

OMARAMA GLIDING CLUB (INC)

Newsletter November 2020



GOOD NEWS – The SI Regionals went well – great soaring and lots of fun.

The photo show Nigel auctioning off Origami – an entrepreneurial enterprise by new Youth Glide member, Fred Grant, to raise funds to attend the YSDC. Well done Fred and thanks to the enthusiastic Origami lovers/supporters!

NOT SO GOOD NEWS is that we are desperately in need of a Secretary to take over from Bruce Graham who has done a sterling job for the past six years but is adamant he cannot continue. Club members are putting in extra effort to keep the ‘show on the road’ on the airfield and here is an opportunity for someone who may not be around to help on the ground but could assist the club greatly by offering to take on the role of Secretary. Contact Brian

brian.savage@fossicking.co.nz if you can help.

Nationals – Are being held at Omarama this year. Already Marju has requested the hire of ZS to participate in the Novice Class. We have two DUO’s available for “Nationals hire”. Send in your DUO hire request to Trevor trevor.mollard@gmail.com or contact him for more information. A good opportunity to really try out ZK-GOD.

NEW MEMBERS – A BIG WELCOME to:

Harvey Frizzell, Wanaka; Clive Geddes, Queenstown;
Alan and Fred Grant, Twizel; Sondre Langvik-Owen, Cromwell;
Tuulianna Laukkanen, Twizel; Wes McIver, Gold Coast;
Pete McKenzie, Alexandra; Alex Shadbolt, Rangiora





KEITH ESSEX & ALEX SHADBOLT WITH DYNAMIC ZK-XYX

KEITH ESSEX

You would have had to be living under a rock not to have heard of Keith Essex who arrived in Omarama from Alaska and almost instantly was doing 1,000k flights regularly and winning our championship trophies so we got him to share his aviation journey for this newsletter.

At a very young age Keith moved to Alaska and lived in an area where everyone flew. Flying was a natural progression as the road system was too difficult to get around. Keith learned to fly in a Super Cub and brought his first aircraft a “1940s J5 115hp, no flaps, Cub – (Hot for a J5!) “a fun piece of junk” – all he could afford at the time but in which he did 900 hours.

Keith got his first flying job at age 19 at 900 hrs, with Delta Air Service flying passengers, mail and groceries and fuel into native villages using a Cessna 207, Cherokee 6, a Beech Bonanza and a Navaho Chieftain – ‘hot’ aircraft in the 1980s! Then Keith became a ski plane pilot flying Cessna 185s on the Glaciers in Talkeetna.

In 1991 Keith set up his own business in Girdwood with a C185 on snow skis, primarily glacier flying supporting mountaineering expeditions, flying skiers and doing tourist flights then 20 years ago switched to helicopters to overcome the lack of reliable weather problems and became really busy as he could operate so much more. Keith got his Helicopter commercial licence straight away. *(In Alaska, as a student Pilot, you could borrow money from the State of Alaska which Keith did to gain his instrument and commercial ratings and if you went into*

aviation a portion of the loan would be forgiven (maybe 50%). For a young person it was a ton of money to get the necessary ratings and it all helped).

Keith introduced innovations to his business – sledge dog rides up on the glacier, the many remote communications sites were powered by solar and generation and with a switch from diesel to propane he saw a need to be able to provide propane so established a propane site for refuelling and put in place the infrastructure for doing that.

When Keith sold his business 3 years ago he had 13 helicopters and has remained as President of the Company with his obligation ceasing in May, but he will remain for as long as they need him. He felt “he established the business at the right time and sold it at the right time”.

Keith had a couple of friends in Alaska who were into gliding encouraging him to have a go – “you will love it”. To Keith it looked very boring. At an airshow the Wilit Brothers were there, well known glider pilots in the USA, talking and offering instruction. “What the hell” thought Keith I will give it a try being advised it would take three days to get an add on rating. Keith showed up and started flying thinking “yeah this is fairly boring” until there was some wind on the ridge – a light bulb went off – “you could actually travel doing this”! Keith got the rating after a week or so and went and brought a DUO but really didn’t know what to do with it. Keith received an invitation to go to Namibia and use of a Nimbus 4D and figured he needed to learn pretty quick how to fly X-C. While in California he flew every day for about six weeks x-c then went to Namibia – an ‘eye opening’ experience where he learned a lot, became solidly “hooked” and his gliding interest has continued from there.

In 2014 Keith came to Omarama. He was used to flying in the mountains but found it both challenging and scenic and because he loved it so much has set himself up to spend a lot of his time here.

Keith was aware the OGC were thinking of buying another DUO and when he saw a good buy advertised (a 550 hr DUO ex the Barron Hilton Ranch) purchased it on the spot and gave the OGC the first option to buy. Keith is our Omarama ‘treasure’ who has ensured gliding continues in the wake of Glide Omarama ceasing business by purchasing a new Dynamic and a Carbon Cub as tow planes – something we are very grateful for indeed. Keith is one of those ‘good NZ blokes’ who give back to our sport assisting where he can and most recently helped at the Regionals providing his task setting expertise.

INTRODUCING ALEX SHADBOLT

Alex is one of the new tow pilots flying Keith’s Dynamic. Alex’s Dad, Trevor Shadbolt, was a keen member of the Canterbury Gliding Club and Alex did his first flight as a six year old with Dad. He flew off and on for a few years going solo on his 16th birthday.

Alex then joined the Canterbury Aero Club gaining his PPL at age 17 and then joined the International Aviation Academy of NZ to complete his CPL and instructors rating.

One day he got a phone call, out of the blue, asking if he would be interested in a job which he thought was his friends “having him on”. He met the person two weeks later and was offered a job in Vanuatu at the time only having 250 hours total flying time. First though he had to ferry a Cessna 207 from Dunedin to Vanuatu needing to get a type rating first. With his ‘can do’ attitude he blasted off to Keri Keri having to divert to Wellington for an oil leak to be attended.

At some stage on the Keri Keri to Norfolk leg the HF radio failed and contact was unable to be made again until 50 nautical miles from Norfolk with VHF. Delightfully Alex admits to finding it difficult “making out the charts”. After Norfolk it was on to Noumea then onward to Wanuata getting turned back to Noumea due to bad weather but he did make it safely the next day after 25 hours of flying.

While in Vanuatu, on reaching the 500 hours milestone, Alex made it on to flying the twin aircraft and although he did have a multi engine IFR rating he wasn’t able to operate IFR until he had more total time due to the Part 135 rules. Alex flew mainly charter in Islanders but said “he flew in all types of aircraft doing everything” becoming the Acting Chief pilot unexpectedly when the Chief Pilot resigned.

He returned to NZ to fly with Golden Bay but soon joined Air Nelson flying Dash Eights.

A stint with DHL Bahrain saw him fly all over Middle East, Europe and East Africa, during this time completing his ATPL flight test and licence.

He joined Jet Connect flying 737s and transferred to Air NZ flying the Airbus when COVID changed everything and today Alex is on furlough working as the Manager of the Pukaki Airport and is very much enjoying his tow pilot role having got his tow rating and Dynamic rating two months ago. He owned a Micro light class one, flies a DC3 based out of Auckland and had to sell his share in a Maule due COVID to avoid selling his house. We love having you as a Tow Pilot Alex. Enjoy your time at Omarama!



It was great to see the first of our overseas members return. Michael Wolff (who has NZ residency status) arrived from Austria to two weeks isolation, providing us with a first-hand account of the experience!

Michael flew ZS in the SI Regionals this week



Gavin, with Jono & Nigel who competed in the SI Regionals in UO winning the highest placed club glider trophy.

From the President:



Well, we kept the faith and it worked.

Thanks to a whole host of club members who have stepped up and kept us on track, the new season has got off to a great start.

Reports are below, but in summary, OGC ran a Mountain Flying course which attracted 8 to 10 participants, depending on the day, and 22 finally entered in the Regionals (should have been 24 but for some admin glitches).

When we thought six months ago where we might be now, none would have been convinced we could kick off so successfully the new normal in Omarama.

Looking ahead:

- we have the Youth Glide camp in mid-December, followed by the Nationals in January
- our new to us Duo GOD was delayed but should now be landed in NZ and flying for the YG camp

- possibly premature to announce, but two members are looking to buy Duos which they will make available for club flying when they aren't using them, so we could have up to four available in the near term!
- Milan has joined OGC with his Gliding (Commercial) rating so is able to offer paid one on one gliding courses to members and non-members. A great opportunity to fly with and learn from a highly experienced pilot. His website is kahusoaring.nz
- Gavin W's initiative with the Twizel area school has resulted in 4 new youth students plus 2 of their parents joining OGC. We have had an approach from the Omarama school and a dozen students will be coming along shortly - some to do a winch launch. We plan to push this out to a wider area, the Regional Council Sports person, Pip Sutton, is offering to assist with this.

So, again, a big thankyou to all who have helped get us to where we are now. One big benefit I have seen is that OGC is becoming a more member involved operation, indeed a proper gliding club, with ab initio training, winch drivers, and many members helping out to get gliders into the air.

Given the massive changes, it still isn't perfect, but is easily good enough and much better than expected. Building on this start is the big challenge now.

We do need more members to help, in particular with winch driving, so if you want to get more involved, please contact me about that or any other ideas.

Finally, if anyone is thinking of using one of the Duos for the Nationals, please get your request in so we can schedule the aircraft.

I hope to see you over the Xmas period in Omarama.

Fly safe. Brian

Jerry's Mountain Soaring Course – Omarama Airfield - 9th to 13th November 2020

The mountain soaring course ran the week before the South Island Regional Championships from Monday 9th November through to following Friday. Nine pilots took part in the course, two each from Auckland, Nelson Lakes, Canterbury, and Omarama Gliding Clubs and one from the Glide Omarama Club.

This year marks the first time the course has been run by the Omarama Gliding Club and takes over the tradition founded many years ago by Jerry O'Neil. Trevor Mollard led the course ably assisted by Chris Streat and Brian Savage who took the students through a structured program teaching the basic skills required for safe mountain operations.

The weather cooperated with steadily improving conditions throughout the week. Friday was outstanding with wave conditions which allowed several course members to soar over Mount Cook. Resources for the week were limited in that there was only one tug and one double seater glider available. Most of the flying was conducted in single place gliders which required a conservative approach for task setting.

Next year we propose to repeat the course with additional resources and a greater emphasis on dual flying.

Trevor Mollard, CFI Omarama Gliding Club

CFI's Report November 2020

Here is a brief catch up for members near and far. Early in March the commercial operator at the Omarama airfield "Glide Omarama" was forced by NZCAA to cease operations. The owner, Gavin Wills, complied with the directive and subsequently laid off most of his staff with two weeks' notice.

In the absence of Glide Omarama, operation of the Youth Glide winch devolved to our gliding club. Phil Plane was dispatched to the Wellington Gliding Club at Papawai, with financial assistance from the Soaring Centre, to qualify as a winch operator. He completed his training and managed to return home to Omarama just ahead of the nationwide COVID -19 lockdown which commenced on the 25th March.

The lockdown effectively terminated the soaring season. With Glide Omarama out of the picture, Omarama Airfield Limited called for expressions of interest from those parties interested in obtaining a licence to operate from the aerodrome. The OGC applied for a licence to operate commercially under Rule Part 149 which covers recreational gliding but excludes adventure aviation and joy rides. This licence was subsequently issued.

When the country returned to level 1 lockdown in June Gavin Wrigley "Griz" took the opportunity to make a gliding presentation at the nearby high school in Twizel. Trial flights were conducted using the winch every second Sunday throughout the winter and resulted in the recruitment of six new members who are four students and two parents. Well done Griz.

The arrival of Keith Essex's Dynamic enabled aerotow operations to recommence in the spring. Alex Shadbolt has proved a willing tow pilot. Keith was obliged to convert his American flying licence to a NZ one to fly his own aircraft. His second tug, a Carbon Cub has been much delayed by the chaos experienced by the shipping companies and is now not expected to be landed until the 19th December.

The good news is that the club's second DUO Discus ZK-GOD together with Keith's ASG 32 glider were landed at Lyttleton on the 20th November and should be available for flight early in December.

The OGC took over the running of Jerry's course this year. We ran a highly successful program for nine pilots teaching the basics of how to soar safely in the mountains. The following week our club hosted the South Island Regional Gliding Championships with 22 entries which is more than last year in a pre-covid environment.

Milan Kmetovics has completed his Commercial Pilot Licence (Glider) and will be providing commercial flight training using the club's two seaters soon. His web site can be found at **kahusoaring.nz**

Phil Plane has been appointed Winch Master and Griz is now the Deputy CFI. The Standard Operating Procedures have been divided into two parts, one for the club and the other for all airfield users. Do please read both parts prior to your first flight this coming season.

Looking ahead we have the Youth Glide Development Camp commencing on the 10th December followed by the Christmas camp and the NZ National Gliding Championship in the new year. Provided we can keep COVID – 19 at bay it looks like we will have a busy summer ahead of us.

To our overseas based members, we miss you and hope things will work out for a more normal season next year.

Trevor Mollard, CFI Omarama Gliding Club



The Tribute to Keith presented by Grae Harrison at the SI Regionals prize giving.

Ladies & gentlemen,

Tonight, we need to acknowledge and thank someone who has gone above & beyond for Gliding NZ but especially for all of us here at Omarama.

This person had the vision and tenacity, along with Kiwi number 8 wire mentality, to make things happen when the demise of Glide Omarama, coupled with Covid-19, threatened towing operations here.

Well organised and generous with time but especially money he straight away ordered not one but two towplanes for use at Omarama for the benefit of all glider pilots, at considerable personal cost.

It takes a special kind of club member to be that creative, to be that generous and to pay it forward for the sport of gliding, the sport that we love.

Ladies & gentlemen could you please show your appreciation to Keith Essex.

A standing ovation followed!

HAPPY SOARING EVERYONE - Yvonne