



## ‘Springing’ into action at Hooton Park ...



Well, here we go again, ready for another season of Open Days and other events. It’s amazing how quickly time passes – and the jobs list is long.

There are changes taking place all over Hangar 16 which has resembled a bomb-site much of the time since we closed the doors last October. Aeroplane projects have been the mainstay, with the Meteor, Sopwith Baby, Auster J1 and Proctor all making steady progress. A complete, albeit rather battered, Miles Gemini also landed in the Aeroplane Collections work area.

We have seen work done on the south-west door tower of the building – essential work, as the top was near collapse. We hope to continue this maintenance work around the remaining towers during 2026. Conservation work does not come cheap, so every visitor paying through the door is contributing to the upkeep and maintenance of the site.

The Trust has also started a major overhaul and upgrade to Building 27. Internal work to bring the interior up to today’s standards should be complete by the time this is read. Phase 2 will be to get the roof and skylights replaced, which is another big-budget project for the Trust. Once complete we will have a first-class space for meetings and as a classroom as we look at engaging through STEM with local schools and colleges.

An exciting new development this season is that the Museum in Hangar 16 will be open every Saturday, 10am–4pm, from 11th April until 31st October.

So – an exciting and challenging year ahead, but one we are sure will be met head-on by our great team of volunteers.

—Graham Sparkes, Chair, Hooton Park Trust

## Public events 2026

From this season the Aircraft & Vehicles Museum will be open every Saturday, 10am til 4pm, from 11th April until 31st October.

The Hooton Park site will also be open to the public on the following Sundays, 10am to 4pm:

26th April, 31st May, 28th June, 26th July, 30th August, 27th September, 25th October.

Sunday Open Days include:

- Aircraft & Vehicles displays in Hangar 16
- Air-Raid Experience
- Museum of Printing
- Wirral Amateur Radio Society
- Ellesmere Port Model Boat Club displays
- Vintage Bus Rides to and from Hooton Station.

Guided tours of the exhibits, together with a history of the site, are also available on these dates.

On 9th August we hope to hold our very popular annual Bus Running Day from 10am to 4pm, with resident and visiting buses of many kinds on display and taking visitors on free rides.

The annual Wirral Transport Show will (provisionally) be held here on Sunday 4th October, with vehicles of all kinds on display.

Hooton Park will also be open on 12th and 13th September as part of the annual Heritage Open Days.

Visitors are reminded that there is limited parking on the site, and are requested to park at Hooton Station and use the free heritage bus shuttle service (not running on the Saturday openings).

Note: dates may be subject to change.

# Hooton Park building works continue apace

Over the past twelve months the Trust has undertaken a number of projects around the site – some very noticeable like the scaffolding around the hangar door-towers, and some less so.

## Building 16 door towers

It is now almost ten years since the roof was reinstated on the Museum hangar, and at the time the money did not stretch to repairing the brick door-towers at each corner of the building that used to support the large sliding doors.

Over the intervening period both weather and age have caused mortar to deteriorate, some brickwork to drop out, and cracks have appeared in the arches. Last year the tower on the south-west corner (by the entrance to the museum) had one arch rebuilt and several others stitched with stainless steel Helibar. The one on the north-west corner adjacent to the entrance gate was too far gone for such minor intervention, and the top third including all the arches has been rebuilt using the original material, followed by full repointing in lime mortar.

We are fortunate to have a heritage brick specialist, Duggan and Parr, working with us – and hopefully we will be able to tackle the remaining towers later this year.

## Building 27

Following the granting of planning permission and listed building consent a start has been made on remodelling the interior of Building 27 to provide accommodation for Wirral Amateur Radio Society

and a bookable classroom/conference facility. The external walls are being insulated and dry-lined and partitions put in place, but there is more to do before the facility is usable – principally a full new roof. We hope that can be tackled later this year. In the meantime some decoration work and fitting out will be undertaken.

## Toilets

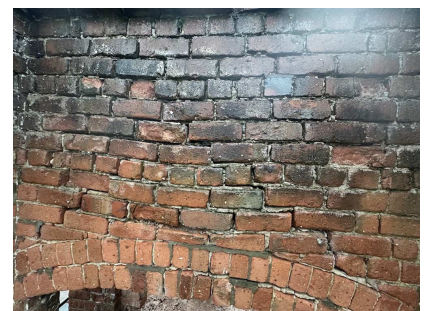
The Trust is very aware that it needs to improve the toilet provision for our visitors, so as a first step two toilets in Hangar 17 have been completely refitted; the accessible WC will follow shortly. The toilet block on the field will also be used for this coming season following a thorough deep-clean and minor repairs.

If any visitors are looking for volunteer opportunities, particularly on the building and maintenance side, please get in touch:  
[info@hootonparktrust.co.uk](mailto:info@hootonparktrust.co.uk)

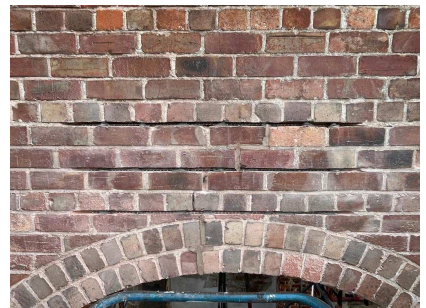
—Neil Hutchinson



*Top view of the northwest tower showing rebuilding before insertion of stainless steel ties and waterproof flaunching.*



*The brickwork and pointing in some areas had reached a perilous condition.*



*Stainless steel bed reinforcement using Helibar prior to repointing.*



*Full-length view of Hangar 16 showing the remedial work at the far end.*

# G3NWR 90th year celebrations

Our 90th year celebrations as a society are now under way, and 2026 will provide us with opportunities to continue our hobby.

There's a lot happening here at G3NWR! Ofcom, the government's department for controlling radio communications, has issued us with the special event call-sign for our 90th year celebrations GB90NWR.

On Wednesday, 8th March, our members gathered for a lovely gala dinner at the 610 Squadron Restaurant (see photo). It was a special occasion as we celebrated the club's founding members from 1936, making it the perfect time to honour them with a formal dinner. The three founder members are Angus Taylor G8PG, Roy Barlow G3QX and Basil O'Brien G2AMV.

Though all now silent keys, they paved the way for today's enthusiasts to dive into the captivating world of radio. Starting with ex-military gear, operators began communicating on Top Band at 1.8 MHz, or 160 meters, connecting across the airwaves. Nowadays, we can tap into a range of frequencies, from very low frequencies all the way up to Super High Frequency (SHF), which spans from 3 GHz to 30 GHz and falls within the centimeter band (1–10 cm) of the microwave spectrum.

—Bill Davies,  
Wirral Amateur Radio Society



## Astra van goes on display

We have at last received the donated Astra van once used by one of our long-term members. Norman has been a major supporter of the Griffin Trust, and now finally retiring from his business we hope to see more of you down at the hangars. The new van complements our existing Bedford, celebrating over 75 years of light van manufacturing at Luton and Ellesmere Port. We hope that in the future an electric platform may bring us right up to date.

—Mike Foulkes, The Griffin Trust



Above: Astra van (centre), with the first car off the production line (left) and below.



## Amy Johnson

### Tea Room

A reminder that the Amy Johnson Tea Room at Hooton Park is open from 10am to 4pm on Sunday Open Days and by appointment for private tour groups.

Contact Sam at:  
samhootonpark@gmail.com  
for more information.

# The Aeroplane Collection (TAC) – recent work



## Miles Gemini G-AKDK

Our latest acquisition, Miles Gemini G-AKDK, arrived at the end of November. G-AKDK is a complete aircraft and will be assembled for display by Easter 2026. The one-piece wing of G-ALAH also arrived which will be restored and fitted to G-AHUI. (probably a two-year restoration project). Rob has started to clean up one of the engines and mount the cylinders, cylinder heads, magnetos etc.





**Vampire**

The canopy hatch has now been fitted to the aircraft.

**Auster G-AIGP**

Great progress has been made and the Auster should be ready for this year's first Open Day. The top rear fuselage has been recovered, doped and primed ready for the repaint. The cream colour scheme has now been found with help from a previous pilot, Cedric Flood, and comparing GP to lots of Auster photos.

**Percival Proctor RM169**

Work has commenced covering the Percival Proctor in Ceconite. The fuselage is partly covered and Steve Poole has been making good progress covering the wings. A novel feature is that the landing lights will be working and can be used on Open Days.

Steve E has been working on various items and has been helping the Vampire team by upskilling them on covering techniques.

*Steve P hard at work on fabric covering.*



**Chippax WG477**

The rear fuselage section has now been mated with the cockpit section by the use of aluminium bands held in place by 135 rivets. The rear section was essential to support the cockpit canopy when in its fully open position and also necessitated the fabrication of the aluminium channel section in which the cockpit slides back and forth as the original was missing.

—Ian Maddock

# Hooton Park's fourth hangar



1928 view courtesy of 'Britain from Above' showing all four hangars including in the centre the single bay one destroyed by fire in 1935

## Grab a bit of Hooton Park history!



Bolts which were recovered from Hangar 16 (Museum) after the roof collapsed were rescued, and our junior volunteers (up to age 16) have made the stands and cleaned the bolts. As a means of raising funds for the Museum, the bolts are offered for sale for a £5 donation, with a certificate of authenticity (specially printed in our own Museum of Printing) to accompany them. —Bob Frost

It is perhaps not well known that when the Hangars were first built in 1917 there were actually four and not just the three we see today.

There was a single bay hangar in the same style as those that remain on the far side of what is now Airfield Way that leads to the Vauxhall car park. The floor slab can still be seen and is sometimes used for bus turning and overflow parking.

Between the wars this hangar was used by the Comper Aircraft Company and then a furniture manufacturer; sadly, in 1935 as the newspaper article (see panel opposite) recounts, it was severely damaged by fire and subsequently demolished.

—Neil Hutchinson

**A full list of contacts for the Trust and for the specialist groups operating within the site can be found on the back page.**

**Volunteers are always welcomed to help with the many and varied tasks at the Hooton Park site. Please email us in the first instance, or make yourself known to members of the Hooton Park community.**

## BLAZE AT AN AERODROME

### Hooton Hangar Destroyed

#### PETROL STATION ENDANGERED

Damage to the extent of several thousands of pounds was caused by a fire which practically destroyed a large hangar at Hooton Aerodrome yesterday afternoon. Aeroplane wings stored there were also burned. The flames reached a height of about 80 feet, and fears were entertained that a petrol supply station nearby would be involved, but the danger was averted. The fire was extinguished about seven o'clock last night, but Port Sunlight firemen stood by for some time after.

#### Two brigades attend

The outbreak, in an unused hangar owned by Hooton Hall Development Company, was first noticed by a maintenance engineer, who saw flames and smoke issuing from the roof of the hangar and immediately called the Port Sunlight Fire Brigade. The Chester Fire Brigade also rushed to the outbreak. The spacious hangars at Hooton are composed of wood frames, asbestos lined with roofs of timber and felt. The roof was quickly in the grip of the flames, and it was not long before it caved in and collapsed. This sent dense volumes of smoke ascending, and the great heat caused the asbestos sides of the building to bulge and break away. The brigades were almost powerless to check the progress of the fire in the hangar. Only parts of the side are left standing. The sliding doors at each end of the hangar gave way when the roof fell in, and there are twisted girders which previously carried the roof. An eye-witness told the Daily Post that he saw the fire when he was two miles away.

#### Other hangars saved

Messrs Plimpton's Ltd, furniture manufacturers, occupy two hangars, one of which is used as a mechanised sawmill. These adjoin the hangar which was on fire, but with great difficulty they were saved from being involved. Some shavings in the sawmill became ignited from the red-hot side of the building but they were quickly put out and the ground staff played on the Plimpton's building with water in order to counter the heat of the burning hangar. Hooton Park, where the aerodrome is situated, was formerly the ancestral home of the Stanleys. Its hall, which was one of the stately homes of England, was demolished after the war. The aerodrome was constructed by the Government during the war and was principally used for training United States airmen before they passed over to France. Before the war Hooton Park was a well known racecourse.

*Liverpool Daily Post, Wednesday 14th August 1935*

## Letter to the editor

Looking back recently, I was surprised to realise that it is approaching ten years since I started volunteering at Hooton. At the end of each of these years I have been gratified, along with the cohort of similar volunteers, to receive the generous thanks for my efforts conveyed by the trustees and others who administer the site, and this has prompted me to consider their own contribution to the day-to-day running of the site and to the demonstrable success that it has now achieved.

On the rare occasions that I made the effort to arrive early, who is it that has already turned up, no matter what the weather, and unlocked the gate so I can enter? – the Duty Officer. If I stayed late, who remains on site to lock up, check security and then lastly make their own way home? – the DO.

On weekends and holidays when many of us are watching the match or enjoying Sunday lunch with our relatives, who is it that turns up for a day on duty at HPT? – the DO.

Whilst the DO is the most visible individual we might see, there are of course a host of others who beaver away behind the scenes to keep the site running: I'm sure we all know who they are.

So, whilst I have not consulted my colleagues on the 'shop floor', I think I can speak for all of them when I say that I would like to propose a vote of thanks to this band of unsung workers, without whom Hooton Park Hangars would not be able to function.

So, thank you.

—Anon.

## 610 Merlin reborn

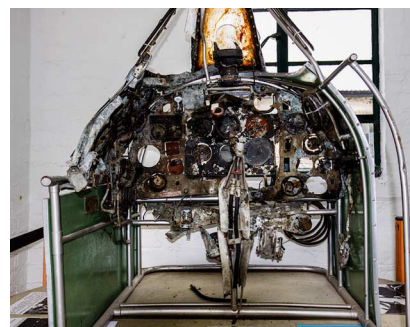
Several years of being stored in a stripped-down state have finally come to an end for the Rolls Royce Merlin engine from Spitfire MkI P9451 (DW-M) which was recovered, along with the front cockpit, by Mike Davey and myself in July 2000. P9451 (County of Chester) Squadron based at RAF Hooton Park was involved in a mid-air collision on 11th December 1940 with Spitfire X4649, when student pilot Sgt H B McGregor sliced the tail of X4649. Sgt McGregor was killed but the more experienced pilot of X4649 managed to bail out and survived. Both aircraft had taken off from RAF Acklington on a routine training flight when the crash happened one mile south-east of Eglingham, Northumberland, near Kimmer Lough, Bannamoor.

It is hoped that both cockpit and engine will be put on display at Hooton Park in the not-too-distant future.

Sgt McGregor's remains were recovered in 1952 at the request of his family; at the time of the crash the site was unreachable due to the wet ground and marsh conditions.

Flowers were recently laid at McGregor's grave by Hooton volunteer Gerry Bateman at Larkhall Cemetery in Glasgow on behalf of Hooton Park Trust and all its volunteers (see photo).

—Graham Sparkes



## Ellesmere Port Model Boat Club news

The Boat Club have organised a work party for the end of the month, with some last bits and pieces to finish off. We are aiming to hold tug-towing competitions throughout the summer, with an open invitation to other model boat clubs' sailing days incorporating the truck club. Also, if possible, we would like to do an evening sail with the boats being lit up; any volunteers who would like to have a go at sailing, please come to the lake.

—Mark Price



## Ninety years ago ... Amy Johnson visits Hooton Park



On Tuesday 2nd June 1936 well-known aviator Amy Johnson landed at Hooton Park by mistake. She had been led astray by an old map she was using which indicated Hooton Park as the old Liverpool airport – as it had been between 1930 and 1933. She had flown up from London in terrible conditions on her way to Liverpool’s Lewis’s department store to deliver a lecture on her recent record flight to and from Cape Town. She was on the ground for just three minutes, and having found that she had landed at the wrong destination and received the direction for Speke from W. F. Davison, she was off. On 9th September 1938 as Amy Mollinson, she again landed at Hooton Park in Topsy B-Seater G-AFCM. —Colin Schroeder

### Hooton Park Hangars



*The aerodrome as built in 1917. The racecourse grandstand, destroyed by fire in 1940, is in the foreground.*

The Hooton Park Hangars site is managed by The Hooton Park Trust (HPT), which was formed in 2000 with the aim of creating a Trust to oversee and manage the restoration of the remaining WWI hangars on the former RAF airfield at Hooton Park, Cheshire. The long-term aim is to provide a multifunctional site, as well as restoring the buildings and the site itself as valuable historic artefacts in their own right. The buildings will then provide the perfect environment for the projects and initiatives that are planned.

Much still remains of the Hooton Park airfield and its buildings. Three original, Belfast-trussed, hangars dominate the landscape, surrounded by the original access roads, taxiways and numerous outbuildings and offices, all steeped in the colourful history of this one-time Royal Air Force airbase.

Some of the runway also exists. All manner of aircraft types have operated from this aerodrome, for example Austers of the Army Air Training Corps, Supermarine Spitfires of 610 Sqn, and, during the postwar years, classic jets such as Gloster Meteors, De Havilland Vampires, Venoms and much more.

Future issues of this newsletter will document the long and rich history of the site – its buildings, its people and its activities – along with photos and other fascinating items from the Trust’s extensive archives.

### Hooton anecdote

The Women’s Auxiliary Air Force was holding an open day in the gymnasium where they were billeted; and all were invited – family, friends and RAF officers could visit and mingle. One RAF officer had fallen asleep, drunk, in the armchair, and as a joke someone shaved off half of his handlebar moustache; when he woke up he went ballistic and drew a pistol from the armoury, and on returning to the gymnasium he emptied the weapon into the dartboard that was hanging on the wall. Unbeknown to this officer the WAAF’s sleeping quarters were on the other side of the wall; fortunately no one was hurt. The officer was later quietly dismissed from the service.

—From Bob Frost’s collection

Ron Hosie, who left this anecdote, was a regular with 611 Squadron and worked in B17 (Workshop) and B16 (Aircraft Parking) until just before the airfield closed.

## Hooton in 1909 as described by a local writer

The dusty road sweeps through Eastham to Chester, but leaving by the road to the southeast, marked ‘Ellesmere Port’, the motors are quickly out of sight and mind; for it is now possible to rest on the field gateways to look over the ever-changing scene, and proceeding in the leisurely fashion of the understanding pedestrian, in a little over a pleasant mile – where many a pause is necessary to listen to the birds, or note the numerous oak-trees which grow in goodly numbers and in shapely size in this neighbourhood – Hooton Hall, the ancient dwelling-place of the Stanleys for close on 500 years, is reached.

William Webb, writing about 1621, says: ‘We come next to Hooton, a goodly ancient manor and fair park, which, ever since the reign of King Richard the Second, hath been the seat of the Stanleys of Hooton, gentlemen of great dignity and worth, deriving their pedigree from Alan Silvester, upon whom Ranulph the first [fourth ?] Earl of Chester bestowed the bailiwick of the forest of Wirral, and delivered unto him a horn, to be a token of his gift; from whence we gather, that Wirral was holden to be a place of no mean account in those times; where have continued the same Stanleys in direct succession, and was lately possessed by a very worthy and noble-minded Knight, Sir Rowland Stanley, who lived there to the age (I have heard) of near one hundred years, and lived to be the oldest Knight in this land; which I note the rather to approve the healthfulness of the place, and where his fourth generation, his son’s son’s son was at the time of his decease.’

The hall commands excellent views over the Mersey, but the Manchester Ship Canal, which passes through the property where it slopes to the Mersey, has

## Sopwith Baby: then ...



The project to restore the Baby has now reached a point where the aircraft is complete bar a few details. Restoration has taken two and a half years and includes frame repairs, 3D-printed engine, new cowling, new floats and structure. plus a new fabric covering and painting.

— Neil Hutchinson

## ...and now



destroyed much of its rurality, and has been one of the means of destroying the ancient heronry which existed in the Booston woods; a few birds only occasionally visit their former breeding-place for nesting.

There is an annual race-meeting held within the park, at which there is always a large gathering of the Cheshire County families, and

many of their sons race and ride their own horses. It is a pleasure to note how boldly and well they ride, and there are few better horsemen to be found in England than the Wirral gentlemen can produce.

— ‘A Perambulation of the Hundred of Wirral’ by H. E. Young, 1909

# Museum of Printing

Although we have not had many visitors to the Museum during the 'closed' winter season, work of various kinds has continued.

The presses need lubricating and maintaining, there are always type and blocks to be sorted, and various printing jobs – large and small – continue to be run off the presses. The smallest jobs have been business cards, and the largest the Admissions poster for the Open Days.

We have recently brought out of storage the 'Model No. 4' tabletop platen press of about 1890 for full restoration (see below).

The original rollers, which were made from a composite of fish-glue and treacle, had been gnawed almost to the shaft by rodents over many years – we are in the process of having new ones made.

—Ken Burnley



The Admissions poster was printed on the 1828 Columbian press (above left) using wood and metal type.

## John Karlberg memorial bench



Money raised within the Hooton Bus Owners Group has funded the acquisition of shelving for the safe storage of oils/coolants.

The same fund has also enabled the purchase of a new bench, which carries a plaque dedicated to John Karlberg. Although this will live in Hangar 16, it is fully intended to be used by the bus group on Open Days for waiting passengers at the departure bus stop area.

—Andy Hamer

**Editor's note:** an accompanying memorial bench has been installed in memory of Simon Pulford and Chris Wright.

## HOOTON PARK HANGARS

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### SITE ADMISSION CHARGES

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Aircraft &amp; Vehicles</li> <li>★ Air-raid Experience</li> <li>★ Museum of Printing</li> <li>★ Wirral Amateur Radio Society</li> <li>★ Ellesmere Port Model Boat Club</li> <li>★ Vintage Bus Rides</li> </ul>	<p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>Adults £9</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>Concessions £7</b> <small>(U-16s, OAPs, students)</small></p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em; margin: 0;"><b>Family £22</b> <small>(2 plus 3)</small></p>
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Printed in-house in the Museum of Printing, Hooton Park

# Chester tram No.4 progress report

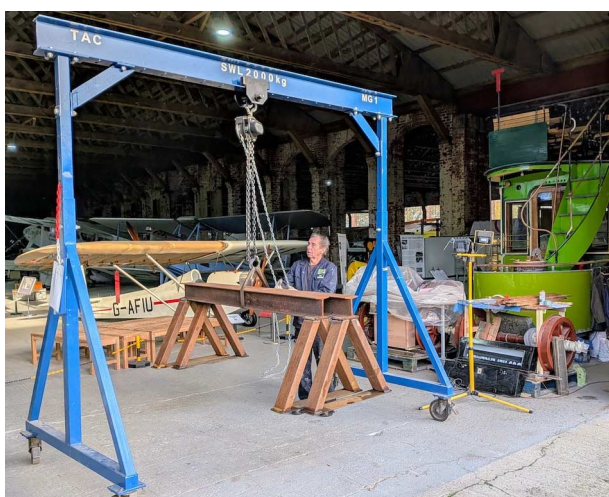
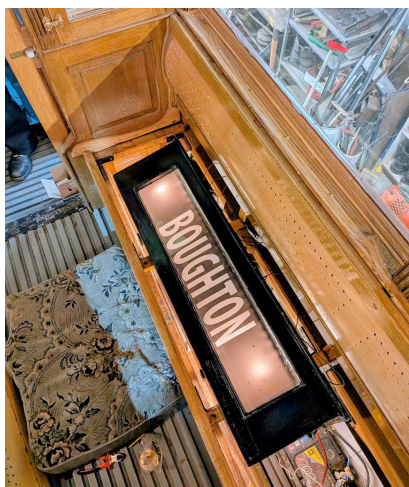
One destination box has been completed and is even lit from within, see picture opposite. This has taken months of experimental work by Geoff and Frank.

Special heavy duty A-frames have been made to support the tram at a more realistic height which will enable access under the tram to fit sanding mechanisms and then lifeguard mechanisms.

The wheels and underframe (called in tram parlance a 'truck') will be able to be wheeled under and fitted to the body when we acquire one.

Here's a picture (below) of the A-frames arriving and the specially trained team who did the lifting of the tram and pushed the A-frames under the car.

—Rob Jones



**New for 2026: The Aeroplane and Vehicles Museum will be open every Saturday from 10am til 4pm, 11th April until 31st October.**



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