

SAM 35 Chairman's Report July 2015

In the 18 Months since my last report there have been a number of challenges to aeromodellers in general and the Society in particular but also some positive developments.

I think the main challenges are:

- access to flying sites
- the age profile of the membership
- difficulty in recruiting and keeping committee members, event runners and planners

Flying Sites

A major challenge has been the threat to the continued availability of flying sites.

The loss of Church Fenton was a blow to free flight modellers in particular in the north of the country and the continued uncertainty about the availability of Barkston Heath even for the BMFA Nationals events has made planning difficult. Our attempts to book Barkston Heath for a SAM35 Retro Nationals event were unsuccessful. There were also difficulties gaining access to Middle Wallop which were resolved for this year but at present it is difficult to be confident about continued access to MOD properties for the future.

There has also been doubt about the continued use of Old Warden for model flying and our thanks are due to Ken Shepherd for his efforts to carry on with his Modelair events and for welcoming SAM35 to join those events.

Our partnership with Modelair continues to give us access to a favourite flying site for many SAM35 members at the Mayfly, Scale Weekend in July and Festival of Flight in September.

We continue to benefit from being a BMFA special interest body. Our presence in the BMFA tent at the Nationals in August continues to attract the attention of both existing and potential new members and last year I signed up many new members and sold a lot of year books.

I view the recent serious intent of the BMFA to find its own flying site as a good thing for SAM35. The BMFA EGM motion enabling the BMFA executive to take action to secure a site was passed with a good majority. My conversations with the BMFA have been very positive about SAM35 being able to access a permanent site to run its own events.

We continue to be engaged in running events at the BMFA FF Nationals and this year we were involved in running control line , HiStart Glider, under 25" rubber and Vintage Power Duration events.

Age Profile Of Membership

Our membership has declined by 70 over the last year, if this were to continue the Society would have no members in 10 years and would become non viable well before then. Clearly this is mostly because of the average age of the membership. For the Society to survive we need to attract younger people, e.g. those approaching retirement, as members. In order to do that we need to provide information and events which will enable people to relive aero modelling as it was in their youth in the 1970's.

Our plan to run a Retro Nationals is aimed at engaging this group. Unfortunately the difficulties already mentioned regarding flying sites has made it impossible to organise an event so far. Sites have been suggested to me but either because the location was not central enough or they were not big enough they have been unsuitable.

I was encouraged by the interest shown in by Bill Longley's Vintage Power Duration competition at the Free Flight Nationals with quite a crowd of spectators on the Sunday. I think that this type of activity could attract new, competition minded, members if the models being flown were ones of their youth.

We need enthusiasts from that era to develop activities to attract the membership of tomorrow.

Recruiting People to run the Society and Events

We are fortunate to have people who are prepared to put a lot of time and effort into helping to keep the society going. In particular the columnists in SAM35 Speaks and the people who organise activities and competitions at events like today's deserve our thanks.

I would also like to mention particularly our Secretary Andrew Housden for his work in organising this meeting and Kevin Richards our Treasurer who does an excellent job of keeping us on the financial straight and narrow. His advice to the committee has always proved to be far sighted and prudent.

We were fortunate this year to be able to recruit Colin Hutchinson to take over from Ron Knight as editor of SAM35 Speaks. Ron gave us great service as editor for many years and handed over a treasure to Colin. Colin has made a number of positive changes to the format and production of the magazine making it easier to read and still the jewel in our crown. SAM35 Speaks remains the glue which holds the Society together.

John Wingate stood down as Free Flight Secretary this year. I would like to thank John and his wife Kath for their enthusiastic efforts running events and contributing to Speaks for the Society over many years.

In my Chairman's Notes column in 'Speaks I have attempted to recruit people to fill posts on the committee as Free Flight Secretary and also Publicity Officer, they have resulted in no response from members. We also need to recruit a Webmaster to take over from David Stapleton who is standing down after 3 years service. If you could fill one of these posts please let me know

A question often asked is " when is this years yearbook coming out"? The production of the year book is a major task always undertaken by willing volunteers who have to be able to persuade people to write articles and then pull the document together for publication and arrange printing . We need volunteers to undertake this before we can produce another year book.

It is clear that we could do more to capitalise on our involvement at the FF Nationals with the opportunity to run more events and better publicity of what we are running. Without people to run these events it will not happen.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties I have mentioned here the Society is currently in good health. Membership is down but still significant, we have a strong relationship with the BMFA and Modelair, events and competitions are attracting significant numbers of participants.

With your help I look forward to a Society which is growing in new directions.