



Wynn Craven

29th August 1922 – 08th December 2013, aged 91 years

Compiled by Brian Kelly from memory and information from Wynn's son John Craven and friend Doug Honnor

From his early days in Auckland, Wynn had a strong interest in aviation and spent many hours building quality model aircraft. It was a natural extension to this that saw him join the local gliding club. As he had a useful shed at his home and with his experience of building model aircraft, he was involved with the building of the T31 glider kit that the Auckland Gliding club purchased.

After being promoted by his company to service the agricultural industry in the South Island, Wynn moved to Christchurch. He was able to continue his flying interest with the Canterbury Gliding Club. It was here where he achieved his five hour endurance flight for his Silver badge.

He served on the NZ Gliding Council and was the founding editor of the national gliding magazine, the Gliding Kiwi (now Soaring NZ). Wynn, in a note dated 27 July 2002, recalled how this came about:

"I was on the NZ Gliding Council and in 1955 at a meeting in Christchurch I stood up on my feet and declared: Here we have gliding clubs springing up all over NZ. We don't know what they are doing and they don't know much, if anything, about us, the ruling body. What we need is a newsletter or regular publication of some sort to keep us all informed.

Well, that edict brought a prompt response. A fellow stood up pointing to me saying, "Don't you travel all over the South Island in the course of your occupation?" To which I nodded, whereupon he pointed again and declared, "Well, you're IT". And thus was established The NZ Gliding Bulletin, the quarterly publication, which seven months later, with the help of Ralph Gore, had a name change to "The Gliding Kiwi." That issue carried the editorial comments, "We hope you like our new name. What could be better than to adopt our national bird the kiwi, notorious for having no wings and to remedy this apparent omission of nature."

I had no thought of being involved myself but clearly I had obviously stuck my neck out and therefore accepted the job as another gliding challenge although I felt dismayed at my lack of experience.

Happily, today though, I realise that I benefited through the gaining of a measure of journalistic skill which has served me well in the ensuing years. It also gives me great satisfaction in seeing the Gliding Kiwi now recognised as one of the world's best gliding magazines and we know that this has resulted from the skilled work of the subsequent editors. Perhaps they also couldn't say no!"

In the early 1960s, Wynn was promoted again and became manager of what was then Barclay Motors in Hastings. This was one of the largest car and machinery dealers at the time. Naturally, Wynn noticed the local Hawkes Bay Gliding Club and promptly joined us. He served on the club committee, had a stint as president and then back on the committee as well as being CFI for a period. He was a dedicated glider instructor and tow pilot. Also naturally, for some years, he was the club newsletter editor. In more recent years, he was the club's patron.

The mid 1970s undoubtedly saw the club have its enthusiasm stoked by Wynn. This resulted in the club using an old ATC winch powered by a flat-head V8. Due to work by Peter Lyons and the generosity of the Glazebrook farming family, we were permitted to develop a strip over 2km long at Roys Hill. Wynn, being the most current winch pilot, volunteered to trial the first launch. He, along with Doug Honnor, using 12g fencing wire, saw the club Rhonlerche

GBQ launched to initial heights of around 900ft in the preliminary assessment trials. This brought great enthusiasm.

Later, with a club built winch and as pilots became current and the wind was down the strip, launch heights of over 2,000ft were achieved. Sadly after a number of years, due to a number of reasons, including time spent on wire breaks, being out of the public eye and the lack of viable teams to run winching, winching was abandoned by the club.

Wynn was also a keen yachtsman and participated in the trailer yacht race class which was a very popular family yacht class. Yachting has similarities to gliding in using the energies of nature to keep craft moving and or aloft for hours which saw synergies with fellow glider pilots.

In the days of “pig in the barrow” raffles and Christmas stocking raffles to raise club funds for further equipment, Wynn could always be counted on to support the cause.

In his archives, Wynn had movies of early gliding in New Zealand which he put together in a video he held. Our club holds an historical copy of this.

The charisma of the man could be seen in his activities after his retirement. He regularly could be seen helping with the RSA, in the role of visiting and providing support and comfort, and the Masonic Club in their welfare programs.

Thank you Wynn. You have been an inspiration.

