



Approach

THE NEW ZEALAND AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS MAGAZINE
WINTER 2021

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Celebrating AOPA's half century*



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Heading south*

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Coming up

- AOPA Winter Fly-in
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Omaka, 3–5 September
- AOPA Darfield Fly-in
Charlie Draper's, 17–19 Sept
- And keep an eye on your
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Cover photo: Blue Light Day in
Balclutha saw Cameron Willis
enjoying a flight with Murray Bichan
Photo credit: Tanya Grant



Contents

- The Advance on Stalingrad *David Berger meets Russian irony* [6]
- Heading South *Gayle and Charles Wilson make the most of a southerly trek* [9]
- What's the story? *Ross Millichamp explains the concession for flying into Milford* [10]
- Blue Light flights *Kids around the country get to share the aviation bug* [11]
- AOPA NZ anniversary *Half a century of wisdom and experience* [12]
- Honours at the 50th *Recognition for going 'Above and Beyond'* [14]
- Sloping airstrip landings *Matt Anderson provides some pointers* [16]
- Saga of an old Conti *Ross Millichamp and an ageing engine* [18]
- Feelgood rebuild *Jay McIntyre describes a project on the go* [22]
- Celebrating 60 *Helen Hoffman hitches a ride to Ruatoria* [24]
- One day at Middlerock *The one-day fly-in model shows its worth* [25]

Regular Columns

- President's Comment *Stephen Brown* [2]
- AOPA News [3]
- Vice-President's View *Steve Horne* [4]
- From the Editor *Anna Mackenzie* [4]
- Safety Notes *Ivor Yockney on sticking to the rules* [15]
- Aviation Personality: Charlie Draper *Ross Millichamp kicks off a new column* [20]

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Deadline for ads, articles and photos for the next (Spring) issue: 20 July 2021.



President's Comment

The new Medical Standard has arrived. AOPA and others started agitating for a more realistic medical standard for PPL flying back in the 1990s, and we were really pleased to get the Recreational Pilots Licence (RPL),

which kept a lot of our pilots in the air. But it wasn't enough. The last five years' lobbying and advocating in Wellington has got us to a significantly more logical 'Medical Standard'.

The RPL is no more; instead we have a Private Pilots Licence, PPL, which now has two levels of privilege. The GP authorised DL9(P) is the medical standard which will be used by the vast majority of private pilots in New Zealand. This is a great advance which will save us money and enhance our 'freedom to fly'.

The privileges allowed under the DL9(P) GP certificate: with six seats you can take five passengers, up to 2730kg gross weight, pressurised and twin aircraft, up to 25,000ft. You can do aerobatics solo above 3000ft agl, fly at night within 25nm of a lighted runway, tow banners, drogues and gliders. You can drop parachutists. You can fly over towns and cities. You cannot fly IFR, do low level aerobatics and you cannot fly for hire or reward.

Please note that AMCs (Accredited Medical Conclusions) and any specific restrictions that accompany them do not apply to the DL9(P) certificate. If you can get a DL9(P) from your GP, you can exercise all of its privileges. Of course if you wish to fly beyond these privileges, such as IFR, you will need a Class 2 Medical, which may need to go through an AMC process and may include specific conditions.

It is appropriate that I give credit to CAA. It is easy to criticise our regulator and they are not used to praise. However, they have done a good job of looking at all the scenarios impacted by the new Medical Standard. In so doing they have removed the need for a separate colour vision test, which was needed by RPL pilots who wanted to fly to controlled airfields. We now need to have a working radio and to use it continuously – just as we always do. Plus, they have left the door open for flying overseas, so long as the local CAA approve New Zealand's standard. I had not expected this avenue to open.

Work will not stop on this issue; we are 95% of the way there. We will soon be starting advocacy to enable IFR flying and low-level aerobatics with the new Standard. We will also start work in Australia to secure the right to fly there with our new standard.

Please give some thought to how confused your GP may be when she/he hears about this. GPs are being asked if you are safe to drive a bus, taxi or Uber, they are not being asked to approve your flying. My advice is to ask for a taxi licence. Of course, if your GP suspects you are not being honest about your health or are not safe to fly, they have always had obligations under legislation to report your health situation to the CAA.

This new Medical Standard is not a 'carte blanche' permission to fly. It is my belief that the medical standard required to drive a school bus is very similar to the standards set out in a CAA Class 2 medical certificate. However, it is a lot easier to visit your GP, and it will be a lot cheaper. In terms of age, we still have an ageing pilot population and we do have issues with bus drivers' memories and minds slowing down, just as we have a problem with ageing pilots' minds. So do expect memory tests and mental agility assessments carried out by your GP as your years advance. You may remember AOPA NZ was asking for a DL9(1) medical standard, which is the standard for driving a car rather than the commercial licence standard, when this issue was out for consultation. The microlight medical standard is the same as the car standard and significantly lower than the DL9(P).

I think that is enough about medical matters, and I haven't mentioned ADS-B once yet, and won't this time.

I do wish to introduce you to our new Exec Committee; firstly Sue Kronfeld (to whom I have apologised for missing her out on the list in *Short Approach*). Sue is deeply involved in our Safety group and will be leading a project to produce some 15 minute 'Safe Mountain Flying' videos. Ivor Yockney is also working on Safety. Geoff van Asch is assisting the Social group; Don Ryder looks after communications; Ian Sinclair is leading our Digital Review which leads him to work tirelessly with all groups; Steve Horne leads our Advocacy group and is our Vice President. Chris Hoffman is leading our charge to keep Kapiti airport open and other advocacy; Murray Paterson ably leads our Social activities group; then there is me, Steve Brown, who tries to keep the organisation on track. This list would not be complete without mention of Mary Bruce, our able administrator, who seems to be getting busier and busier as our organisation grows.

We have allocated regional representatives AGM: Steve Horne has responsibility for the Northern North Island, Chris Hoffman for the Southern North Island, Geoff van Asch for the Northern South Island, and Sue Kronfeld for the Southern South Island. Feel free to contact these reps if you have any local issues.

On another note, we recently met with Keith Manch, our new CAA Director. We had a very constructive discussion and are pleased to note that CAA have done legions of work to improve their 'culture'. We pushed for CAA to engage with us as 'users' prior to new initiatives coming out for consultation, with the goal of us being supportive right from the start rather than being at loggerheads. Keith has undertaken to work toward this also. We also had a productive talk about risk, and agreed that we need to assess risk more fully and have realistic goals which will not impinge unreasonably on our 'freedom to fly'.

Let's look forward to a settled autumn and winter so we can all enjoy some aviating in that calm smooth air.

Safe flying,

Steve Brown, President 



AGM weekend line-up at Cromwell, March 2021

30 years at Ardmore

South Pacific Avionics are celebrating their 30th birthday this year and are pleased to thank the GA industry for their support over this period.

With facilities now in Nelson and Dunedin as well as Auckland, they're looking forward to being of service for the next 30 years too. Please see their ad on page 16.

2021 AOPA Awards

Congratulations to the winners of the 2021 AOPA Awards, announced at the AGM dinner in Cromwell last month!

We will be following up with stories in the next issue of *Approach* once all the presentations are made, but for now, here's a shout out for our 2021 aviation notables: Charlie Draper for Going Above and Beyond; John Penno GA Champion; Classic Fliers Avgas Café at Tauranga Airport, winners of the Best Aviation Watering Hole; Rangiora Aircraft Engineering who gained the coveted Maintenance Shop of the Year; and Wellington Approach, who won the Most Helpful Tower Award.

Compact, lightweight ADS-B transponder now available

CAA has now approved Trig TT21 and TT22 ADS-B units for installation in GA aircraft. TT21 is a 125W unit while TT22 is 250W (refer AC 91.- 24 7.9.1 on their website). These units are smaller and lighter than the equipment previously available and are very competitively priced.

Trig units should prove an acceptable alternative for aircraft with limited power availability and restricted panel space, the only disadvantage being that they come with only ADS-B Out. But do discuss this option with your supplier to ensure you're getting the best fix.

AOPA recommends ADS-B In

Prices for ADS-B IN installations are now just about the same as the CAA \$500 subsidy availability, so why not enjoy the real safety benefit of situational awareness by being able to see other aircraft within your vicinity (important even outside controlled airspace). It's a no brainer to get this done at the same time as your ASD-B Out installation.

When do I switch on my ADS-B unit?

Correct operation of this new system requires that ADS-B units MUST be turned on before moving the aircraft from where it is parked. Not while taxiing, not when lined up for take-off and not in flight (switching on and off during flight can result in the transmission of erroneous positional data).

A reminder: don't wait too long!

December 31 2022 is not too far away,

meaning the deadline for ADS-B usage in controlled airspace is coming around quickly. Prices are unlikely to get any cheaper than now and one big advantage of booking in soon with your avionics provider is that you then have the choice of supplier. Getting nearer the deadline, availability of workshops is likely to become limited, so a backlog with a waiting list is expected (and don't forget that the subsidy pool money is finite as well).

ADS-B In endorsement

I've been wanting to get ADS-B In on Avplan on my iPad and, while possible, this has been pretty expensive to achieve.

I've just bought a uAvionix ping-USB Dual-Band ADS-B Traffic Receiver from Avcraft in Fielding for \$276 including GST and freight. It's an unprepossessing wee thing and weighs next to nothing but I've plugged it in and it works just fine with Avplan. Installation took a matter of moments and aircraft have appeared on the map, together with altitude and direction info. There's a range of prices out there but Avcraft had a sharp price, were in stock and very prompt. I gather it works with OzRunways as well.

Yes, Ian Sinclair is right, ADS-B In is awesome.

– Robert Gray



A warm welcome to new members:

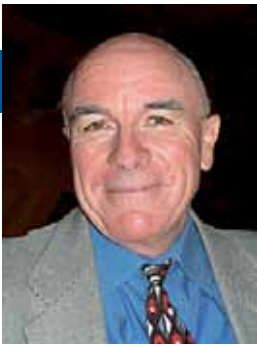
Jonathan Elliott, Vans Aircraft RV7 JTE; Keith Essex, Dynamic XYX; Andrew Gaddum; Andrew Green, Cessna 172A CKX; Dave Gregory, Cessna 172 CAP; Terry Hetherington, Piper Warrior EQE; Shaun Johnson, Cessna 172S CTY; David Kenyon, Cessna 172N EHL; Katherine Kirk; Alice Lammas, Cessna 150 DTQ; Serge Luke, Piper Cherokee DEJ; David Morgan; Aaron Murphy; Kevin Perreau, Zenith CH601HD; Larry Ross; Andrew Smith, Cessna 172M MWC; Samuel Spiers, Cessna 206G JDV; John & Yvonne Stewart, Impulse 100TD MPL; Andrew Teetzel, Just Aircraft Highlander N554MT; Ryan Walklin, Sling 4 Tsi RPW; Pat Worsley, Cessna 172 DRS

Member benefits

Please don't forget to check out the growing list of member benefits that are included under that heading on the AOPA website. This month we're featuring the Downunder Pilot Shop. If you check out their website www.pilotshop.co.nz you'll find a great variety of literally hundreds of great aviation items – and all available to AOPA members with an exclusive discount.

Correction

On page 5 of the Autumn issue of *Approach*, article author, Tim Costley, was incorrectly identified as the MP for the Otaki electorate. This is not the case and we apologise to Tim for the error.



Vice-President's View

I really enjoyed our recent AGM meeting at Cromwell. It had all the right ingredients: a good airfield close by, an excellent hotel and good conversations and sessions with attending members.

The panel of members relating the history and founding of AOPA NZ was very enlightening. I learnt a lot about our heritage and the hard work put in by previous Executive committee members. Thanks to Ian Sinclair for organising and hosting this. It was video recorded for posterity, and should soon be available on our website (also see pages 12-13 of this issue). Speaking of our website, it's going through a major revamp but, like all things, it is taking longer than anticipated. Ian Sinclair is leading this and has put in a lot of time.

The AGM itself was well attended with excellent discussion on a number of issues presented by the Executive. Opinions were diverse on some points. I look at this as very healthy. Without input and discussion, we become an inert body.

Something I ask you all to consider is whether you have the time and inclination to put yourself forward for an Executive position. Steve Brown or myself will happily answer any questions, and perhaps you could observe one of our Zoom meetings to get a better understanding. Before we know it, our next AGM will be upon us. The location will be in the North Island with exact place and time to be decided at our next Executive meeting.

Visiting the Highlands race track and museum was special for me. It married both my love for and past career in motorsports with my love of aviation. The museum is excellent and the new humorous toilet block a highlight.

Work continues behind the scenes with CAA and a leading training provider on revisions and updates to the IFR training syllabus. Our aim is to improve the ability of our members to obtain an instrument rating. I obtained an FAA rating when I was living in the USA and it was a very rewarding and practical rating to have. It wasn't easy though!

Flying weather has been excellent up here at Ardmore. The circuit has been very busy over the weekends with overhead joins necessary when returning from away trips. At times there were eight aircraft in the circuit so 'see and be seen' was a high priority. I have ADS-B In and Out fitted, but in close environments like this I find it almost a distraction. Eyes need to be outside the cockpit.

However, leaving the airport environment en route ADS-B is very helpful to marry radio calls to aircraft in the near vicinity. Have you had yours installed yet?

Thanks to all who have participated in the Blue Light 'Take a Kid Flying' days. Due to your generosity many of these kids did something they could only previously dream about.

Please consider writing an article for the magazine about your aviation experiences. We all love to read others' stories.

Steve Horne, Vice-President



From the Editor

From remembering the past to looking to the future, this issue offers a good variety of reading. We also launch a new column, 'Aviation Personalities', in which we will celebrate some of those characters who contribute to making GA so enjoyable. In our inaugural column, Ross Millichamp interviews Charlie Draper.

A key event of the last quarter was the AOPA AGM weekend, running in tandem with celebrations to mark our organisation's 50th anniversary. Weather co-operated this year, and Hamish and I flew down to Wanaka. There's something about crisp autumn mornings, about setting off while the cloud still lies in the valleys below and the plains are striated by long shelterbelt shadows. We tracked down the Wairarapa, skipped across the Strait and refuelled

at Rangiora. Cloud in South Canterbury and the Fairlie Basin sent us on a roundabout route – not quite so roundabout as our return flight three days later, which saw us overflying Timaru, further from home two hours after we set off than we were when we began. But that's aviation.

The AGM weekend was thoroughly enjoyable. Interesting chat at the forums (see page 12), surprises aplenty during dinner, hearty discussion at the AGM, and no shortage of socialising. We also found time over the course of the three day weekend to help family members regib a bathroom – who wouldn't travel half the length of the country for such rich and varied entertainment?

Overflying Paraparaumu en route home, the importance of the airport as the first accessible safe haven after crossing Cook Strait was abundantly clear.

As material came in for this issue, I found myself particularly delighted by photos of Blue Light Day events around



the country (see page 11 and our cover). Sadly, the Hawke's Bay event was cancelled this year, and looking at the photos of the enthusiasm and delight (not to mention the kids' reactions), I found myself rather envious. Our cover photo really captures the essence of this event; perhaps of the joys of GA flying.

Many thanks to Ross Millichamp for coming on-board with the magazine. Please be aware that you can get in touch with either Ross or myself about potential stories.

Anna Mackenzie, Editor

The Advance on Stalingrad

By David Berger

The Vikings sailed down the Volga to the Caspian Sea. If that thought does not quicken your heart, stop reading now. It quickened ours, but various plans to travel north or south of the Caucasus to the Caspian had been rejected for geographic, political or meteorological reasons, and our customs delay in Anapa, along with the rapidly advancing season, finally put paid to all thought of a Caspian Sea outing.

Five days after we arrived, we took off from Anapa, our newly minted customs carnet burning a hole in our Folder of Important Documents, and crossed a small range of forested coastal hills, quickly reaching the vast steppe of south-west Russia, between the Sea of Azov to our left and the city of Krasnodar some way off to the right. As we headed north-east the 400 or so miles towards Volgograd, I couldn't help gazing out the right side window into the hazy distance of the vast, arid plain stretching down to the Caspian. It was just a few hundred miles away. I felt as if I ought to be able to see it. I could certainly feel it. How extraordinary to reflect that one or two reconnaissance units of the German army reputedly succeeded in making it all the way there in the autumn of 1942, and that we were now flying through skies which had once been thick with Yaks, Stukas, Heinkels, Sturmoviks and all the rest.

Out the left side, the vast lake formed by the dam on the River Don at Volgodonsk eventually started to take shape and we ploughed past it for some time. It is a pity that these mighty rivers have been so heavily dammed, but there is something about taming rivers which fascinates the totalitarian socialist mind the world over, often with disastrous ecological consequences. The death of the Aral Sea on the

Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan border is one of the most painful of these to record.

Volgograd's main airport is west of the city, but we were keen to avoid large airports as much as possible and our destination was Beketovka airfield, a former Luftwaffe, then Soviet, military strip to the south of the city. It had been given over to agricultural and general aviation use since the collapse of the USSR, and just how agricultural became apparent as we came overhead: "That's not actually it, is it? Those are pretty good-sized trees growing out of the runway and the potholes are enormous. It's not in use, surely? There's no windsock."

"No, look, there are some AN2s parked beyond those sheds to the north. They must be hangars."

We told the local controller at the main airport that we were in the circuit at Beketovka, made a couple of low passes, identified a part of the runway which looked relatively free of trees, car-sized potholes and large lumps of disintegrating concrete, then approached around the trees growing on the eastern third and landed to the west. Now what? There was a rough, rocky farm track leading to a gate next to the sheds, but no taxiway. Oh, that is the taxiway!

We taxied gingerly along it to the gate. It was closed and padlocked. There were



AN2s at Beketovka; Sergei, David and Tom with LA8

a couple of men busy doing jobs in the yard. No-one looked at us. We sat and waited, the engine running, wondering if we should shut down here. Eventually a burly man walked slowly up, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, unlocked the gate, opened it and walked off without looking at us. It was only the width of a farm gate. It was a farm gate, but our wings sat high enough to clear the posts on each side and we taxied through. No-one seemed to care where we went, so we parked up and shut down just opposite a row of three blue and yellow AN2s, dirty, exhaust- and oil-stained, with spray fittings. They were crazy, magnificent, steampunk-looking contraptions and we couldn't take our eyes off them.

We wandered over to chat to a mechanic working on one of the machines (a thousand hp and 200 l/hr – car gas, in case you're wondering – and another dozen litres of oil – truck oil, naturally, the cheap stuff). The airfield security man came over – the man who had opened the gate for us – and beckoned us over to his caravan where he offered us a cup of tea. This was our first experience of the Russian night watchman's caravan, a feature of all small airfields. They are cosy, with a wood-burning stove, chintz cushions and curtains, bubbling samovar and little television tuned permanently to a



Fields between Volgograd and Samara; Inset: precious avgas at Beketovka. Below: Mamayev Kurgan monument 2. Far right: Oil change on the Russian steppe with the ubiquitous AN2 behind.

Russian soap opera. More on these later.

My schoolboy Russian was good enough to decipher that Vladimir would be along in about an hour and would provide us with the fuel which Evgeny had ordered on our behalf. This was a matter of some relief, as the idea that there would be fuel for us at this odd spot on the Russian steppe had seemed increasingly improbable since the moment we'd arrived overhead and tried to decide whether this was actually an airfield or not. We were still worried about the quality of the fuel we'd be getting, but need not have been. When Vladimir arrived, we were shown to the door of a rusty shipping container, obstructed by various large pieces of equally rusty junk. These were heaved aside, the door opened and inside, praise be, were two pristine, blue and white 200 litre drums of Russian produced avgas: Сто лл Sto LL (100 Low Lead).

Russian-blend avgas with high lead content, B110 and B130, seems to have been largely phased out and there are at least two producers of perfect quality 100LL in the country. We didn't have a moment's concern about the quality of our fuel from one end of the country to the other, but to see these two sparkling jewels full of avgas waiting just for us in this, ahem, somewhat unlikely location was a surprise and a tribute to the skills and connections of Evgeny Kabanov at www.makgas.com, our Russian aviation 'fixer'. And there was nothing to complain about on price either: 2¢/litre west of Lake Baikal and 3¢/litre east of it.

The drums were manhandled out of the container by a couple of helpful mustachioed men and, after half an hour's hand pumping, we were soon filled up. Everything seemed to have warmed up a bit after the apathy which had greeted our arrival. There were lots of smiles and some excruciating handshakes with enormous hands which were no strangers to manual labour, in contrast to my own soft, slender mitts.

By this time a nice man called Dimitri, who had some English, had rolled up. He operated some ag planes from the airfield. He was involved with the AN2s, but was mainly operating an upscaled metal Russian version of the Zenith with a large spray hopper. After he had shown us round his impressively sturdy Russian aircraft, he offered to drive us into town and we gladly accepted.

Beketovka sits on a hill at the very southern end of the city, which was the turning point of the German campaign in February 1943, when von Paulus surrendered Stalingrad and the shattered remnants of his army to the Soviets after a brutal six month siege. Dimitri drove us down through a suburb of desperate, decaying Soviet-era housing blocks – the first we had seen – to the curve of the Volga and then about forty minutes into the heart of the city to our hotel, the Старый Сталинград Stariy Stalingrad (Old Stalingrad), and one of the only older buildings to survive the battle. The Russians do irony. Bitter irony. Irony is the national core competency and usually comes with the acrid smell of Russian

tobacco. The Stariy Stalingrad Hotel is ironic Soviet kitsch of the highest proof, crammed with Young Pioneer memorabilia, next to busts of Stalin and Lenin, next to socialist realist posters of muscly men and women striding purposefully towards a golden future, all overlaid with the overpowering drapery and dull colours of the era. It is a gem and I commend it for your next stay in Stalingrad.

Volgograd, for such must we call the city these days, was completely different to Anapa, the only Russian city we could compare it to. It was poorer, more decrepit and completely Soviet-feeling from its head to its toes. Flashy Moscow money and its accompanying bling had a long way to go to reach here. There are two attractions. The first is Волга-матушка Volga-Matushka (Mother Volga), the great river which is the lifeblood of European Russia, rising south-west of St Petersburg and draining into the Caspian Sea via a series of broad sweeps 3500km later. You can sit for hours watching the river flow by with the odd commercial barge chugging along, and we did so in the late afternoon, but it is dangerous, mind, for the imagination wanders, and here was borne the seed of a future adventure. Post-covid: picture a 30ft steel boat, a sturdy but comfortable vessel, a circumnavigation, from Germany, north into the Baltic, to St Petersburg, up the Neva river and along the Volga-Baltic Waterway to the Volga, all the way down to the Caspian Sea, south down the coast to Baku, then back up the Caspian and along the Volga to the Don, down to the Black Sea, up the Danube and then along the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal back into the heart of Germany, all to be done in one season, or perhaps two. Friends, what is a man without his dreams?

The second attraction is the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad monument complex on Mamayev Kurgan, dominated by



the enormous The Motherland Calls statue, which was unfortunately sheathed in scaffolding for our visit. This is the Russian equivalent of Washington's Arlington National Cemetery or London's Cenotaph and is a place just as sacred. Forget the uncomfortable political realities for a moment – the non-aggression pact with Germany, the betrayal of Poland, the oppression and decimation of its own people over decades, and more – the Soviets lost 25 million of their own citizens in the Great Patriotic War and this monument is a moving tribute. It's also one of the world's prime examples of socialist realist architecture. We caught a commuter train and spent the best part of a day wandering around the 1960s complex in the thin, early autumn sunshine. It was crowded with visitors, many of whom obviously had very personal reasons to be there, and the changing of the guard was observed in reverential silence, as it is in such places everywhere. Why the world becomes richer for butchering millions of its sons and daughters is a question which has yet to find a satisfactory answer.

We planned the next day's trip over dinner that evening, an excellent hamburger in an avant garde hamburger joint near the river, to the accompaniment of the ubiquitous Russian technopop. We were going to make an early departure to Krasniy Yar airfield, just north of Samara, itself about 350 miles north-east of Volgograd and further up the Volga. We didn't know it at the time, but Samara (formerly Kuybyshev) is the aerospace hub of Russia. Among many other aircraft, they built Sturmoviks here in WWII, and still build Soyuz rockets. The city has a number of aerospace institutes to educate the required engineers and that, it turns out, is why it is the home of the Seabear, and that was why we were going to Krasniy Yar.

For those who haven't gazed wistfully for hours at pictures and videos of the Seabear in action, it is a twin Rotax powered four-seat amphibious flying boat with prodigious performance and enchanting lines. I had been corresponding with the senior engineer on the project, Valentin, who suggested we stop in on our way past, so we did.

We left early on our short flight, following the Volga north out of the city. The



river presents an image so powerful, so commanding that you cannot keep your eyes off it. It thrills, and we were silent for the first twenty minutes or so, just drinking in the view as we purred along in the smooth morning air.

As we did at Beketovka, we told the regional airport controller we were in the circuit at Krasniy Yar and went in and landed. It had the feel of a tiny grass airstrip in New Zealand; Mandeville, perhaps, which also has its own cottage aircraft company. We taxied in and parked, the last in a short line of twin-engined amphibians. Valentin was there to meet us with a huge smile and, between his English and my Russian, we quickly orientated ourselves. The airfield is a private one, owned by AeroVolga, the company making the larger twin-engined amphibians – up to eight or ten seats – and powered with IO-540s. They did a polar circumnavigation with a turbine powered version in 2018. They also make the two-seat Borey amphibian, with similar performance to the SeaRey, but an all-composite construction with better load carrying capacity. It's an attractive machine, which may be coming to Australasia soon via South Coast Seaplanes in NSW.

Seabear Aircraft and AeroVolga are in different market niches and co-operate well, and Seabear uses Krasniy Yar airfield for test and demonstration flights, though their own factory is about 20km away. AeroVolga were putting us up in their Дом Пилота Dom Pilota (Pilot House) just back from the flight line, a red and white striped building that looks

like a WWII control tower and functions as a hotel for visiting pilots. A quick huddle with Valentin and Sergei, the general manager of AeroVolga who has excellent English, and the rest of the day was planned: fuelling, lunch, a tour of the AeroVolga factory, then an oil change, followed by a flight in the Seabear with Valentin and Dimitri, the company owner and the aircraft's designer.

Food and comradeship are important to Russians and even this tiny little company has its own canteen on the airfield, with bustling, proud ladies serving tasty, wholesome dishes. We enjoyed lunch tremendously, Valentin and Sergei talking non-stop about aircraft, then toured the AeroVolga factory, a place where craftsmanship still lives and flourishes.

The weather was good, so Tom and I did the oil and filter change outside. An oil change. Outside. On the Russian steppe. I had a shiver down my spine thinking of the engineers on both sides who had done just this and so much more in terrible conditions to keep their planes running in the Great Patriotic War and here we were, doing the same. History sits ever present and heavily on your shoulder in Russia, or at least it does on mine.

By the time we had finished the oil change it was mid-afternoon and Dimitri had turned up. He is a huge man, friendly and smiling, but with no English. The Seabear is his creation and they apparently now have about forty flying all over Russia. Did we want to go for a flight and do some touch and goes on the Volga?

Reader, I must inform you, we did. 🛩️

Heading south

By Gayle Wilson

With Cromwell the venue for the 50th Anniversary of AOPA NZ, Charles and I decided we would follow it with a safari of southern New Zealand. As a delayed 80th and so they could experience what we love doing, we invited my parents, Peter and Carole, to join us.

Dad and Mum are adventurous (eg: driving the whole continent of Africa), thus were issued the title PPiL (private passenger in-law). As our Cessna 182 ZK-DNZ would be fully loaded, Charles allocated a maximum of 7kg (shock, horror!) baggage per person. This caused many sleepless nights: I normally pack more for a weekend away, let alone ten days. Needless to say, we managed it.

We departed Te Kuiti for Cromwell Racecourse on 18 March, a day early, as we wanted to meet up with Sue Kronfeld of Classic Flights in Wanaka for a mountain flying course which would allow Charles to 'earn some currency'.

Our trip took us via Omaka and Rangiora for fuel. There was a fair bit of cloud over Cook Strait and the Sounds were not great, so a scenic tour was abandoned

in favour of hot chocolate at the Omaka café, much needed due to the cold. Our plan from there had been to track along the Clarence or Awatere but, after speaking to some locals, we decided to track along the coast. Typically of New Zealand weather, Rangiora was warm and sunny.

We were first to arrive at Cromwell Racecourse and, shortly after shutting down, discovered DNZ's battery had given up the ghost. Steve Lyttle came to our rescue with an overnight battery charge and an early morning lift to the airfield. A huge thank you, Steve.

The following day, with the battery successfully charged, we flew to Precision Aviation at Wanaka to make sure it was just the battery and nothing more serious, like the alternator. The Air Force was operating out of Wanaka and I took a photo



of their Hercules C180 at take off with the dew point and sunrise just perfect to capture the prop wash vortices.

With a new battery installed we taxied to Classic Flights for a three hour mountain flying course with Sue Kronfeld. Our main objective was to understand flying at altitude and dealing with the resulting lack of power. Not only did we learn about finding the energy (updrafts) but also about the illusion effect caused by the mountains (being further away than you think) and that the best plan B is to have a plan C as well. The course was well worth the time and money; we recommend it to all pilots who are novices to the Alps and mountain flying.

At the end of the flight, we noticed DNZ had developed a slight oil leak. Twenty24 at Wanaka very kindly 'squeezed' us into their work schedule and repaired the leak. We were so grateful as it meant we could continue our journey with peace of mind. Lucky for us it was a very simple fix. Thanks also to Kevin for the use of a car.

Anniversary celebrations

The AOPA programme included a different type of flying: around the Go-Kart track or, for some lucky folk, fast laps of the Highland Motor Park track in a McLaren, reaching speeds up to 208km/h. The Go-Karts proved rather competitive and Charles learnt an important lesson – let your wife pass!

That afternoon saw the 50th anniversary celebrations begin with reminiscences



Enjoying the variegations of the coastline at Hooper's Inlet, Dunedin.

Top left: A memorable flight over the Alps; inset: Hercules C180 prop wash vortex at Wanaka.

from 'The Kittyhawk Originals' followed by carriers of the flame and lastly younger aviators who had grown up within the AOPA organisation. It was most interesting and Ian Sinclair was a fantastic MC.

The AGM was the following morning. During discussion someone suggested AOPA NZ is more of a South Island organisation. That may be argued due to its origins, however AOPA's advocacy work benefits all New Zealand GA pilots. As North Islanders, we're proud to be affiliated with the organisation – and it has introduced us to a great bunch of people too.

The afternoon consisted of a flight to Alexandra for lunch, provided by The Lions, followed by three strip landings. Alexandra Airfield has a few two-person accommodation cabins with hangars for those who wish to make Alexandra either a base or layover.

Southern adventure

Monday morning and time for everyone to part ways. After goodbyes to friends, commonly including the phrase 'See you in Haast for the Winter fly-in', it was time to continue our adventure. Mum and Dad would like to thank all of the members for their warm hospitality.

Departing Cromwell Racecourse we tracked along the Clutha River for Dunedin then followed the coast south. On approach to Invercargill, incoming sea fog forced us inland, diverting us to Gore for fuel. The Stewart Island flight pilots confirmed that Stewart Island was clear as far as the eye could see, with only Invercargill fogged in and a no-go.

It is important to note that you require permission to land at Ryans Creek. The first step is to complete their form, which gets filed. Permission is only granted once you have spoken to Stewart Island flights for a verbal weather and strip briefing. Your arrival and departure time is dictated by the commercial flight operations.

We were booked for two nights at Stewart Island, staying at The Argyle Apartments. These are new, modern and within 400m of the pub, shop and activities. A gorgeous view of Halfmoon Bay from the deck, complete with sundowners, ended the day perfectly.

The following day was designated a rest day, though perhaps Charles and I need a dictionary for Christmas: we walked the whole of Ulva Island and cycled all 27km



Charles, Gayle and their two PPIs, Peter and Carole; Alexandra Airport, AOPA AGM lunch.

of Oban's roads. perhaps not so restful but great. We will most definitely return and stay longer.

On 24 March, with more clear skies, we flew the whole coast of Stewart Island. It's size was a revelation, as was the amount of untouched land. The plan was to then fly to Te Anau for fuel, followed by a visit in and around Milford Sound, before finishing up at Haast.

We had spoken to quite a few AOPA members about Milford during the course of the celebrations at Cromwell and ascertained that one needs to get an airfield briefing, which we got. The AIP states that permission from DoC is needed to land. What it does not say is that DoC requires a minimum of five working days to process. Based on this, we decided that we would have to miss landing at Milford Sound this time round.

I have subsequently found out that, as a member of AOPA, one can land under a joint concession which negates the need for prior approval. This information might beneficially be made more available to members, and I wonder whether other landing strips are also covered under a concession. I suppose that's the penalty one pays for not being a local. (See the following article for further information on flying into Milford under the concession.)

Fiordland turned out to be completely blanketed by low cloud and the AOPA webcams did not paint a pretty picture. We instead headed inland to Mandeville for lunch, as we heard it had a good café and great coffee.

Our plan B was to head back to Wanaka and make further decisions there. Low

and behold, clear sky, so we tracked over Lake Hawea and up into the Alps. Mum and Dad had previously been in the Southern and European Alps by campervan; this was their first experience by air. When I looked over at Mum she had a smile from ear to ear and an expression of combined awe and tranquillity. Dad was totally speechless (well, almost). "What is there left for us to do?" he asked. It demonstrated how truly lucky we are as aviators (and family of), enjoying experiences inaccessible to most.

The Landsborough valley was clear, which allowed us to track into Haast to our pre-booked accommodation.

Next morning we woke to cloud around 3500ft. With Rangiora our goal, we took off and orbited over Haast to gain height. The clouds were thin enough to reveal all the splendour of the Alps. The view was more mystical than the previous day, clouds 'flowing' over some saddles giving the appearance of waterfalls.

The weather was completely different when we reached the Canterbury plains: low cloud around 800ft, so we picked our way through some holes in order to get above it on track for a very sunny Rangiora. We spent the night catching up with some long-time friends, the perfect final night of our trip.

Setting off in great weather the following morning, we tracked the Clarence River en route Omaka. This valley is still one of my favourites and, thanks to my screensaver, I relive the memory daily.

Taylor Pass into Omaka offered the first turbulence of the trip, continuing out over the Sounds due to a gusty northerly. It provided a classic rollercoaster ride; certainly not pleasant, so up and up we went to a ceiling of 9500ft, where it was lovely and smooth, homeward bound. 🐦



Clarence River valley, en route home.

What's the story at Milford?

By Ross Millichamp

The experience of Charles and Gayle Wilson demonstrates that there is some confusion about private aircraft landings at Milford Sound (NZMF).

NZMF lies in a national park, which means that a 'concession' is required for all landings. Concessions normally only apply to commercial activities, but private aviation on Public Conservation Land is also affected by the Conservation Act. The process for obtaining a one-off concession/landing permit is to apply in writing to the Te Anau office of the Department of Conservation, pay a \$50 administration fee and wait up to five working days for it to be processed. Five days is a very long time in terms of Fiordland weather and the chance of conditions still being suitable at the end of this process is remote.

Fortunately, AOPA NZ, Backcountry Pilots Association, Cessna 180-185 Club and Sport Aircraft Association hold a joint concession for private landings at NZMF, which allows members to land without

the need for reams of paperwork and long delays. You are still required to study the procedures described in the AIP (NZMF AD 2 -31.1), to get a briefing from a "pilot currently experienced in NZMF operations" and to adhere to the arrival/departure rules on the day. Briefings can be obtained from any of the operators who fly into Milford – Top Flights or Southern Alps Air in Wanaka or Glenorchy Air, True South, Milford Sound Scenic Flights or Air Milford in Queenstown. They all have an interest in safe operations in and out of NZMF. Other useful resources are Sue Kronfeld's 'Milford Sound Awareness' article in the Autumn 2021 *Approach* magazine and the CAA GAP publication 'In, Out and Around Milford'.

The Milford Flight Service (MFS) advise that they are happy to help visiting pilots

with advice on current weather conditions and expected traffic flows. It's not a bad idea to ring them on 03 249 8092 and let them know your likely arrival time and registration details. Best time to ring is between 8–9am, before the tourist flights start to arrive. MFS don't need details of the concession you're operating under.

There is no charge for using the concession but you will get an invoice from Airways for use of MFS. Shaun Gilbertson is responsible for annual reporting of concession activities to DoC so you need to let him know your aircraft registration details and the date of your visit as soon as you can after completing your trip. Shaun encourages members to visit Milford and reckons the savings made through using the group concession will go a fair way to paying your AOPA NZ subs. 🦅



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Blue Light flights



Great feedback from kids, pilots and volunteers confirms that Blue Light Day is alive and well around the country.



In Canterbury, twelve aircraft took eighteen youngsters plus a couple of accompanying volunteers on a flight to Philip Seale's hangar at Forest Field, where they enjoyed looking around his microlight manufacturing operation. A scenic flight 'the long way home' led to a good lunch and chat. Deborah Swaney of Canterbury Blue Light passed on the following message from a delighted parent: "Thank you so much for the Take a Kid Flying Day. My son was so happy and excited. We are really grateful."

At Ardmore, the postponed Blue Light Day saw twenty-three youngsters and parents enjoying flights care of eight aircraft and pilots, all fizzing with excitement.

"Awesome!" was the response from eighteen Balclutha children who enjoyed the day's outing in the Deep South. Ten pilots gave the lucky recipients a tour of the Catlin coastline, Dunedin, Mosgiel and Gore, with a stop at the rescue Helicopter complex in Mosgiel, and an inspection from on high of the rally car service area at Lake Waiholo.

Seventeen young aviators and their supporters joined with local AOPA members to share flights at Timaru Airport, to much acclaim. The BBQ and games didn't go amiss either!

The Blue Light 'Take a Kid Flying' programme has been running for nearly ten years, and is a collaboration between the Blue Light Charity, AOPA NZ and the NZ Police. The youngsters involved range

from 8 to 17 years old and are fairly universal in their reaction to the opportunity.

The success of the event comes down to the effort and enthusiasm of local organisers, volunteer pilots, personnel from Blue Light charity and the NZ Police, and thanks are due to all. The fun – and that all-too-rare opportunity to again enjoy flying as if for the first time – is down to the kids. Thanks to you all, too!

Steve Brown notes: "The reaction of the kids on the day is certainly reward enough for the participating pilots."



Blue Light flights in Canterbury (top left), Ardmore (top right, left and below), Balclutha (above and pg1), Timaru (bottom left).



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50 years of AOPA NZ



By Anna Mackenzie

When twenty planes – Austers, Tiger Moths, Cubs and Cessnas – from Timaru, Otago and Southland gathered at Walter Peak Station in 1969, it was remarkable enough to make the local newspaper – and led to the incorporation, a little over a year later, of the Kittyhawk Flying Club.

The inaugural meeting was held at Taeiri on 7 March 1971 and the club formed with 60 members. Ivan Strathearn was elected President – and what an honour it was to have him at the 50th commemorations.

From the outset social gatherings were a mainstay of the organisation, but it soon became clear that there was an additional need to provide a voice for recreational flying to protect our right to fly. In 1978, the Kittyhawk Club officially adopted the AOPA banner, joining AOPA International in 1985. At that time AOPA NZ membership stood at 280.

Subsequent decades saw the Executive Committee much involved in national politics, representing GA's interests against legislation restricting private aviation.

Three forums remembering AOPA's history proved a highlight of the 50th anniversary weekend. With Ian Sinclair hosting in the style of Michael Parkinson – or was it Graeme Norton? – panellists shared stories of where we've come from, celebrated our successes, and cast a brief glimpse at where we're going.

First up were some of our long-standing members whose recollections stretch

back to those early days. The name 'Kittyhawk Club' came from the Wright brothers, who flew from Kittyhawk Sands, Merv Halliday recalled.

"The first meeting didn't take long," Brian Hore added. "And afterwards we had a fly around Dunedin to let people know what was going on."

As the 1970s progressed, 'trendy things like logos' were adopted and the organisation began to evolve. Merv: "Back then landing fees were free and petrol was 7cents/gallon – but things were beginning to tighten up. 'User pays' was starting to creep in – and that led to the feeling that we needed to be part of international AOPA."

The Executive settled down to some serious work – panellists Brian Hore, Merv Halliday, Brent Fergusson, Murray Paterson, Russell Taylor, Ian Andrews and Richard Bradley jointly represented 79 years of service on the Committee, but the longest service record goes to Don Ryder, with 16 years (and still counting!) of continuous service. And let's not forget the commitment (and tolerance) of all the other halves...

But it wasn't all committees. Family outings and flying trips have always been a feature. "AOPA was a big part of my life and my family's social life," Brent Fergusson noted.

Murray Paterson: "For our first fly-in we landed on a strip at Glenorchy. The wives had supplied big bags of smoko, and we set it all out and listened to the rugby test on a transistor radio."

Richard Bradley joined in 1984, and recalled the newsletters produced by Celia Bowmar on an old Gestettner. "They were really interesting. AOPA trips became a big part of our family life – the kids still talk about them." He also recalls being crowbarred into standing as President – some things never change!

There were brief encounters with Government. "We fought the 'age 60' rule and Airways' \$42 flight plan charge – it was a lot of money then; we had to fight it – and actually, we're still fighting it."

Brian and Merv's brush with government, over the levy on aviation fuel going into the consolidated fund, had proven equally frustrating. "We went to Wellington and met MP Martyn Finlay, plus advisors.



Left: Forum of Life Members, aka 'the Old Fellas': Brian Hore, Merv Halliday, Brent Fergusson, Murray Paterson, Russell Taylor, Ian Andrews, Richard Bradley.

Right: Richard Bradley presents a service medal to inaugural Kittyhawk Club President, Ivan Strathearn.

Above clockwise from top left, a few 'talking heads': Brian Hore, Ruth Orbell, Grant Halliday, Sean Gilbertson, Sue Kronfeld, Dave Paterson.

And at the very top, the event that started it all!



We'd just started to put our case when there was a division in the house, bells rang and the meeting was abandoned. What a disappointment! Next day we met Opposition MP Colin McLachlan at his request; he opened the whisky and promised the earth – easy when you're not in power. Post election, we met with him and those same advisors again and they were all apologetic that they couldn't do anything as previously discussed. It was like belting your head against a brick wall."

Russell Taylor remembers continual hurdles with CAA. "We approached them and had extensive talks, and they agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding."

Brent: "When we joined it was purely social, but CAA and others were trying to make inroads into our flying, and many people joined because they could see we needed to have a voice at the table. AOPA gave us that. We've got to keep fighting for it but, compared to the situation in other countries, what we've got is pretty good."

Politics aside, there were local and international flying adventures.

"The first time we flew around Aussie," Russell recalled, "we had a group of about 40 or 50. We flew over via Norfolk and Lord Howe. Your aeroplane will go for years and years without a problem, but if you're ever flying over water, if it's going to go wrong, it'll do it then."

"Advocacy is great," Murray said, "but the social side is still an incredibly strong part of this organisation, which we shouldn't let slide."

That social aspect was the focus of the second forum of the day, featuring Ruth Orbell, John Carter, Graeme Donald, George Thompson, Kevin Anderson, Sean Gilbertson and Geoff van Asch.

Ruth and her sister Claire Paterson were taught to fly by John Penno. "He went round the country, staying in each place for a week at a time, and taught local people to fly. He brought a different aeroplane every time – that was an experience."

In 1982, newly licensed, she became the first woman elected to the Executive and took responsibility for organising fly-ins. "We had quite a few at Nokomai, Dingle and Clayton. In those days the philosophy was 'fuel your plane and fuel your family, all the rest will be free'. You brought a tent and stretchers. There was a loo available, and the shed for shelter. At one fly-in



Forum 2: Ruth Orbell, John Carter, Graeme Donald, George Thompson, Kevin Anderson, Sean Gilbertson and Geoff van Asch.

we ended up with 110 people, including ten kids. Ten kids could find ten times as much trouble."

Kevin Anderson would take his boys along and, while the flying was on, take them fishing. "Lifelong friendships were formed, within both generations."

North Island fly-ins began to feature. John Carter and Graeme Donald recalled gatherings at Raglan, Te Kuiti and up around the East Cape – "some of the most beautiful coast in New Zealand."

In 1987 the first mid-winter fly-in was held at Lake Pukaki, with a trip up to Mt Cook the next day. A few years on, the event relocated to Omarama "because we could taxi right up to the hotel."

The northern South Island Safari 2020 proved memorable for the access it gave to places you don't normally get to. "We owe a great debt to landowners who let us onto their properties and allow us to use their strips," Ian Sinclair noted.

The day's third forum with Jacob Booth, Grant Halliday, Hamish Ross, Sue Kronfeld, Dave Paterson, Alistair Matthews and Tom Williams focussed on passing on the experience, the knowledge and the enjoyment of flying.

B-cat instructor Jacob Booth was introduced to flying by his Grandad at age four. In 2010 he enjoyed his first air safari, aged eleven – as they set off for Portland Island, Judy Pacey gave him her pillow so he could see. "The most valuable part of growing up through AOPA has been the opportunity it presents to talk with people who've been in the game a lot longer than I have; to pick up tips and tricks. It's

special to be able to get out and do some strip flying, and to get access to places I couldn't otherwise visit."

Hamish Ross started to fly through the Aero Club movement. "In Aero Club training you get taken to a certain level then you're largely left on your own. Wanting to learn more skills got me involved in AOPA. There are a lot of pilots with a wealth of experience to pass on. You've got to be able to cull the good advice from the bad – and this organisation helps you figure how to do that."

For mountain flying instructor Sue Kronfeld, who got into flying as a teenager – "I was 17 and bored and did a trial flight and that was it: I was hooked" – mentoring is key. "Airwomen's, Aviation Federation and AOPA have all been crucial."

Being in touch with like-minded people has been a key part of many of the panel's flying educations – and there's no doubt recreational flying can run in the blood. Tom Williams noted that his father, Laurie, had been an AOPA member in the early days. "He had a Piper Cub, based in Fox Glacier. I bought my first aircraft in 1988. My son learnt to fly and joined AOPA once he left home, and his daughter, Ruby is a very keen flier. So, four generations."

Ian asked how we continue to build our GA community. Sue: "Cost is a big challenge. If you've got a spare seat, fill it up. Encourage someone new in."

Alistair: "One day fly-ins attract younger people – the only cost is the flying."

Tom: "Learning in AOPA is immense. Once you've got your licence, then the learning starts." 🦋

Forum 3: Jacob Booth, Grant Halliday, Hamish Ross, Sue Kronfeld, Dave Paterson, Alistair Matthews and Tom Williams.



Honours at the 50th



To acknowledge the work done behind the scenes over the last 50 years, AOPA's Life Members minted a medal honouring 'above and beyond' service, presented on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary. An outstanding turnout at the Anniversary dinner saw many of these presented in person.

Medals were presented during the Anniversary dinner to: Ivan Strathearn, the first President of the Kittyhawk Club. Celia Bowmar, for her many years as secretary and producer of the newsletter.

George Thompson, Kevin Anderson and Shaun Gilbertson; all stalwarts of the Executive, and regular organisers and attenders of AOPA events, as well as encouragers of new members.

Ian Sinclair for keeping AOPA IT systems up-to-date.

Alistair Matthews, who on the committee and in the position of Safety Officer dealt with issues of safety at many flying events.

Anna Mackenzie, our long-standing editor, producer, writer and photographer for the AOPA magazine.

Dave Wiseman, service on the committee and organising events. Arden Jennings, a great attender and sponsor of events, with much useful information to offer at these times.

Graeme and Marie Donald. Graeme spent many years on the committee including as Vice-President; he and Marie organised several memorable AGMs and safaris.

Mike Wine, a general all round good bugger and 'meeter and greeter', and still attending the AGM at almost 92 years old.

Robbie Burnside, for many years of faithful service, and always making everyone welcome at the farm.

Tom Williams, for years of committee service and being a great representative of the West Coast, while also managing to include some airstrips on the Coast in his roadside mowing contract.

Anne Hore, a most generous hostess at Nokomai and especially for the world AOPA convention.

Ruth Orbell, first lady on the Executive and a most welcoming host at Clayton Station.

Recipients not present subsequently presented with medals:

Phil Pacey, for Blue Light flights.

Don Ryder, for years on the committee including many as Vice-President, and organising advertising for the AOPA magazine.

Murray Smith, committee member and magazine editor, producer and distributor for many years.

Ian Vercoe, for many years as secretary.

Guy Sanders, organiser of Shell and Z fuel discounts and numerous winter fly-ins at Omarama.

Claire Paterson, for much hosting and helping with meetings and fly-ins; always making everyone welcome with food and drink.

Paul Hood, for much work on autumn fly-ins and safaris, years on the committee, and for building a new Hamner airfield and getting RD fuel depot established there.

Guy and Davida Mead, for always making visitors welcome to the fabulous Dingle, giving food and accommodation so willingly over many years to hundreds of members.

Laurie and Anne Prouting, for opening Mesopotamia to many visitors and making everyone welcome over many years.

Granville Jones passed away in advance of the AGM, but was presented with a medal prior to the AGM weekend for his work in organising many great fly-in safaris and AGMs in and around Gisborne and the East Cape region, all of which ran perfectly. 🛩️

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A sample of surprised and delighted faces. Top row: Mike Wine, Richard Bradley (presenting throughout), George Thompson, Graeme and Marie Donald. Below: Tom Williams, Dave Wiseman, Ann Hore, Arden Jennings, Celia Bowmar.

Sticking to the rules

We all need to be familiar with, and abide by, the Civil Aviation Rules (CARs). This article is a response to common rule-based questions asked by pilots, and a few recent prosecutions.

For most, the CARs become familiar during pilot training and are revisited for a refresher before a BFR. Unless you're dealing with the rules all the time, it's all too easy to get complacent and forget, misunderstand or, worse still, disregard the rules as 'just a guideline'.

While some of the CARs can seem outdated and not agile enough to move with the times, others are predicated on safe flying practices. It is these I'd like to focus on here. For those who have attended the excellent CAA Safety Course, you'll be familiar with the term 'Blood Priority' Rules. This refers to the CARs that are based on accidents that have resulted in fatalities.

It is commonly said that there are no new causes of accidents; all accidents are iterations or variations of previously proven accident causes. Very few accidents are caused by a single factor. It is far more common that they result from a chain of events. This is sometimes referred to as the 'Swiss cheese model', where the accident occurs when all the holes line up, and, conversely, if any one of those holes had been blocked, the accident would not have eventuated.

Now, I'm not suggesting that by diligently sticking to the rules you can ensure that nothing will ever go wrong, but if you look back through CAA fatal accident reports, you can often find deviations from the rules which, if the rules had

been followed appropriately, could have prevented the accident from occurring.

Two of the rules for VFR GA pilots in New Zealand that seem to keep reoccurring in accident reports are Meteorological Minima, and Minimum Heights for VFR flight. Others that crop up include fuelling of aircraft, BFR requirements, minimum fuel requirements, carriage of dangerous goods, requirements for and contents of a passenger briefing. So, do we all know them? Do we all stick to them?

Knowing the rules is straightforward. Next time you have a few minutes, open your flight tablet and skim through the rules. Apps such as OzRunways have all the documentation available at the touch of a button. Alternatively, you can find them on the CAA website.

It's easy for those who fly regularly with aero clubs or work for an aviation organisation to be immersed in and familiar with the rules – but it is equally easy for those of us not regularly exposed to a club or professional environment to go a couple of years without reference to the rules, and even to forget how to find them!

Once you know them, stick to them! Knowingly deviating from the rules is different to inadvertently breaking them through inattention or forgetfulness. The human factors behind such a scenario can be complex: lack of discipline, ignorance, time pressure, the decision to



take a one-off small risk for a big gain (get-home-itis comes to mind). These behaviours are linked to the attitudes we all studied in Human Factors (anti-authoritarian, impulsive, sense of invulnerability, machismo).

The rules are a legal bare minimum (thinking about weather), and there is merit to having a personal minimum that is set higher than the CARs – similar to the recommendation in the open road speed limit 'It's not a target' campaign.

I was taught by a flying mentor that when planning a flight operation, you should start at the 'accident scene' and work backwards. By this, I mean writing up your own accident report in your mind prior to taking the flight. What is that accident report likely to say? That the root cause of the accident was the PIC deviating or disregarding the rules?

The Civil Aviation Rules around flight are there to protect us. They are often based on fatal outcomes that we can all learn from and thus avoid repeating. Observing them is a legal obligation, with prosecutions or insurance declines a very real possibility, especially with the ability to retrospectively interrogate technology in EFB apps and ADS-B. Access to the rules is easy. Become familiar with them, stick within them, and avoid becoming another prosecution case or, worse still, an avoidable accident statistic. ✈️

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Sloping airstrip landings

By Matt Anderson



Like the old golfing quote, your stance can be either too far away from the ball or too close. With sloping strips it can feel the same, in that you either feel too high, or you realise you're too low on short finals.

While I don't claim to be an expert, over the years I've spent flying in West Papua, I've done a lot of steep slope landings on some of the highest and steepest strips anywhere, and have worked out what suits me best. Others may have different techniques. In fact, I was trained by an ag pilot who used lower stalking approaches with a lot more power. However, I've seen the results of these going wrong. Also, overly high approaches that lead to panic on short finals and can result in over-run. Hopefully a few pointers here may help keep you on the right path.

So the question is how to get it right. Practise a lot, and start with shallow sloping paddocks and strips that can provide a good starter to more slope. Bear in mind that each aircraft is different, and that these notes have been written with a fully loaded aircraft in mind, at max AUW, which is what I'm used to. Initially it's best to use an approach configuration and angle that you're used to, then adjust as need be as the slopes increase.

Let's assume you can already land on a predetermined spot – or very close to it – with regularity. First rule is that, generally, all sloping strips have no go-around option. So unless you have lots of excess power with a lightly loaded aircraft, or the strip levels out on top or has an escape valley to drop into off the side, then give away any thoughts of a go-round.

Hopefully you've seen the strip from the air and been briefed on basics such as length, size, slope, touchdown zone, go-around options, obstacles, etc. Another good pointer for checking slope or rise on a new airstrip is to fly across the airstrip at right angles in both directions. This will be a good indicator of the slope. One direction always looks different to the other. Even on flat ground, flying one direction across a strip can give a different slope perception than going the opposite way. Many farm airstrips have more than one slope or undulating slope angles, so a touchdown area needs to be decided on. Often there can



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be an ideal touchdown area between two steeper areas, or a nice slope to touchdown on before a flatter section.

Plan a nice long approach and set up early. All too often with groups, the planes bunch up and base legs are cut short, leaving little time and room to set up well. Hold an aim point at a constant spot through the windshield which will be before the touchdown area, assuming the flare will take 20-50m. Always have power on and be in a stable approach. By this I mean have your approach attitude/speed set with elevator position and descent controlled with power. For most strips with 10-20% slope, I work on descents of 2-400fpm. This is adjusted with load, and any wind conditions at the time. Lower than this and you'll need more power, which will leave fewer options when extra power could be required (down-draught). Any higher than 500fpm, and your round-out will be much bigger than necessary and it will be harder to hit the landing spot. As mentioned above, aircraft type and load will play a part in determining which descent profile works best on each slope. The main point here is to have a stable approach profile.

Steep strips require either more airspeed or power to flare (or a combination of both). Five knots extra is a good start point to flare and round-out and for momentum to the top. Extra power may also be required during flare to cushion the round-out and make a smoother touchdown rather than a rough arrival. If done well, approach power will be left on during flare to fly onto the slope. On steeper strips more than 20% slope, I always use 2/300fpm with a double flare. Initially flaring to level attitude to kill the descent, a second or two to assess arrival and touchdown, then re-flare onto the slope. Once practised this whole flare can merge into one, but it works just as well in two stages.

As strips become steeper and shorter, aim points before threshold are needed, as flaring will take far more room. As I've recently witnessed, if at any point, approach power is pulled right off (in calm conditions), then you're not stable and have a problem. Gliding onto any strip, let alone a slope, means you're well above the ideal descent profile and running out of options fast. A puff of wind up the rear at this stage can leave you right in the crap, or at least creating it. Make abort decisions early if unstable and high with no power on.

Obviously, landing at any challenging airstrips should ideally be done in calm conditions. With any winds it's even more important to stay on profile to get to your landing spot.

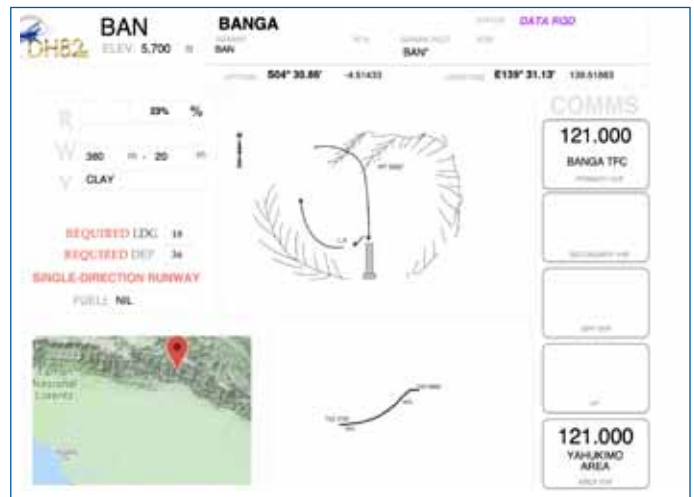


Photo previous page and information above: Banga in West Papua Indonesia is an example of a sloping airstrip commonly used by Cessna Caravans and Porters for delivery of loads of up to 1 tonne.

Once touchdown is complete and flaps up, keep power on for momentum to reach the top or parking area. Good judgement is required here, as you don't want to be too slow, but also need to keep speed up to reach the top. Knowing your aircraft and having a feel for load on board is important for any sloping landings.

Typical mistakes are:

1. Poor approach and setup. Unstable, as above.
2. The common illusion of being too high, when in fact you're probably about right if your aim point and attitude/speed is set, and your descent rate is where you want it with some power on. Thinking you're high can result in reducing altitude then realising the aircraft is behind the power/drag curve and too low, needing a lot of power just to make the threshold.
3. Cutting power before flare, as it looks like you're high. This happens often and is a difficult thing to learn when the visual cues don't match what is happening. On a good stable approach you'll need power on all the way until touchdown, not only for round-out, but to keep momentum up the slope.

Slope landings require constant practice. Add in tailwinds, crosswinds, up- and down-draughts, and you have a demanding situation. With full loads and a heavy aircraft, speed, some altitude, and some power is required at all times. Lose any one of these three key factors and you need action immediately.

These tips are only a guide, so get out and practise to see what works best for your aircraft and load. 🛩️

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Saga of an old Conti

By Ross Millichamp



Phil Pacey came running towards us as we shut down after landing at Omaka during the 2020 Summer Safari. From a hundred metres away he could see black oil streaming out of the 'shark gills' and from the breather on the underside of the cowling.

I got out, and at first glance, it looked bad. Oil everywhere and black smoke still wafting out of the breather.

We'd bought the Cessna 182Q in 2013, knowing that the engine was something we would have to deal with during our tenure. The Continental O-470U was already twenty-something years old and had run for 1500 hours in private ownership, which is typified by bursts of activity followed by long periods of doing nothing.

The late Paul MacDonald, who was a mentor to me and many others on all things aviation, had advised us to get an aircraft with a corrosion-proofed airframe and not to worry about the engine.

"Engines can be replaced, corrosion is what kills Cessnas," he'd said.

We had a top overhaul done at the time of purchase and had enjoyed around 500 hours of relatively good running out of the engine. However, as the engine approached 2000 hours in service, she started to give signs that she was ready for a birthday. Oil consumption was increasing, as was the amount of sludge accumulating on the underside of the airframe rear of the breather.

Bruce Robertson at Avtek discussed the state of the engine with me at each

service and started to gently hint that we needed to start thinking about a replacement. However at the 2019 Annual, the leak-downs were reasonable and no metal was found in the oil filter. Although she was burning more oil, Bruce was comfortable that it was not yet excessive so we were given another year of operating 'on condition'.

Leap forward eleven months, and I was looking at an aircraft covered in oil and looking very sorry for itself. 'Why did it have to happen so far from home?' I thought.

Fellow pilot and farmer Arch King had once told me that 'tractors never break down in the shed', so I guess it was inevitable that something major would happen away from home base.

In hindsight, it turns out that Omaka was not a bad place to break down. I wandered across the airfield and found myself in a hangar full of historic aircraft at JEM Aviation. I introduced myself to owner Jay McIntyre, who kindly downed tools and came over to take a look.

"Could be one of many things," he said, "not necessarily terminal."

Off came the cowls and out came the degreaser. After a lot of cleaning he found a corroded and partially blocked breather

tube, and thought the oil cap may have been a little loose. There were no obvious cylinder cracks or oil leaking from the important bits. The breather tube was sorted and a new gasket was put into the oil filler cap. The engine was run up and seemed fine.

The problem with these old Continentals is the bloody things run well even when they are at death's door. I took it for a quick test flight over the vineyards and saw good oil pressure and normal temperatures, so taxied back to JEM Aviation for a 'where to from here?' discussion.

It's in this situation that engineers are really exposed. It's their call whether it is safe to continue or whether the aircraft should be grounded. Jay could see that the engine was aging but also fully understood the difficulty of being stranded away from home and the hangar. "Come back in the morning and we will do a leak down test," he suggested.

The leak downs were average to poor but not quite bad enough to ground the aircraft. I was booked in at Avtek for the Annual the following week, so we agreed I could fly the plane home and take it to Timaru for closer inspection.

At Avtek the leak-downs were better. Apparently grit can get stuck under the

valves, giving erroneous readings. The oil leak had stopped, the engine ran well and there was no metal in the oil filter. Bruce gave me another year of operating on condition, but looked me in the eye and told me to start planning for a new engine. He also suggested that it might be a good idea to do an oil change at 25 hours, instead of at 50 hours as is the norm. At the time we were trying to sell a holiday house so Jinny and I decided to order a replacement engine as soon as the property sold and our finances were back in order.

Those 25 hours took a while to run up due to the COVID lockdown, but once back in the air the Continental appeared to be running well. There's nothing like winter conditions to keep engine temperatures low and the oil pressure high.

As a result, when I returned to Avtek in November I was expecting nothing out of the ordinary. While the engineer got to work, Bruce called me into his office and discussed my plans for a new engine. He warned me that the COVID crisis had caused major delays in engine production and shipping in the US. He pointed at James Murray's Cessna 185, which had been languishing in the Avtek hangar for many months waiting for a new Continental. "As soon as the bach sells," I assured him.

Ten minutes later the matter was out of my hands when metal was found in the oil filter. There was a possibility that it was coming from the starter adaptor or a piston ring, which did not necessarily mean a complete overhaul, but I'd already made the decision. We may have been able to patch things up and scrape a few more years of life out of the old engine, but I knew that in time I'd be back in the same



Oil on the cowling provides a graphic indication of issues. And finally: the new engine that will see Ross back in the air.

place having to make the same decision.

I'm in my mid-fifties and, if I enjoy good health, I may be lucky enough to be in the air for another twenty years. The thirty year old Continental was not going to see me out. Why spend lots of money keeping the old engine going and then have to replace it just before selling it to the next owner? I may as well enjoy the lower maintenance costs and peace of mind of having a fresh engine out front. Bugger the next person!

To be frank, placing the order was a relief. The scheduled leak down tests had been like waiting for the results of a cancer check. Interest rates are low and the NZ/US exchange rate is high. Although the cost of the replacement engine is eye-watering, there will probably never be a cheaper time to do it. The other thing



to come out of the saga was a greater respect for the engineering fraternity. They understand the huge cost implications of these situations, especially for private owners who are not registered for GST and can't claim anything back on a business. However we rely on them to be up front when action is needed to maintain aviation safety.

The only negative of the whole experience is the four month wait for the replacement engine, which could have been avoided if we had known the bach would sell within days of placing the order! 🛩️

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Charlie Draper:

Grassroots aviation champion

By Ross Millichamp

"Stand-up Charlie!" Those unkind words are often heard as Charlie Draper gets up to address attendees at his Darfield Fly-in. On this occasion, however, I refer not to his nuggety stature but to his habit of shying away from publicity about his contribution to aviation in the Canterbury region.

Charlie started learning to fly in a Piper Cherokee at the Canterbury Aero Club when he was 17 years old. He got close to finishing his PPL but, like many people that age, got distracted and went off in a different direction. Skydiving, kart racing, sidecar racing, starting a business and buying a farm dominated his life over the next twenty years, but the aviation bug was always lurking. In his forties he made the bold step of buying an aircraft before attempting to complete his PPL.

This time he trained with Jackie Frame of Hanmer Air, who was a great fit for a person wanting to finish his licence with the minimum of revision and re-qualification. It turned out that Charlie had not forgotten much, as he finished his PPL after only ten further hours in the air. Charlie

credits Jackie's practical, student-specific approach for getting him through so quickly.

Charlie's first aircraft was a half share in a 1961 Beagle Airedale. It was a mix of the old and the new with a steel tube-fabric fuselage powered by a 180HP engine and constant speed propeller. At the time it was the only Airedale in the country. A few years later another aircraft project came along. Paul Morrison owned a damaged Auster that he rebuilt for Charlie over a period of twelve years. For a short period of time Charlie operated both aircraft, but sold the Airedale eight years ago and now does all of his flying in the Auster.

Charlie's working life started as a fitter and turner apprentice at CWF Hamilton



Rebuilt Auster AYU; Charlie (centre) with Michael Oakley (left) and Donald Wright

in Christchurch, which led to a job as a maintenance fitter at MM Cables. His next step was the purchase of a small farm at Sheffield from which he ran a farm contracting business for many years. He and his wife Jo are now full time farmers on a 200ha property near Darfield, which has become the home of his popular fly-in.

Charlie does most of his flying in the local area with a tight group of friends. He occasionally ventures further afield but the hassle of carting around 91 grade fuel for the Auster makes long distance trips difficult. His longest day in the air started at Omaka on a day when the sky was full of low cloud and rain. He took off at 8am and fought an all-day battle with the weather, having to land at Cape Campbell (twice), then Hanmer, then Culverden, then Rangiora before finally getting home to Darfield at 5pm.

For many years Charlie operated under the radar and only occasionally participated in AOPA events. It may have stayed that way, had it not been for a get together in Omarama where Murray Paterson suggested that "one of you North Canterbury lot should organise a fly-in". Charlie thought about it and came up with the idea of the Darfield event. At first most people thought that the Darfield Fly-in would be a one-off but it has developed into one of the most popular events in the AOPA calendar.

Readers by now may have guessed that Charlie is not great with dates but he thinks that the first Darfield Fly-in took place seven or eight years ago. It attracted 23 aircraft and was, by Charlie's admission, not the best example of aviation

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event planning. Attempting to take that many aircraft to multiple strips in one group was a mistake. That no incidents occurred, Charlie credits more to airmanship than to his planning. These days, participants are broken into small groups with a designated leader and a well considered plan about the order in which they will visit each strip. Any new strips on the itinerary are reconnoitred before the weekend so that proper briefing notes can be developed.

Charlie and I checked out a new (to us) strip north of Amberley in the lead-up to the 2020 fly-in. Charlie wanted to take my Cessna as it was more typical of what people would be flying on the day. The farmer described his paddock as having a vector 'about 500m long' but because we had been unable to pin point it on Google Earth, we decided to take a look to make sure. We eventually spotted a windsock and after landing both thought that the strip seemed shorter than described.

On the way out we taxied the aircraft to the far end of the paddock and really concentrated on using all of the space available. As we cleared the fence we both

said 'that's not 500'. By now we had the co-ordinates and a check of Google Earth showed it to be more like 400m on the vector that a visiting pilot was most likely to use. The briefing notes were amended and a safe event took place.

The Darfield Fly-in now attracts more than seventy aircraft and is at the point where it is saturating local accommodation and facilities. Charlie is very proud of this growth and the ever increasing contribution it is making to the local community. In 2020 the Darfield Rugby Club made more than \$800 from hosting the event – money which will be used to supply jerseys to young players. The AOPA logo is to be included on the jersey!

Charlie is adamant that the fly-in remain accessible to all pilots and all aircraft types. He also wants the event to be affordable, as he understands from personal experience how expensive aviation is to pilots in the early stages of their flying careers, when they are also likely to be facing family and business commitments.

Charlie has assembled a large group of assistants who help in the planning and operation of the fly-in – in fact, I am yet

to meet a local pilot who is not involved in some way. He is reluctant to name names, however, for fear he leaves someone off the list. "They know who they are," he says.

With twenty-plus years of private flying under his belt, Charlie remains 'old school' in his choice of aircraft and the way he flies. "They all used to fly around safely in the 1950s without radios or transponders," he says. He believes that while new technology has its place, at his fly-in he wants everyone to be looking outside of the cockpit during the busy arrival and departure movements. Heaven help anyone who announces over the radio that they have spotted the traffic on their ADS-B! However his attitude may be changing. He is thinking about selling the Auster and buying something made of metal, with a starter motor, that runs on avgas! We all look forward to hearing the story... 🐦

This is the first instalment of a new column focussed on aviation personalities. If you know someone who would make a worthy subject of a future article, please contact Ross Millichamp at rrhmillichamp@gmail.com

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Jay McIntyre is the owner, LAME, IA, PPL and chief bottle washer of JEM Aviation, Omaka

Feel good rebuild

At JEM Aviation we enjoy a wide variation of work from GA annual inspections and repairs through to full-on warbird restorations, and everything in between.

Currently, one of our projects, and a feel-good one at that, is the return to flight of what is probably a very well-known Cessna A152, ZK-MUM. Pretty easy one would think... However, MUM was caught up in the financial collapse of a prominent North Island flight school and maintenance operation in 2014, when she was in pieces for SIDs inspections. Sold 'as-is', she suffered the fate of many aircraft in this condition, with bits being lost left, right and centre as the aircraft was moved from location to location.

During 2019 we had taken on the refurbishment of PA-38 ZK-FML for the Walsh Aviation Support Society Inc (WASSI). This was progressing nicely and WASSI prime-mover Mark Woodhouse advised he had come across a 152 Aerobat project that the Society was keen to acquire.

WASSI exists to support the Walsh Memorial Scout Flying Scholarship held at Matamata in January each year. As many of

you will know, this flying camp has been held for over fifty years, and has given many a pilot their start in aviation. In recent years the camp has struggled to get hold of the numbers of aircraft they require, so a decision was taken to acquire a number of aircraft to alleviate this problem. ZK-FML was the first aircraft, and it required a complete refurbishment and engine overhaul to get it to the standard that WASSI required.

A152 Aerobats are a relatively rare commodity with only 315 built, so it was felt this project was a good risk for the asking price. After an inspection in Hastings, the purchase was completed and the aircraft containerised and shipped to Omaka. Pre-existing workload meant that nothing would happen for some time, but some work was carried out on the wings and an inventory completed to ascertain what was missing. Unfortunately, the state of the work carried out previously and the lack of work records for it meant that the entire airframe had to be completely



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Left: completed rebuild, Tomahawk PA-38, and below: JEM's current project for Walsh Aviation Support Society Inc (WASSI), Cessna A152 Aerobat MUM.



gone through from top to bottom, which, given the SIIDs needed to be completed, has not been too onerous.

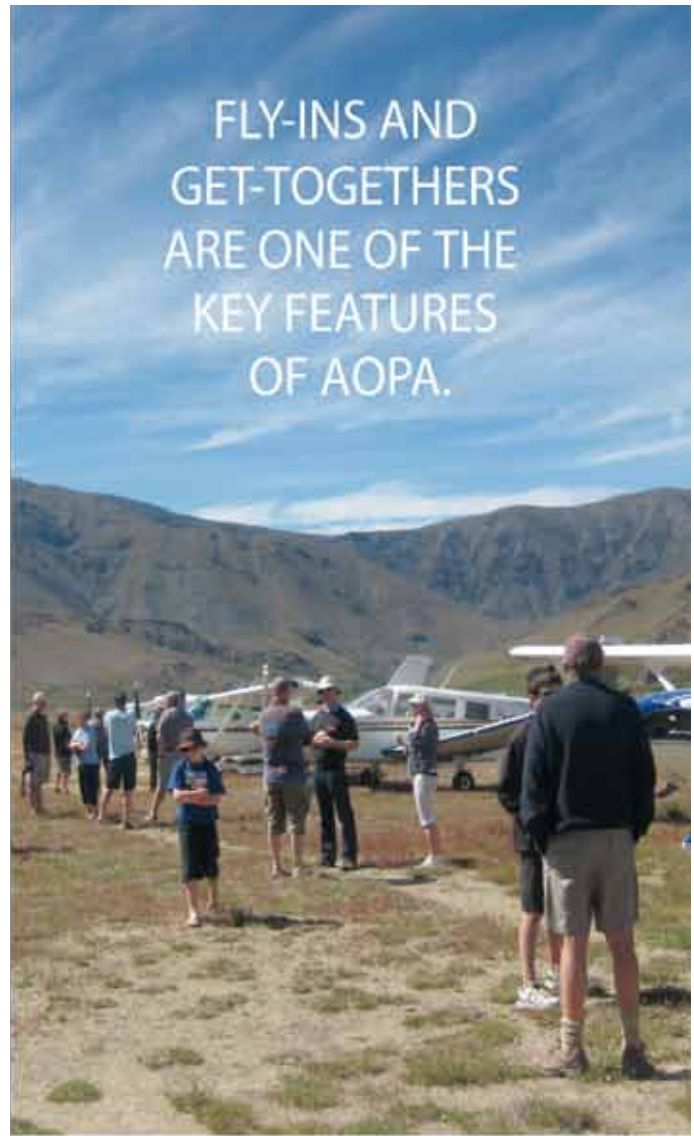
However, while the inventory side of things showed us what was missing in terms of major components (e.g. engine, cowls, wheel pants and the like) it did not immediately reveal all the little nick-nacks that had gone west since the aircraft was dismantled. For example, while the cabin doors were present, they had been dismantled and many small components of indiscriminate nature had disappeared. It is this sort of thing that we are spending silly amounts of time tracking down. Finding these items can be good fun, but it does influence delivery time, something WASSI is hopeful will occur in time for the 2022 camp.

Work to date has focussed on corrosion control, replacement of many rivets, the heads of which had been sanded down during the initial SIDs work back in 2013, and preparation for painting of the fuselage, wings and empennage, not to mention sourcing all the missing items. The fuselage interior has been primed and corrosion proofed and many components have been rejuvenated, ready for fitting once the fuselage painting is completed. New transparencies are about to be fitted and, once this is done, the fuselage will go into the paint shop. The wings are currently primed and a base coat of white has been applied with colour coats to be applied soon. The flaps and ailerons are pretty sad with significant internal and external corrosion present. Superior Air Parts and McFarlane Aviation Products to the rescue for much of this stuff!

As the project had no engine, an O-235 core was sourced from LyCon in the USA and this is being overhauled. COVID (amongst other!) issues have meant the delivery of this engine has slipped a couple of months, however we are not held up for it. Recently, acquisition of another PA-38 means that this engine has been re-allocated and the engine from the PA-38 will go to the 152 in due course.

A third PA-38 was identified in California earlier this year and this was meant to have been shipped by now, but once again COVID shipping issues have seen this delayed twice. We are hopeful the container will finally have moved by mid-May. Exciting times for WASSI!

If you would like to know more about WASSI and think you might be in a position to help support them, please check out <https://www.wassi.org.nz>



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Celebrating 60 at Ruatoria

By Helen Hoffman

I feel a kinship with the East Cape and with Ngati Porou, the tangata whenua, partly because I and my brothers, Chris and Matt were born there, and partly because I love mountains. Hikurangi, the maunga of Ngati Porou, is rugged, wild and just asking to be climbed.

In two recent trips to the East Cape I spent time on Hikurangi, overnighing in the old hut, welcoming the dawn at the Maui whakairo, as well as visiting places which hold a personal magic – Te Puia, where I was born; Ruatoria; Whakawhitara, where my parents taught in early 1960s, and Tikitiki, which has the world's most beautiful chapel. A highlight was Wharekahika (Hicks Bay) where we also lived and where my dad caught so many kahawai at the river mouth that my mum was bottling them for days!

So when my older brother Chris said he was flying to the Ruatoria Aero Club's 60th anniversary on 27-28 March and that he had a spare seat, I had no hesitation. My only problem was that I'm not a happy flyer. In fact, I'm an anxious flyer. My last two trips to the East Cape had been via Air New Zealand planes big enough that you don't even know you're flying, and that's how I like it. The thought of getting into Chris's Cessna 206 did not thrill me.

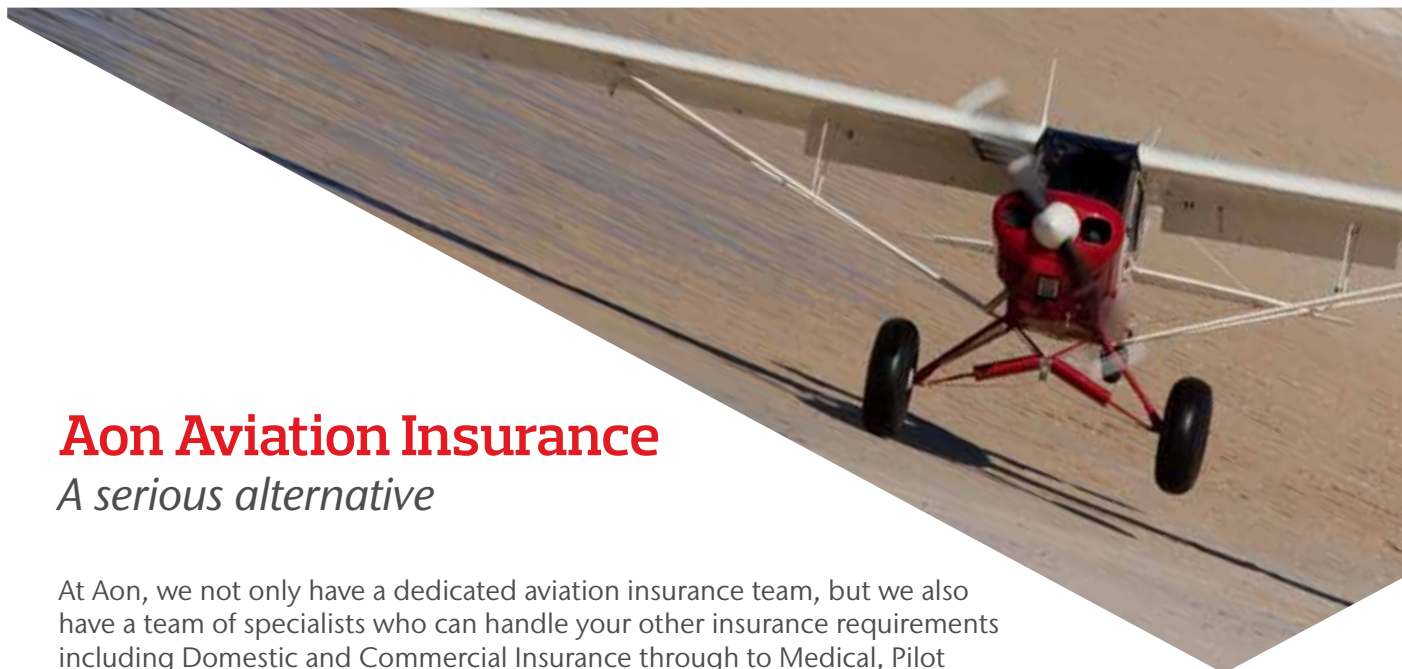
On the day of the fly-in, preloaded with airsick pills and a prayer, I accompanied



Molly and Helen Hoffman

my mum Molly to Paraparaumu airfield and waited as Chris went through the preflight rituals, following his wife Sally's advice: leave him to it, let's enjoy the morning sun. The sun was rising as we took off, rays shining through the dawn cloud, and there was not a bump or a shudder. A good day to be flying Chris assured me, and so it proved.

During the flight up I was glued to the window studying landforms and towns;



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the familiar places freshly beautiful from this bird's eye view, and so much closer and more personal than through a commercial jet's window. I was fascinated listening to the communications with air traffic control and hearing other pilots checking in. Chris and Sally, both experienced 'fly-inners', checked on Molly and me throughout the flight: 'Were we okay; be prepared for a turn here; may be a bit of turbulence there'. Reassured by the updates, there were no surprises.

I was apprehensive as we approached Ruatoria; it would be my first grass strip landing. A call to 'air traffic control', aka Mahanga Maru, Chris using his best Te Reo, and soon we were bouncing along the strip, being ushered to our parking spot and to a real Ngati Porou welcome. Ruatoria airfield has a unique on-field experience via the Koti Club. It was open for guests, Mahanga offering tea or coffee and a chair to rest and, for the adventurous, the possibility of scenic flights over Hikurangi or the East Cape.

The 60th celebrations were a community event. Local musicians, crafts, kai providers, the NZ Police, NZ Defence Force and Helicopter Rescue were all on site supporting the Aero Club, creating a fête-like atmosphere. For a non-flyer like me, the presence of almost thirty planes landing en masse was a sight hard to beat.

Once all planes were on the ground we were taken by bus to Reporua Marae,

Mahanga's home marae. Reporua is nestled amongst groves of trees beside crashing coastal surf and has an aura of peace and tranquillity. We were welcomed and fed like royalty. For many attending pilots, the experience of being hosted and staying overnight on a marae was a first. It's a unique experience. Unique for me was seeing the pilots enjoying being with others who enjoy flying and their flying machines, and, despite some of the more technical conversations being beyond me, their passion was evident.

The speeches and dedications honoured the early founders and stalwarts of the Ruatoria Aero Club, men like Theo Meredith, Hughie Hughes, Neil Thatcher and others. The anniversary was special for my whanau. In 1962 my dad Julian, now deceased, photographed the original clubhouse, a corrugated tin shed excess to Ruatoria Council's requirements, being floated across the Waiapu river on a log raft. My mum still had the colour slides and Chris presented three framed prints to the Club during the weekend.

Guests were privileged to sleep in the wharenuī, watched over by photographs of Tipuna gone before. My whanau was particularly blessed and slept the night in the beautiful chapel on the marae, Mahanga taking pity on us with the prospect of twenty snoring pilots! My mum was honoured by Mahanga with the title 'koka' Molly, a reflection of the esteem



Chapel at Reporua Marae; arrivals gate Ruatoria

she was held in as a strong woman leading the way. Our time on the marae finished with a pororoaki; us as guests thanking our hosts, honouring their generosity with song.

Aircraft departure was as special as arrival. After copious farewells, each craft lifted off and headed for home – east, west, north and south. After Chris had taken Hughie Hughes for a fly over this unique part Aotearoa, we did the same.

The weekend was memorable on so many levels – for my whanau and our history with the Aero Club, as my first fly-in, and for the flying itself: flying for the sheer joy and pleasure it can bring, rather than simply as a means of transport. I'll go again when next Chris has a spare seat. 🛩️



A successful one-day fly-in was held on 31 January at Middlerock Station. Middlerock is located in rolling hill country to the west of the Rakaia Gorge in central Canterbury.

Landowner Bruce Nell tells us the station got its name when the pioneers were digging fence posts by hand and found a rock in the middle of every hole!

Taking advantage of fantastic weather, more than twenty aircraft turned up for the one-day fly-in, including a large group of microlight pilots in their Alpi's.

The airstrip, which is a regular on the annual Darfield Fly-in itinerary, proved a little different this time. Landowner Bruce Nell had planted the paddock in turnips for winter feed but when approached about hosting a one-day fly-in, he rolled a strip through the turnips to produce a useable vector, taxiways and parking. Now that's commitment! Thanks Bruce! 🛩️

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