GGWAS Chair report of the Society’s activities during 2015.

One Year on – From Egg to young Gosling.

Just over a year ago a small group of Archers in the wider Christchurch area started a new club looking to offer something different. So, a new society with its first venue single target at the end of a 70-meter driveway came into being.

Now just over 1 year on, the egg has hatched, and the Grey Goose Wing Archery Society is becoming more active. We started with nothing, no targets, no venue, no money but an idea to offer something not in competition to the other clubs in the area.

First the name of the club, it’s Historic and goes back to the original flight feathers on the British longbows of old. It’s also named after one of the most valued books on Archery “The Grey Goose Wing” by E.G. Heath, with rare first editions selling at some silly prices. Why a Society, while a certain of positions are needed for day to day decision making, all members have an equal say in the activities of the members. No ego’s or dictators allowed, just a group of people with an interest in shooting the bow in all its forms.

For several reasons, we have always met on a Sunday, the traditional day of Archery in the UK. For it is still Sovereign law, that all able body men over the age of 14 shall practice Archery at distance of 180 yards on common ground every Sunday, the targets to be put out by the local parish clergy after morning prayers. While our shooting ground is now the Christchurch Catholic and Marion College school field, we have not yet got the church that meets in the school hall to help us set up the field on a morning. However, they do have a group that plays modern Christian songs to help with the warmups.

Once a shooting venue was established with the help of some 2nd hard targets and a bit of refurbishment, we had 5 basic targets and stands and even Geraldine gave us some ground stands that we use for some fun shoots.

Next came talking to Archery New Zealand and finding out what we need to do to be a registered club with ANZ. So, lots of E-mails with Patsy and chats with those that know about setting up business to work around all the legal stuff to become formal was done. Putting the Societies Constitution together and working with the College to formulate a Health and Safety plan, bank accounts and that sort of thing. We started looking at uniforms and logo’s. For a while those that shot competitions dressed themselves in all whites and depending on the level of competition called themselves either Independent, or Grey Gooses Wing Archery Society members.

With the great help of the Uniform shop we tried out different combinations of colours and designs to finally end up with the distinctive Gold and Maroon with either all black or all white bottoms, this uniforms first outing was the National Indoors 2015 and we received a great deal of “we like that” comments on the style and colour. Having Polo shirts, fleeces and a jacket all in the same colours and style and all registered with ANZ means that whatever the weather you can wear the clothing that suits you and not shiver in just a polo shirt if the weather takes a turn and inclement weather is not called.

Membership growth has been slow, but this is down to the lack of gear and the fact that at the start of the year both the club coaches had to undergo major operations and so beginners courses did not start. As everyone is now getting back to some form of fitness, even if Colin must undergo yet another shoulder /chest operation, a few 1-2-1 members and a full beginners course will be over by the time this gets to print. The club is looking strong with 8 full members plus those joining after the completion of the beginners course. In fact, we have had to stop some of these from rushing out to buy gear before the end of the courses, but maybe Christmas gift time has something to do with that.

Together with support of MC Archery, that run Archery in Schools programs as well as loaning us beginners equipment etc., several Spring ‘Have-a-Go’ sessions have been held and these have gone down very well.

In the Society we have a 70-year-old that is currently making a set of Ash longbows, having returned to Archery having not shot for about 15 years when he was in the UK. Another in his mid sixties that has taken up the sport to get healthy after a heart attack late last year, as well as a group of smiling youngsters and parents some with bows in hand. The 2nd beginners course is already full, and several existing Archers are showing an interest in joining us after the summer break, so our future is looking good.

Over the past year the outside face of the club has mostly been the family Tucker, but rest assured the next year will see more GGWAS shirts on the line in the Canterbury area especially at social events if they are put on. A coaching course for members and anybody else in the area (being held over a couple of Sundays) is being held in Jan/Feb to help with the growing number of people showing an interest so Colin and Maria can also do some shooting.

Our aim is to introduce families to the sport, first at a social level, progressing at a pace that they are happy to move at and into the competitive side of the sport should they show an interest. Over the year we had 6 members shoot in the ECBOPAA Winter series and gained 3 gold medals. We have visited Ellesmere and AimTru clubs for some RMT’s and Major 720’s as well as our friends at Christchurch and Dunedin for WA 1440’s and other events. We have formed a close link with the Geraldine club and had added a social “Pope Young” round to be shot annually between the clubs, other fun Social Archery activities are also being investigated.

Currently we are in the process of making some new targets and purchasing a few full-size targets once we can arrange a bit more storage space. That way we can start to enter the ANZ and SIDAA summer postal’s as well as hosting some form of social fun shoot on a Sunday afternoon. Also looking at hosting a Social club Dart-Archery competition to get the clubs together at a Social level, so watch this space.

It’s been a hard year, but very rewarding so far and hopefully that Goose egg will soon spread its wings.

Colin Tucker - The Grey Goose Wing Archery Society.