

# WASSI



## Walsh Aviation Support Society Inc.



### Update 1-24

#### Chairman's Introduction

Welcome to the first WASSI update for 2024. This update will inform you of recent news and activities involving the WASSI. Plenty has occurred since the previous newsletter issued this time last year. In fact, I have been so busy, I didn't have the capacity to consider publishing any other updates in 2023. For that, I apologise.

During the past twelve months the WASSI acquired a sixth aircraft and now has five Tomahawks leased out to different flight training organisations. Progress is also being made on getting the remaining aircraft (ZK-MUM) completed.

Several WASSI members participated at the 57<sup>th</sup> Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School ("The Walsh") at Matamata in January, giving me very positive feedback about how the WASSI aircraft performed and how easily they could be identified both in the circuit and in the training areas.

The WASSI's Annual General Meeting was scheduled for late in the Walsh, however, due to illness at the school, it was postponed. The AGM was subsequently held by Zoom meeting on the afternoon/evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> of February. With it remaining vital that all the membership of the society are updated, below you will find extracts from my Chairman's Report; the AGM and more.

## Chairman's Report

Below are details extracted from my Chairman's Report, to highlight several areas involving the WASSI over the past twelve months.

2023 was a much more manageable year, with WASSI continuing to grow steadily towards our objectives. Five of the six aircraft we own are now airworthy. Our five PA-38 Tomahawks are now leased out as detailed below. Unfortunately, we have not been able to complete the restoration of our sixth aircraft, a Cessna A152 Aerobat (ZK-MUM).

Lease income overall for 2023 was improved compared to 2022 and relatively steady, with generally good utilisation by the leasing organisations. Maintenance costs are still unpredictable, but we are gaining a better understanding of what is reasonable. Averaged across the fleet, lease income exceeds maintenance costs by a modest margin.

**JHF** is being leased by Hawkes Bay and East Coast Aero Club. In November 2022, JHF had its initial avionics upgrade of a Garmin GTX335W ADS/B Out and In Transponder and a Garmin Aero 660 VFR GPS Navigator display. When funds are available, we will programme JHF's repaint in the WASSI scheme and the completion of its avionics upgrade.

**FML** was, until the 57<sup>th</sup> Walsh in January 2024, being leased by Wellington Aero Club. However, this lease was terminated with effect the end of the Walsh and was ferried to Motueka initially and then to Omaka for a small amount of remedial work to be completed. WASSI have reached a lease agreement with Air Hawkes Bay in Hastings for their use of FML for the medium to longer term.

**NJT** is also being leased by Air Hawkes Bay.

**MAJ** is being leased by Mid-Canterbury Aero Club. In October 2022, MAJ had its initial avionics upgrade of a Garmin GTX335W ADS/B OUT and IN Transponder and a Garmin Aero 660 VFR GPS Navigator display. MAJ requires a complete paint strip and repaint in the WASSI scheme, and we hope to be able to complete this and the remaining avionics upgrade and internal refurbishment in 2024.

**JRS** is also being leased by Mid-Canterbury Aero Club. Running-in was completed by September 2023, and the aircraft positioned to Omaka for application of the WASSI paint scheme, the fitting of two Garmin G5s and completion of a few relatively small jobs. This allowed JRS to position to Ashburton in early December.



The latest addition to the WASSI fleet and attending its first Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School (WMSFS) at Matamata Airfield is Piper PA38 Tomahawk JRS, while taxiing back to its parking bay on the flightline is Piper PA38 Tomahawk NJT attending its second WMSFS. (Phil Craig)

**MUM** had the fuselage, wings and control surfaces were painted in late 2021. The engine came from NJT and was reconditioned by South Air in Dunedin in April 2022, then mounted to the airframe but not yet run. MUM's restoration continued steadily through 2022, extending to a complete re-wire, repair to the instrument panel and the upgrading of the avionics to include two Garmin G5s; a Garmin GTX335W ADS/B OUT and IN Transponder; a Garmin Aero 660 VFR GPS Navigator display; and a Garmin radio, along with the undercarriage legs, fairings, brake discs and wheels all being replaced. Unfortunately, time and money in 2022 ran out to complete MUM in time for it to be used at the 56<sup>th</sup> Walsh in January 2023. Later in 2023 when we had the financial capability, Jay McIntyre at JEM Aviation did not have the manpower to fit in the required work, however he informs me that he has now moved MUM into his main hangar and is making real and hopefully final progress on its completion.

**Future Aircraft Investment** The availability of suitable aircraft for us to invest in is totally unpredictable. However, it is clear that airworthy and relatively low hour aircraft are a better investment for us than aircraft requiring total rebuilds. While I do not expect we will be in a position to invest in any more aircraft in 2024, in order to move toward a balance of PA38s and Cessna 152s, I expect that the next aircraft will be C152s.

**Priorities for 2024** Our priorities for 2024 are the completion and leasing of MUM; to build up a buffer of funds; the continuous improvement of JHF and MAJ; and the further allocation of roles and duties to WASSI volunteers to spread the load and improve the completion of tasks.

**Marketing and Social Media** In the last two or three years I have not had the capacity to adequately market WASSI. Consequently, we are being held back and not progressing as we might. We are losing opportunities and I need help. The WASSI website needs updating to include recent news and stories about the Walsh. This would allow our story to be shared with prospective donors. We could also include student testimonies from over the years describing how the Walsh has positively impacted them.

Additionally, the Social Media aspect of the WASSI is currently limited to a Facebook page that could benefit from a more active presence. I have had an approach from a couple of WASSI members to assist, but with all such tasks, we still need more enthusiastic, committed volunteers to help with building and maintaining our social media presence. If you are able to assist with this task, please drop me an email.

**Warbirds Over Wanaka** The organisers of WOW have generously offered the WASSI a prime location at the event, to set up a display (free of charge) where we can showcase an aircraft and promote our society objectives to the industry and the general public. Carlton and Amit have been organising volunteers to attend the display, and we hope to use it as a marketing opportunity. If you are able to help with any of the areas identified above, that are needing input and effort, please do not hesitate to contact me in the first instance.



Another two of the WASSI aircraft attending the Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School at Matamata airfield this year were Piper PA38 Tomahawks JHF and MAJ. This pair continue to earn income ahead of being repainted and receiving upgraded avionics to match the other PA38s in the WASSI fleet. (Phil Craig)

## WASSI at the 57<sup>th</sup> Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School

With a few weather challenges this year, most commonly a northeasterly breeze requiring the use of runway 04 for long periods of time, plus the disruption to the school when COVID-19 spread amongst a number of staff and students, the eighteen aircraft assigned to the students completed almost 1,300 flights that totalled just over 702 hours of flying. Meanwhile, the air traffic controllers handled almost 7,700 aircraft movements!

While a good portion of the staff and students affected by COVID-19 were able to return to the school to continue their flight operations, this did impact the number of ab-initio students that were able to complete their first solo flight at the Walsh. Still, due to the massive effort of the students and staff involved a total of thirty-two out of the forty-eight ab-initios completed their first solo flight this year.

Interestingly, of the 702 hours of flying at this year's Walsh, the five WASSI aircraft completed over 235 of these! This total consisted of the following individual values: FML recorded over 47 hours with a busiest day of 7.2 hours; JHF logged over 48 hours with the biggest day of 8.7 hours; JRS totalled over 48 hours and a busiest day of 6.5 hours; MAJ recorded over 22 hours with the most hours on one day being 3.6 hours (bear in mind this aircraft spent a few days out of the air awaiting a fix to a mechanical issue); and NJT totalled nearly 70 hours with its biggest daily total being 8.4 hours. I think you will agree that these are mighty impressive numbers and are largely a reflection of the standard and condition (albeit with some improvement still to come) of the current WASSI fleet of airworthy aircraft. It appeared that JRS and NJT a least, were well liked by those pilots who flown them so much!

Despite the challenges created by COVID-19 at the school, flight operations and instruction continued without disruption as best they could. Although the beach trip to Mount Maunganui was cancelled, the Family Day went ahead on Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, with a handling display by Corsair ZK-COR (courtesy of Mike Jones and Greencare Aviation Ltd) plus a demonstration by the RNZAF Black Falcons team along with the RNZAF firefighters' competition. Meanwhile, the returned student Arkley evening was able to be held on-site in the marquee, as was the school concert night.

And in the interest of the health of those at the school and those invited guests that were due to be at the school, the Wings Parade saw students presented with their Scout Wings and Certificates, followed by the Awards Dinner, both held in the marquee attended by just the students and staff. Although the invited guests, sponsors and supporters of the Walsh were unable to be part of these celebrations this year, they were all still generous enough to allow staff members to represent them while presenting a wide range of awards, trophies, gifts and work experience prizes to a range of deserving students. Prizes were again provided by Air New Zealand, Airways New Zealand, the RNZAF, the MetService, ASPEQ, and others, with the Walsh Trophy for the top ab-initio student being awarded to Max Tarrant who also received a major Air New Zealand prize.



It is all concentration from the student pilots at the 57<sup>th</sup> Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School as they complete their landings in Piper PA38 Tomahawks JHF and NJT. (Phil Craig)

In conclusion, the importance of the WASSI, to help strengthen the future of Walsh, is clear and to ensure we achieve our goals it will take many more years of commitment. Part of this process is succession planning. I would ask that you give some thought to whether you may be able to contribute in some capacity in the future.

Thank you all, for sharing the dream.

Mark Woodhouse, WASSI Chairman