

Out of the Blue

Waikerie Gliding Club Newsletter

MAY 2009

Notices

Annual General Meeting **2nd May 2009** (AGM will commence in club at 1600)

All members should have received an email with their notice of meeting, nomination forms and draft minutes of the 2008 AGM. We have posted notices to members that have not given us email addresses. If you have an email address, changed your email name or provider please ensure you let the club know.

Hangar Ball 23rd May 09

(Major Club Fund Raiser Event)

The Waikerie District Development Committee (WDDC) has developed a proposal to stage a **Hangar Ball** in the Club's main Hangar on Saturday May 23rd. The *black tie* Hangar Ball is proposed as a fund raising event by the WDDC to raise funds to paint our main hangar. This will be a major fund raiser event for our club and your support is required. A fabulous idea and a great opportunity to have a great weekend of fun and entertainment at Waikerie. Find something formal to wear and bring a party of friends. Suggest you book your accommodation early.

DIARY DATES

Annual General Meeting	Sat 2 nd May (4pm) 2009
Next Committee Meeting	Friday 22 nd May 2009 Friday 10 th July 2009
Member's Flying Days	Sat 21 st Sun 22 nd March Sat 4 th April Sun 5 th April
Public Hol's L/Weekends	Check WGC web page

Full Time Operations

We are busily engaged in planning for the Club's end of year annual fulltime operations, commencing from December 26th 2009 to January 11th 2010, We are holding some accommodation for our overseas members but will need to know by July 09 confirmation of arrival dates and expected length of stay. Please contact the John Hudson with this information.

Coaching Week - 27.12.10 - 3.01.10

This event has grown in popularity to the stage where we have asked the organisers to request a formal registration from pilots intending to fly during this period. It is highly likely some pilots will come for coaching week and stay on to fly in the Nationals.

National Multi-Class Gliding Competition 4th ~15th January 2010

The Club will host the 2010 National Multi-Class Gliding Championships at Waikerie from 4th - 15th January, 2010. Planning for the event is now underway, and will require significant input from SAGA clubs & members to assist in staging the event. Your assistance is required for a wide variety of tasks. Further details will also be published on our web page in the near future.

Operations

1. Calling all Crew

Crew meeting held on Saturday 18th April 09 at Waikerie had a extensive agenda and generated considerable discussion. Have a chat to your instructor or Mark for your personal update.

2. Club Business

It is expected the club will make a small profit this year (info avail at AGM) and the funds will be used for small capital works and improvements to the club assets and facilities.

Bulk Refuelling Facility – It appears that few tank builders will work with special Avgas tanks. J Hudson has had discussions with CL Tanks at Eudunda and it is likely this is where most of our avail funds will go this year.

AS K21 trailer – Construction will start soon, volunteers needed.

Club Documentation Review – “Model Constitution” and other club documentation is underway. Want to become involved let contact the secretary.

Cross-Hire Aircraft – KYS should be available by the time you read this article. Other x hire gliders are in the pipe line for this soaring season.

Airfield Water we have arranged to purchase 3 meg litres of water for the pads to be used over the next few months.

Next Committee Meeting – 1900hrs Friday 22nd May at the WGC clubrooms.

48th Aust Multi Class Nationals - 3.1.09 – 15.1.09

The Waikerie Nationals committee has had several meetings in preparation for this big event.

1. Lots of pre-comp activities and tasks have been identified. We will be looking for support from people with experience and skills and help from local and interstate gliding clubs members. Securing suitable tow aircraft and pilots is high on our priority list.
2. Key positions
 - Contest Director – Looks like J Hudson will undertake the task with support from Terry Cubley - needs ratification
 - Operations Director
 - Safety Officer
 - Scorer
 - Radio/flight sheet
 - Launch controller
 - Weather

How about 750 on a 650 day (Craig Vinal) (750 Km Task).

This is a story that I started last year, but have only now finished. It is about one of my last flights in the Mosquito during Coaching Week last year (07/08 season). Unfortunately, we did not have the outstanding conditions this year for either Coaching Week or the State Comps; they were good but not high. So, as I finished the story, it was nice to be reminded of those great conditions for what was two outstanding weeks of flying.

It had always been my ambition to complete a 750 km task. Although, in previous years, I'd been focusing more on improving speeds and competition flying skills. My average speeds did improve to the point where I was confident that on a strong day I could fly fast enough to do the distance. I reckoned I needed to be doing at least 120+ kph in the stronger parts of the day, and I was starting to achieve these speeds in the Mossi on stronger competition days.

So a 750 task was never far from my mind. Being confident of achieving high cross country speeds made me think that on the right day, I should give it a go.

But a strong day is essential. Without strong conditions and favourable winds, long tasks are not possible. Also, a flying window of at least 7.5 hrs was needed to be confident of making the distance which means a launch time of preferably 11-12 am. It had to be an early start day. Latter start times would need soaring conditions extending well after 1800 hrs. That time of the evening and being a long way from home didn't seem like a good combination.

In gliding you have to be patient. For three years either I was not at Waikerie for the right day or when I was at Waikerie the days weren't right. You also have to anticipate whether to head east or west. For example, during the 07 Coaching Week, a group of us declared 750s (Pinnaroo-Carrieton-Waikerie). On the journey north, the westerly change came in earlier than anticipated so around Burra, we encountered 50 kt head winds. Game over. Those who went east achieved their task including one pilot, Paul Clift, who did a 750. Right day, wrong direction.

[750 Km]

You also have to be prepared. When the day comes along you have to be ready to go; you need a well prepared glider as well as being well prepared mentally.

The weather at Waikerie in January last year was simply spectacular. During the State Comps we had 5 consecutive days of over 10,000 ft. One of those days would have been ideal for a quick 750, but with competition flying this is not so easy. It takes a lot of time to assemble and launch the fleet so even on good days the tasks can't be overly long. Another opportunity lost.

However, during the Coaching Week, some days later in the week looked very promising. Thursday looked like the day. Forecast temperature of 44 C, with light north easterly winds, and an Adelaide temp trace showing thermal heights of over 10,000 ft. On the negative side there seemed to be no likelihood of Cumulus and on the day, the Area 50 forecast was only showing thermal heights of under 5,000 ft. A quick call to the Adelaide Bureau in the morning confirmed that this was an error. But the duty forecaster was able to give some more useful information. The day was expected to start early and finish late and she confirmed that the thermal height would in fact be at least up to 10,000 ft. She also said that there was likely to be some instability north of Renmark with the likelihood of afternoon thunderstorms. So, stay away from there!

The task was planned. Likely to be blue but strong. Stay south to avoid the overdevelopment and Cu nims in the north. Peter Robinson, Gavin Wrigley and I declared Waikerie-Pinnaroo-Peterborough-Copville-Waikerie. 753.2 kms.

Glider ready; full water ballast, extra drinking water and food, PDAs programmed and task declared to the Colibri. Tow to the launch point and wait for the trigger temperature. And wait. 1100 am not hot enough. Sniffer flights report mediocre conditions. Wait until 1200. Start time getting a bit marginal, but finally a trigger temp of 39 C. I'm the first to launch at 1215 and to my great relief, release into a climb of 4 kts. It's only going to 4,000 ft, but the decision is made to start.

Off we head and the conditions start to improve. All going to plan.

The climbs after Wunkar are going to 7-8,000 ft with 6-8 kt averages,. Lift is everywhere. Easy to find and easy to centre. So far so good.

But then 20 kms short of the first turn point, the good lift is no longer there. Down to 5,000 ft and struggling to find strong lift. We seem to waste time looking for climbs. You can feel the momentum slowing. It's frustrating because you know that you're not flying fast enough.

Also, the downside of declaring a task becomes all too apparent. The area north of the river, where there was forecast to be thunderstorms, is lit up with a sky full of great cu. The cu seemed to be everywhere other than on our task line. Typical.

If that was not bad enough, the predicted north easterly was in fact a north westerly. We turned at Pinnaroo into the wind. 330 kms to go to Peterborough. It was going to be slow and marginal.

We all got back to abeam Waikerie and the positive was that there was cu north of the river on our track line. We were also back into better air and now had regular climbs to 10,000 ft. At least there would be a chance for some fast flying in the Cu.

About then, I had a battery problem. The B100 in the Mossi had always given a low battery warning. I tended to ignore them as I had been told it was a known bug. But suddenly, my Colibri also stopped telling me track, bearing and speed, and instead said "low battery".

Not a problem; switch to the second battery...I flick the switch ...everything goes dead. Nothing is working at all. Don't panic. Switch back and try it again. Same thing.

Great. Half way into a long flight and there was a chance that it might not even be recorded. I need to reduce the load, so I switched off the radio. The Colibri comes back to life, but it means that I will not be able to stay in contact with Robo or Gavin. On my own now.

On the plus there was a sky full of cu in front. Push the stick forward and roar off to the next cu.

This was a fast part of the task, but unfortunately, the cu petered out 50 kms short of Peterborough. And the head wind was starting to hurt. I was well behind time. I had hoped to be at Peterborough by 1730. But by 1730, I was still 50 kms short. I didn't think it was going to happen.

It was lucky I had turned off the radio. Robo was thinking the same thing and Gav and he had decided to give up the task. Had I heard that on the radio and in my frame of mind, I would have given up as well. No doubt about it.

But instead, I thought the day was still good enough to at least get to Peterborough and back to Waikerie. So my reasoning was to make it to Peterborough and see what happened after that.

I was well behind time. I turned Peterborough at 1800 thinking this is a very late hour to be so far from home. The view back to Waikerie was not heartening. The cu I'd been under was still 50 kms away across a blue hole and, although high, was looking decidedly flat and flaky (that look of "you should have been here 2 hours ago"). I'd never been up this late before needing a strong climb. It seemed to me that the day was over and I might even struggle to get home.

My plan was to fly generally parallel to the Peterborough to Burra road. I would try to get under the cu and see if anything was there and if not, I'd be able to make it back to the road and have a better outlanding option.

I was down to 7,000 ft and still not under the cu. The lift I was encountering was not great and reinforced my view that the day was nearing its end. At this point I used my mobile to ring the club to at least let them know where I was and that there was a chance of me outlanding on the Burra Road.

But to my great surprise, when I got under the cu, there was still lift. In fact I got the highest climb for the day; 13,000 ft. I was now only 6,000 ft below final glide for the task. A glimmer of hope.

But then, more difficulty. The Colibri again said "low battery".

What do I do now? I knew it was still recording because it was sending data to the PDA. But I needed the Colibri to know I was in the sector of the last turn point at Copeville. I didn't know how to do this with XCSoar on the PDA. Would the battery last long enough to keep the Colibri going?

Turn something else off, but what. Then I remembered I had an off switch for the B100. Off it went but so did the electronic vario. It started to remind me of the Apollo 13 movie. It was also very quiet.

But at least now the Colibri came back to life, showing distance to the last turnpoint and showing the required track. I was also getting the vital final glide information from the PDA.

With height, my plan was to now stay on track and see what happened. I knew I was well above final glide to Waikerie. This was comforting as the terrain I was over was unlandable until Morgan.

But near Morgan, the cu's ran out. Back to the blue and still 3,000 ft below final glide. It was now 1900; I had never been on task and still airborne at such a late hour. Surely the day must be dead by now. The only thought I had was to stay high.

The sky didn't look promising. I was not encountering any good lift and it the difficulty was compounded by not having an audio vario. I then remembered the glider was still full of water. Now seemed like a good time to dump some of it. I let about half go.

After passing Morgan and not encountering much lift, I noticed that there was a strong line of cu east of me stretching south of Waikerie. I turned 90 degrees and headed for it. If I found lift under it, I could complete the task. If not, I would be able to simply head back to Waikerie. Off I went.

It was now 1930. I was down to 8,000 ft still about 3000 ft below final glide. The sun was low, only half an hour away from setting. To the west, the light was fantastic. Long angled shafts of light stretching all the way to the ground from between the remnants of dying cu.

I reached my target cu and there was lift. No electric vario so I was having trouble centering. I managed to get to 10,000ft but could not get higher. Still below final glide so I decided to dump the rest of my water in the hope of climbing in the weaker conditions. I moved to another cu and felt a surge and managed to stay centered. Unbelievable. At 7.30 pm I managed to get to 11,500ft and final glide. All I had to do now was head to Copeville turn and head back to Waikerie.

This seemed to take forever. Just sitting there and making sure I stayed above final glide. I'd also been out of radio contact for a long time so I took the time to phone the club and let them know I was on my way back.

I landed right on sunset. About 10 minutes past 8pm. I'd been airborne for almost 8hrs. I had managed 753.2 kms in 7hrs 18min for an average speed of 103.2 kph. Slow, but at least I made it around the task. Getting back to the airfield on these long flights is always a bit of an anticlimax. Everyone is in the clubhouse having dinner and enjoying themselves, so there is no fanfare as you get out of the glider. All that is left to do is get the car and tow the glider back to the hangar. And then shout the bar!

A very satisfying flight even if a bit slow. I now know that on strong days, there will be lift late in the day provided you stay high. I was also glad to do it in the Mossi rather than in the new glider. It just seemed like more of an achievement in that glider by comparison to something of higher performance where greater speeds and longer distances are taken for granted. It was also close to my last flight in the Mossi before it was sold.

You can't match the weather to your days off, but a good day will happen again soon. Can't wait. And the electrics in the new glider are sorted...hopefully!

Craig. VH FQK

OUT OF THE BLUE'
**SEND YOU'RE NEWS ARTICLES, ITEMS OF
INTEREST OR ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR
FUTURE TOPICS TO: gjack@tpg.com.au**

