

GHC Newsletter Winter 2021/2022

So how are we getting on?

Pretty reasonably I'd say. OK a couple of problem areas which we'll discuss later, but there's a lot of positives.

The Workshop

People working in there virtually every day. With the winter now upon us I see this continuing as a safe haven for Lasham based GHC members. It's very well insulated, heated, has loos and a small kitchen. Even more attractive after the disastrous fire on September 29th in the Lasham Gliding Society clubhouse which looks like being very many months before it can be used again.

Restorations

We have two major ones well under way in the workshop.

- 1.) The 1910 Clarke Chanute glider – on loan to us from the Royal Aero Club Trust. David Siddall is undertaking a full restoration which includes complete recovering.



(David Siddall doping one of the wings)

David has nearly completed all of the flying surfaces. Finally the fuselage, which once done can see it being reunited with its trusty mannequin pilot, “Fred”!



- 2.) The 1944 Swiss Spalinger S21h 2-seater. We acquired this in December 2017 and it had no documentation. However, we're pretty sure its last flight was 1960 or 1961. To begin with we had it on display in our 2nd hangar but when our workshop became operational this Spring we decided to give it a full restoration with the intention of getting it flying again. First into the workshop was the port wing and the tailplane on the 18th April.



(The Spalinger on first rigging in the then uncompleted 2nd hangar)

Pretty soon the thought was “Wish we hadn’t!!” The first component we inspected was the port wing, and once it was stripped of fabric it was very apparent that it had been a home to several rodents – later identified as rats. The damage they’d caused by gnawing holes was huge. So the initial reaction was “OK, that’s it, this is just going to be a cosmetic restoration”. However, we’re very fortunate at Lasham in having as members Howard Torode, chairman of the BGA technical committee, and Gordon MacDonald, the BGA chief technical officer. They had a good look at the wing and said “The glue is absolutely fine, a lot of woodwork required, but it is repairable”.

So the saga began with a team led by Gary Pullen, with much assistance from Ray Whittaker. The port wing has been restored apart from recovering.

Next on the agenda the starboard wing. An initial cursory inspection gave us hope that this had escaped the rodent's attention. Not the case! Stripping the fabric off and, whilst not as bad as the port wing, still serious woodwork damage. The starboard wing has now also been brought to the recovering phase. The tailplane has been restored.

Finally the fuselage which we brought into the workshop on the 3rd October. That too has been found to have suffered rodent damage, so a lot of work to restore the fuselage which is under way, reckoned to be several months-worth.

But we'll get there! This is somewhat akin to running a marathon! You start off full of enthusiasm and then halfway through you think "Why on earth did I do this?!"

For the Spalinger to fly it's going to need specific BGA clearance as this glider type has never before flown in the UK. At this point in time there's no guarantee we'll get her flying again, but there is optimism. Gary Pullen has been responsible for a number of top-class glider restorations in the past, getting the Spalinger past the finishing post and flying again will be the "Piece de Resistance"!

Visits

With Covid restrictions being sufficiently relaxed we restarted visits at the start of August. This included the "Just turn up on Sundays at 14:00" as well as pre-arranged visits. Encouraging attendances but of course we're now moving into the "dark" period where we expect to see reducing numbers, and that's being exacerbated, most definitely for the 14:00 "Turn up" Sunday tours, by the closure of the LGS clubhouse.



MG car club



U3A visit

Finance and admin

The delayed AGM was held on Sunday 31st October. Just 12 members attended in the visitor's viewing room of the workshop plus another 2 by Zoom teleconferencing, However, with the proxy votes received we easily managed to approve the financial reports for 2020/21, which was a necessity to enable us to submit annual reports to the Charities Commission and Companies House.



(The 9th AGM, attendees at the workshop and the big screen presentation)

Finances are in good shape. We have a very healthy bank balance with no significant outstanding debts. However, we are looking at two possible infrastructure developments one of which will cost a great deal of money – see [Possible future developments](#) later.

Problem areas

As mentioned, two of them.

- Lack of hangarage space. You'd think with two 30 x 30 m hangars we'd be fine but whilst we're very "picky" as to what we accept we do agree to take a few of the gliders that we get offered when they're seen as especially desirable. You could say we're victims of our own success! More on offer as I write this. So we're looking at the feasibility of extending the second hangar – see [Possible future developments](#).
- Not flying our airworthy gliders enough. It's a bit of a "Catch 22" situation in that having so many gliders in the two hangars means you need a lot of people to get those out you want to fly. For being airworthy a glider needs a CofA, and in some cases an ARC as well, and this

isn't cheap. Also insurance of course, though we have a flexible policy agreed with our insurers which helps. Bottomline, we expect the flying fees from our airworthy gliders to exceed their running costs. This is not currently the case. So this is a major issue for the GHC CoM to debate over the winter, and look for improvements starting Spring 2022. Possibilities are:

- A.) Certainly running at least one task week. Because of Covid the last task week we ran was in Aug 2019 and this was very successful.
- B.) Have one or more "Fly Vintage" weeks where members of clubs external to Lasham are invited to fly our gliders – this will need the agreement of the LGS Flying Committee.

New gliders

Since the Spring 2021 edition of this Newsletter we have acquired three.

- A 1966 **Dart 17r** from Jeff Lynes. Not as yet flown. We will give it a thorough inspection over the Winter with a view to flying it in the Spring 2022.



(Not its current livery but this is the glider. Photo courtesy of Richard Cawsey)

- A 1970 **Pirat SZD-30** from John Halford which arrived at the GHC in May. This has been given a CofA (and ARC) and first flew with the GHC on the 7th November – seven different pilots!



(Photo Paul Haliday)

C.) The **Schweizer TG3a** which has been donated to us by the Imperial War Museum.



(A TG3a, but not the one that's coming from the IWM, Duxford)

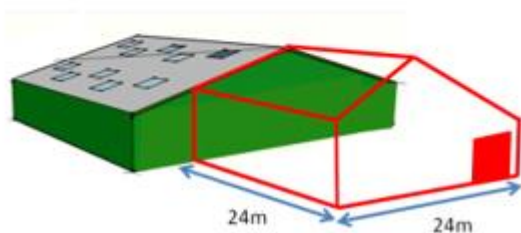
The TG3 was an initial USAAF training glider for those who went on to fly Waco CG4a's in combat in WW2 – D-Day in Normandy and Arnhem two of the more famous operations. We have documentation that our TG3 was indeed used for this purpose, so truly a historic glider.

We're awaiting agreement with the IWM as to what day we can go up to Duxford to collect the glider and documentation, all the paperwork regarding ownership transfer has been signed.

The intention is to get the glider flying again. How practical this is won't be known until we get her into the GHC workshop for a thorough inspection. Yes, the glider has been exhibited/stored dry for very many years, but we have no idea of what condition the fabric is in.

Possible future developments

- 1.) A spray booth. External to the workshop and situated on its south side. A facility we'd really like to have. Besides ourselves we think there's a lot of people who would be only too happy to pay for its use. A feasibility study is under way at the moment, the overall cost is expected to not exceed £20k. If the GHC CoM decides to go ahead there's a number of hurdles that need to be overcome.
 - Getting approval from the LGS committee.
 - Passing the required building regulations.
 - Above all satisfying Health & Safety requirements.
- 2.) A 24m x 24m extension to the second hangar. A feasibility study is also under way. Doubling the hangar size is not possible due to the proximity of the workshop. The aim is obviously to substantially alleviate the space problems we're currently suffering from. Building costs have risen appreciably in recent times, and the estimated cost means we're going to have to raise more funds should we decide to go ahead.



(Probable positioning of the hangar extension)

Looking ahead to 2022

- Like everyone our fingers are crossed that Covid in the UK becomes just a very unpleasant memory, and that we get a full year's flying in.
- It's our tenth anniversary, the GHC was registered as a company on the 15th March 2012 and we'll be looking to celebrate that.
- As yet we haven't held an opening ceremony and party for the Trish Williams Memorial Workshop. Quite possible we'll decide to combine this with our 10th anniversary event.

Glyn Bradney, 13 November 2021