



# *The Southern Cross Journal*

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS GLIDING CLUB

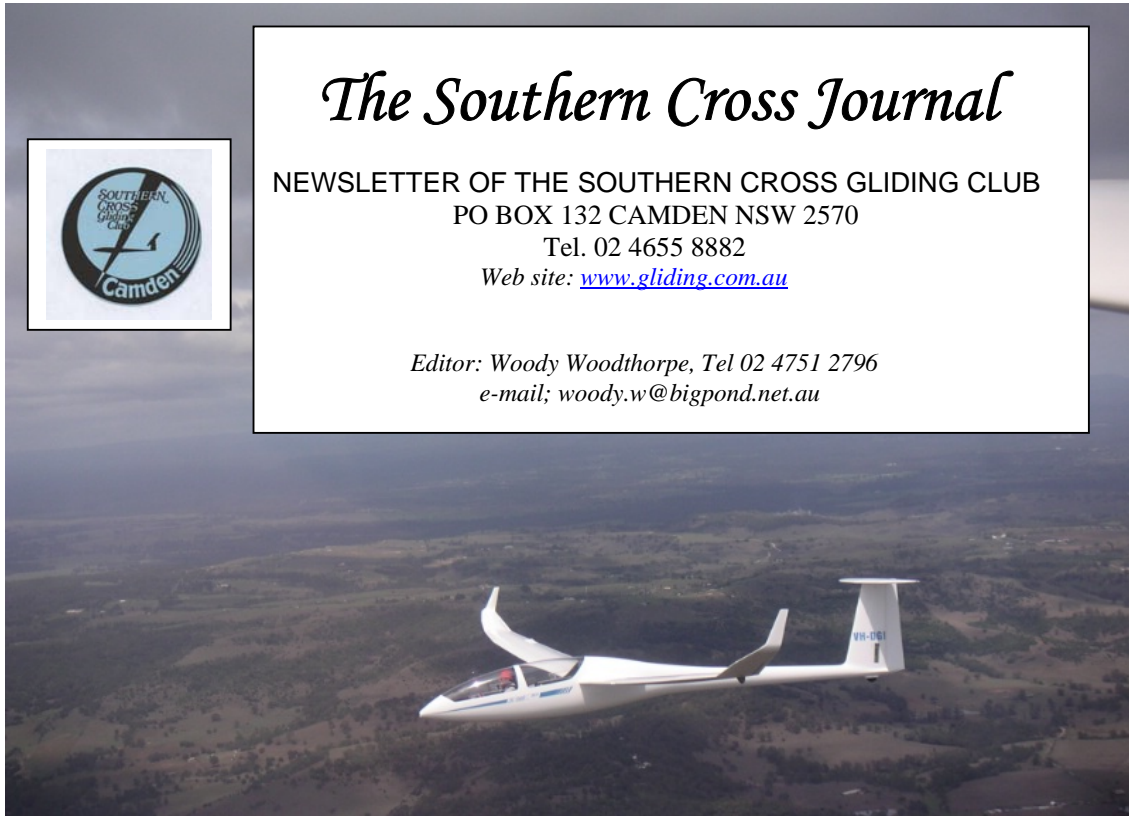
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*March – April 2005*

## *The President's Thermal:*

I have some good things to report, but also one unpleasant item. I'll deal with the good things first. The K13 is now back on line at Camden, looking superb after its repairs and repaint. Let's hope that it gets plenty of usage, but at the same time let's hope that it is well cared for by our members. The main item which makes or mars the look of a glider is its canopy. The new canopy on GIQ looks great, so let's keep it that way. All it needs is care. Don't allow anyone to lean against it. Don't leave it open and unattended, even in calm conditions, and don't use the sliding window as a handle to lift the canopy. Also, remember that Perspex is easily scratched, particularly when the canopy is being washed. Any dirt or dust must be flushed off with water, before wiping with it a wet chamois leather and then drying. Never just wipe the dirt off the canopy.

With the return of GIQ we'll be able to take IUJ off line to have its canopy replaced.

Good news of our DG 303. It is ready for flight-testing, in fact by the time you read this the testing will almost certainly be completed. Shipping arrangements have been made and it is anticipated that we should have the glider at Camden by some time in May. I'm sure that all our members are looking forward to its arrival, and to flying this newest and most modern addition to our fleet.

We have had *seven* first solos recently, as reported elsewhere in the Journal. Congratulations to all concerned, but particularly to our youngest soloist, Tim Dugan.

Our indefatigable Secretary, Martin Feeg was recently able to arrange for an ASW 28 to be at Camden for just over a week, giving members who were suitably qualified the opportunity to try this state of the art machine. Those who did so found it to be a docile and delightful aircraft to fly. Unfortunately our pockets are not quite deep enough for the club to contemplate purchase at present. However, it will be one of the aircraft under consideration in the longer term for our fleet renewal.

And now for the unpleasant news. As you will already know, a general meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> March, attended by forty four members, to hear Mal Bruce's appeal against the termination of his club membership. The findings of the Disciplinary Committee, which had been circulated to members were explained and Mal offered his defence. The members present then had their opportunity to ask questions both of the Committee and Mal before a secret vote on the issue was taken. The outcome was that thirty members voted to reject the appeal, so the decision of the Disciplinary Meeting was confirmed and Mal has now formally resigned.

This has been a very unhappy episode for all concerned, and the Disciplinary Committee members found it particularly time consuming and stressful. However, we must now put the matter behind us. Despite what has happened, we all wish Mal well for the future.

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### *Welcome:*

To all those who have joined the club recently, and in particular to the following who have been invited to Full Membership.

Andrew Glenn	Elliott Bohringer	Michael Delaney
Neil Gearside	David Goulding	James Gray
Damien Ogden	Bruce Ogden	

We hope that you have some great flying and enjoy some good social contacts while with the club.

### *Congratulations:*

#### *First solos:*

At the time of writing have had seven first-solo flights in March. These were made by Roger Butler, Will Schmidt, Kurt Rall, Tim Dugan, David Aincough and the father and son combination of Damian Ogden and his father Bruce.

Congratulations to all, and also to:

Paul Milsted, whose solo flight was reported in the last Journal. He was airborne in the Junior for 2 hours forty one minutes on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

I also note from the log sheets that Shaun Dunshea had a flight of 3 hours 27 minutes the Junior for earlier this month.

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### *Forbes Camp- the final tally:*

I doubt whether we've ever had a more successful camp in terms of the number of cross-country flights and the distances covered.

The following list of flights made during the camp may not be quite complete, but it gives a good indication of what individuals achieved.

Bryan Hayhow	510 km	469 km	463 km	280 km
John Jurotte	510	469	463	
Mike Bow	404			
Bill Nixon	404			
Richard Neale	300+			

Hugh Sparrow	300+			
Andrew Rickard	280 + Gold Height			
Bill Pain	430	320	270	270
Graham Leonard	300+	300+		
Phil Endicott,	made several flights of 300 to 400 km			
Udo Bauerman & Steve Korbel	in the DG , 238km			

Martin Feeg attempted a task of 1000 km, but only completed a mere 760 km!!

There was a full page write-up in the local newspaper at Forbes, including photographs, about our camp. There is a copy on the notice board in the club house.

*Temora – State Comps.*

We had quite a contingent at Temora. It included Martin Feeg, Jim Bannatyne, Jay Anderson, Paul Matthews, Miles Gore-Brown, Malcolm Bruce and Bill Kirkham.

Bill flew the DG, with Tom Gilbert on the first day, and John Jurotte on the subsequent days but they were essentially Bill's flights. He performed extremely well for a first-timer and got around every day with no out-landings. Well done Bill.

One aspect of the comps which he found particularly interesting, and pleasing, was the way in which the older hands such as Paul Matthews and Miles Gore-Brown were prepared to freely offer help and advice. Sportsmanship at its best.

The 18 Metre Class was won by Malcolm Bruce in the ASW 28, and he was placed second in the Open Class. Mal was highest scorer on three days and made his fastest time on Day 1 of the competition when, although placed fourth, his speed was 124.7 kph for the 383 km task.

Mal also informs me that he made the greatest height gain of any pilot in the calendar year 2004, and will therefore receive the Martin Warner trophy for this achievement. Congratulations Mal.

*Other noteworthy flights:*

There have also been some other very memorable flights made from Camden recently. In particular, Bill Pain flew the Jantar to Goulburn and back in three and a quarter hours on 9<sup>th</sup> March. He didn't know that the ASW 28 was available on that date. Had he flown it, the flight may have been a bit quicker and easier, but it would have been slightly less meritorious, not to mention being more expensive. But let's hear about it in Bill's own words.

***To Goulburn and back.***

***By Bill Pain***

This is just a brief account of a very pleasant flight I had in the Jantar on the 9<sup>th</sup>, utilizing the sea breeze front.

Don Palmer was running the show. He was most encouraging that I should do some sort of XC flight and was prepared to organize retrieve if necessary. He suggested I check the trailer. A wise move as this revealed a flat tire, which I changed and ran the flat down to Beaufairs.

Launched at around noon to 2500' and climbed to cloud base at 3500'. Not that promising but I anticipated this would go up and inland to rise considerably. Followed a street past Wedderburn and east of Wilton. Cloud base was 4500' here. Set off for Mittagong heading for a cloud near the bomb-out paddock - it is the only landable paddock between Wilton and Mittagong - topped up to 4500 and continued. It was at this stage that 5 knots sink was encountered and continued right up to the

Mittagong strip. I could see I was always going to make it there, but the circuit would have been somewhat abridged. Got my low save here which proved to be an easily worked thermal. Up to cloud base at 5000' over Mittagong. I could see the cloud base was well high away from the coast with nice cu. Pushing out from Mittagong it was an easy job to connect with this cu. Climbed to 8500' and what a glorious sight from this altitude of the maritime air mass with its cu base at 4500 and tops up to 10,000 in places. Yet again I make the vow to equip myself with a camera when flying. The front had pushed right up the Shoalhaven River to Marulan, which I proceeded along. As I approached Goulburn the cu stopped due to high cloud in the west killing things off so I continued along the front for another 25km to the south east of Goulburn.

The return to Camden required no turns except I took a little top up to 8500 just before Mittagong so I could dive under the 7,500 foot step at 140knots and maintained that speed to dive under the lowering cloud base bringing me to Picton at about 5,500 feet, and then bleeding back the speed to arrive at the Oaks at 4,500. On arriving back at Camden it was still soarable but rather like flying in pea soup after the wonderful visibility I had enjoyed. So quickly landed at 3.18pm. Total distance 230km.

In summary I believe there are many days where the sea breeze can assist in flights out to Goulburn and beyond and in view of how average the conditions were at Camden but how good they were past Mittagong, me thinks we regularly miss out by simply not trying. The cloud base will usually be higher, there is a higher ceiling and the return trip is made easy - it is not far off final glide from Goulburn at 8500'. Being prepared to land out with retrieve already organized is important but not hard. I for one will retrieve you if I possibly can, and if we have a few of us with that attitude it is easy.

Finally thanks to Don Palmer and the boys flying at Camden that day for being prepared to fetch me, had the need arisen. Let us make Goulburn and return the Southern Cross milk run. There is a lot of good flying to be had.

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Also noteworthy were flights by Bryan Hayhow and Richard Shemtob.

Bryan took the opportunity to fly the ASW for a very enjoyable 3 hours during which he went to Mittagong and back.

Richard and Gary Thompson also visited Mittagong, in the DG on 13<sup>th</sup> March. It was a blue day and at one point when they were searching for a thermal a couple of eagles which were circling gave them a helping hand (wing?). They maintained contact with Wilton en route as parachute dropping was taking place. After rounding Mittagong they headed back, but as the conditions were good Richard asked Gary where they should head for next.

Unfortunately Gary hadn't expected such a successful flight and after two hours forty in the air he had a pressing need to get back on the ground!! However, they'd both enjoyed it, and it gave Gary some further experience of cross-country flying.

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#### *DI course:*

There's a notice in the pie cart about the next DI course is to be held. Phil has asked those who will be attending to prepare for it by assisting in carrying out some Daily Inspections, noting what checks are made in the DI book before the inspection starts, asking questions if anything isn't clear.

With this initial preparation the course will proceed quicker, and will be more meaningful to participants.

#### *Radio authorisation course:*

All solo pilots are required to have a radio authorisation endorsement in their log books. A course, which normally takes just three or four hours, will be run in the near future, so if you are in need of an endorsement please keep your eye on the pie-cart notice board and the club's web site for an announcement of the date.

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*More on Tim's first solo:*

There was quite a party atmosphere at Camden on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March. Tim Dugan had been ready to solo for a few weeks, but was too young to be let loose on his own. However, this was Tim's fifteenth birthday, and weather permitting it would now be legal. Eddie Pahic conducted the usual pre solo check in near perfect conditions and announced that all was well. A final briefing and he was off! Tim's dad who runs Delta Aviation was there together with Tim's mum. His grandad came along to watch the proceedings, as did his uncle Mike, who operates Camden Sailplanes. To complete the family support his aunt took time off from her job at Curtis Aviation to witness the event. Jim Drinnan, who runs Curtis and is Tim's power instructor, was present, and no doubt we'll all be going across to the other side of the airfield this time next year to see Tim make his first power solo. I didn't note the take off and landing times, but he was certainly airborne for quite some time before making a well judged landing, then after a break he repeated the performance. When flying was over, and the aircraft had been stowed away, we all went back to the club house for a little celebration. Eddie had arranged a birthday cake and some of the others had brought liquid refreshment for the ensuing party. However the first item of business was for Eddie to present Tim with his First Solo certificate.



We have had a few young members go solo in the years that I have been in the club. Peter Moffit and Christian Jensen immediately come to mind but no one, as far as I am aware, has managed it on his fifteenth birthday. The fact that he comes from such an aviation-minded family must have given him help and encouragement, but this in no way detracts from his achievement. Well done Tim.

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*Safety matters:*

*Undercarriage problems:*

One of our members recently reported on the radio that they couldn't lower the IS 28's undercarriage. However, a satisfactory circuit and landing was made and no damage done. Getting the checks completed early gives time to sort out any problems, but pilots need to understand that the priority in such a situation is to fly the plane. If they are experiencing difficulty it is better to leave the undercarriage up rather than lose concentration on the vital task of completing a safe circuit and landing.

This is particularly valid in the IS28 as the wheel protrudes even when retracted, (though the oleo leg is inoperative with the wheel up), so if a normal landing is made there should be no problem.

The probable solution if there is difficulty with the IS28 undercarriage is to press forward on the lever if you can't depress the button. This may free it and permit the undercarriage to be lowered normally.

*Rope breaks:*

In the last journal some thoughts were included on the avoidance of rope breaks. The subject came up in the morning briefing on March 12th, and Richard Pincus made the following important point which I had omitted to mention. If a significant bow occurs, it is vital to take action to prevent it developing further. The most common cause of bows in ropes is that the pilot has inadvertently lowered the nose, allowing the glider to accelerate. The first action should therefore be to raise the nose, followed immediately by yawing the glider so that the load is taken up progressively as the glider is swung back into line.

Some pilots advocate cracking the airbrakes to slow the glider, and this may be all right in some types of glider and with a really experienced pilot, but for most of us there is a risk of this action being too slow, and if the brakes are then opened too much there is the likelihood that the resulting load which will break the rope - the very thing we are trying to avoid.

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*Flying the ASW 28:*

*Woody*

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to fly the ASW 28 during its short stay at Camden, and I found it to be very easy to fly, comfortable, and with a very impressive performance. All that remains now is for me to win the Lotto!

It was getting late into the afternoon when I was launched, but as there were good thermals around I decided to try the local triangle, Camden, The Oaks, Narellan and back. It took me a rather unimpressive 30 minutes, though this was a substantial improvement on my 40 minutes for the same flight in the Junior. The fact that I couldn't resist climbing to 4,500 feet over Camden when I only had to go to Narellan and back meant that I finished overhead the church at 4,000 feet. Not the way to make a good time.

Kevin Wilson flew it after me, and Richard Solomon finished the day with a flight finishing not long before sundown. They both agreed that that it was a delightful aircraft to fly.



*Kevin Wilson was one of those who flew the ASW 28 during its short stay at Camden.*

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*Hangar door chains:*

When opening up the hangar please ensure that all the chains are unhitched. If two gates are left chained together and are then pushed past the front of another gate, the chain tends to scrape against the cladding of the other gate. This is both damaging and unsightly.

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*The K13 is back:*

The K13 was trailed back from Temora by Paul McElnea on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March. That's a long drive, so thanks Paul.

It is looking good, and as mentioned by the President we will now be able to take IUJ off line to have its new canopy fitted.



*John Jurotte about to take a passenger for an Air Experience Flight in the newly refurbished K 13 on 15<sup>th</sup> March.*

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*Inching towards 300km*

*(A grab-bag of mixed metaphors, interesting events and learning)*

*Richard Neale*

**Early days:**

I've always enjoyed aircraft and airports. For a number of years I was a frequent air traveller as part of my job, and I always found the aircraft to be the best part. I enjoyed the remote gates at airports – the ones where you get to walk out to the plane or drive around it in a bus. And it was a source of constant frustration to me that I couldn't walk over to the plane for a poke around and to ask questions of the pilots and engineers. But they don't like you to get close to the planes at the world's major airports. On one memorable 'remote gate' experience I had my boarding card whisked from my hands by a sudden strong gust of wind. It was with great reluctance that the security staff allowed me to break ranks and pick it up.

Needless to say I was delighted to get my hands on the aircraft when I took my first trial flight in May 2000. My wife had given me a gift certificate for my birthday some six months earlier – little knowing that her kind gift would turn into an exciting (if time consuming) past-time.

Paul Rindfleish took me up for that first flight – in ZAY, if I recall correctly. And didn't I have fun? Taking the controls during the flight was an awe-inspiring experience. This wasn't at all like my upper deck window seat on the flight to Singapore. I could feel every little disturbance in the air. I could see all in all directions. And I was instantly hooked.

I came back for two more trial flights, just to test my addiction. Yes, this gliding thing was for me. It seemed to embrace a unique combination of technical interest, physical coordination and mental exertion. Probably just what I was looking for to give me a break from what was (at the time) a very stressful job.

Everything went on hold for a couple of months, as I had to take time out for a spell in hospital and subsequent recuperation. Many of my idle hours were spent with my nose in Derek Piggot's 'Gliding', and perusing gliding club websites from all over the world.

It hadn't dawned on me during those first few flights that it might be possible to fly away from the airfield. The engineer in me had figured out that there must be some sort of inverted cone in the sky, with its point on the airfield, and that if you stay inside the cone you will be OK. Laid up in hospital, Piggot took me 'outside the cone', at least in my imagination. I learned that a glider pilot can skip through the sky from thermal to thermal, completing distances that seemed to me to be almost impossible. I couldn't wait to be back on my feet so that I could join the gliding club.

My gliding instruction began in September 2000, but my schedule (and the fact that flying proved to be a more difficult task in reality than my hospital bed imaginings had assumed) meant that I didn't make my first solo until 1 Sep 2001, when Dickie Bird signed me off. I took a 2,000ft launch and flew for just 10 minutes in intermittent drizzle. Hardly a great start in terms of the wondrous distances I had started to hear about from club members, but my mile-wide grin (that lasted for about a week!) testified to a great sense of achievement.

Many pie-cart conversations had whetted my appetite for doing more than just local soaring. Clearly I had to go to a gliding camp. And this is where the story really begins!

### ***Camp 1: Narromine, January 2002***

I was still on 'daily checks' when I went to Narromine. Bill Nixon and Paul Kovari made sure that I got my check out of the way each day before the first thermals kicked off, so I don't think I caused too much inconvenience.

My flying improved dramatically with a week's intensive work. I learned how to outland, and completed a check. I started to learn about soaring meteorology from Phil Endicott. And I experienced my first real 'launch emergency'.

The Southern Cross tug had a broken tail wheel. While we were waiting for a replacement to arrive, the club members decided to hire a Cessna 172 (VH-DNF) from a local company. DNF had been used often for glider launching, and had the requisite Tost hook. Pichard Pincus and Alan Curtis took DNF for a quick circuit to gain familiarity, then came back to the airfield to pick us up for my daily check. I was in the front seat of GIQ, Paul Kovari in the back.

We trundled down the runway, and seemed to take a long time to get airborne. We turned left after passing over the fence, and maintained a long, slow left hand turn. As we passed over the downwind end of the runway from which we had just taken off, we had only gained 500 feet. We radioed the tug to ask if everything was OK, but got no response. We had an easy glide back to the runway, so we stayed on the rope. Half a minute later we got a call from the tug. It was Richard's voice. "Golf India Quebec this is Delta November Foxtrot. We are experiencing a small operational difficulty. We'd appreciate if you could get off at your earliest convenience." There was a very short pause. "Now would be good."

We didn't need a second invitation. We were still an easy glide from the field (in fact, we had to side-slip to get down close to the end of the strip), so we released and landed without incident. It turns out that DNF had been down on power from early in the flight, and the call to release came when engine oil appeared on the windscreen. As they say in motor racing circles: DNF means Did Not Finish.

On 11 Jan 02, we all decided that I was ready to try for my Silver C. I passed my daily check, and strapped myself and all my gear into GIQ for the attempt. The day was quite good, and I climbed easily to around 7,000ft. Jim Kent had kindly inducted me into the Ancient Order of Barograph Smokers, and I could hear the machine ticking away behind me. I knew I had my 1,000m height gain in the bag, the day seemed OK, I could hear lots of (experienced) pilots calling on the radio about their long flights, so I decided to cut the apron strings for the first time and set out on my own for Peak Hill. 27km later, I put that outlanding training to good use when I landed (uneventfully) in a paddock. On a blue day, I had headed for what looked to me to be promising paddocks, but my level of experience wasn't sufficient to keep me aloft in the conditions.

The retrieve crew (and believe me, for the K13 it really is a crew) arrived a few hours later, we packed up the old girl and headed back to town. As this had been the last day of Camp, my Silver C ambitions would have to go on hold for a year.

### **Camp 2: Forbes, January 2003**

I arrived at Forbes in the middle of the afternoon. What a lovely gliding site. At Narromine a year earlier, we had been fighting runway congestion as the National Championships were beginning a couple of days after the Camp, and I found that the stress and congestion generated by working in with the hot-shots had detracted somewhat from the fun. This place, Forbes, was different. We had the airport pretty much to ourselves. No pressure. No stress. Plenty of time to concentrate on getting ready for the day's flying without rushing out to avoid being on the end of a long queue.

Richard Pincus went with me in the Forbes club's Blanik for an area check which lasted 2.5 hours and took us up to 10,000 feet. Richard had plenty of advice based on his years of experience, but the single thing that has proven most useful to me is this: "On a good day, don't turn in crap".

On 7 Jan 03, the conditions looked very promising. Surely this would be my Silver Day.

I took off into a Cu-studded sky with plans for a return flight to Condobolin. I was flying the club's Astir (WVJ), and Richard Pincus was keeping an eye on me from Phil Endicott's Pilatus. (On this day, Phil flew nearly 700km in Richard's Hornet – the trace is still on the club's website.)

For the second time since beginning gliding, I turned my back on the airfield.

To be perfectly honest, Condobolin was a pretty easy task on this day, once I got away from the airfield (although I was about to commence a circuit before I hit the first thermal). The Cus were working magnificently. In fact, they were so good that I found myself stopping at every one of them to top up! I didn't turn in crap, but I made pretty slow progress as I hadn't managed to convince myself to skip a thermal if I hadn't reached the bottom of my working height band – these one's just seemed too good to miss!

About 3.5 hours after taking off, I got back to Forbes from Condobolin. I had my Silver (and Gold, thanks to the near-relight) height gains in the bag. I had completed a task of way more than 50km (Condobolin is about 75km from Forbes). And the conditions were great. So I decided to hang around and complete the third leg of my Silver C – five hours. I flew from Forbes to Eugowra and back twice, to pass the time.

5 hours and 45 minutes after taking off, I landed at Forbes. The mile-wide grin was back. In the end, I had flown nearly 290km to get my Silver C badge. I'm sure I could have completed a 300km task that day, if only I had declared it. Mind you, it would have been one of the slowest 300s on record!

[300km – attempt 1] I had a few days off flying, and set off for my first attempt at 300km on 10 Jan 03. I was in the Junior. The day was not great: poor visibility due to dust, and VERY rough air. I flew locally for 2 hours before landing. My first attempt at 300km was over. And so was my time at camp. Maybe next year.

### **Camp 3: Lake Keepit, March 2004**

Work kept me away from the Southern Cross camp at Forbes in 2004. But I needed to get my cross country fix, so I accepted the invitation of the Central Coast club to join them on camp at Lake Keepit in March and April.

I've already written about my outlanding education at Lake Keepit in an earlier Journal.

My personal goal at Lake Keepit was 300km. I had been thinking and planning for months. I bought and read Reichmann's book (Cross Country Soaring). I tried to learn about the weather. I was ready to go. But the conditions weren't ready for me!

The weather just didn't play into our hands while I was at Keepit. The thermals were not strong, and recent rains meant that large areas to the north and west – usually the preferred soaring areas from Keepit – were damp and difficult.

[300km – attempt 2] Nevertheless, 3 Mar 04 looked moderately promising. I planned a 300km “cat's cradle” task based around Keepit. I talked to local guru Harry Medicott about where to go and how to approach the task. I had high hopes as I strapped myself into a beautiful LS-4 for the day.

Jay Anderson had brought his LS-6 to Keepit for the camp, and we agreed to fly together. I took off first, and Jay followed.

The early conditions were quite a struggle. I came close to landing a couple of times. Jay did fall out of the sky and needed a relight. I flew locally, waiting for Jay to come up and join me.

Just as Jay got going with his relaunch, I managed to fall out of the sky. The day was not starting well.

[300km – attempt 3] I pushed back for a re-light, but was delayed by the need for tug fuelling and a few aircraft in front of me on the line. By the time I got going again, it was already around 2.00pm. I wasn't feeling confident to set out on the task, but Jay is always ready to go, and I let his enthusiasm talk me around. We set off for Boggabri. We had a close call on the way, but found lift at a quarry about half way to Boggabri, and we both got there (50km) about an hour after setting out. Clearly this was going to be a slow 300, if we could make it.

The course to the next turnpoint would take us straight over Lake Keepit, so we were retracing our steps. I was a little more cautious than Jay, and fell behind. About half way across the plain, things looked bad again. I looked for lift at the quarry where we had found it an hour earlier, but there was nothing. I picked out what looked like a really great paddock, just next to a farmhouse, and was about to commence downwind when I hit the day's best thermal (how many times have we read THAT?). It took me back up to around 5,000ft, and I headed off again for Keepit.

Just short of the Kelvin ranges I was struggling to gain height when Jay called on the radio. He was likely to outland and needed help to relay a message. I was totally focussed on my own predicament, so I don't think he got more than “stand by” from me.

By studiously ignoring Jay's radio calls (he found another pilot to relay his position), I managed to eventually gain height and glide back to Lake Keepit. Jay landed in a paddock. Clearly this was not the day for my first 300km flight.

### **Camp 4: Forbes, January 2005**

This time for sure!

My 300km plans must be perfect by now – after all, I've been trying for two years. (I had great fun trying – don't get the idea I didn't enjoy it!)

[300km attempt 4] 11 Jan 05 looks promising. The day will be blue, but should be quite strong. I loaded all my gear into the Jantar, and lined up.

The Ancient Order of Barograph Smokers had been disbanded since last I attended a Southern Cross camp. We have now formed the Secret Society of Colibri Convincers – dedicated to trying to convince recalcitrant Colibris to work. The Grand Poobah had blessed me with a Colibri for the day. It was alleged to work – most of the time. All was ready. I had a positive outlook. My previous camps had taught me what equipment I needed to bring in the aircraft. (For example, I have learned that the one way to be sure that you will not need to pee on a flight is to make elaborate preparations for coping with the need for one...) 300km, here I come.

I took off. Four minutes later I landed. Drat.

*[300km attempt 5]* I pushed back, lined up and took off again. This time I found a thermal before I found the ground again. I climbed slowly, and eventually set off for West Wyalong with about 8,000ft of air beneath me. The day wasn't as strong as I had hoped it would be, and the absence of Cu's was disappointing. By the time I reached West Wyalong (94km from Forbes) I was the furthest I had ever been away from 'home'. And it had been a bit of a struggle to get there. In fact, I hadn't found a thermal for quite some time and I was getting low. I wasn't at all worried, as I had chosen an airfield as my turnpoint, so the outlanding, if it came, would be straightforward.

At about 2,000ft AGL over West Wyalong airfield I was getting worried. I scratched around until I found a thermal that took off like a train, but died just as suddenly at 3,000ft AGL. But at least I now had some extra searching time and radius. I found nothing. I went back to catch the 'train' again. It had left the station. Nothing! West Wyalong airfield sucked me down and I landed uneventfully.

I foolishly elected to take an aerotow retrieve from West Wyalong. It was a great experience, and I learned a lot about flying a long distance behind a tug. The foolishness was revealed to me when I calculated the cost. I could have bought the whole club a dinner!

*[300km attempt 6]* I decided to try again the next day, 12th Jan 05. No sense in getting discouraged! I made my preparations, loaded myself and my equipment back into the Jantar and took off.

The conditions weren't even as good as the day before. I found the air to be choppy and rough. But worst of all – I was terribly uncomfortable. I had flown many hours in Jantars before, and had never had a problem. But on this day I was wearing a different parachute, and somehow it had changed my sitting position. After an hour and a half or so, I was so uncomfortable in my lower back that tears were coming to my eyes. Clearly, 300km was not going to be possible. I landed, feeling sore and sorry for myself. I resolved to take a day off the next day to gather my thoughts and regroup.

I turned up for the briefing next morning determined not to fly. The weather forecast seemed a little better than the day before, but didn't promise too much. I planned to stay on the ground. However, the other club members weren't having any of this. This week at camp was not very busy and if I didn't fly, there would be an aircraft sitting idle. "You'll never get there if you don't try", they told me. So reluctantly, I headed back to town and picked up my gear from the motel, installed the Colibri in the Astir, tied my gear into the stowage area, lined up and strapped in.

*[300km attempt 7]* By the time we started launching, the sky was actually looking pretty good. My spirits really started to pick up when I hooked into a super thermal instantly after releasing from the tow. It took me straight to 8,000ft, and I set off immediately to Condobolin, the first turn point on my task (Forbes, Condobolin, Weedalion, Forbes: a distance of 310km).

Despite the early success, the first half of the first leg was a struggle. Bill Pain in the Jantar was ahead of me, and we both got quite low about half way to Condo. I watched Bill hook into a good thermal, and flew over to join in below him. From this point on, the thermals were simply brilliant. I turned Condobolin at 10,000ft, 1hr37 after taking off at Forbes. Although this was a slow leg, I was already an hour ahead of the time I took to get to Condobolin two years before on my Silver C flight.

And the conditions so far on this day had not been as good as two years ago! Clearly I had learned things and become more disciplined in my flying over those two years.

The run from Condobolin to Weedalio is 143 km, but I completed it in 1hr20. I had a wonderful time flying down some massive lift streeting. At one stage, I flew for nearly 50km without stopping at a thermal. This is what I had read about in the books and magazines. This is what I had heard all the experienced pilots talking about. This was a Great Day!

I lost some time at the Weedalio turnpoint as the Colibri had decided to stop recording. I invoked all my Ancient Order powers, but it nothing seemed to work. So I put it down and concentrated on gaining some height to give me fiddling time. The next time I glanced at it, the Colibri had come to life again. I raced back into the observation zone and turned for home. I was at 10,00 feet and had around 93 km to run. The sky ahead was peppered with promising Cu's. I had a slight headwind, but I was sure I could make it.

I stopped once or twice on the run back to Forbes to top up. The sky was my friend. Black Springs Mountain was kilometres below me and presented no problems at all. In fact, save for the fact that the Colibri went on the fritz again, I had an uneventful trip home. It was about 10km from Forbes that I noticed that the Colibri had stopped counting down the distance. Nothing I did could convince it to restart. I unplugged the power (as suggested in the manual). Nothing! I held it up where there could be no possibility of interference to the satellite signal. Still nothing! I resigned myself to having the personal satisfaction of completing the task, but not the badge. I flew through the observation zone and landed, 4hr 15minutes after taking off, safely at Forbes, but with mixed feelings.

After we towed the glider back to the tie down area, I noticed that the Colibri was now working again. Hmmm. I wondered what the data recording would show? Back at the clubhouse, I downloaded the trace. Sure enough, there was a gap from about 14km short of Forbes until it started recording again on the runway. But closer examination revealed that the barometric altitude trace was continuous for the whole flight. Although the GPS track was interrupted, the altitude trace showed that I was still flying. Maybe there was hope!

I wrote a letter explaining all the details, attached the IGC file and sent away for my badge, not sure at all that the GFA's certificates officer would accept the evidence. I was delighted, several weeks later, to receive my Gold badge with one diamond in the post. After seven attempts, I had finally made it! So now it was time to set my sights higher.

*[500km attempt 1]* Two days after my 300km flight, I set out with 500km in mind. My task was Forbes, Narrromine, Temora, Forbes. I was in the Astir again.

As usual, I struggled a little bit early on, but things picked up and I made good time on my trip north. I visited Peak Hill (my destination on the first Silver C attempt) at 10,000ft. I flew over the paddock where I had outlanded in the K13 three years earlier. It looked much nicer from 10,000ft! I flew through rain over Narrromine, and turned south. The day was still strong, I was making good time, but I could see some dirty weather ahead.

As I approached Forbes heading south, Bill Nixon called on the radio to tell us all that the wind on the ground had changed. Between me and Temora was a line of storms. This was not to be my 500km day after all. But it was still a great day! I was really enjoying the flying. I was making good time (I beat the DG1000 on the leg to Narrromine). My thermalling was improving every day. I was happy to land at Forbes, happy to know that I had made a good decision to abandon the task on the grounds of safety, happy to know that a 500km flight is out there waiting for me. And happy to just keep on trying until I make it!

Lessons learned in getting to 300km (nothing here that the old hands don't know!)

1. Preparation is paramount. Get your glider ready early, and be ready to go as soon as the conditions are right.
2. Get comfortable in the glider. If you haven't flown the aircraft before, or if wearing different equipment, sit in it on the ground for a good time to make sure you will be comfortable.
3. Drink lots of water, and make 'relief' plans.
4. If the day is strong, "don't turn in crap" (the Pincus Dictum).
5. Keep trying. The 'Big Day' is out there waiting, and the weather forecast won't always tell you that it's today!
6. Watch out for dead cows in outlanding paddocks (see my earlier article).
7. Go to camps. Local soaring at Camden is fun. Cross country soaring at camp is magnificent. You'll never know until you try. Once you try, you'll never want to miss a camp!

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[Richard Shemtob found this on Sportavia \(Tocumwal\) web site - Latest News - 16 March 2005](#)

It's a letter from a 'student' who is an airline pilot/check captain based in Hong Kong, and it is addressed to Ritz, the lady who looks after accommodation and social activities at Tocumwal.

"Hi Ritz

After a short visit to NZ, now back in cold Hong Kong – 10° and definitely no thermals (apart from thermal underwear)!

Once again a big thank you to everyone at Tocumwal (you, Don, Eddie, Tove, Grant, Henrik, Nathan, Erik, Debbie, Ashok, Georgi, Rob – and anyone else I have forgotten to mention in a "senior moment") for making it a real holiday and all so much fun. It was the best possible introduction to gliding that I could have hoped for.

However, I am now desperately trying to forget everything I learnt during the 2 weeks at Tocumwal - and remind myself of the basic techniques before I return to flying jets tomorrow –

- I must NOT use rudder,
- I must NOT ignore the throttle,
- I must NOT dispense with refuelling before flight,
- I MUST disconnect from the tug BEFORE take-off,
- I must NOT head straight for dark, heavy clouds,
- I must NOT look for turbulent thermals,
- If I do encounter turbulence, I must NOT continue to circle tightly until the passengers are sick,
- I must NOT land on grass in preference to tarmac,
- I must NOT vacate the cockpit on the runway after landing - to mention just a few points!

In addition, I will try my best to emulate Don's relaxed teaching methods, but I have my doubts as to how long I'll last before I resort to more physical methods again!

Looking on the bright side, I'm seriously relieved that I will not be expected to wash and dry my jet before flight. But, particularly at my age, the biggest advantage will be having a proper toilet available during flights of 5 hours or longer.

Best wishes to everyone at Sportavia,  
Paul."

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