

On Silent Wings by Chris Williams

# SCALE SOARING

**E**very summer the various vintage glider clubs in Europe get together for their International Rally, and this year it was held at Lasham in Hampshire, which was extra lucky for us, as it was only a couple

of years since the annual event was held at Tibenham in Norfolk. Lasham is reputedly one of the largest gliding clubs in Europe, and when my pal Motley and I arrived one beautiful sunny day in the middle of the week, that was certainly the impression we got when we saw that the flight line was a speck of small dots far away in the shimmering distance.

When we arrived at the scene of action, panting and footsore, it was all worth it, for the area was packed with vintage sailplanes of all shapes and sizes. The foot-slogging didn't end there, though, because a bit further on we could see the outlines of the new VGC Heritage Centre. The

building that will eventually house a fine collection of vintage machines is named the Chris Wills Heritage Hangar, named after the founder of the Vintage Gliding Club who had sadly passed away quite recently. CW, as he was known, was a living repository of gliding history, and looking at the part-collection of gliders already assembled, this will indeed be a fitting tribute to his contribution to the club over so many years.

It was after we had inspected and photographed to death the machines inside and we were walking back to the flight line that a Slingsby T31 Tandem Tutor appeared overhead at a seemingly low altitude. Obviously, the pilot had run out of altitude and was taking a short cut to get back to the active part of the field. In doing so, the handbrake turn he had initiated put the glider into a steep bank over our heads, and as he did so, one of the two occupants

let out a hearty 'wooh-hoo!', which could be clearly heard from the ground. Motley and I looked at each other in mutual agreement...that pretty much summed up the whole day.

As a Minimoa enthusiast (I may well hold the world record for the number of models I have built of this iconic machine) it was a pleasure indeed to see the only airworthy example in the UK in action, having only seen her rigged at the previous International rally. It was a busy day indeed, with much hiking around the airfield environs, but I went home with an SD card full of photographs, some of which I'm sure will be the subject of future projects.

## White Horse aerotow

The White Horse Club's flying site sits astride the top of a hill near Lambourn, where the racehorses gallop. When first formed, it was one of the earliest clubs to engage in the, then, new art of aerotow.

The only airworthy Minimoa in the UK.



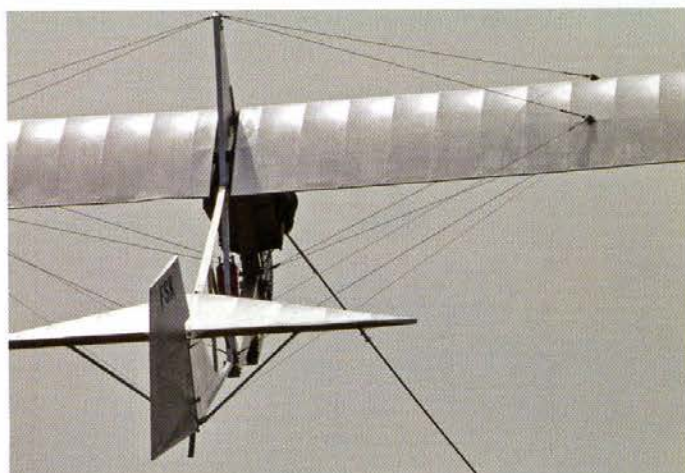




The new VGC Heritage Centre is under construction.



The Chris Wills Memorial Hangar (Replica Colditz Cock in the background).



Primary glider goes up on the winch.



Another primary, the Hols De Teufel.

Although not on the curriculum for many years, The club decided to hold an aerotow event to mark the club's 40th anniversary. An invitation was extended on the Scale Soaring UK forum, and was eagerly accepted by the forum dwellers therein.

It was no surprise, therefore, that when the day dawned bright and sunny, a lot of the usual suspects were to be found rigging in the car park. Bright and sunny it may have been, but it came with a side

order of wind, and this wind was blowing in the worst possible direction, coming directly over the trees. To make matters worse, the vast, open plain that used to confront us in the olden days, is now criss-crossed with fences. This meant that when it was time to land, any turn into finals that was too far downwind, created the possibility of straddling one of these fences, all of which added a frisson of excitement to the festivities.

Given the conditions, then, it was with

some surprise that I saw Bob Blackmore happily flying one of my old designs, a Slingsby T21, built to 1/4 scale. Affectionately known as the 'barge' by its exponents, this glider has all the glide angle of a grand piano with the lid open, but seemed to be coping very well in the robust conditions. Flying equally well was Cliff Evans' new o/d Slingsby Capstan, one of the less modelled variants from the Slingsby stable. Cliff runs his own laser cutting business, and promises a



Scene at the busy flight line: Eon Olympia in the foreground.





Cliff Evans displays his o/d Slingsby Capstan.



Ian Davis goes fence hopping with RFD2 at White Horse.

for the Capstan in the near future. One of the few models I saw on the day that had flown here all those years ago was Ian Davis' RFD2. Given that this glider has no form of braking system, Ian was brave indeed to give it a go, and it came as no surprise when he ended up fence-hopping in the far distance when it came to landing time.

I gave it a go, too, with my recently constructed 1:3.5 scale Rhonadler and was pleasantly pleased and surprised in equal proportion to make it back to the patch almost every time, despite the massively thick scale wing section at the root. Given the conditions, a relatively small proportion of the attendees were keen to fly, but for those who were, the tug pilots were always on hand, and thanks must go to them and to Simon Jones of the host club for making what turned out for many of us to be a very enjoyable day.

#### TVSA aerotow, Siege Cross Farm

2013 may well stand out be a bumper year

when it comes the arrival of new models and their subsequent maiden flights. First up at the TVSA concern's event saw Terry Holland proudly displaying the results of his winter efforts in the form of the Luftikus, built to 1/4 scale. This took to the air without fuss in the capable hands of Dave Stokes and, with it's HQ airfoils, proceeded to float around quite prettily indeed.

Also maidenoned on the day was the Slingsby Sky built by Neville Mattingley. Built to 1/4 scale from the free plan by Jim Owen, which is downloadable from the SSUK website, this is an attractive bird indeed in its red & white livery. Neville seemed initially reluctant to commit her to the air, a reasonable enough emotion given all the work involved in her construction, but before too long she was airborne and really looking the part in the air.

Another model maidenoned on the day, was Mel Gigg's new Phoenix models Ka8. Whatever your views on the range of Chinese ARTFs that are increasingly available these days, some of them fly very

well indeed. Having reviewed an example of this particular model, I can confirm that the Ka8 is a nice performer, lacking airbrakes and somewhat flimsily constructed, but with the safe handling that comes with its extremely light weight. The wing joiners consist of two hollow aluminium rods, and although I didn't see exactly what happened, I couldn't help but notice that somehow Mel had managed to increase the dihedral to free-flight proportions!

Altogether an excellent (and extremely warm) day, with an occasional shortage of tugs, perhaps they were busy looking for an ice cream van. The usual thanks to the tug pilots and TVSA crew for continuing to provide the facilities that we glider pilots like to enjoy...

#### Slingsby T.61E project conclusion

I made mention of my pal Motley previously, well he, too, enjoyed a maiden flight during the busy summer season. The T.61E was a licensed-built version of the German Scheibe SF-25 two-seat side-by-

#### Bob Blackmore's Slingsby T21 at the White Horse event.







**Neville Mattingley displays his new 1/4 scale Slingsby Sky at the TVSA event.**



**Terry Holland with his 1/4 scale o/d Luftikus.**



**The Sky in action at Siege Cross Farm.**

side motorglider, and there are many examples to be found, usually one at just about every operational flying club. I once built a version from the Cliff Charlesworth plan (it's the blue and white one in the ad page) and was given the opportunity to have a flight in the full size.

The pilot, well stricken in years, had a duff hip and, unbelievably, this particular T61 had a pull-start, rather like a lawn mower. It was kept, and flown from, a farmer's field and thanks to his recalcitrant hip the pilot found it extremely difficult to pull the cord. She started eventually, after much 'effing & blinding, and we were off.

After a while, somewhat to my consternation, he switched the fan off and we were in soaring mode. Thereafter, the buildings and trees below started to loom large he and switched the ignition on. Grunting and straining he pulled on the cord, but to no avail. Instead, the cursing sprang to life. I gulped, and tested the integrity of my harness by nervously pulling on it. Soon it was possible to discern individual leaves and roof tiles. The sound of the engine finally coming to life was a sweet one indeed, and to this day I have never fitted an on-board starter to my motor gliders in honour of that occasion.

Motley's version is built to 3rd scale, and

the fuselage and empennage simply scaled up from the Charlesworth plan. The reason he wanted to build one in the first place was the pleasure he had gained from flying my 1/3rd scale C-Falke, so to keep things as similar as possible, the wings were designed with the same HQ wing sections and construction methods. Power is similarly provided with a Zenoah 38, that sweetest of engines, and thus it was at the beginning of July that we found ourselves at the site of the County Model Flying Club ready to put theory into practice.

Sneakily, he handed the Tx over to me, so having got him to sign the obligatory disclaimer notice, I opened the taps and we were off. Sure enough, the flying characteristics were uncannily similar to mine, and I poled her around for a few minutes before handing the Tx to Motley. There is an expression that comes to the face of those that have sailed the stormy seas of construction and arrived at the harbour of airborne manipulation that consists of a subtle blend of satisfaction, relief and excitement, and this was the state of Motley's face in those moments. When I was sure he was happy to carry on, I fired up my C-Falke and we were treated to the sublime sound of two Z38's in perfect synchronisation.

There is a lot to be said for the motorglider...not only can you fly the usual up & down the flight line display of any powered scale model, you can also climb to altitude, hit the kill switch, and enjoy the sublime experience of flying a large glider in search of rising air. When the wind refuses to blow on the slope and the tug pilots all indisposed, Motley & I tend to do this a lot...

(To see the T.61 in action, just Google **MOTOGGLIDERS AT DAWN**)

### Tailpiece

When 2013 came into being, a bunch of us foregathered on White Sheet hill and had a glorious day's flying. I unwisely commented that this was a good omen for what was to come. What actually came was four months of freezing weather, with biting Easterly winds and precious little flying. Then miraculously, it all turned around, and up to date we have enjoyed the sort of summers that old men dream about. With all the flying that has subsequently taken place, my reports have been somewhat brief in order to fit everything into one column...long may it continue!

[c\\_williams30@sky.com](mailto:c_williams30@sky.com)



**Geoff Crew before the maiden flight of Slingsby T61E.**

**The T61 in action at the County Model Flying Club.**

