



# Gliding Hawkes Bay & Waipukurau Incorporated

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary June 2017



**Gliding**  
HAWKE'S BAY & WAIPUKURAU

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*Compiled by Jason Kelly from various sources*

Gliding in Hawkes Bay started well before the current club was formed with flying recorded in 1915 when “Tye” Husheer, then aged 15, built and flew a gliding biplane in Napier. This was really a hang glider with directional control by swinging his body. It had a 5.5m (18 foot) wingspan and 4.9m (16 foot) fuselage. Unfortunately the police ordered him to destroy it because of his German ancestry.

The New Zealand Gliding Association was formed in 1931 with the first annual camp held at Dannevirke during the Christmas holidays that year with the second camp held in Hastings.

After World War 2, it took a few years for gliding to become re-established in Hawkes Bay. Roy Russell, who top dressed with a Tiger Moth, imported a Rhonlerche two seater training glider ZK-GBE in 1957 and a 13 metre glider ZK-GBF, a K6, for himself. He intended to form a gliding club and do the instructing but was not very successful on his own.

A meeting for anyone interested in gliding was called on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1957 and about fifteen people turned up. These included Tye Husheer, Roy Russell, Gerry van Asch, Russell Spiller, Chris Brayshaw, Peter Gibb, Doug McIntyre (as a 15 year old boy), Mort Usherwood, Mike Monteagle, Clarry Faulkner, Ken Harris and Ken Francis. The Hawkes Bay Gliding Club was duly incorporated on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1957 with Gerry van Asch the first president and Tye Husheer the first vice president.

The club had to raise £900 to buy the Ronlerche GBE. Three members approached various businessmen including Guy Baillie of Baillie Motors and Piet van Asch (founder of NZ Aerial Mapping Ltd). With these and a few others who put in £100 each, along with £5 debentures, the club soon had the required amount.

As most of the members were Napier based, flying started from the Beacons Airfield (now Napier Aerodrome) and a shed built there that contained both gliders derigged. The club also operated from Joll’s Farm behind Te Mata Peak, Roy’s Hill, Ocean Beach, Poukawa and various farms.

Aero towing using Tiger Moths was too expensive for most of the members so the club tried car towing using Gerry van Asch’s Studebaker station wagon. Unfortunately, it was not possible to change gears without causing trouble with the launch so they had to start in second gear and get up to 40 miles per hour. It seemed obvious that the club needed a winch to get airborne and after investigation, Piet van Asch donated a Bren Gun Carrier which Gerry van Asch turned into a winch.



Membership was around 50 in 1961 and members were pressed into service to assist with building a hangar to house the club’s equipment and to end the necessity to rig and de-rig each flying day. A Slingsby T31 trainer, ZK-GAW, was purchased from the Manawatu Gliding Club in a written off condition for £230 and rebuilt by two dedicated members. It was sold in 1963 as it was not satisfactory as first through due to its open cockpit. It was replaced with a new Rhonadler K7, ZK-GDA, for £1,500. This aircraft saw four years of service before being sold to the Piako Gliding Club.

By 1965 several factors brought about a decision to vacate the Peak strip. The difficulty of getting away from the strip in a sea breeze because thermals were not often present and the inability to fly when the winds came from the westerly quarter, combined with the owner not wanting so many cars on the strip, eventually saw the club move to its permanent location at Bridge Pa. Launching was done with aero tows by Hawkes Bay & East Aero club Tiger Moths and the occasional winch launch until it was decided winching and planes did not really mix and winching was abandoned.

Piper Super Cub ZK-BOY became the club's first full time tow plane in 1965. This was purchased by Bill Williams for the club's use and eventually the club purchased it from him. This performed very well until the engine hours expired. At that time an offer was made to the club to swap it for a Piper Pawnee in flying condition valued at £1,500. This offer was taken up providing the club with ZK-BOQ in late 1967.

The club fleet then comprised of the Rhonlerche two seater training glider ZK-GBE, Schleicher K6 CR ZK-GEH and an ASK13, ZK-GFL purchased for £2,050. In 1969, both GBE and GEH were written off in separate accidents at the same time and were subsequently bought back from the insurance company and rebuilt.

Note snow-capped ranges.



The time consuming rig / de-rig and equipment storage problem surfaced again so the main priority was the building of another hangar. This became a reality in 1969 following much hard by club members. The names of those who donated generously of their time and money for this project can be seen today set in bricks in the hangar floor.

Once firmly established at Bridge Pa, many away weekends for fun or competitions were enjoyed by members with many a tall story being told around the camp fires.



Fund raising, as always, received much attention in order to keep the club solvent and the aircraft flying. The minute books record a number of occasions when the hat was passed around for donations to meet commitments. Low membership numbers were a continual problem, as they are today, with much time devoted to organising open days, public displays and scholarships in order to try and boost membership.

Mid 1972 saw the addition to the club fleet of K6E ZK-GFE which brought the club's fleet up to that as modern as any in the country while providing a very competitive single seater. The following year it was decided a further two seater was required and ZK-GDN, a K7, was purchased from the Wigram Aviation Sports Club for \$4,500. This K7 was considered a short term measure only as it was of the type the club owned in 1963.

Another K13, ZK-GKA, was purchased late in 1975 to give the club two of these aircraft which were considered the best training aircraft of the day and are still considered as such by many instructors today.



The single seaters became under utilised in the late seventies which prompted the decision to sell ZK-GEH which was subsequently purchased by a local syndicate of Dave Smith, Malcolm Belcher and George Lane. This was completely refurbished and can still be seen flying today.

The Waipukurau Gliding Club split off in the 1970s with Geoff White, an ex Spitfire pilot, being CFI of both clubs.

The seventies saw the rapid increase in tow charges as a direct result of the fuel crisis. This led the club into the decision to build another winch in order to reduce costs and to get around the fuel restrictions placed on private aircraft by the government. Help from the Raetihi Gliding club saw a team headed by Bob Gorringer, Doug Honnor, Malcolm Belcher and very enthusiastic members work long and hard until the fruits of their labour were realised with the first launch in May 1979 with Wynn Craven the first pilot. This winch was used mainly at a strip cleared by the club at Roy's Hill where the 6,000 feet of single strand 11swg wire gave launch heights of up to 3,100 feet with many launches above 2,000ft. The land beside the river was made available by the Glazebrook family. The winch was also used at Waipukurau, Napier, Bridge Pa and Taupo. The required logistics of setting up at Roy's hill and returning to Bridge Pa ultimately led to the site being abandoned and the winch sold with the club returning full time



to aero tow from Bridge Pa.

Easter Weekend 1981 saw the club suffer a setback when the tow plane hit a fence and was written off. This setback turned out to be a blessing in disguise as when the insurance paid, this enabled the club to purchase a new tow plane, a Champion Citabria, ZK-CPD. This two seater had its 100 HP engine replaced by the 150 HP engine taken from ZK-BOQ and has since proved to be an ideal tow plane for the club's needs. In recent years the wooden spar wings have been replaced with all metal wings and the engine replaced.

One of the more controversial decisions was made by the club in 1981 to purchase an all fiberglass high performance two seater glider. This was a Grob Twin Astir G103 ZK-GMX which arrived brand new in November at the horrific cost of \$45,000. This again took the club's training fleet up to as good a standard as anywhere in the country.



Glider M X looking for thermals over our lush Plains.

(17.5 M span)

During the 1980s, ZK-GFE was sold and a Single Astir ZK-GNF purchased. This was unfortunately written off in a tragic accident and was replaced by another Single Astir ZK-GNI which was eventually sold. A K6 ZK-GDB was subsequently purchased and sold a number of years later to Doug McIntyre who allowed members to fly it.

The club struggled for members with membership hitting a low of 24 in 2009. This caused financial problems with insurance costs being a perennial issue. However, the value of having insurance was shown again in 2009 when the K13 ZK-GKA was destroyed by fire after an accident at Waipukurau Airfield.





*Remains of ZK-GKA after fire at Waipukurau Airfield*

With the Waipukurau Gliding Club also struggling for survival, the two clubs rejoined with formal effect in August 2009 and the club name changed to Gliding Hawkes Bay and Waipukurau. The merger saw the club take ownership of the PW5 ZK-GYP. The funds of the merged club, along with grants, enabled the club to purchase ZK-GHB in 2010 which is a Grob 103C Twin III SL. This self launching glider was bought to encourage cross country flying and has had some great flights from Bridge Pa and also Omarama. Waipukurau Airfield is used as a summer flying base as conditions permit.





Membership numbers have been boosted in recent times with a surge of youth members. This has led to the formation of the Gliding School in 2017 to help foster all students and retain them as members. Doug McIntyre has recently purchased another PW5, ZK-GWG, for youth members to use.

Wynn Craven, the founding editor of the New Zealand Gliding Kiwi magazine, served in most of the club's executive positions as well as being an instructor and tow pilot. He was a great club stalwart, always available to assist, and produced a good club newsletter.



Four great Gliding Club stalwarts. Ex WW 2 pilots.

Club members have had many meritorious flights for distance, height gains and National records. Peter Lyons and Brian Kelly at one stage held the 100km triangle two seater record completed in a K13 and also the 500km out and return two seater record completed in a Janus CM. In that flight they beat an AirNZ Friendship from Wellington to Bridge Pa. Peter Lyons held the 500km single seat out and return single seat record in his Cirrus and also won a number of National titles and represented New Zealand a number of times. He was a great cross country pilot and took time to help new pilots learn these skills. Peter is still fondly remembered today with a Memorial Trophy awarded to the most meritorious member.





One of the longest aero tows occurred in the early 1970's during the National Gliding Championships at Alexandra when Peter Lyon's Standard Cirrus was damaged and a replacement was aero towed from Bridge Pa to Alexandra.



Graham White was one of Peter's many students and has also represented New Zealand. Peter and Graham had an epic flight from Omarama to Bridge Pa in the ASH25M ZK-GRJ when they only used the engine to launch from Omarama and then soared the rest of the way in just a few hours utilising a variety of lift sources.

Tow fees have been a recurring issue for the club. A current initiative being pursued is the Skylux, a home built plane with an automotive engine. If this works out as planned, the cost of towing will be greatly reduced.



The formation of the club back in 1957 must have taken great dedication by the founders. The present members owe much to those who have proceeded them and kept the club spirit alive and who have done much to provide the facilities that we enjoy today. This appreciation will no doubt continue to manifest itself in the continued support of present members and of those in the future.

There is so much more that could be written and there are plenty of names left out that have done so much for the club but that would take a book.