

# TEACH ABOUT THE PAPERWORK TOO

## A PLEA TO INSTRUCTORS



An instructor might think they're being helpful by taking care of all the paperwork. But they could be setting their student up to fail as a future aircraft owner/operator.

When engineer Colin Alexander, of Solo Wings in Tauranga, recently investigated a fuel leak in an autogyro, he discovered the problem lay with the fuel drain.

Turns out, the owner didn't know the fuel drain existed, had never drained water from it, and its top retaining shoulder had rusted away, predictably "through lack of use and the presence of water" (defect report).

Such obliviousness from aircraft owners is not a one-off in Colin's experience. Also recently, he received an aircraft after a smoking radio had triggered a fire in the cockpit.

Locating the tech log to record his repair, he found the aircraft had an overdue airworthiness check, and "a couple of other things that would have made the aircraft unairworthy – and therefore illegal to fly.

"The pilot had no idea."

Colin says such incidents are becoming more common.

"Students often have much of the paperwork taken care of by their instructor. I guess the instructor is trying to be helpful, or it's simply quicker for the instructor to do it.

"But the students never learn to do it themselves, that it's important, or even that it has to be done at all.

"In fairness to them, they can't know what they're not taught."

Colin says the new PPL holder sometimes thinks they've been trained in everything they need to know, so it's time for them to buy an aircraft.

"They have no clue what a tech log is for, or daily flight sheets, or maintenance records. These things are often foreign to the new aircraft owner with a fresh PPL."

So Colin's making a plea to instructors to teach 'the other stuff' to ab initios.

"It's not just about flying practice," he says. "Students need to also be made aware of on-the-ground know-how, and record-keeping."

CAA flight examiner Katrina Witney says both 'preflight' and 'aircraft documents' are integral competencies, evaluated as part of the biennial flight review, type ratings, and initial issue of a private pilot licence.

"The BFR and type rating are learning opportunities and should be conducted as such. Often these are the only occasions where instructors have the chance to impart further knowledge to an already qualified pilot.

"A thorough BFR and type rating assures that the pilot has demonstrated a sound technical knowledge of the aircraft type, reducing the likelihood of demonstrating such failings, as in Colin's examples." ➤