



THE SOUTHERN CROSS JOURNAL

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS GLIDING CLUB

P.O.BOX 132, CAMDEN N.S.W.

Tel. 02 4655 8882

Web site: www.southerncrossgliding.org

Editor: Woody Woodthorpe, Tel. 02 4751 2796, e-mail: woody@acay.com.au

MARCH-APRIL 2002

The past few editions of the Journal have been made available to most members by e-mail. This represents a considerable saving to the Club in printing and postage costs. However, as we all know, reading from a computer screen is not as easy as having a hard copy in front of you, and important items may be overlooked. It is suggested therefore that members print out a copy for ease of reference.

It is with great regret that we record the death of "Dickie" Bird, long time member of the Club, instructor, and valued friend.

Ken McCracken read the eulogy at Dickie's funeral, which is reproduced below.

EULOGY FOR GERALD "DICKIE" BIRD, 22/02/02

By Ken McCracken

I am extremely honoured having been invited to speak on Dickie's experiences in the world of sailplane gliding and of his personal contribution to the sport.

Out of love and respect for the man, and of his family, the gliding fraternity is represented here today by a significant number of bods. I know in my heart that there would be many more, had they been aware of this event and/or their circumstances would have permitted.

When you look into Dickie's history and listen to his family, you would have to conclude that Dickie was borne and destined to fly. It is not difficult to imagine Dickie ranked high in the RAF as a pilot. This was his most fervent wish however, to his utmost disappointment, it was denied him on medical grounds.

We know Dickie by our association with him. And what many are not aware of, is that prior to taking up flying here in Australia in 1979, he had ceased flying 22 years earlier after his initial period of eleven years in the sport commencing in 1946. That is a story in itself and is the subject of a document prepared for the SCGC journal by Dickie in 1996 entitled "Glider Pilot Training 50 years ago". It is a good read and perhaps it ought to be republished in memoriam.

A few highlights of Dickie's early days.

- Commenced flying at an Air Training Corp gliding school 1st September 1946, as a civilian instructor (an interesting system where you started as an instructor without flying experience, and without two seater gliders).

- By 22nd September 1948, after two years and 118 launches, he had amassed the sum total of 5 hours, 1.5 minutes.
- On the 23rd September 1948 (i.e. launch No. 119), he ridged soared not above 1000 feet AGL for 5 hours and 6 minutes to gain his Silver “C” duration. A considerable feat given the very low performance characteristics of gliders in those days.
- Launch methods at the time were rather crude and varied including “rocket assisted”. Though Dickie never had the experience of riding a rocket, he is one of the few who mastered the bungee launch which literally catapults you off a hill.

When he ceased flying in the UK on 17th August 1957, after 299 launches, he had amassed the sum total 36 hours and 37 minutes.

During the 23 years of flying in Australia, he obtained a huge string of credits including Xcountry and height gain badges, instructor ratings and competition flying, bringing his total hours on his last flight (launch No. 2259), to 1032 hours, 27 minutes.

A study of Dickie’s flying records, etc. reflects the mind of a person who is consumed by the passion of the sport. Everything is there in meticulous order for the observer to see. The list of people whose lives he touched in passing on his skills reads like a telephone book. His son Graham was one, and Graham then moved on to achieve his own level of satisfaction.

Apart from flying, Dickie gave much of his time to the SCGC as lecturer, examiner and as a committee member.

I have contacted several of people in the SCGC who were either coached by Dickie, or were his peers or both, in order to obtain feedback on their sentiments at this time. Before I spell them out I take the liberty of announcing mine first.

“Dickie was capable of mixing it with people of any standing, but never stood above you. He engendered harmony and contributed a great atmosphere in the club scene. He was a ready learner and enjoyed passing on his knowledge. He pitched in and was no slouch. He shared the load with enthusiasm and showed great leadership by example. He didn’t criticise others and never spoke a word in anger. He was no “push over” and was unmoved by fools, he would tolerate them with his characteristic smile. He was a good man, a person of high self esteem, unruffled and intent on service to his fellow man. God love him!”

Here is a collection of sentiments that I referred to earlier-

- A real gentleman, straight and happy to do the right thing by others
- There are a lot of people flying around today that can be thankful for his patience and thoroughness
- Committed in the tradition of Bert Johnson
- Humorous, particularly with questions at the instructor panel meetings
- A special sort of teacher
- Always very friendly and helpful
- Real gentleman, always extremely kind, endlessly patient
- Never had a bad word about anyone
- Interested in people
- Never saw him angry, very even tempered
- A caring guy. Did a lot for the club in an unsung way
- Fantastic fellow, taught a hell of a lot at Xcountry camps
- Helpful, knowledgeable, supportive
- Stalwart of the club
- Careful, thorough, unhurried
- A very nice guy, well travelled and very knowledgeable, tried all sports and many other things, knew how to enjoy life, had a great grasp of the beauty of the world and loved doing things in it

I love that last sentiment. It reminds us that we should stop and smell the roses, that we must stop and listen to the people who can see beauty in everything everywhere and have engulfed themselves in it. Just like Dickie did.

From these sentiments, you can see that Dickie was especially unique and has left an impressive legacy. Without hesitation, the committee of the SCGC have already resolved to perpetuate the memory of Dickie in some way, in recognition of his fine qualities and the legacy that he has left with us.

Dickie has taken Flight No.2260. His last solo, out of the life he has known and as we know it. It is not an out and return, it is one way, into the next world. We hope and pray that we will be blessed with his company when it becomes our turn.

PRESIDENTS THERMAL:

The weather has not been kind to us over the past few months and this has resulted in a decline in our flying hours with the inevitable reduction in income. I think we can say that the worst is now past, and we have had some good flying days lately. Remember the need to keep current, and also that the Club does need the revenue, so fly as much as possible in the next few months.

I still receive occasional reports about lack of attention given to the public and new members on the field. It does not take much effort to keep your eyes about you and ensure that no one is left 'out in the cold' around the pie-cart. It is particularly important to make new members feel that they are part of the family. So, if you see someone you don't know, introduce yourself and if you are unsure of answering their questions take them to the duty pilot, instructor or committee member.

The duty pilot fills an essential role in our weekend operations, but for a long time we have had difficulty in getting enough volunteers. A new approach to a duty crew roster at the weekends was discussed at our recent planning meeting and is under consideration by the committee. The basic idea is to roster two instructors, an AEI and three duty pilots. This duty crew would be responsible for getting aircraft out, doing the DI, carrying out the normal duty pilot job, log keeping, aircraft retrieving and finally packing up at the end of the day. Other members who are present would of course be expected to assist. The benefit is seen as the relaxation of the need for other pilots to spend the whole day on the field. However, the allocation of aircraft would still be on a first come basis, although the possibility of devising a very basic booking system was also raised and will be looked at further.

The major requirement for such a scheme to work is that ALL members would be required to be on the roster about every 8 weeks. There was also a suggestion that club members, who did not wish to be on such a roster, could perhaps pay an increased membership fee. This would only effect the roster for duty and not in any way change the allocation of aircraft.

If you have any ideas on this subject or any other contribution, could you please put it in writing and give it to a committee member.

A Marketing Plan for the Club is being devised with the assistance of Dave Boulter. It is looking at all our activities, with a specific aim to increase our membership. When it is in a near final form it will be put to members for comment.

Michael Bow

New Members:

Welcome to Troy Duncombe and to Robert Maher who joined recently. Robert is new to gliding, but has had some previous experience in power flying. Troy has flown previously with Central Coast and Leeton clubs.

Also to father and daughter duo, Michael and Amy Russell. Amy had her first flight with yours truly recently, and despite that she still decided that she wanted to glide. Michael figured he might as well do some flying too rather than watch Amy have all the fun.

Finally, we welcome Brad Martin as a new probationary member.

Achievements:

Congratulations to Roger Head who made his first solo flight recently. Have there been any others? If so please let me know.

Eddie Pahic mentioned recently that Ian de Ferranti had made a 750 km flight during the Bathurst camp in January, the third such flight that he has made in recent months. For those who don't know him, Ian is a member at Bathurst and an Associate Member of our club. He flies with us regularly on weekdays in his DG 600 (VH-HDU).

Peter Moffit, our youngest member, graduated to the Junior on March 2nd, and enjoyed the experience. It wasn't actually a great step up for him as he has already flown the Air Training Corps' K8 single seater at Bathurst.

Ron Barney has also moved up to the Junior and has commented on how pleasant it is to fly after the two seaters.

Some of our members are far too modest. In the last issue, had they mentioned it, we could have recorded that Jay Anderson obtained his Silver C and that Jim Kent completed a 300 km flight in the Junior while at camp. Congratulations, albeit belatedly, to both of them.

It was also noted from AG/Skysailor that John Jurrotte had obtained his C certificate.

What with the Christmas fires and the subsequent rain there haven't been very many really good flying days of late. However March 2nd turned out to be very good. There were several long flights including over four and a half hours by Paul Rindfleisch in the Astir, and about the same length of time for Phil in his 'Philatus'.

Incidentally, in the month covering Narromine camp and Temora, Phil clocked up 92 hours flying time!! (I've looked at the Pilatus carefully, but can't find the engine – but he must have it there somewhere).

Tuggies galore:

Derek Ruddock has recently started towing, and Richard Shemtob was seen in the Pawnee a couple of weeks ago receiving conversion instruction from our tug master. Also, as reported in November's Journal, Don Palmer has obtained his PPL and I gather that he is an aspiring tuggie. Jay Anderson is nearing completion of his power training with Curtis Aviation, though he hasn't told me whether he wants to move to the front end of the tow rope.

Anyway, it's a good thing to have tuggies who are really experienced glider pilots and will hopefully sniff out the thermals for us. *Though.....*

Overheard:

At a seminar for tug pilots in Perth. "Throttle back in lift to reduce the climb rate, and put power on in sink. That fools them into getting off in sink." (Hearty laughter all round).

So that's why I manage to beat the tug down!

[from Aus. Gliding Feb 95].

The Camden Mini comp.:

The rules have been modified somewhat, and the competition is open until the end of April. Timing starts when the pilot is overhead Camden church, not above 3,000 feet. The course is from the church to The Oaks airfield, back to McDonalds, and finishing overhead Camden church. The comp. is self timed and thus relies on the honour system.

Richard Solomon is the first contestant, and he covered the course in 31 minutes. So unless someone beats this time Richard will be the winner.

If you are thinking of having a go, please see the folder in the pie cart setting out the rules and showing aerial photos of the turn points. On completion, note your time in the folder.

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### ***News from Toulouse:***

Peter Chegwiddden phoned a couple of days ago to say that he was about to visit the DG works to see how our DG1000 is progressing. With any luck he'll get a flight in one while he's there. Peter says that he has been flat out on his course at the Airbus factory, but when it finishes he'll be doing some touring in Europe before returning.

### ***Calendar of Events:***

*Please note the dates which will affect you in your diary.*

**D.I. Courses:** See schedule below.

**ABC certificate lectures :** See schedule below.

29<sup>th</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> April **Easter weekend at Temora** – See notes below.

16<sup>th</sup> June **Presentation night and BBQ** (presentation of club trophies)

27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> July NGS instructors' revalidation will be held at Camden, This will affect the number of two seaters available for normal flying.

August Wave / ridge soaring camp – Date & location to be advised.

15<sup>th</sup> September @ 7.30 pm **BBQ and AGM**

### ***D.I. Courses:***

The next courses will be:

23<sup>rd</sup> March at 9am for Metal aircraft

6<sup>th</sup> April at 9am, for Fibre glass and wooden aircraft.

Both courses are subject to there being sufficient numbers of participants.

Contact: Bill Nixon, tel. (home number) 02 9674 2771.

### ***A,B,C Certificate Lectures:***

As noted by e-mail, Dave Boulter has volunteered to run the ABC certificate lectures which were previously given by Dickie Bird. Those attending will meet at the club house at 7pm for a 7.30 pm start, on the following dates.

20<sup>th</sup> March\*, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 18<sup>th</sup> September.

\*This date will probably be passed by the time you receive the Journal.

If you wish to attend or require any further information please contact Dave on (work number) 02 8875 9541 or (home number) 02 4626 8165.

### ***Easter weekend:***

Two aircraft, the Astir and the Jantar, will be taken to Temora for the weekend. Anyone wishing to go should contact Don Palmer tel. 4653 1146. The proposal is to de-rig the Jantar on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> and tow it to Temora on the following day. The Astir will be taken there by Kevin Weston a few days earlier. At the time of writing it is not certain whether there will be a Level 2 Instructor available. If not, only Independent Operators will be able to fly. It is important therefore that others check the situation with Don.

### ***The Committee for 2001/2002***

|                              |                  |           |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| PRESIDENT                    | Michael BOW      | 9873 6285 |
| VICE PRESIDENT               | Derek RUDDOCK    | 9487 3752 |
| SECRETARY                    | Peter CHAPMAN    | 9979 1125 |
| TREASURER                    | Eddie KROPKOWSKI | 9712 7419 |
| CFI                          | Clive POTTER     | 9634 6186 |
| AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE OFFICER | Peter CHEGWIDDEN | 9631 2737 |
| GROUND EQUIPMENT OFFICER     | Dave CALLAHAN    | 9482 8882 |
| TUG MASTER                   | John DALL        |           |
| MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY         | Jason ARMISTEAD  | 4647 5904 |
| OPERATIONS OFFICER           | Bill NIXON       | 9674 2771 |
| EXPEDITIONS OFFICER          | Don PALMER       | 4653 1146 |
| JOURNAL EDITOR               | Woody WOODTHORPE | 4751 2796 |
| ELECTED FLYING MEMBER 1      | Richard SOLOMON  | 4683 1426 |
| ELECTED FLYING MEMBER 2      | Jay ANDERSON     | 9810 6279 |
| PUBLICITY OFFICER            | Richard SHEMTOB  | 9954 0244 |
| SOCIAL SECRETARY             | Cecile RICKARD   | 9636 4120 |
| ALTERNATE NSWGA DELEGATE     | Frank CROWE      | 4626 8165 |
| CERTIFICATES OFFICER         | Dave BOULTER     | 9719 8692 |

### ***Jason enjoys some Great Flying at Camden:***

More encouragement to get you flying at Camden now that the bushfires and rain are gone ...

Saturday 9th March saw cloudy conditions at Camden while parts of Sydney experienced significant rainfalls. A total of 14 flights accomplished, including 9 AEFs (a family of 3 and another of 6). Thanks to Don Palmer and David Boulter for helping with the AEFs even though they weren't on the duty roster, and to the duty crew and other members who helped make the day worthwhile. Welcome to two new members, Brad Martin and Michael Russell, (father of Amy who is a probationary student member already),

We only got a few short and light showers on the airfield on Saturday - one more reason to check what's happening at Camden before deciding not to come. If in doubt, ring the Club mobile phone (0402) 055 093 on weekends and hopefully the Duty Pilot can fill you in on the actual conditions at Camden. Failing that ON WEEKENDS ONLY PLEASE , you can call my mobile on (0418) 499-568 and I can give a Mt Annan view of the weather (I live just 10km from Camden)

After a late start, Sunday 10th only had 9 launches in total. Congratulations to Ron Barney who was converted into the Junior.

Monday 11th saw a continuation of the overcast conditions of the previous 2 days. Yours truly managed a personal best, with a 2 hour 44 minute flight in the Club Astir, first under cloud and then in the blue as the sky opened up with brilliant sunshine in the late afternoon. Climbs of just under 5 knots on the averager were recorded, with some thermals of up to 8 knots for brief periods.

So, what are you waiting for ? Flying at Camden is great, even if there's rain in Sydney ! Get out there and get current again ASAP.

Jason.

*Reminder:* You can get current surface weather information from the Camden Automatic Weather Station (AWS), tel. 02 4655 9248. The information includes the temperature and dew-point, from which you can get an idea of the cloud base. e.g Temp.20°C, Dew-point 12°C, Temp./dew-point spread = 8°C. Cloud base will be  $8 \times 400 = 3,200$  feet AGL approx. The station does not give weather forecasts. The AWS data is also available on the Bureau of Meteorology web site - links to this are on the Club web site under "Weather"

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### **Safety Matters:**

#### *Safety in the circuit.*

We all know the old saying 'familiarity breeds contempt', well this can certainly apply at times to our flying. If we fly from the same site all the time we can easily fall into the habit of flying the circuit with reference to ground features, and basing our height on the altimeter reading. During training the instructor has, of course, gone on about angle to the field and so on, but the method we've unconsciously developed has worked out well, so no problem! However, come the day when we fly at another airfield or, worse still, have to make an outlanding and problems suddenly arise. So this is one habit to avoid.

Another aspect of this problem can arise if we've had a longish spell of flights in calm weather or light winds. We may get used to making our approaches at a certain speed, which might be appropriate in calm conditions, but is very inappropriate if we suddenly encounter strong winds.

Our 'speed near the ground' should be not less than one and a half times stall speed, to minimise the risk of inadvertent stall. For the IS 28 this is slightly over 50 knots, and in calm conditions this is OK for the approach. But if we have a wind to contend with we must be prepared to cope with the wind gradient effect on approach. This is covered in Basic Gliding Knowledge under 'The Approach and Landing' and will also have been dealt with in training, but the business of familiarity comes into play, and if we haven't had to deal with it for some time we can easily overlook the need to make adequate allowance for the diminishing wind speed as we descend on final. The net result can be that our speed in the final stages of the approach may decay to the point where a heavy landing, or worse, is quite likely. So, let's keep in mind that the formula for windy conditions is: Approach speed =  $1.5 \times \text{stall speed} + \text{half the wind speed}$ . In strong gusty conditions a little more speed is an advantage to cope with the possible lulls between gusts.

OK, but how do we know the wind strength? Well it should be normal practice to try to assess wind speed and direction when we are in the circuit. The procedure is to check the wind sock and to be on the lookout for drift as we fly down wind. If we are having to crab our down wind leg we'll have to be prepared for a cross wind component on landing. There is the possibility that in the course of a lengthy flight the wind may change in direction and speed, so relying on the wind being the same as when we took off is not a good idea. Apart from the wind sock/crabbing checks referred to above, it is worth remembering that during tower operating hours at Camden, you can listen to ATIS on 125.10 to get a surface wind check. However, if you do, don't forget to return to Ground frequency straight away afterwards.

If you aren't clear about the problem of wind gradient and airspeed, please have a word with one of the instructors.

### **Rigging woes**

Two cases of rigging problems were noted in the last Journal, both from the UK. In the first case the pilot flew for 283 km with the elevator disconnected (*perhaps I should try that!!*), and in the second case one airbrake wasn't connected. Both pilots, fortunately, returned to earth safely.

In the Winter 2002 edition of UK 'Gliding Safety' there is a report that "Just after release from aerotow, an SZD 55 pilot noticed that the safety pins from his glider's main wing pins were hanging from the camera mount. In his own words, he then 'landed promptly' presumably having got over the immediate digestive problems." It appears that during rigging he was interrupted just after fitting the main pins and then forgot the safety pins. To compound the problem, the subsequent DI had not revealed the error. The CFI's comments were said to be not very supportive.

I don't know whether these cases are indicative of a death wish amongst the Poms, but they might help to remind us that after a glider has been rigged it should be given an independent check, and this should be noted and signed in the DI book.

Also from the same edition of Gliding Safety:

#### **"Words Fail Me"**

Flying had stopped due to rain and the retrieve truck had driven out to the launch point to collect some pilots who had been parking gliders.

The driver took his foot off the brake and the truck drifted forward and over the wing tip of one of the gliders. Trying to recover the situation, the driver then reversed the truck, passing over the wing tip again and causing further damage.

From the UK Sailplane and Gliding Jan 2002:

Substantial damage to a Pegasus on landing –the pilot mistakenly grabbed the undercarriage lever instead of the airbrake. He didn't *identify!* Also, the pilot of an ASW 19 mis-set his altimeter, but continued to rely on it until he was down to about *a hundred feet*. Then, realizing that he couldn't make it back to the field he attempted an outlanding. Stalled/spun into the hedge, fortunately without injury, though with substantial damage to the glider.

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#### *Into safe keeping...*

After the day's flying the green money box is returned to the club house and the money should then be transferred to the safe. However, Elsie has found on a couple of occasions that the money box has been left on top of the safe, with the cash still in it. Over the weekend this can add up to a substantial sum which the Club cannot afford to lose, so please remember to deposit the contents into the safe.

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