



Newsletter – July 2012

Open weekend

The weather did its best to disrupt events but despite this we had a steady flow of visitors and none were turned away. Revenue was inevitably affected but we also had some excellent feedback and several of the visitors have returned for further flights. Overall it was very successful and a wonderful atmosphere. Sincere thanks to Cheryl for putting it all together and to all the helpers and workers who made it happen.

Flying activity

We started the year well with much less disruption by winter weather than the last few years, and by April were well ahead on all fronts. Sadly summer has decided to take a break and at the time of writing has yet to return. This has inevitably hit us hard with a big reduction in flying days at the time of year when we hope to see the greatest activity. Financially it is not catastrophic as whilst revenue is down, we now have some cushion to absorb variations like this, but most importantly of all we all want to fly more. We can only hope that it will improve shortly.

Launch marshal roster

I have received grumbles about the frequency with which the duties are coming round and the number of occasions when there are “no shows” by the duty marshal. We exist as a club managed and run voluntarily by the members for our mutual benefit and flying. To avoid or fail to do your bit puts an added burden on all the other members. We rely on having DLMs for weekend flying as an essential part of running operations safely and efficiently, as this produces most of our income to run the club, so whilst I accept it can be an inconvenience it is an important part of operation and existence.

I found upon looking into this that less than half of solo pilots were on the DLM roster. The management committee agreed unanimously that **ALL** pilots who fly P1 must be on either the instructor or DLM roster. I have been very impressed and grateful that all of the “absentee” P1 members who I have approached have understood the situation and have responded willingly and positively.

Wendy Willis-Fleming has posted notices requesting preferences for day and time from all P1s not currently rostered, and if none is expressed duties will be allocated by the Dutyman system. If everyone does their bit, duties will come round much less frequently, it is only half a day and if you organise it you can still fly. If “no shows” without good reason persist as a problem then we will have to consider re-rostering for the missed duty. I hope that will not be necessary.

Bats

A reminder that over the weekend of 21st July that (subject to weather) at dusk and dawn a bat survey will be carried out along the public footpath on the field as part of a larger project, so if staying on site be aware of (more) unusual nocturnal activity than normal.

Secretary and treasurer

John Sillett and Peter Field have both advised that they intend to stand down at the AGM in December. Both have done sterling service and work for the club. If anyone feels that they might be able to take on one of these challenging but rewarding tasks please feel free to discuss with the incumbents or me. The appointment will of course rest with the membership at the AGM but by announcing this now the time available can be gainfully used and provide a more measured process than in the short period after nominations are sought before the meeting. For my part, my present intention is to offer to stand for a further year as I would like to make progress on the field levelling and plans for the clubhouse before standing down. That is also of course a decision for all the membership.

Showers

Andrew Muggleston is still working away on this ably assisted by Henry and they are doing a super job. Continuing thanks are due to them and to others who have contributed.

Vehicle hangar

Once the shower works are complete the old corrugated vertical cladding will be replaced on the west elevation as will the lower lean-to extension and porch roofs to match the remainder of the building. The doors and window to the workshop will be renewed with white upvc and the last job will be some tidying up and decoration to the rendered wall and outside area. This will complete the refurbishment and weather proofing of this building, which started some while ago and which should now stand us in good stead for many years.

Future planning

I promised some while ago to look at how the club might develop in the future. Inevitably this must include how to renew or replace the clubhouse when the time comes for that. If we are positive about the future of the club and gliding at North Hill then we should have the courage of our convictions and move forward with what we have and offer existing and potential new members. I am aware that this has provoked some controversy so I would like to clarify what I am trying to achieve.

I do not have a driving ambition to rush into building a new clubhouse, but I do believe that we should have a clear idea of how and where we will do so, and possibly even the relevant permissions in place so that should it be forced upon us at short notice we can react swiftly. The present structure is undeniably in distress and has a finite life, whether that is one, two, or five years is impossible to predict, but my view is that it is less than 10 years, maybe significantly so. It has done well for what was built and sold as a temporary prefabricated building many years ago and to expect it to continue indefinitely is to deny the obvious symptoms and facts. The trigger could be storm or water damage, given that all the fixings and structure are progressively diminishing in strength, or it could simply be provoked by increasing maintenance costs on a decaying asset. We are already seeing evidence of the latter.

The existing clubhouse has served us well and is the hub of our social activity and makes a huge contribution to the life, existence and vitality of the club. It would leave a huge hole incapable of being filled by temporary cabins, so I believe that it is vital to retain the present facility until a replacement is available if we possibly can. Equally major refurbishment of the existing structure would be very disruptive, probably more expensive than re-build in the long term, and deliver an inferior end product. I don't think that we either need, or can afford, a significantly more elaborate or extravagant building, something similar in size to what we have with an improved and more efficient layout, arrangement, and services with lower energy demands will serve the club well for the future.

The building could be renewed in its present location, and in planning terms this has some advantages, but the obvious problem is what we do for 6-9 months or so during the building process. Temporary cabins are possible but they do not come cheaply, we would have no long term benefit for the considerable costs of hiring setting up and service connections, neither would they suit our use and activities.

My present thinking is that a replacement building should be positioned alongside the existing clubhouse where the Motor Falke store is, so that the existing clubhouse can be retained until the replacement is ready for use. The new location will be convenient for the main hangar, the vehicle hangar, and we can improve the layout, parking and external areas when the building work is complete. The existing water, electricity and drain connections can be utilised to save the cost of rearranging or renewing these. It would be equally

convenient for the caravans. It would not impinge upon flying or club activity during the build process and would deliver a low maintenance building at meet the aspirations I outlined above.

It would obviously necessitate relocation of the Falke building and I am endeavouring to discuss and explore this with the syndicate and I hope that a mutually acceptable solution can be found in principle.

Should that be achieved then it is my intention to produce preliminary plans for a scheme (at no cost to the club) which will I will put to the committee for consideration, and if they support it, I would wish for it to be tabled for discussion and input from **all** the membership. Should it advance sufficiently thereafter I believe it should then go to a General Meeting (annual or other) for the purpose of embracing the concept as the way forward for the club. If it is accepted then the question which flows from that is clearly when, but at least we then have a clear ambition and a path to follow. I say again that this will not be a decision which I will be taking, it is one for the whole club, and in a perfect world one which it would be nice to see everyone fully joined up with and committed to. I will keep you posted on developments and am happy to discuss this, provided you let me fly occasionally!

The field

We experimented with a large vibrating road roller to see if this would tame some of the more vicious bumps. Sadly the North Hill geology has proven to be too much of a task even for the 72 tonne effective weight of the roller. I am now discussing with contractors a method involving some filling, followed by stone burying and re-seeding, within the constraints imposed upon us by the archaeological interests. This is ongoing and is dependent upon an adequate source of suitable soil for seeding. It would be a trial exercise on a modest area in the first instance. I hope to have some costs for the committee to consider shortly. I will keep you posted.

Instructor training

Congratulations to Jimbob AKA James Hood and Matt Wright who have both achieved basic instructor rating. Thanks are due to the instructors who steered them through the training process.

Glider store/hangar

Another project which has been mooted in the past but not moved forward. In an attempt to either do or abandon it I am investigating this. Many clubs have done this very successfully with gliders being used more often, and ultimately to the benefit of the club and club funds and assets. I am looking at the possibility of a long low building under the trees at the east end of the field with an obstacle to prevent gliders being towed directly out

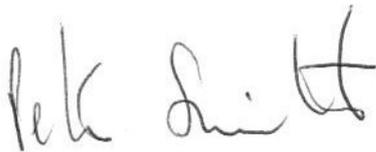
into the landing area. It would not remotely impinge upon the latter. I believe that this is the only location which is practical, possible and achievable.

If the committee accept the principle (and I will shortly be putting plans to them) I will then further develop these in order to produce a costed proposal and invite interested parties to make themselves known.

Where this has been done elsewhere the costs have been funded by a rent free period in return for financial contribution towards the capital cost so that club funds are not employed in the development. Vacant possession of the building falls to the club after the rent free period, which will then provide an income stream for the club, albeit some years hence.

I favour the east end as the topography is almost ideally suited to this, there are fewer archaeological issues, it is well located for services and security, and is more likely to be favourably received by the planners. Also the length of the building can be made to suit the number of gliders needed with (I expect) room for future expansion. An added bonus could be covered trailer storage. It would be good to see the club trailers under cover.

At least it will either work or the idea can be put to bed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'S'.

30 June 2012