

## The Soaring Scene

Happy New Year and welcome to 2016 and another year of soaring. There is not a lot to report for December and this was partly because NDC finished in November and partly because of the near continuous gusty wind in the early part of December - the local weather station has been a boon and saved me a few bob on gas. It would appear that normal summer service may have resumed though and the last week of the year has seen some brilliant conditions at Ara each morning before the on-shore Easterly intruded most afternoons. And about time!

### Aero-tow

Don't forget that we have an invitation Aerotow scheduled for the last weekend in January at Quaildale. Peter Deacon is the organiser and he reports quite a few entries so far with visitors from as far afield as Tauranga in the North and Gore in the South so we are looking forward, provided the weather plays ball, to another great weekend of towing. It costs nothing to join us, unless you want to fly when there is a nominal entry fee, so come along and have a look - there will be some mighty models there and some damn good pilots.

This is how the big boys do it: [Discus 2c on Vimeo](#) A lovely bit of video making good use of airborne and on board cameras. I said the "big boys" although in today's terms this 4.5 metre Discus is a mid-size model - but a very nice one!

This is how the little guys manage without throwing around the thousands of dollars required by the big boys: [RC glider towing for beginners, How to do it. - YouTube](#) This all looks a bit crude but it still gets the job done. The velcro towing system is simple, cheap and well proven, although I have some doubts about the "lasso your tow plane" idea. Whatever works I guess.

### Electric Gliders

The conditions at Ara recently have frequently been ideal for small gliders and it's good to see a number of people breaking out their Radians and Phoenixes and enjoying the ride in some of the strong thermals that have been common lately.

B J Carr has started to fly again after a break of many years and his new Radian incorporates many of the modifications suggested on YouTube by Paul Naton. The model looks good in its flashy colour scheme and it feels much stiffer and stronger than the standard version - it flies well too. It didn't take Beej long to get back in the groove once he finally started.

Guy Marfell is also back in the air regularly after several months struggling with the disorientating effects of Vertigo and he "specked out" in a boomer recently which must have been great fun after being ground bound for so long. Guy's Radian, which he has been flying for at least 5 years (and probably a fair bit longer), is very original and trimmed perfectly. Consequently it really does float well in calm conditions and Guy can make the most of that when he wants to. Here are the two "new boys" after another morning of easy soaring:



Paddy Gordon is another with a Radian, although he is showing considerable determination to retain his “learner” status and his model is showing signs of some distress having had the occasional brush with the planet. Like any foamy though, if you pick up all the pieces and apply appropriate quantities of glue and the occasional wooden skewer, it just keeps on flying. Amazing things!

My more traditional Guppy has also enjoyed quite a bit of air time and I have had some really nice flights with it including one that started with about eight or ten gentle circles at around 4 metres while thinking about landing, and which gradually built into a strong climb to “plenty high enough”.. Those are the flights which are really rewarding - much more satisfying than picking up a thermal at altitude.

## Slope Soaring

Someone has been playing tricks on us over the Christmas period. Wednesday evenings have been consistently calm, which doesn't make for a lot of lift. Carl McMillan and I jumped out of our cars into a moderate breeze the other day only to find that it had dropped to nothing by the time we had models assembled and walked down to the launch point. We walked dejectedly back up to the cars and it started to rain! This has been very frustrating as there have often been some lovely conditions mid afternoon with brisk Easterly breezes. Just what we want, but it's not on to fly there on my own so I need an afternoon flying buddy - anyone interested?



Here is Phil Elvy flying his Phoenix one early December evening when the wind was just about okay. There were four of us flying that night and we were all surprised to find we had been flying for about an hour - time passes quickly when you are having fun! The Phoenix seems to be quite a good model for this kind of thing, with the added benefit of an electric motor for rescues when the lift is marginal. Hobby King still have them at US\$83.20 which has to be remarkable value. Apologies for photographing the back of Phil's head but it's quite difficult to get a frontal shot and have the model in the photo.

We are just beginners at this slope soaring game though. This YouTube clip really caught my attention: [Gli spaventa passere al Corno della Paura - YouTube](#) The first few minutes aren't much but once they get cracking from the Corno della Paura (clearly somewhere in the Italian alps) the action is something to see. The Top Models Swift S1 is most in evidence and the aerobatics performed are more like a jet than a glider. All I need is a couple of years more practice, a couple of thousand dollars worth of model and a damn great mountain with a road to the top and I "might" be able to do this too.

## Discus Launch

Those of us that fly these models have been getting in a little practice and I think we are all looking forward to some early competition with an NDC round due in January. Ken McMillan is really getting to grips with his Snipe and seems able to find lift almost at will, with the model showing incredible slow flying capability. He's even practicing tip catches for quick relaunching which is a major step forward in his skill level and might force the rest of us down the same path. I'm not looking forward to that - I have enough trouble landing within 10 metres of where I'm standing without trying to grab the launch peg.

This is the action that Ken's trying to learn: [Stobel V3 DLG practice. - YouTube](#) Getting the model to return so precisely to the right spot is a lot harder than it looks and then you have to hook the peg with your fingers and rotate straight into the launch. Another noticeable thing about this sequence is how little effort goes into the throw - it's all about rotating smoothly and swinging the arm. The video concludes with a gentle launch and a 2 1/2 minute flight that never appears to exceed 5 metres - lovely flying.

## NDC

We have just 4 weekends left to fly F3K and ALES Radian in January, and one of those is an aerotow weekend, so get ready. I'll be e-mailing those on my list to try to arrange competition days in suitable weather but remember you can fly these on any weekend day and they will be valid as long as you have another MFNZ member to time your flights. It's a lot more fun if flown in a group though. For ALES Radian we would like to encourage more of you to participate, so if you fly a Radian or Phoenix (or any foamy glider under 2 metres) contact me <mailto:rex.ashwell@xtra.co.nz> and come and have a go. No pressure, you don't have to put in a time, just try to fly the task and see what you think. For those that don't know, the task is to try to stay aloft for 7 minutes after a 30 second maximum motor run, then land inside a 30 metre diameter circle - harder than it sounds!

For F3K it's the usual 4 tasks that we are all familiar with. It would be nice to see all of us there and starting the year off with good performances. The way the lift has been lately it should be easy, right?

## Other Stuff

First up a few comments on the new CAA website "Airshare". If you haven't already checked this out then have a look: [airshare™ - Your UAV Hub](#) I think they have done a good job on this and there is a lot of easy to access information which is applicable to all of us who fly models, not just to multicopter pilots. Get used to the term Drones being applied to everything because exactly the same rules apply to all r/c models. You can register on this site, something which I'm reluctant to do at this stage as they say they may share the information with third parties - I will be interested to hear MFNZ's view on this.

In the USA the FAA have just come out with a registration rule which is causing a storm of protest: [FAA Announces all RC Pilots Must Register - Model Airplane News](#) This is the gist of the new rule, you can find the full text online if you feel like dredging through a lot of bumph. The AMA are advising members to hold off on registering at this stage: [Hold Off On Registering | AMA Government Relations Blog](#) Hopefully our own legislators won't feel the need to go down this path.

Recently I discovered a series of brief instructional YouTube videos by Les Stockley. Les was a member of the NZ team, along with Joe Wurts and Scott Chisholm, who won the team event at the F3J World Championships in 2010, so he knows his stuff. Although the information is relatively basic and the standard of filming is perhaps not as professional as we see today, there are a few pearls of wisdom in this little lot. Here is episode one: [RCSoaring.co.nz - How-To Series - 1. 'Exponential' - YouTube](#) You can follow through the others using the sidebar on YouTube.

These days most serious competition models use a lot of composites in their construction which does make them extremely expensive. Given that they are performing essentially the same tasks as the traditional built up models of a few years ago, one wonders if the exotic materials are really necessary. That's until you see a clip like this: [V tail flutter \(cam: Flycamone2\) - YouTube](#) Do we put our models under severe stress? You betcha!

Recently it was suggested to me that if pilots stood in an elevated position they would be able to fly around a closed course. The technology to fly a triangular course determined by GPS points has been around for a while and a few Kiwi pilots have begun to experiment with it. Dave Griffin briefly demonstrated the technique at our last aerotow and it has become very popular in Europe, where bigger gliders (and wallets) are a little more common than they are in NZ. Here is a quick explanation of how GPS racing works: [Brief description of GPS Triangle Contest - YouTube](#)

Here is a very nice aerobatic routine from the full size world. [► Glider extreme aerobatics - YouTube](#) I don't know who the pilot is but the aircraft is a Swift S1. One would imagine things would get a little violent in the cockpit with some of those manoeuvres and this is what it looks like to Luca Bertossio in a similar

display, also in a Swift: [GoPro Hero 2 Swift S-1 2012 by Luca Bertossio in 3D - YouTube](#) Nothing to it you see - this young guy was the World Glider Aerobatic Champion in 2012 at just 22 years of age.

Okay, that's enough for now, I hope you found something to entertain you in this edition of the Soaring Scene. Feel free to send me your comments (good or bad) and I could use some local photos please. I'm not sure when the next issue will be out but it will include our first NDC results for the year and a report on the aerotow meeting. In the meantime enjoy some good summer soaring and remember that you are doing your bit for the fight against climate change - no carbon emissions for us glider guiders!

Rex