

# Briefings



## Thielert action group formed

Owners of aircraft with Thielert diesel engines have formed an action group and have retained German lawyers to protect their interests following the bankruptcy of the company.

The US-based Thielert Engine Owners Group (THENOG) hopes to protect the investment of nearly 1,000 affected owners, including about 900 owner/operators of Diamond DA42 twin-engine and DA50 single-engine aircraft. It says that nearly 50 percent of those aircraft are currently grounded, and nearly all may be rendered uneconomical to operate, depending on the outcome of the Thielert situation.

The group says: "Owner/operators of Thielert-powered aircraft have been treated to a horror-show of bad news over the last three weeks, including the unexpected and sudden cancellation of engine warranties, quadrupled engine-part prices, a variety of service bulletins on the engines that force early engine repairs and replacements and uncertainty over parts supplies. Over the past weeks owners have

found the cost of Thielert engine maintenance rising by as much as 800% and have received confusing and contradictory messages about parts availability."

The grounding was costing about a million dollars a week in the US, according to Todd House, a founder and director of THENOG. House is president of YourJet LLC, a startup air-taxi company in Louisville, Kentucky, that operates a D42 aircraft.

Complicating matters is an acrimonious and public battle of charges and counter-charges between Thielert and Diamond Aircraft, the largest manufacturer of Thielert-powered planes. "Diamond and Thielert have engaged in a war of words while afflicted aircraft owners watched helplessly from the sidelines," House says. Another founder member, Vilis Ositis, says: "It is our goal to establish THENOG as a substantial creditor to Thielert due to the cumulative value of warranty agreements for our engines."

If you're affected, check out the THENOG website at [www.thenog.org](http://www.thenog.org) ■



Many Diamond DA42s are grounded due to Thielert's bankruptcy

## VAT break lives on

The Danish VAT anomaly through which hundreds of aircraft owners have saved literally millions of pounds in tax is to remain open until January 1st, 2010.

Strong lobbying by the Danish VAT facilitators Opmas, assisted by AOPA Denmark, has persuaded the Danish government to delay the implementation of amendments which will cut off this particular tax avoidance measure. Opmas's chief executive Lasse Rungholm says that buyers will be able to import zero-rated aircraft after the deadline, provided they have been ordered before the end of 2009.

Rungholm says: "We are very happy that our lobbying effort to postpone the law change has been so successful, and we look forward to handling a lot of aircraft in the coming years as we have in the last 15. As you can imagine, we will have another procedure for minimising VAT in place for after the law changes."

HM Customs and Excise in the UK has confirmed that the Danish import route is perfectly legal, but you need to know exactly what you are doing. AOPA knows of a case where an aircraft which landed in Norway on its way to Denmark was refused a zero-rating. The owner is now fighting a costly court battle.

Check out Opmas's website at [www.opmas.dk](http://www.opmas.dk)

## Avoid hitting stuff

David Cockburn, the indefatigable *Deminence grise* of the CAA's Safety Evenings, has written to us asking pilots to be more aware of glider flying sites and parachute-dropping zones. David says: "Winch launching glider sites are potential hazards, not only from the rapid rate of climb of a glider being winch-launched, but also from the cable itself. While there is always a launch controller on the ground whose duties include checking that the airspace into which the cable is to be launched is clear of approaching aircraft, the higher the glider is launched, the longer it is attached to the cable. Powered aircraft approaching the launch site at even moderate speeds may be outside the launch controller's view at the start of the launch, but in the danger zone by the time the glider (whose pilot has a poor field of view

Paul Hellday/www.flightbox.net



during launch) reaches it.

"Free-fall parachute sites also present a hazard to passing aircraft. Although the jump master checks the area below his aircraft before allowing the parachutists to leave the aircraft, it is not always possible to see an aircraft from an altitude of possibly 12,000 feet, especially one approaching the drop zone rapidly. Parachutists in free-fall have very restricted manoeuvrability, and collisions have occurred with fatal consequences.

"All notified winch launching and free-fall parachute sites in UK airspace are clearly marked on the CAA charts, and the frequency of the local air traffic service unit is also shown for parachute drop zones. Any additions can be found on the aeronautical charts and data section of the CAA's web site [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk) and in Notams. However, they are not always marked as clearly (or perhaps at all) on other commercially available charts, or the displays for GPS databases. It is vital that pilots do their pre-flight planning on the CAA charts so that they are aware of potentially hazardous activity along their route. If an en-route diversion is necessary, again the CAA chart must be studied before setting off on a previously unplanned track."

### FLARM

All of which gives us an excuse to introduce FLARM, with which most British GA pilots are not yet familiar. It's a small portable box that Velcros onto the coaming and tells you when you're coming into conflict with another FLARM-equipped aircraft. Operating on the frequency used by garage door openers, it has found great favour among glider pilots, who often fly close together in stacks of aircraft doing erratic things. FLARM is a GPS unit which plots the trajectories of other planes and alerts you with an audio signal and a flashing

light to a potential conflict. The lights are set out like a clock dial so you know which direction the threat comes from; a green light means there's something out there, a red light says you really need to do something about it right now. There are 'above' and 'below' indicators to help you make up your mind.

John Delafield, whose company LX Avionics imports the FLARM from Switzerland, says: "It's not a device that gives you an awareness of the big picture around you, it's an emergency alerting system that stops you hitting something. Maximum range is five miles, but that depends on the positioning of the aerial and other factors and you rarely pick up traffic at five miles – two miles is more like it."

Because it was designed for gliders, the FLARM software is able to compute complex curved trajectories incorporating the sorts of rates of climb and descent that gliders use. The Swiss makers are introducing more straightforward software that does a better job on the more predictable flightpaths of powered aircraft. Given that the unit is portable, it needs no CAA approval, although in a powered aircraft it would have to be wired through the headphones, and that's a minor mod that will cause the tills at CAA House to ring. Although the uptake in the UK has largely been in the glider community, a number of glider tugs have been fitted with FLARM. It costs around £500 and seems like a particularly good

**The tiny FLARM box Velcros onto the coaming**

piece of kit for a powered aircraft if you habitually operate in airspace that is thick with gliders; for more information, have a look at [www.lxavionics.co.uk](http://www.lxavionics.co.uk). If any member has experience of using FLARM, please let us know. ■



## Stampes on a Permit?

The Stampe and several other French aircraft such as the Jodel are included on a list of aircraft types which the French aviation authority considers no longer have continuing airworthiness support from a Type Certificate Holder. As a result, the UK Stampe Club has written to the CAA to formally request that regulatory airworthiness control should be transferred from a Private Category C of A to a Permit to Fly.

However, three separate trading organisations who operate the aircraft commercially have made a bid for the Type Rating Certificate, and the UK Stampe Club is extremely worried that this may encourage the CAA to keep all Stampes, private and commercial, within a C of A regulatory regime.

The Stampe Club believes that the skills required to look after fabric and timber vintage aircraft are more likely to be found amongst smaller maintenance workshops than larger CAA approved M3 type organisations, and a Permit would therefore be a better bet. It has suggested to the CAA that a Permit to Fly should apply to all privately operated aircraft while commercially operated aircraft should be subject to the regulatory control of the CAA Public Transport Category C of A. The CAA is expected to make a decision by October 1st. ■



## 'The Jet' flies

The Cirrus 'The Jet' made its first flight in July, a 45-minute runaround in which it was said to have 'performed flawlessly'. The aircraft, powered by a Williams FJ33-4A-19 turbine, has a V-tail which Cirrus says marks

the first use of such a feature on a major consumer aircraft in 60 years, and seats five passengers and two pilots.

'The Jet' – now officially named Cirrus Vision SJ50 – was unveiled just over a year ago, and the company has taken more than 400 refundable deposits of \$100,000. Cirrus says it's designed to give 300 kt at 25,000 feet. Like other Cirrus aircraft, it has a last-ditch parachute system.

● Meanwhile, Cirrus has included a 'get out of jail' button on the top-of-the-range turbo SR22 model. It's the last thing you do before reaching for the parachute handle – a 'panic button' that will right your aircraft in the shortest possible time. There's a bright blue emergency switch marked 'LVL' which will return the aircraft to straight and level flight from any attitude up to 75 degrees of roll and 50 degrees of pitch.

The button comes with the customised \$48,000 Garmin Perspective integrated cockpit option and has generally been well received by owners. It's mounted on the GFC 700 autopilot mode controller, and pushing it means that whether the autopilot is engaged or off, it will roll the wings level and hold altitude. The system gives the pilot time to figure out what's happening and solve the problem before things get messy. But it's not real flying, is it... then again, that's what they said about the artificial horizon.





## Premium profits

Business-related general aviation is on the rise in the US while business class passenger travel on the airlines has stagnated, according to a leading aviation consultancy. The Stanford Transportation Group says business travellers on GA aircraft now equal 41% of the number of first-class, business-class and full-fare coach passengers combined.

"The number of premium trips has fallen from 20% of overall airline travel prior to 9/11, to less than 10% of airline travel," says STG Managing Director Gerald Bernstein. "Premium airline travel has remained static and at a low level for several years. Despite the rise in total airline passenger trips through 2007, the number of premium trips has stalled at 41 million, and airline reports for early 2008 indicate reductions are likely this year.

"Conversely, growing business aviation acceptance, fleet growth, the expansion of fractional programs, pre-paid flight card programs, and the development of new business models enabling lower trip costs have driven a steady expansion in the number of travellers using business aircraft."

The airlines are likely to continue their relentless campaigns to hamper the growth of general aviation. Bernstein says: "This can't be a desirable trend for the airlines. It's tough for most of the carriers to make a decent profit

## Bonanza fly-in

Got a Bonanza? (You lucky dog.) The Second Annual European Bonanza fly-in is being held at Wilhelmshaven on Germany's North Sea coast between the 4th and the 7th of September. The European Bonanza Society has put together a programme of technical and flight seminars, as well as a visit to a German squadron where you get to sit in Phantoms, but mostly it's a meet-and-eat social gathering where you compare hardware and swap stories. The EBS is laying on events for accompanying spouses and children, boat trips, dinners and dances. For full details see the EBS website [www.beech-bonanza.com](http://www.beech-bonanza.com).



with over 90% of passengers flying on discount fares. This erosion of Premium travel diminishes the one group where the airlines are able to make a profit."

At the AOPA World Assembly in Athens in June, IAOPA President Phil Boyer reported that the biggest growth sector in GA was what he called the 'no monkey business' pilot who used an aircraft purely to get from A to B. He knew who he was travelling with, he went when it suited his schedule, he avoided appalling hub airports and he avoided the most humiliating shoes-and-belt off security manhandling.

The General Aviation manufacturers Association reported that business jet and turboprop sales were up by 40 per cent last year, although piston aircraft sales fell. ■

## Happy neighbours

Shipdham Flying Club is hosting a club Open Day and small air display for local people. Pilots are welcome to fly in for the event, but it's strictly PPR. There will be stalls, food and drink, flying and static aircraft displays, vehicles and more. The date is Saturday August 23rd, and the website with all the PPR details is [www.shipdhamflyingclub.co.uk](http://www.shipdhamflyingclub.co.uk). Gates open 11am.

## Helitech goes south

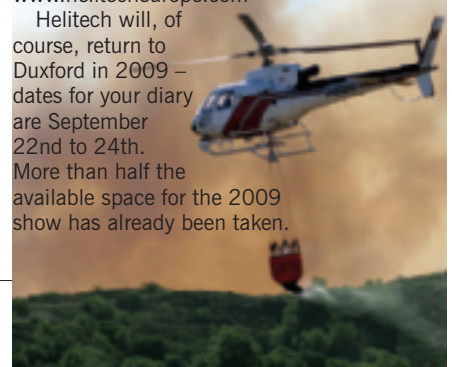
Helitech is moving to Portugal in October, its first appearance in southern Europe, and many of the exhibitors who feature regularly at the biennial Duxford show will be displaying, including Eurocopter, European Air-Crane, The Bristow Group, L-3, Pratt & Whitney, RUAG and Carl Zeiss Optronics together with a variety of smaller specialist suppliers as diverse as Adams Aviation, BLR Aerospace, Headset Services and Red Box International.

British companies are strongly represented at the show despite its international nature. Rotor Blades is a Bell CSF and EASA approved rotor blade repair facility based in Warminster (although its parent is American), while Glasgow-based Turner Aviation is a specialist aircraft accessory repair centre.

The first day of the show incorporates an aerial firefighting conference in Estoril, close to Airport Cascais. VIP helicopters will be the subject of a free all-day conference on the second day. The expo runs from October 14th to 16th, and full details can be seen on [www.helitech europe.com](http://www.helitech europe.com)

Helitech will, of course, return to Duxford in 2009 – dates for your diary are September 22nd to 24th.

More than half the available space for the 2009 show has already been taken.



## VLJs for Oxford

A new private charter consultancy is to establish its headquarters at Oxford Airport, from where it plans to control a client's fleet of Embraer Phenom 100 Very Light Jets.

The VLJ Consultancy Ltd plans to commence operations with its first four-seat Phenom from May next year. It is proposing a route network of air taxi charter services with the aircraft, covering mainland Europe and UK domestic cities including Manchester, Birmingham, Newquay and destinations in Ireland and Scotland.

Managing Director David Fletcher says the company hopes to pick up traffic to European sporting events and short leisure breaks. "Oxford Airport will be the centre of the wheel and we are looking forward to adding the spokes," he said.

"We are convinced this is the right time for an operation like this, but being a small player in the lucrative business aviation market can make or break you if you don't have the right aircraft, or the right airport base.

Oxford was right because of its position close to London but outside the TMA and its affluent catchment area.

Fletcher, currently an Airbus A320 captain with Monarch, will be looking to recruit personnel, including several pilots, later this year.

Oxford Airport – whose customer services manager rejoices in the gloriously inappropriate name of Surley – provides ample room for growth. With Britain relentlessly forcing its commercial flight training industry to take its money and expertise abroad, movements at Oxford have dropped from 160,000 a few years ago to 50,000 last year.



From left, customer services manager David Surley, VLJ's Fletcher and airport head of development James Dillon Godfray