

The Soaring Scene

More than one month gone in 2016 already and the obvious highlight in January was our invitation aerotow. More on this below but suffice it to say that once again this was a successful event. Flying at Ara has been a bit sporadic with the month coughing up some very un-Marlborough like summer weather. At the beginning of the month we were in drought conditions with threats to vineyard water supplies creating a lot of local anxiety. Subsequent cool and sometimes very damp weather has removed that problem (at least for a while) but done little for those of us that fly toy aeroplanes.

The Aerotow

When we first started aerotowing these events were held about six monthly but they have morphed into an annual event. The first three were held at Ara but the need for wide open spaces and a much higher legal ceiling soon became apparent and resulted in a move to Quaildale, a farm in the Waihopai Valley where we can apply for a Notam, which was at 2000 feet this year. Peter Deacon, who has organised all of these events, once again did a great job and 21 pilots turned up from as far afield as Tauranga in the North and Invercargill in the South, our best field so far.

As has become customary, the early arrivals headed to Meadowbank for a slope soaring session on Friday afternoon. The breeze was from the favoured direction but lacked any real velocity so most people used smaller models or Radians in the light conditions. It was difficult to fly far from the slope and gaining altitude was a time consuming business. This resulted in quite a crowded piece of sky with up to a dozen models dodging one another while Dave Griffin's edf boosted 4 metre Fox barrelled around in the background. For those, like me, who were used to flying with two or three others, this made for an exciting couple of hours but eventually the wind dropped to the point where only two of us were flying and, as the big Fox had managed to alight in a tree, fortunately with relatively limited damage, it seemed the right time to stop. The enterprising crew from Christchurch had made a block booking at the Argosy Cafe and a number of us enjoyed an excellent meal and a lot of banter, both between ourselves and with our waitress, who was well capable of giving as good as she got. An entertaining evening.



The smiles say it all but Wellingtonians are clearly used to more wind

Saturday dawned cool and with low misty cloud around the hills, and by the time the pilots briefing took place it was drizzling lightly, so less than ideal for mid Summer. No-one came to sit and stare though and it wasn't too long before the first exploratory tows were under way. With the ceiling at around 200 metres it was "we'll go up until they start to disappear then you get off because I'm coming down". It certainly made for some interesting tows! As the day progressed the ceiling gradually lifted and once a breeze settled in early in the afternoon the tows started to stretch out, with most releasing around the thousand foot mark. There was not exactly an abundance of lift though and 10 to 15 minute flights were probably the norm for most people.



As you can see, it wasn't looking too bright early on

One thing the slow start afforded was the chance to get around and check out some of the aircraft on display as well as catch up with old friends and find some new ones. That's an essential at an event like this because once we get into action everyone seems to get busy either on the flight line, adjusting, repairing, or picking up pieces. The last couple are not so much fun but almost inevitably there were incidents, with one model damaged on tow and another spiralling into the ground, while it's pilot gazed serenely skywards at the aircraft that he thought he was flying - oh damn! There were a few other less spectacular brushes with the planet (I'll own up to one) as the cross wind made landings a little tricky, but nothing to write home about.



Dave Falconer's Blantik being readied for it's maiden flight.

Generally it turned out to be quite a good day given the ominous weather that we started with. A good solid day's flying followed by an excellent evening meal at the Dodson Street Beer Garden and Restaurant where, needless to say, a good time was had by all.

Sunday morning didn't look too promising but the low cloud had lifted by the time flying commenced and with little wind to speak of the conditions were ideal, although there wasn't a great deal of easy lift. Everyone quickly got into the swing of things and there was a lot of flying done. Another towing disaster and a model shedding a wing as it released the towline marred proceedings somewhat, but to offset these incidents there were some wonderful flights, spectacular high speed passes and wild aerobatic displays. I think Allan Knox may have had the high tow - 1800 feet!

Ricky Bruce provided one of the highlights with a flight of his half scale ASW 28, trailered all the way from Invercargill. We were all waiting in anticipation for this one but the conditions needed to be just right as it was felt that the best available tug was a bit marginal on power. Peter Hewson collected all the video cameras on Sunday and downloaded everything onto his computer to be edited into some sensible footage and you can see some of this on the website. Peter is a good editor and there is some nice footage in the videos - it probably helped that he had a choice of bits from several cameras, two quadcopters and at least one camera on a glider.



It's no small task moving a model this size around

There were a number of maiden flights during the weekend, including Dave Falconer's Blanik, Paul Chisholm's Ka6 and Gordon McArthur's Swift S1 (there may have been others) all of which went off without a hitch. The standard of piloting was consistently high and the condition of the models was a credit to their owners. Overall we would have to be happy with the event I think. The weather wasn't too flash on Saturday morning but okay for the rest of the weekend, not what we expected but okay. No sooner had we packed up than the sky cleared - Monday was clear skies and 30° and I'm pleased it wasn't like that the preceding day because we would all have fried and spent the day hunting for shade. As always the event was made by the people who attended, as good a bunch as you could hope to spend time with, and I think they would be universal in thanking Peter Deacon for a very well run event enjoyed by all. My personal thanks go to those skilful tow pilots who front up with their big, grunty models and whisk us into the sky with the greatest of ease - I had Rolls Royce rides behind all of you.

Discus Launch

A round of NDC was flown in January. The weather was not friendly being cool, windy and overcast, so it was a battle trying to make times as the results below show. Thanks to Richard Craddock who assisted with time keeping. He might not be about to start chucking a DLG but he does now have a better understanding of what we are trying to do. Peter Deacon led the way (again) but finished on an unfortunate note, badly damaging his Snipe with his last launch of the competition. The repair will be quite tricky because the impact sheared off the outer section of the left hand wing which, of course, includes the throwing peg, so that is a very highly stressed part of the model. Peter has some experience with composites though and I'm sure he will come up with a decent fix.

Event #168 F3K

TASK B (Last 2 Flights, maximum 4 minutes)

P Deacon 168 141 Total: 309
K McMillan 101 64 Total: 165
R Ashwell 180 131 Total: 311

TASK D (Ladder, flights increase in 15 second steps)

P Deacon 30 45 60 75 90 105 120 Total: 525
K McMillan 30 45 60 75 90 Total: 300
R Ashwell 30 45 60 75 90 Total: 300

TASK G (5 Longest Flights, maximum 2 minutes)

P Deacon 80 120 92 118 85 Total: 595
K McMillan 88 91 71 120 73 Total: 443
R Ashwell 79 77 69 101 88 Total: 414

TASK H (1,2,3 & 4 Minute Flights in any order)

P Deacon 63 123 76 ___ Total: 262
K McMillan 99 60 106 150 Total: 415
R Ashwell 60 73 73 79 Total: 285

Grand Totals:

P Deacon **1691**
K McMillan **1323**
R Ashwell **1310**



Same old faces, Peter, Rex and Ken.

Electric Gliders

Electric gliders continue to be popular with club members and it seems to be common for the odd Radian or Phoenix to be in the air before the power models come out. They are great for casual flying and, as some are discovering, you can add considerable spice to your flying by giving one of the NDC competitions a try. January is a busy month for many though, with school holidays and a lot of weekend family activities, so getting people out on the day can be a bit difficult at this time of year. Combine all that with the mixed weather we have seen lately and the result is that only two of us managed to post times in the January NDC Radian event. For those that were considering it and passed, my advice is to fly when the opportunity is there as it may be the last suitable day that month. Scores are below:

Event #169 ALES Radian

Peter Graham MFNZ #10777

Flight 1 - 5 min 07 sec Landing - 25 Points - 332

Flight 2 - 5 min 32 sec Landing - 0 Points - 332

Flight 3 - 6 min 49 sec Landing - 0 Points - 409

Total 1073

Rex Ashwell MFNZ #10746

Flight 1 - 6 min 55 sec Landing - 0 Points - 415

Flight 2 - 6 min 55 sec Landing - 50 Points - 465

Flight 3 - 3 min 06 sec Landing - 50 Points - 236

Total 1116

A welcome addition to the soaring fraternity is Paul Barrett. Alf had an under-utilised Phoenix which passed into Paul's hands and it's now being put to good use. Since starting to fly that model he has progressed remarkably quickly and recently made short work of gaining his Wings qualification. We've tended to discount the Phoenix in comparing it to the Radian, but these rugged models fly very well, whether gliding or under power, and make ideal trainers - cheap too. Paul fronted up for the February ALES 123 event and experienced what a thrill it is to catch your first good thermal - he flew very well to put the pressure on some fairly experienced guys. Results of that contest will be in the next Soaring Scene.



Right, that's the Wings test done, now where are those thermals?

Slope Soaring

The numbers flying on Wednesday nights remain relatively small, although we had six flying in the most recent session so that's a 100% increase since the start of Daylight Saving. That makes for 100% more fun as well so if you've never flown off the slope join us for an easy hour of flying with your model close to eye level. In the light winds that we have been seeing most evenings an electric foamie glider is just the ticket - smooth flying with electric insurance. It's not uncommon to launch, fly for an hour, land, have a quick chat and head home for a meal - you really accumulate stick time when slope soaring.



Phil Gibbison, Phil Elvy, Rocas Razvan and Carl McMillan sharing the slope.

NDC Events

We got away to a good start this month with some people flying ALES 123 on the first available day. A quick glance at the NDC calendar www.modelflyingnz.org/Docs/NDC/2016NDCCalendar.pdf will show you that we have just four soaring events in February, ALES 123 and X5J which are for electric gliders, Thermal A which is winch launch and Thermal H.

We have not flown Thermal H, at least since I started flying, a class for towline gliders up to 2 metres wingspan with a maximum of three channels. To make it interesting, if you have a third channel it can only be used for spoilers. It is then, a class for simple models launched in a simple manner and it may be that some of the senior flyers in the area have suitable models tucked away in the rafters at home. If so, bring them out into the light of day - it would be great to see a few traditional models in the air again and only those with long experience will know the technique of launching with a towline - a bungee can also be used. I'm thinking about putting a hook on the Guppy to try something a bit different.

Next month we have F3K, ALES 200 and ALES Radian so bear that in mind and put in a bit of early practice. Keep in mind as well that any points accumulated in NDC events go to the pilot individually, but also to your club and we would like to see the local clubs taking their rightful places on the New Zealand scene. All it takes is for people to front up and fly.

I have started to put together a chart of accumulated scores for all those local participants in NDC events. The intention is to work out the maximum score possible for each round then see what each person has scored as a percentage of that maximum score. For example, in ALES Radian the maximum for one flight is 7 minutes or 420 seconds (420 flight points) plus 50 landing points giving a total of 470 for three flights. If we look at Peter Graham's score from the January round it was 1073 or 76.03% of the maximum possible. The idea is that I will keep a chart of all the rounds and send out the accumulated scores to everyone involved at the end of each month. I don't know how MFNZ do this for the whole country but we will have our own mini NDC competition amongst ourselves. Here are our results up to February the 6th.

	F3K	ALES Radian	ALES 123	X5J	Total
R Ashwell	59.68	79.14	64.18	85.00	288.00
P Deacon	72.48		70.14	89.15	231.77
P Graham		76.09			76.09
K McMillan	60.27			84.17	144.44
P Barrett			55.88	80.97	136.85
P Elvy			48.93	91.05	139.98
A Baker				87.52	87.52

Other Stuff

Recently I found this nice bit of video on the Dream-Flight Weasel, a simple foam kit that has just been reintroduced to the market. The bank in front that's providing the lift is only about 15 metres high and, as you can see, there is not much wind, but a simple model in the hands of a skilled pilot is well capable of smooth and graceful manoeuvres with a minimum of lift. [Dream-Flight | Facebook](#)

It never ceases to amaze me how easy it is to find something on YouTube that I wasn't looking for. I'll start out looking at fishing boats at Stewart Island and 10 minutes later find that I'm marvelling at the construction of a yurt somewhere in Mongolia. This applies to this newsletter as well, which Chris Brew (our webmaster) tells me has had views from all over the world. Shortly after the second one was posted on the website, the editors of the Radio Controlled Soaring Digest contacted me to ask if they could use it in the next edition of their well known e-magazine. I was astonished, but instantly agreed and the first two Soaring Scenes duly appeared in the February RC Soaring Digest, so if you were in those newsletters you are now world famous. [RC Soaring Digest magazine](#)

There is a lot of full size gliding material on YouTube and I came across this video from the 2007 World GP Gliding Championships held at Omarama. It features ten times world champion Sebastian Kawa and some truly remarkable footage in the Southern Alps. Sebastian is Polish so you won't understand anything he says (unless you are Polish) but the subtitles are adequate to follow what is going on. He seems unconcerned to be flying around terrain that most of us would avoid even with a motor up front and in weather that looks quite intimidating. There is some great content here so I'll excuse him for a couple of brief snippets from Australia which seem to have got mixed in. Have a look, they are brave guys glider pilots: [II World GP Gliding Championships - YouTube](#)

At the recent aerotow I managed to make a bit of a mess of my Kiwicon, courtesy of an extravagantly clumsy attempt at landing which could probably better be described as a crash. Fortunately damage was confined only to both wings and the fuselage! I've done a bit of work with fibreglass, albeit about 40 years ago, so I elected to have a go at this myself and I'm about to begin my first attempt at composite repairs on some quite badly damaged structure.

Coincidentally my Christmas gift to myself was a copy of Paul Naton's Glider Repair Labs, a 3 disc DVD set, so there must have been a premonition of problems to come. There is a huge amount of information in this set, all clearly and logically explained as Paul demonstrates his techniques on a range of damaged models. I can't speak too highly of his instruction and it has given me the motivation to tackle my repairs with a degree of confidence that may have otherwise been lacking. There was a small mix up with my order, which I won't bother to detail, suffice it to say that Mr Naton's customer relations rating is unsurpassed as far as I'm concerned. [Glider Repair Lab 3 training class digital download set for R/C soaring and RC glider pilots](#) Highly recommended.

The world dynamic soaring speed record has been broken yet again. This short video captures a record run when the model hit an incredible 505 mph (810 kph) and apparently pulled 91 G. It's hard to imagine a model aircraft going this fast and I have no idea how the pilot keeps up with it: [505 mph DS world record 22nd Nov 2014 Weldon CA - YouTube](#) This is the fastest speed I could find on video, note that it was in 2014, but the new record, set in December 2015, is now 513 mph (822 kph) - gulp!

Okay, that's enough for now. I'm always on the lookout for material so if you have anything to offer, photos, reports, comments on models or competitions, feel free to pass them on. In the meantime, keep on soaring.

Pex