

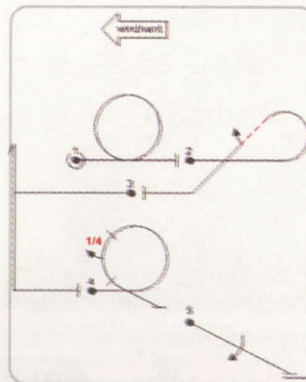
Putting the fun back into flight instruction

It must on occasion, be tedious for instructors to have to repeat 'straight & level' and 'climbing & descending' flight exercises to their students day-in, day-out. Some instructors have even said they prefer giving trial lesson flights over PPL instruction, as it means they get a chance to fly the aircraft more often, rather than just monitor their student's progress from the right-hand seat. And for that matter, what about their students? He or she will spend the vast majority of their course flying 'standard' attitudes, honing their skills in the circuit and learning the secrets of accurate navigation which, while vital skills for every pilot, can nonetheless leave them with the thought: "Is this it? Is this as exciting as it gets?"

Post PPL, the drop-out rate is still alarmingly high in the UK for pilots who are not progressing onto a commercial licence, and running out of ideas of what to do with their newly gained licence is often cited as the major cause. And from an instructor's point of view, how many worry about their ex-pupil's ability to cope with the unexpected (something that is almost impossible to cater for during a PPL course)? The vast majority, is the oft-quoted answer. So how about teaching something that puts the thrill of flying back

ic instruction restriction' is granted.

On Track Aviation Ltd, based at Wellesbourne Mountford Airfield, is one such school that provides aerobatic instruction for those who wish to teach it. And recently the school played host to the British Aerobatic Association (BAeA), who ran a three-day course of seminars and competitions solely for instructors of this adrenaline-packed art. The first of its kind, the seminars and competition were designed, as contest director Eric Marsh put it, "to convey to



BAeA's 2007 Beginner's sequence, involving a loop, half Cuban, stall turn and ? cloverleaf



into the instructor's life and rewards the student with additional skills not taught in the PPL syllabus? There are plenty of options out there, from farm strip flying and tail wheel conversion courses to IMC and night flying. But there is one that can be said to well and truly put the thrill back into the instructor's daily grind and reward the student with the confidence to cope with the unexpected – aerobatics.

Many of the UK's flying schools operate an aerobatic aircraft of some type, be it a Cessna 150 Aerobat for basic aerobatic manoeuvres or a Pitts Special for advanced level shenanigans. Not all clubs offer aerobatic courses however, as an instructor rating does not automatically qualify an instructor to teach aerobatics - a course must be attended before the removal of 'aerobat-

flying instructors what competition aerobatics is about: that we are primarily sensible, disciplined competent pilots and not the ostentatious rich kid stunt pilots we are sometimes perceived to be!"

The event opened on a Wednesday evening with BAeA chairman Alan Cassidy making a presentation to the delegates on how to fly and teach aerobatic sequences. Alan, as four-time British national champion, 6-time member of the British aerobatic team at the world championships and full-time instructor since 1991, has a wealth of knowledge behind him that made his presentation truly informative and enjoyable. The consensus from the delegates was one of privilege to have such an experienced individual to learn from. On to the Thursday and following a flight briefing at 08:00 it

was time to take to the skies. Or it would have been, had it not been for the fog that precluded anything more adventurous than a second, then third cup of coffee. While waiting for the fog to lift Alan continued on from the night before and took the instructors through the beginner's aerobatic sequence, concentrating on how to best teach it to students.

After a couple of hours of the technical analyses of various aspects of competition aerobatics (with only one modest plug for his definitive book "Better Aerobatics") Alan himself (facing the open door) noticed the visibility was improving sufficiently to fly. Trainee instructors were paired with rated instructors and appropriate aircraft and a running order established. The combo then set off in turns into the murk to play away for ten minutes, then returned to the 'box' - a 1000m cube of air in the overhead in which the contestants performed their routine. Six trainees participated, and although it was not really a contest, On-Track had provided some medals that

Out on the line. The instructors, pictured with Alan Cassidy front centre.

Mrs Jill Newton presented to the top three. The event continued with a BBQ, an impressive display by several spectacular model aircraft, and a very tight 7-ship formation fly-by by local pilots.

Friday's Beginners once again experienced the tribulations of an early briefing and all arrived on time. Unfortunately, so did the fog. As it gradually cleared a field of Advanced pilots also appeared, so at 12:00 an Advanced briefing was held. The running order for the day's competition was settled on Advanced Known, Beginners, Advanced Unknown. For those unaware, a 'known' sequence is one a pilot has a chance to practise before competing and an 'unknown' is a sequence given to the pilots on the day of the competition, allowing no chance for practise. The first Advanced Known took off shortly after 13:00 and the last Advanced Unknown landed at 17:30, with the five Beginners running for about an hour from 1430.

The event appeared to go extremely well and should bolster confidence in an increased take-up in competition aerobatics in the UK and maybe inspire a few more instructors and students to take up the art of aerobatics.



Most pilots start on a basic trainer such as a Cessna Aerobat and then move on to something more 'sporty' like a Pitts Special



For those instructors who'd like to become qualified to teach aerobatics, the current requirements are:

General

An FI or FI (R) or AFI who wish to give aerobatic instruction must have the aerobatic instruction restriction removed from their instructors rating. The course must be conducted by an FIC instructor qualified to give aerobatic instruction. There is no formal test or check at the end of the training

Pre-Course Entry Requirements

Before being permitted to begin an approved course of training the candidate shall have:

A) At least the licence, rating and qualification for which instruction is being given

B) An AOPA Aerobatic Certificate

Or

Have reasonable previous aerobatic experience - Military pilot, BAeA recognition or flying assessment by FIC instructor

Ground Training

The mandatory training for the aerobatic instructor course requires a total of 8 hours of ground instruction (3 hours technical and 5 hours briefings).

During the course the student instructor will practise giving ground lectures to the FIC instructor giving the course.

Flying Training

The flight training element of the aerobatic instructor course consists of 5 hours of dual instruction.

Instructor Skill Test

There are no formal tests on completion of the aerobatic instructor course.

References

AOPA (UK) Aerobatic Certificate Course Syllabus
Basic Aerobatics by R D Campbell and B Tempest
Instructional Techniques For The Flight Instructor by John Halstead and Alan Newton - available through On Track Aviation Ltd
LASORS
Conquest of Lines and Symmetry by Duane Cole
General Aviation Safety Sense Leaflet No.19 Aerobatics

Privileges

Permits the holder to give ground and flight training in aerobatics.

Validity

Remains valid so long as the FI or FI (R) or AFI rating remains valid.

Revalidation / Renewal Requirements

The ability to teach aerobatics may be checked during the FI or FI (R) or AFI revalidation or renewal process.