The Vintage Glider Club of Great Britain

NEWS LETTER

October 1973

WHILE BACK AT THE RANCH .....

1938 PETREL

In the last News Letter, mention was made that a Petrel might still exist in Southern Ireland, and that enquiries would be made about it. Hardly had the News Letter been sent out than the exciting news was received that not only did the machine exist, probably in good condition, but that it was about to be brought back to England for restoration.

Michael Russell (Silver C 263) is an old Petrel enthusiast and now is an equal share partner with one of the former owners, John Byrne of Co. Dublin. Mike has thus had shares in both Petrels in existence. He found this Petrel hanging, rigged, from the roof of a heated Air Lingus hangar in Dublin. The glider was imported by air through Cambridge and will be kept during the winter at Peddars, Wood End Green, Henham, Bishops Stortford, Herts. (Henham (o27 975) 308. (We hope Mike has already broken this news to Mrs. Russell). This Petrel is the same as the other one, except for a Petrel Mk 2 fixed tailplane. It has among its canopies its original many-piece canopy and an open one. The present colours of the machine are - red fuselage and cream wings. It is hoped to base the Petrel at Cambridge and it may be going to be painted Cambridge blue with pre-war transparent doped and varnished flying surfaces. The end result should be wonderful beyond imagination!

The glider at present has a small built-in wheel. This will be removed and replaced by a dropable dolly. CAN ANYONE SUPPLY DROPABLE WHEELS PLEASE? A trailer will be made for the Petrel during the winter, and if the C. of A. can be got, it will be flown in an unrestored state during the next season.

1935 SCUD 3

Mike Garnett of Orchard Cottage, Hempton Lane, Almodsbury, Bristol BS12 4AP has written with the news that he has the Scud 3 almost ready for fabric covering. A C. of A. will be applied for next year. The book 'British Gliders and Sailplanes 1922-1970' by Norman Ellison says that only two machines of this type were built in 1935. The Scud 3 was designed by L. E. Baynes and was built by Abbott Baynes Sailplanes Ltd. of Farnham. The aircraft was later built by Carden Baynes Ltd. of Heston, Middx. When fitted with an engine, the type was known as the Carden Baynes Auxiliary.

This Scud 3 will be flown without its engine, which was originally a retractable 249cc 2-stroke Villiers of 9 b.h.p. pusher)

What seems incredible is that two Scud 3s still exist, especially as one was seen fairly finally destroyed by a power pilot who tried to take off towards the hill at Dunstable with the wind blowing down the hill, in 1938 or 1939 (though Doc. Slater says this happened earlier).

1932 Scud 2

The last Baynes Scud 2 has finally returned to Dunstable, restored. Very recently it was seen flying low over the hill. This Scud 2 is believed to be the second oldest glider in existence in Britain to-day, the oldest being the Manuel WREN of 1931.

1939 GULL 3

John Ellis, 10 Monument Road, Chalgrove, Oxon says that his Slingsby Gull 3 has been flying again at Weston on the Green, but has not been brought to Rallies because it has no trailer. The machine is almost in its original form, the alteration being a one-piece canopy. This was the last and (the Editor thinks) the best of the pre-war Gull series. Due to the outbreak of war, only one Gull 3 was built. It was hoped that the machine would be produced in quantity after the war. This did not happen. Instead the basically different Gull 4 was built in 1947. The Gull 3 was flown by Prince Bira of Siam, the famous racing driver, during 1944 and 1945.

1936 KRANICH 1 (Swedish built 1943)

This machine is now almost repaired after severe damage to its fuselage during the 1972 Lasham Regional Contest. The repair has been carried out by Speedwell Sailplanes and the machine will spend the winter at Camphill. This is probably the last airworthy Kranich 1.

Aviation

Another is being stored by the Midland/Preservation Society. The Society also has a Nybourg Special sailplane, a 1944 German built Grunau 2B and a Kirby Cadet. Chairman of the Midland Aviation Preservation Society is:- G. B. Heatley, 42 Dorridge Road, Dorridge, Warwickshire. Tel: Knowle 4009. Business: 021-236-2494. Secretary:- R. P. Smith, 70 Eversleigh Road, Coundon, Coventry. Tel: Keresleigh 4456. Business: Coventry 88733, Ext.84. This information was recently extracted from a leaflet at this year's Vintage Display at Wycombe Air Park, 30th September and the leaflet may be 2 years old.

1942 German built KRANICH 2

This machine has for years been lying derelict in the Newcastle Club's hangar on Carlton Moor, without a C. of A. All efforts to obtain information about the aircraft through the Club's Secretary have failed. It is believed that its owner has little to do with the aircraft except possibly paying for its hangarage. He also will not sell the machine to the Club. Another KRANICH 2 is being rebuilt in the south of England.

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There are probably more older gliders in the country including a Falcon 3, worthy of restoration. However we do not know their whereabouts.

One can see that our movement is indeed gaining ground in that almost every old glider that we know about, with the exception of the Kranich on Carlton Moor and possibly the 1947 Czech Krajanek (address: - Rotherham and District Gliding Club, 38 Meadow Bank Avenue, Sheffield S7 1PB) is being looked after or repaired. We now have over 50 members in this country and in Germany, Switzerland, Australia and New Zealand.

As I have heard of no damage to the machines that are already flying (touch the good old wood of which they are made), we can expect an unparalleled collection of old gliders to be flying over Britain next year.

We wish everyone good luck with their Cs. of A. and hope that because so many of the vintage gliders are now in such good condition they will not need very much work done on them. We hope that all owners will find dry places for their gliders during the winter.

OLD GLIDERS IN YUGOSLAVIA

News was received at the end of August while I was in Germany that all old gliders in Yugoslavia are now grounded although some of their Weihes were registered as late as 1960.

News has also been received that OLD GLIDERS IN FRANCE are once again to be grounded. One does not know whether the grounding this time will be final or not.

VINTAGE DISPLAY AT WYCOMBE AIRPARK 30th September 1973

This year because of the overcrowded landing area, we were not allowed to fly before or after the Air Display. Two flying demonstrations were planned to begin the Air Display itself.

With strong cold winds and no possibility of flying, only five gliders turned up. But these five were a worthwhile contribution to the ground display: a Weihe, Minimoa and Grunau 2B from Dunstable and Tutor and Rhönbussard from Wycombe Air Park.

There was a magnificent flying display of old aeroplanes, and a large number of old cars and steam engines on the ground, all worth a good look. Frances Furlong brought the Dormobile to provide our headquarters and lunch room: the tent attached became our Lecture and Display Hall. Ken Crack came early on Saturday and energetically rigged up black out in the tent to show slides, a fluorescent light to lighten our darkness and an electricity production unit. On Saturday there was an Air Display of more modern aircraft, starting with Concorde and finishing with the finest imaginable aerobatic display by the Red Arrows.

Our thanks to Club members and all who came with their gliders. The effort took our membership over the 50 mark.

VISIT TO GERMANY

At the beginning of September John Coxon and I visited Münster with John's MINIMOA as guests of the Münster Oldtimer Gliding Club, to take part in an Air Display with the Münster Minimoa at Telgte airfield. A front sat over Münster bringing rain and low cloud while a short distance away was good weather. The Minimoas were only able to be shown for a short time during a lull in the rain. The Air Display was by RAF aircraft - a Lightning, Hercules, Jet Provosts of the Red Pelicans and helicopters. Our thanks to the Münster Oldtimer Gliding Club for their most wonderful hospitality during our week's stay.

In perfect weather we visited the Wasserkuppe. The Presdient, Herr Gottstein seemed very sympathetic to an International Vintage Glider Meeting there next year, and news has just come in that the dates have been decided as 1st to 9th June 1974 inclusive. More information as soon as it is available.

CHRIS WILIS

EXCHANGE AND MART

FOR SALE

More information about the Slingsby Kirby Gull owned by Tom Smith, Deansboro Road, Rt.12B, Clinton, New York 13323. The price is $2500 at Clinton, New York, an enclosed trailer is included, the only major change is that the struts were changed from wood to metal. Full details and photograph obtainable from Frances at Otford House.

FOR SALE

1952 World Championship Winner SKY - damaged. Built 1951. Also prototype T.21A, built possibly 1944. Apply to HMS Thunderer, RN.E.C. Manadon, Plymouth, PL5 3AQ.

WANTED

An enclosed trailer and enclosed canopy for winter use wanted for PREFECT PROTOTYPE. Information please to the Prefect Syndicate, Colin Street, 'Cirrus' 76 Copse Avenue, Weybourne, Farnham, Surrey.

WANTED

Twin release drop wheels wanted by Mike Russell for his Petrel. His address - Peddars, Wood End Green, Henham, Bishop's Stortford, Herts. Tel: Henham (027-975) 308.

VINTAGE GLIDER LIBRARY

The Club has been given a collection of historical photographs, 3 view drawings of pre-war foreign gliders and books. The collection also includes early Thermik magazines which have in them much information on the wartime developments of pre-war German gliders.

Prints of photographs, photo-copies of 3 view drawings and documents will be available at a small cost to all members.

We would like to thank Peter Fletcher for entrusting us with this collection, which will enable us to have some interesting items available for viewing at Rallies next year.

FROM THE OFFICE

DIARY ITEMS — Spring Rally at the Midland Gliding Club, Long Mynd, but confirmation of exact week-end, whether Spring Bank Holiday or one before, to come.

Wasserkuppe - 1st to 9th June 1974.

Several months of running rallies and the office have brought to light a number of bits of equipment we need. A lot of these are in Green Shield and Co-Op Stamp catalogues. If you don't actually save stamps, but like me, you occasionally get them, would you send them to me?

The next NEWS LETTER will contain more about gliding in Germany, and an address list of Club members and other useful people.

G O I N G U P . . . . . membership now 54

Issued by the Secretary:
Frances Furlong, Otford House, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent

Editor: Chris Wills, Huntercombe End Farm, Nettlebed, Oxon.
26.10.73

Another in our occasional series on vintage gliders. Reproduced from AUSTRALIAN GLIDING by kind permission of the Editor, Martin Simons.

THE WREN SERIES

In the decade 1925-35 the technical leadership of German glider manufacturers was so great that very few original designs in other countries survived beyond the prototype stage. One of the exceptions was the English 'Wren'. The first of the series, the Crested Wren, was flown by its designer-builder, Corporal W. L. Manuel in 1931. It was cheap and easy to build and quickly proved itself to be fully controllable and capable of soaring quite well. Its performance was probably comparable with that of the Grunau Baby 1, which appeared in the same year, but the Wren was smaller and easier to build.

The wooden structure followed standard practice, but Manuel devised a simple mass-production method of producing wing ribs without the usual elaborate jigs. Plywood blanks were cut and shaped together in a block, like model aeroplane wing ribs, then the ply webs were edged with thin spruce capping strips. The ailerons were extensively cross braced to improve their stiffness, but they were not differentially geared and no wing washout was used.

The fuselage had a tall pylon to carry the wing above the pilot's head. View upward was very restricted, especially since the slight sweep-back of the wing brought the leading edge at the root further forward than strictly necessary. The sweep-back was hardly enough to improve longitudinal stability and the Wrens, with their all-moving tails, were very unstable and without any means of trimming. The control cables to the tail were external for much of their length, and a single bracing wire ran from the open bungey hook fitting on the rather pointed nose to the wing strut fitting on the wing. These wires were always slack in flight and were often removed altogether.

Manuel himself built two more Wrens, each incorporating minor improvements. The Willow Wren had a re-designed elevator and internal control cables, the Blue Wren of 1934 had 'washout' to cure the spinning tendencies of the earlier models, and the ailerons were covered with oak veneer. Meanwhile amateur groups built their own versions from the Willow Wren plans: the Golden Wren, which had extra stiffening in the fuselage and extended ailerons, with an enclosed cockpit, and the White Wren which had dihedral. Both these models had a wide leading edge transparency to give the pilot a view to the inside of turns.

A A Willow Wren was built in Australia by F. M. Hamilton, and flew regularly in the Sydney area from 1935 to 1937. The Blue Wren, after a couple of years in England, was exported to South Africa.

In February of 1935 Manuel and his associates advertised that an improved Wren, called the 'Dunstable Kestrel' was available. The Kestrel was identical to the Blue Wren but was strengthened slightly and had some detailed improvements such as a deeper landing skid and differential ailerons. The new machine was offered complete at £130, with discount for bulk orders, but apparently only one factory model ever saw the light and it was sold to a purchaser who had not progressed beyond 'hops' in the primary glider. Its fate is unknown but may be imagined. However, Manuel sold sets of drawings at £6. 6s. a time, and four Kestrels were eventually built from these, one in England, by W. E. Godson. The other three were Australian. One was built by R. New in West Australia, one at Horsham by R. Balsillie, and another by Percy Pratt at Geelong. All three played their part in the development of gliding in Australia during the war years and after, and they are well-remembered. The Balsillie machine was badly damaged, and was re-built by the Igguldens, its remains are now in South Australia. Ric. New's Kestrel is still in existence at Cunderdin.

In England only the Willow Wren, restored to museum condition by Manuel himself, survives. The Golden Wren flew a good deal during the immediate post-war years, but was eventually condemned because of glue deterioration. Godson killed himself in his Kestrel by spinning in at the British Nationals in 1939, Hamilton's Willow Wren suffered a similar fate (not being flown by Hamilton) in 1937. The others vanished without trace.

Additional Reference: Sailplane & Gliding 1932 p.51: 1933 pp 141, 164, 172: 1934 p 85: 1935 pp 25, 103, 204