The Soaring Scene

Here we go with another Soaring Scene reporting on all the action in the top of the South - well, all the action I know about anyway. Most of the focus has been on either electric gliders or aero-towing over the last few weeks, NDC events being a bit light, probably due to the build up to the Nationals over Easter. The weather has been high summer here, everything is dry and brown and we have had some beautiful calm days, mostly during the week, to the chagrin of those with jobs to go to.

The big news on the club scene is that the Ara vineyard has been sold, so at this stage we wait to see what effect that will have on our continued use of the flying field, which the Blenheim Model Aero Club has occupied for a good many years. The new owners are locally based wine producers Indevin and the vineyard now goes under the Bankhouse Estate label. They are mighty busy at the moment as the harvest has just started but once the dust has settled I have no doubt that the new committee will be having discussions about the club's continuing use of the flying field with Indevin's representatives.

Aero-towing

Peter Deacon has done some great work in securing the use of Quaildale on the third Saturday of each month until June. Since the January aero-tow we have held a couple of "Soaring Saturdays" there and, while we haven't had big attendance, we have had a lot of fun. February saw half a dozen stalwarts turn up to enjoy a beautiful calm day, perfect for flying, while just down the road at Bankhouse (Ara) the wind was strong enough to deter most from flying.
One notable attendee was Phil Jordan from Nelson who turned up with several small gliders, one of which was FPV equipped. After a quick tow to make sure everything was working okay he donned the head gear and was duly towed up under FPV control. The result was a release at an altitude where most of us were struggling to actually see the model, not that Phil was bothered as he could see the ground, although he did get a bit lost for a while on a later flight. The model actually wasn't far away and some frantic scanning of the sky soon located it, but it does show the value of having an observer for FPV flying. We are wondering if this is the first time this has been done in NZ, anyone know? There's video of Phil's flight here: Soaring Saturday FPV - YouTube

Phil Jordan checking his gear before an FPV tow.

A month later we did it again with a couple more pilots in attendance including Phil Jordan and Sam Laidlaw from Nelson. Again the weather was perfect and we had some very good flying. Peter Deacon and Carl McMillan did sterling work with their tow planes while the rest of us enjoyed the smooth air. I had a few flights with a recently acquired Top Models Discus 2c, at 4.5 metres by far the biggest model I've flown. Forgetting to lower the undercarriage on the last flight resulted in a stripped rudder servo, which curtailed activity with that model, but my confidence is now a lot higher than it was previously - just gotta remember the bloody gear in future!

Everyone else flew a lot and it was good to see Peter Graham have a goodly number of trouble-free flights as things have not always gone well for him in past events. He had a quick lesson about trim at one stage when the towline parted company with the towplane and Pete was left flying with the line hanging off the front of the glider. To everyone's surprise it flew **much** better and simply did not want to come down. Something to do with the C of G perhaps Mr Graham.

Peter Graham's Seagull Ka8-B heads skywards on yet another flight

The second round in the South Island aero-tow circuit was held at "The Willows" just out of Christchurch on the 12th and 13th of March. As these things go the field was quite small with about eight pilots fronting up each day. Saturday was overcast and calm until we were almost ready to fly, then the wind started - not sure what the official figure was but I'd say around 25 to 30 kmh, which caused a degree of carnage amongst the scale gliders but was okay for those of us flying competition type models. Not the best of days unfortunately.

I had picked up my new (to me) glider from it's previous owner and spent a few hours on Friday working out how to put it together and which servo went where on my receiver. Incidentally it's an interesting exercise rigging a 4.5 metre model in a motel room, or perhaps I should say two motel rooms. Eventually everything seemed to work okay and with control throws at factory settings I was looking forward nervously to flying the beast. As it turned out I had to stay nervous a bit longer as it was a bit windy for test flying on Saturday. Sunday though was a different story - the wind was absent! Scott Chisholm did the test flight honours, taking the tow behind Andrew Palmer's Pawnee and handing over to me to fly a bit before taking control again to demonstrate a

landing. Scott talked me through the next flight and having done his bit admirably, left me to do my own thing. The Discus is a pussy cat to fly but I had a bit of a perspective problem with a model which is so much bigger

than I’m used to when it came to landing - short and off the far side of the runway when I thought it was in the middle.

In about a millisecond Alex Hewson will settle the ex-Neal Blackie 5 metre ASW on the deck for a precision landing.

This was a meeting with a small field who had to contend with mixed weather conditions but nonetheless exhibited all the camaraderie that seems to be the norm amongst soaring pilots. There was some seriously good flying done as well with Alex, Scott and Andrew to the fore. I never expected to see the Palmer Blanik demonstrate a rolling circle but somehow Andrew fitted that in amongst a bewildering array of extreme aerobatics. Paul Chisholm also did a lot of flying, in fact everyone did, and I was impressed by Jeremy McLean’s electric tow plane, a big Cub which he flew with considerable abandonment when he wasn’t towing. A good weekend despite the wind on Saturday. You can find more photos, especially of the tugs, on this link: Flickr

Peter Deacon brings the Morrisey Bravo smoothly back to earth after a tow at Quaildale

Electric Gliders

As usual there is a lot of activity in this area with electric gliders. Almost everyone in the BMAC has some form of electric glider and the standard 2 metre foamies get flown a lot, although it is difficult to cajole most into having a go at an ALES event. One relative novice who leapt in boots and all with his Phoenix was Paul Barrett. Sadly the RNZAF have transferred him to Auckland so we farewell Paul and wish him the best with his newfound hobby in more northern climes.

Our hard core NDC people have flown ALES 200 and ALES Radian during the last month with the following results:

Event #175 ALES 200

Allan Baker MFNZ #4943

Flight 1 - 8 min 27 Points - 507 Landing - 40 Total - 547
Flight 2 - 0 min 00 Points - 000 Landing - 00 Total - 000 (Had to restart motor)
Flight 3 - 8 min 17 Points - 497 Landing - 40 Total - 537
Final Score - 1084

Rex Ashwell MFNZ #10746

Flight 1 - 5 min 42 Points - 342 Landing - 45 Total - 387
Flight 2 - 6 min 01 Points - 361 Landing - 25 Total - 386
Flight 3 - 7 min 15 Points - 435 Landing - 40 Total - 475
Final Score - 1248

Phil Elvy MFNZ #11020

Flight 1 - 4 min 40 Points - 280 Landing - 00 Total - 280
Flight 2 - 4 min 51 Points - 291 Landing - 30 Total - 321
Flight 3 - 7 min 52 Points - 472 Landing - 50 Total - 522
Final Score - 1123

Peter Deacon MFNZ #10441

Flight 1 - 7 min 16 Points - 436 Landing - 40 Total - 476
Flight 2 - 3 min 33 Points - 213 Landing - 45 Total - 258
Flight 3 - 4 min 25 Points - 265 Landing - 45 Total - 310
Final Score - 1044

Ken McMillan MFNZ #10988

Flight 1 - 7 min 20 Points - 440 Landing - 20 Total - 460
Flight 2 - 9 min 59 Points - 599 Landing - 40 Total - 639
Flight 3 - 5 min 21 Points - 346 Landing - 25 Total - 371
Final Score - 1470

Ken McMillan took high score for ALES 200 although Allan Baker handled the difficult conditions better than anyone else and really should have come out on top but for a spot of bother near the end of his second flight. An inadvertent tip stall at low level almost resulted in disaster and Allan had to bang the throttle open to prevent his model from crashing heavily - of course that meant zero points. Bummer!

Event #176 ALES Radian

Rex Ashwell MFNZ #10746

Flight 1 - 6 min 42 Points - 402 Landing - 50 Total - 452
Flight 2 - 7 min 01 Points - 419 Landing - 25 Total - 444
Flight 3 - 7 min 02 Points - 418 Landing - 00 Total - 418
Final Score - 1314

Phil Elvy MFNZ #11020

Flight 1 - 3 min 26 Points - 206 Landing - 50 Total - 256
Flight 2 - 3 min 09 Points - 189 Landing - 50 Total - 239
Flight 3 - 3 min 02 Points - 182 Landing - 00 Total - 182
Final Score - 677

Radian was held on a fairly crappy day with only Phil and I flying. There were no easy points available with the conditions that we had, but my Radian had a significant advantage over Phil's Phoenix which just wouldn't stay up. We really need to see some more participation fellas, only two is not good enough when there must be a dozen suitable models in the club.

There are some very attractive small electric gliders on the market these days and Sam Laidlaw showed up at Quaildale with a good example. Clearly a favourite model (he just kept flying it) this is an ideal model for anyone wanting to dip a toe into the scale glider scene and seems to be a pretty competent model. It's a 2.6 metre ASW 28 with a foam wing and moulded plastic fuselage, made by Lanyu-Volantex (they also make the Phoenix) and bought from Hobby King, currently listed at $109.40 and on backorder but available from other sources as well, for instance: Volantex ASW28 2.6m Plastic Unibody Scale Glider Brushless PNP(759-1) [VLX7591P] - USD $111.72 : Austars-Model.com It looks good, climbs well, soars well, doesn't cost the earth and makes the kind of sound when gliding fast that we normally only hear from larger moulded models. I liked it.

Sam launching his ASW 28 at Quaildale - great little model

Discus Launch

The local DLG enthusiasts are frequently to be seen thermal seeking and although our numbers are static our models are not. One of the great things about these models is the satisfaction gained from flying them. No two flights are the same and every one is a challenge. We flew an NDC event at Easter on a cool, overcast day when the air was heavy and patches of lift were few and far between. With only two of us available It was a bit of a testing competition with generally poor scores, but better than last time so I suppose I can take some comfort from that.

Event #174 F3K

Peter Deacon MFNZ #10441

Task B - 1 min 50, 2 min 03 Total - 233
Task D - 30, 45, 1.00, 1.15, 1.30, 1.45, 2.00 Total - 525
Task G - 1.56, 2.00, 2.00, 2.00, 1.32 Total - 568
Task H - 1.00, 1.35, 3.00, 3.55 Total - 570
Final Score - 1896

Rex Ashwell MFNZ #10746

Task B - 2 min 00, 1 min 58 Total - 238
Task D - 30, 45, 1.00, 1.15, 1.30 Total - 300
Task G - 1.17, 1.36, 2.00, 2.00, 1.48 Total - 521
Task H - 1.00, 2.00, 3.00, 3.17 Total - 557
Final Score - 1616

The Asian Pacific Open

Here is a report on this recent DLG Championship event from Peter Williams - Kiwis to the fore again in DLG.

Joe Wurts and Kevin Botherway (Rowdy) mentioned that the APO F3K (Asia Pacific Open) discus launched glider competition was on in Melbourne out at Longwood in March 2016 and told the gliding fraternity that they should attend.
Joe had gone to China for the same contest in 2014 and said he had a great time and with both these guys pushing it along we soon had 8 pilots and 3 partners making the kiwi contingent a group of 11.
Tickets were booked models packed and we met up as a group after flying in from Wellington and Auckland on different flights at Melbourne on the Wednesday morning before the contest that was due to start on Friday.
Joe, Len Drabble and Rowdy had arranged a car and a van to transport the team and their boxes and bags and so with a little bit of help from Jon Day (one of the Aussie Organization team) we were off like a pork chop in the sun to Longwood about an hour north of Melbourne.
Of course were were all keen to get to the flying field and get some flying in and see what the days ahead had in store.
The kiwi team were using almost exclusively the Snipe from Vladimirs Models and of course this was designed by Joe Wurts and has featured heavily in the last two world champs campaigns and in most local contests.
Other models we saw were the Vibe from ArmSoar composites, the Stream NXT, and some others that I didn't have time to look at.
We spent Wednesday afternoon flying and getting used to the Aussie 36 degree heat and catching up with other fliers many who are old friends.
Thursday saw the arrival of most of the other teams and we continued practicing and fine tuning the model setups. This was a chance for the more experienced fliers to help the newer guys fine tune their settings and pass on some hints before the contests started.
The Friday was to be the RCGA Open a separate one day contest used as a shakedown and a separate contest in it's own right.
The day started out calm and the wind slowly built to around half the FAI limit which provided some score separation, and then dropped off later in the day. We flew seven rounds. The conditions were hot, a little dusty and this meant large strong thermals and later in the day big lift sink cycles.
The flying was tough with previous and current world champions all flying there were almost no easy rounds and there was some blood shed on the score sheets.
First was Alex Hewson then Joe Wurts, Peter Williams (Peewee)Kevin Botherway (Rowdy) with Steve Warner in 14th Neal Moss in 17th Rod Hale (Nanna) in 23rd and Len Drabble (Dribble)in 25th.
It was a great first day for the Kiwis and the possibility for better results in the coming main contest to be held on Saturday and Sunday.
The main contest started on Saturday there was light wind at the start of the first round and an overnight storm had dampened the field and blown out most of the shade tents.
Looking at the scores it was hard for most to achive the required flight times.The thermals started kicking in after this and we finished the day half way through round 7.

The Kiwis were looking OK after the first day with Joe then Rod Hale Peter Williams and Alex Hewson rounding out the top four with Kevvie in7th Neal Moss in 12th and Steve and Len in 22nd and 23rd, however the scores were tight at the top of the board so it now became a game of no mistakes.
Sunday was very calm and warm and we started on completing round 7. We were pretty keen to try and get Neal into the top ten and not let anyone slip down the pecking order for the last 3 rounds.
The thermals and wind picked up more slowly on Sunday and Rods last three rounds were very tough and pushed him just out of the top ten

We finished the 10 rounds with Joe in 1st followed by Kevvie in 2nd and Peewee 6th Alex in 8th Neal in 9th, Nanna in 13th Dribble in 22nd and Steve who had also suffered in the last three rounds in 27th.
Now it was onto the fly-offs with the top ten pilots discarding their scores and starting with six rounds with the tasks drawn from a hat.
The fly-off conditions were fairly variable, it started windy with big lift and sink cycles and slowly the wind backed off towards the end of the six rounds. Most pilots started with ballast and removed it as the rounds progressed. With the APO title on the line fliers made some big calls and some landed out with a resulting zero score. This really mixed up the scores and played into the hands of the more cautious pilots who made conservative calls and concentrated on getting scores on the board. My impression was that there was bloodshed all over the score sheet and it was going to be a washing machine type outcome.
In the end Alex was 1st with Kevvie 2nd and Peewee 3rd Neal 4th Joe 6th
Joe was very unlucky to finish in 6th his sublime skills for once letting him down after dominating both contests and never looking in doubt for a podium finish.
With the contest results in it was almost a given that the Kiwis would secure the team title and so it was.
Team results.1. New Zealand 2.Australia, 3.Singapore, 4.China, 5.Taiwan, 6. Thailand 7.Hongkong.

The APO was a great contest, the organization was superb with sunshades, chairs, water, BEER and lunch all provided and social events every night arranged by Shona Guest, Jon Day and their team. They had arranged accommodation for the teams and buses for transport, airport pickups and had the entire community behind them, the Local Mayor attended for both days of the APO and presented the trophies. Len wanted to take her home but was not allowed.
Tim Lennon was a great Contest Director and with Jerry Carter assisting things ran smoothly.
The Aussies kept up with Kiwi bashing even with the overwhelming result to team Kiwi.
Roll on the APO for 2018.

Slope Soaring

A small group has continued to fly at Meadowbank on Wednesday evenings although that has now ceased as a regular activity with the end of Daylight Saving on April 3rd. Flying on the slope has been relaxing recently with generally fairly light winds limiting us to lighter weight models. It's still fun and if you are there for an hour at least 50 minutes will be spent in the air. The other nice thing at this time of year is that the temperature has been quite acceptable, on occasions it's been tee shirt weather.

There are more exciting forms of slope soaring of course and there was mention of one type, dynamic soaring, in the last newsletter with news of a new DS speed record at 513 mph. If you have wondered since how on Earth a model glider can achieve this kind of speed check out this site for an explanation: What's DS Page You soon get the idea that DS pilots require a good degree of skill to perform this discipline. I have always envisaged that only one model would be able to fly at a time but that's not nearly exciting enough for some people:
furball.mov - YouTube

Occasionally when trolling the net one comes across something totally new. This trick has probably been done before but to catch it on film……..The ultimate slope soaring glider trick with A SAS Wildthing - YouTube

NDC

Here is our progress chart to date in the local NDC Competition. As previously explained, scores are calculated using each competitor's score as a percentage of the maximum possible for each event. It's fairly obvious that the more events you fly in the higher your score is likely to be, so get out there and compete.

	F3K	RADIAN	ALES 123	HLG	CLG	TEXACO	X5J	ALES 200	RADIAN	F3K	TOTAL
R Ashwell	59.68	79.14	64.18				85.00	64.00	93.19	73.28	518.47
A Baker				37.50	46.66	65.53	87.52	55.58			292.79
P Elvy			48.93				91.05	57.58	48.01		245.57
P Deacon	72.48		70.14				89.15	53.53		85.98	371.28
K McMillan	60.27						84.17	75.38			219.82
P Barrett			55.88				80.97				136.85
P Graham		76.09									76.09

This month we have just ALES Radian and Thermal J in the soaring category. ALES Radian is very familiar so lets see a good turnout for that. Thermal J is a return to winch launching, something that we haven't done for some time. We'll schedule this event for Soaring Saturday (April 16) at Quaildale. I'll be in touch with interested parties.

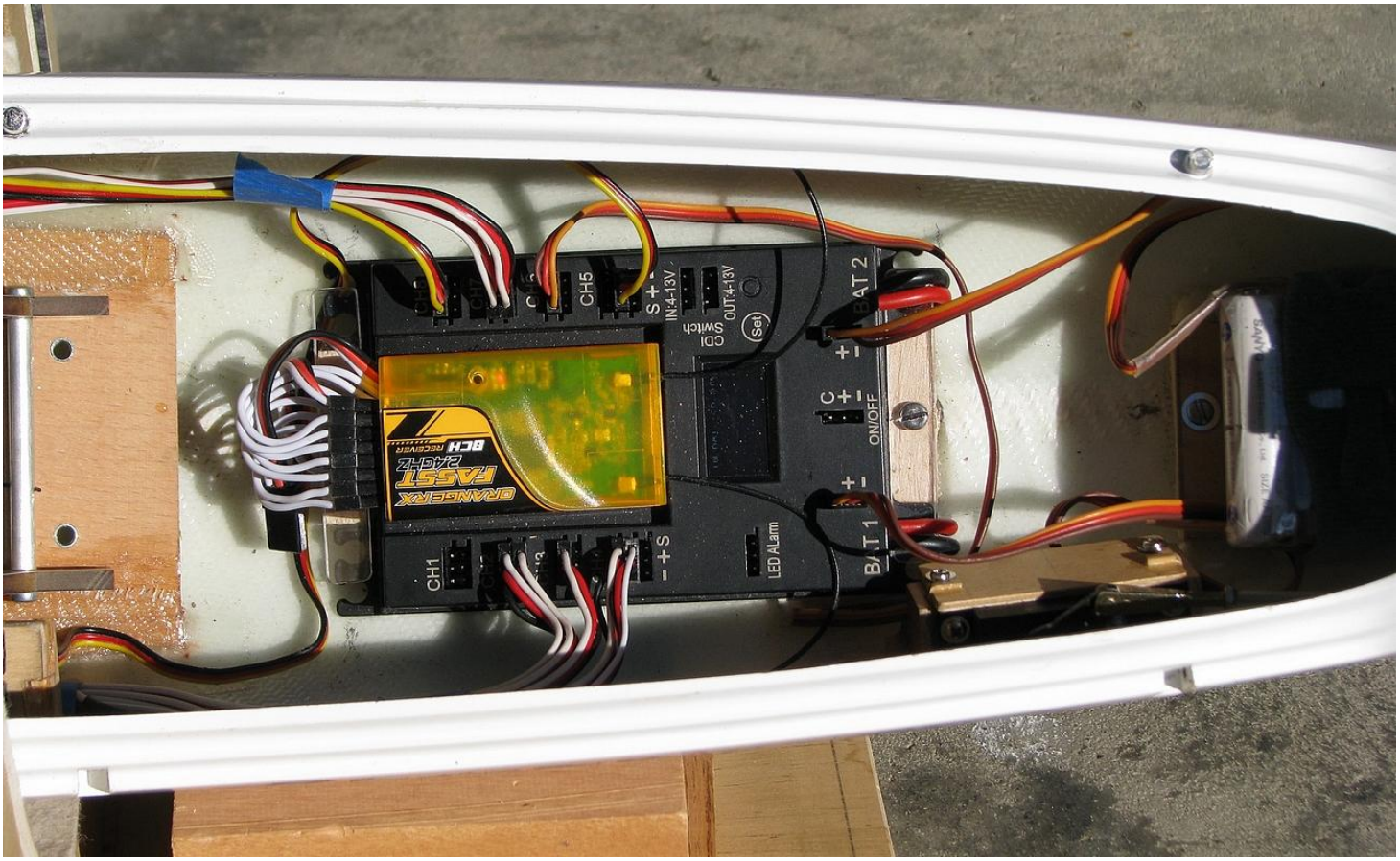
Other Stuff

Most of you will have had the experience of trying to cram a servo lead into every available socket in a 7 or 8 channel receiver. The result is not always pretty and when I collected the aforementioned TM Discus I was a bit taken aback to find a rat's nest of wiring which wouldn't have looked out of place on one of those Hobby King foamies with retracts, flaps, lights and goodness knows what else. High on the list of jobs to do was to sort out the wiring - everything was there and it all worked fine, it just didn't look that great. The model had two battery packs but as they both fed into a Y lead there wasn't really any redundancy as, if one battery failed the other would just expend it's energy into the failure.

I looked at Paul Chisholm's Ventus at the Willows, which is a great example of how wiring should be done, and he uses a Power Box Gemini to accept power from two batteries of any common type and regulate the output to the receiver, which looked like a good idea to me. While researching I came across the concept of an "expander" RCCSKJ POWER BOX X4105 [X4105-GL] - USD $89.00 : Austars-Model.com and eventually decided that seemed like an even better idea. Hobby King list these things but apparently they have been on back order forever and I didn't want to wait quite that long so I went to Austar who delivered a unit about a week later.

The idea is that the Power Box plugs into the receiver, which mounts on top (mine's velcroed in place), then all your servos plug into the appropriate channels around the perimeter, up to two servos per channel which is quite handy with dual aileron wings. The receiver is supplied with a steady 5 volts and on this version the output to the servos is adjustable anywhere between 4.8 and 9.7 volts, so high voltage servos can be used if that's your preference. There is an on/off switch, a low voltage alarm, an LCD information and setup screen, and for those who want an installation in their tug, a CDI ignition output with an opto switch. Best of all, it all works as advertised, and although it has a fair sized footprint, there is plenty of room in the Discus. As the photo shows it

makes for a simple and very tidy installation - in fact I'd say it now looks more like a cockpit and less like an armpit.



The RCCSKJ Power Box fitted with wiring almost complete

The installation above uses NiMh batteries but it is quite happy with any type of battery including the ubiquitous Lipo. There is a huge amount of information around about the pros and cons of Lipos, a lot of it is crap of course but there is no doubt that there is a risk factor with Lipos especially if you abuse them. I subscribe to a newsletter out of the USA produced by Ken Myers who has been involved with electric flight pretty much since it started. Ken is a retired school teacher who takes a scientific approach to his writings and recently he decided to gather together as much credible information on Lipos as he could find. If there is something you want to know look here: Learning About LiPo Batteries and if you think you know it all look here: Learning About LiPo Batteries

I've started to think about making a pilot the correct scale (1/4) for the newly acquired Discus as the existing one is clearly too small. There are plenty on the market, some probably cost as much as the model so diy looks likely. Scanning the internet I found this: Selecting The Right Pilot For Scale Sailplanes – slide show feature! | RCAeroTowing.com Check out the slide show at the end of the article.

While thinking about pilots, did you ever feel that some of our models are getting rather big: a3887717-60-Jordy_wants_to_takeoff.jpg 1,024×768 pixels

Having got that out of my system let's wind up with this beautiful clip of famed paraglider pilot Jean-Baptiste Chandelier doing his thing: Urban paragliding. [VIDEO]

That's it from me folks - I hope you found something to interest you. Keep on soaring.

Rex