



The Southern Cross Journal

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS GLIDING CLUB

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The President's thermal:

A sad note to start off with. Greg Fehon was a tug pilot for over 20 years and a glider pilot. Greg recently lost a battle with cancer. Greg's experience and his gentle, easy going manner will be missed by many of our mid-week members.

Another sad but also happy note. Sad because Tom and Jane Gilbert will be moving away from us to Temora. Happy because I am sure Tom and Jane are really looking forward to the change of scene and slow down that comes with retirement. They have certainly earned it. I have been receiving lots of comments from old members wishing Tom the best on their behalf. There will be a dinner for Tom and Jane at the clubhouse on Sat 20th starting around 6:30pm. Please remember to contact me via email or via telephone (02 4626 8165).

Another not so sad note, Eddie & Trish Kropkowski are leaving us.....but only for a few months. They are heading off overseas. Bryan Hayhow has stepped up to the plate to help out with the Treasurers role. Bryan has been away in NZ improving his kiwi accent I believe. Thanks for stepping up Bryan. I hope he made time to visit Omarama.

Our planning night was held on Feb 28th. I would like to thank the members who turned up and put their ideas forward on how the club should proceed in the future. The results of this will be available in a future email after Martin and I decipher our notes from the meeting.

There have been a few rainy weekends lately and I hope this does not affect our flying too much. We are starting to get ahead in our cash position again and in the next few months membership renewals will improve that position further.

There is a camp organised for Easter and if you are interested please contact Don Palmer.

Lastly, I am making a plea for help in a replacement for the Membership Secretary's position. Jason needs to step down and if we can get 2-3 people we can break the job up into smaller roles that can be performed with less load on the people concerned.

If you can spare some cycles to help then please contact me.

Keep safe and good flying.

Vale Greg Fehon

As mentioned by the President, Greg Fehon, who flew our tugs for about twenty years died recently after a long illness. His funeral was held on Monday 15th March and among the many who attended were Ray Morton and Denise, Ken McCracken, Eddie and Elsie Pahic, Jim Kent, Paul Kovari, and myself.

Apart from flying with Southern Cross, Greg had been a tug pilot and gliding instructor with the Scouts. In fact his association with the Scouts went back to 1958, and he was the recipient of several awards for his work with the Scout movement.

Those who knew Greg will remember him as an unassuming, easy going, likeable and helpful person with a wide range of interests. He was a very competent and reliable pilot, and among his gliding achievements was a 300 km flight in the Scouts Blanik.

I'm sure that everyone will join me in expressing our sincere condolences to Cathy and Greg's family.

New Members:

Welcome to new members Antony Tunnicliffe, Tom Kakouros, Mark Brooks and Rick Withaar. Best wishes for plenty of enjoyable flying with the club.

Congratulations to the following members :

- Bill Kirkham on obtaining his Silver C and also on completing a 300km flight in the Junior while at camp.
- John Jurotte on his 500km flight during the camp.
- Richard Shemtob on completing his Gold badge, and on obtaining an advanced tug rating.
- Mike Moore, who has now moved on to flying the Junior.
- Neil Cocks and Richard Neale, who are both now cleared to fly the Jantar.

Listening to the radio recently I was surprised to hear Ellena Bentley-Woods (that's our Elle) being interviewed about her work for the Camden Hospital support group, which organises fund-raising events. I understand that her sister and Mrs. Woods are also involved. This is very commendable and I'd like to congratulate Elle on being so public spirited.

Farewell to Tom and Jane:

The President has commented on Tom and Jane's impending departure, and by the time this Journal is published the club's farewell party will have been held. Soon afterwards they'll be heading off to Temora. Having Tom and Jane at Camden has been of enormous benefit to the club over the years and they will certainly be missed. We wish them success in whatever new ventures they undertake. At the same time, it is good news that Cliff and Peter will still be around to help us out when needed.

Coming events:

- Canberra Gliding Club will be holding its wave camp from Sat. 14th to Sun. 22nd August 04.
- Easter camp at Goulburn. Anyone wishing to attend should contact Don Palmer without delay.

The DG describes its first 500 Km flight:

We get regular contributions from pilots talking about their exploits, but in this case the glider has its say. Bill Nixon overheard the DG's musings and passed them on to us.

After almost three weeks flying out of the dusty country airfield at Forbes, I was disappointed. No one had yet taken me on a really worthwhile task. Most of the club members and gliders had gone back to Camden, leaving me in the sole company of Junior, and a small band of pilots. Today, I overheard, was to be the last day of the Club Camp, and my spirits sank as the weather did not look promising.

The day dawned blue and cooler than previous days. About midday, the camp commandant, a short, balding instructor with an unusual accent, who did not impress me very much (I am an elite German glider and I prefer tall, blond, Luftwaffe-bred pilots to fly me), seemed more intent on coercing a reluctant pilot to take the little Junior on a 300 Km FAI task than on preparing me for a long distance flight. He asked another similarly vertically-unassuming instructor with a goatee and moustache to get me ready, briefly mentioning something about doing a 500 Km flight. I was not happy. Today was going to be no better than the previous three weeks. How could I ever have been sold to such a bunch of *schmucks!* Glaser Dirks should have chosen my buyer much better...

After Junior reluctantly departed on its proposed 300 Km task, the two instructors came on board and we took off into a sky that was rapidly filling with low level Cumulus clouds. We released into a weak thermal that failed to get us to cloud base, which was at that time below 5,000' QNH. The pilot decided to go and look for better lift over some brown paddocks in the direction of Parkes, losing height rapidly in sink. As we got closer and closer to the ground the pilot mentioned the possibility this might be my first outlanding. He said that he'd been the first club member to outland the Junior when it was new. Apparently, he seemed quite ready to do the same thing to me. The situation was worse than I could have conceived possible. I had absolutely no wish to outland less than 20 Km from the airfield. What shame this would bring upon me, not to mention the possibility of scratching my pristine skin!

However, the little fellow in the back seat was persistent and showed some skill in locating and centring lift, asking the other pilot on several occasions, "Is this how Pincus taught us?" So luckily we avoided an outlanding. A little later we were at cloud base, flying towards Parkes under increasing cloud cover. Sadly cloud base was still low and lift weak and sparse. As we cruised North one of the pilots noted it had taken one hour to do 40 Km. "Not good," he said, "I don't think we are going to have a chance at a 500 today, not unless conditions improve a lot."

We continued to fly towards Narromine. Over Peak Hill the sky showed signs of overdevelopment and we got low again. The pilot with the beard did well and got us up under the clouds that worked and we plodded on slowly, taking every bit of lift he could find.. Radio reports from pilots based at Narromine said conditions towards Nyngan, our next turn point, were bad. Both pilots agreed to change course and go to Tottenham instead. It had taken us two and a half hours to cover 130 Km!

Along the way to Tottenham we noticed the conditions improving, then after a long stretch with no lift we found ourselves low again. The pilot in the front seat called out in dismay, "Look, the paddocks in front of us are covered with water. It must have rained heavily in this area on Tuesday."

We turned away from Tottenham, which was clearly visible some 15 Km ahead, and moved towards drier terrain, aiming for a large dark cloud with a flat bottom. The name of that Pincus guy was again mentioned several times, as the best strategy to deal with the situation was discussed.

Whoosh, a powerful updraught sucked us up! The dark cloud provided a welcome change to widespread sink and in a matter of moments we were at 8,000' QNH climbing at a rate of 8 Knots. Back on track at 80 Knots and five minutes later we flew over Tottenham aerodrome. The pilot in the back seat had been studying his map and suggested we continue South to Burcher, then fly East to Eugowra and back to Forbes. "If we have enough time to complete the polygon, we should achieve 500 Km," he said to his partner.

"OK, let's give it a go," said the bearded one.

With that I was flown away at high speed. The conditions had changed dramatically. Cloud base had gone up to 9,000' QNH, with 6-8 Knots thermals spaced conveniently across the sky, marked by well developed Cu's. The crappy little clouds creating overdevelopment earlier had thinned out.

My crew now had to race against time. It was after five o'clock and they did not want to be caught out low at the end of the day. Taking turns at flying, they raced me as fast as they dared, often flying above 90 Knots between thermals. My huge wings spread out fully, I cruised with the serene dignity and arrogance of a German eagle, as we darted under large Cu's, took a couple of turns to cloud base and hastened onward to our destination. *Wundebah!* I thought. This is gliding!

As we cruised at 10,000' QNH 10 Km South of Forbes airfield the radio brought good news to my crew. The man in the Junior was on final glide to Forbes, having completed his 300 Km task. The commandant was exultant. "Congratulations, I knew you could do it! Where were you all day? We could not contact you." he radioed the other glider.

"I'm sorry, I've had a problem changing frequencies on the radio," replied the Junior. The voice of the pilot sounded tired, he had experienced a hard ride for sure.

"OK, we're on our way to Eugowra, see you in an hour or less."

At this point someone called Phil, flying a metal Philatus glider (I wonder if he is the designer, as the glider carries his name?), spoke up too, saying he was on final glide from Eugowra to Forbes and that conditions ahead were good for the DG. I presume he referred to me because, obviously encouraged, my pilot simply increased our speed. The Cambridge final glide computer indicated adequate height to complete the task, so the pilots ignored further thermals, pushing ahead for their goal, using the computer to tell them to fly faster or slower. At 18:35 hours I flared over runway 09 to complete my first 500 Km flight in a total of six hours exactly. At last, something to be proud of! I grudgingly conceded my pilots had done quite well, under the circumstances and despite their non - Luftwaffe appearance.

As the crew tucked me into my trailer, the sun sank below the Western horizon, lighting up the sky in a glorious array of reds, pinks and purple. A fitting close to this glorious day. "*Achtung! Zees must be ze twilight of ze Gods celebrating my success,*" was my final impression, as the trailer's clam shell top closed above me and I fell into a contented sleep.

No prizes for guessing that the short chap was Bill and the bearded one was John Jurotte. This was the day that Bill Kirkham did his 300 km in the Junior.

Cross-country training:

We are very fortunate in having Martin Feeg as a member. He is an experienced cross-country pilot, and apart from his role as Secretary he is hoping to be able to give some cross-country training at Camden.



Martin and Gary Thompson prepare for a mutual flight recently, which no doubt gave Gary a few pointers on cross-country techniques.

Safety Matters:

Weak links revisited:

You may recall that in the September 2003 Journal the reason for having two weak links, one with round holes and the other slotted, was explained. Well the value of this system was shown recently. While collecting the rope to hook up to a glider, Malcolm Bruce noticed that one of the links was broken. The ends were dangling. At some point on a previous flight the primary link had failed, probably due to damage (I'll come to that later), but although the secondary link was intact, the idea is that the whole assembly should be replaced if a link breaks. So it was congratulation to Mal for keeping his eyes open and spotting it.

As the primary link is normally carrying all the load it is subjected to wear and tear and may fail due to fatigue. It may also fail because it has been bent, either by being run over, or on impact with the ground when released by the tug. There are gizmos available to protect the link, and the availability of a suitable device is being investigated.

Tractor driving:

Our tractor is not the quietest vehicle around and there's a good chance that if the man walking the wing tip yells 'STOP' the driver may not hear him, so when you are driving the tractor don't just keep your eyes on the way ahead. Have a glance back at the wing man every now and then just in case he is trying to attract your attention.

The 'A' in CHAOTIC is for Air-brakes and flaps:

Well, we all know that, but it slipped the mind of one pilot recently who was commencing his take-off run with the brakes open. Once again, Mal Bruce to the rescue. He noticed the brakes and called on the radio of a glider parked nearby. Brakes were closed and the launch continued. Which brings us to:-

The role of the wing runner:

As we all know, once the pilot indicates that he is ready to go, the wing runner is in charge of the launch. He must be on the lookout for gliders in the circuit and for tugs, and anything else which may require the launch to be stopped. The 'anything else' may include a tail-dolly left on the glider, air brakes left open or possibly a broken weak link. In short, the wing runner should be alert for anything that might affect safety.

Hangar rash:

We fortunately haven't had many problems lately, however we have recently had some (fortunately minor) damage to the elevator on the Astir, apparently resulting from contact with one of the hangar stanchions. There is really no excuse for this, and perhaps it is worth reminding members that a

collision between an IS 28 tailplane and a stanchion, some years ago, caused damage which might have resulted in failure had the aircraft been flown. If, when hangaring a glider, its main wheel doesn't run into the guide rail it must be taken out of the hangar, repositioned, and another attempt made.

Reporting of damage:

It is no doubt very embarrassing to report that you have been responsible for damage to a glider, but unreported damage may put someone's life at risk. So, if you have the misfortune to cause damage please make an entry in the DI book, and report it to the Aircraft Maintenance Officer without delay.

Glider towed downwind:

One of our members recently commented that on a day with strong wind he was towed an uncomfortable distance downwind. If you aren't happy about the distance from the field when you reach release height, the most important thing to remember is *DON'T RELEASE*. If at any time during the climb you feel that you are getting too far from the field for the prevailing wind conditions, you need to tell the tug what you want him to do. When the tower is operating you can do this by asking the controller to relay your message. On non-tower days, speak to the tug directly. It has been said by some pilots, though it is not my experience, that they've had difficulty talking to the tug. In that case get Glider Launch or another glider to relay your message.

On the subject of talking to the tug, it is worth noting that you have a better field of visibility from the glider than the tug pilot has from his aircraft. So if while on tow you see anything that might present a safety hazard, don't hesitate to inform the tuggie. This is where an '*Alert Alert*' call might be appropriate.

Listening watch:

There have recently been some adverse comments on our listening watch. I must admit that I find it irritating at times when there is a lot of chatter on the radio, but being aware of where other aircraft are, and what they are doing, is vital to our own safety. So when airborne, don't turn the radio down because it is irritating you. Listen in and, in the interests of safety, respond to radio transmissions if necessary even if they aren't directed at you.

Just a reminder for our newer members, you should hear the tug pilot make his take-off call. If you don't hear it there could be a number of possible reasons, such as Master switch off, volume too low, wrong frequency selected, radio defect, flat battery, or even no battery! The best place to sort out the problem is on the ground, and in such a case it is best to pull the release and abort the take-off.

Instructor training at Camden:

Richard Pincus conducted a three day training course for Level 1 instructor candidates. Two were from Central Coast club, and from our club Richard Solomon and John Jurotte were the trainees.



Richard Pincus and Richard Solomon discussing some of the finer points of instructing

Richard Pincus is to be commended for giving up his time for this very important exercise, and we hope to see our two members elevated to Level 1 in the near future.

How long is a tow rope?

Last Sunday, first flight of the day. The rope was hooked on and the slack taken up, at which point either the tuggie or the glider pilot decided that the rope wasn't long enough for their liking. So the rope was gathered up and replaced by a new one. Fair enough, but it jogged my memory regarding a war-time experiment carried out by the Luftwaffe, which I'd read about.

In 1937 Hans Jacob, the designer of many pre-war gliders including the 'Olympia' set to work to produce a troop-carrier/transport glider. This aircraft, designated DFS 230 had a wing-span of 22metres and could carry up to ten men. (DFS stands for Deutschen Forschungsinstitut fur Segelflug – but of course you already knew that!)

During test flying the glider was initially towed by the three-engined Ju 52/3m, but flights were also made with a variety of other aircraft used as tugs including, amazingly five Heinkel 52 training bi-planes. Perhaps even more surprising, a 1.2 metre rigid tow-bar arrangement attached to a Ju52 was also tested. A successful night-time flight, Darmstadt, Hamburg, Munich, Darmstadt was made with this arrangement.



On operational flights by day a 40 metre tow-line was used, but as the tests with the rigid tow bar had been successful this was the normal towing method adopted for night operations.

Being towed at night must have been nerve-wracking, whatever towing method was used. But when the flight was destined to end in the dark, in an unknown field, possibly under fire, perhaps the length of the tow-rope was the least of their worries.

An expedition to The Oaks:

Tuesday this week started bright, but even before the gliders were brought out the sky had become completely overcast and cloud base was less than 3000 feet. It didn't look too promising for soaring so it was decided that for something to do we'd go to The Oaks. Eddie Pahic led the way in ZAY, followed by the Junior, Jantar and Astir. A little later IUJ dropped in, so that was all the fleet apart from the DG, in which Eddie Pike, back at Camden, was flying a visitor from Adelaide University. Flying into The Oaks is not as exacting as making a paddock landing, but it gives you a little more to think about than making a take-off and landing on our familiar home turf.

Cloud base didn't change as the day wore on, and little if any sun filtered through, but nevertheless there were quite large areas of lift until quite late, so everyone had about an hour or more of soaring time on the return journey.

While there, Geoff Uther reminded me of the last time we'd had a group expedition to The Oaks. That was a couple of years ago, just before Greg Fehon's illness began. There was a cross wind when we landed, but it wasn't much of a problem. However, soon afterwards it picked up and when Eddie took-off in the IS 28 he had quite an exciting ride. Greg wisely decided that he wouldn't return until the wind eased, and as time went on we had visions of tying the remaining three aircraft down and coming back for them the next day. Fortunately, by late afternoon conditions had improved and while the subsequent take-offs were rather lively all was well and everyone returned home to Camden without incident.



The K13:

As I'm sure everyone knows, the K13 was badly damaged in a landing accident recently. Fortunately neither of the occupants suffered any injury.

It has now been decided to repair the aircraft, though it will obviously be out of action for a considerable time.



The K13 in happier days, with Peter Chapman in the front seat and Ray Morton in the rear.



Junior briefing notes:

The briefing notes for the Junior have been revised and are now in A5 booklet form. They now contain some basic notes on parachutes. The Briefing Notes, including the information on parachutes should be read by pilots who are solo on the two-seaters and about to fly the Junior for the first time.



I've often wondered.....

Do parachutes come with a warranty, and what are your chances of making a claim if it doesn't open?



Until next time, best wishes for some great flying.

