if you are over 16 stone or 6ft 4 inches tall please mention this at the time of booking as you may need to "be upgraded to a larger aircraft." There are three classes of trip on offer: the Quickie (30 minutes for GB£250 -- US\$490), the Standard (one hour for GB£450 -- US\$880) and the VIP (GB£750 --



Old Sarum club owner Lesley Maynard and Simon Birt with a Bulldog trainer



The Needles, Isle of Wight



Military caps insignia, Fovant Down

US\$1,460 - for 90 minutes). So far there are only two posts on Mile High Flights' customer feedback forum: one from someone asking whether he can book a solo excursion and a scatological, homophobic rant from someone who may never find someone to go with ...

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