2-3 March 2024

AGC Weekly News

The weekly newsletter of the Auckland Gliding Club at Drury, Auckland

From the CFI

Congratulations once again go to Angelie who has now completed her XCP flight test, just some paperwork to be sent off to complete the rating. This was attained almost exactly a year after first going solo so well done.

The photo below was taken after Angelie's first solo.

I've asked Roy Innes to be deputy CFI and he has accepted. So, in my absence, Roy will be the go-to guy.

The Grand Prix starts with practice day this Saturday. There are only a couple of takers for a front seat so far. If you are interested in doing a day or two, please let me know.

I've finally managed to pick up the line marker and have extended two white lines 200m apart across part of the field. If you can consistently touch down just inside the first line and stop before the second, you are probably safe for an out landing.

A short visit to Taumarunui

David Moody

At last year's AGM, the Taranaki Club proposed holding a competition based at the Taumarunui Airfield; the proposal was accepted for next season, subject to an exploratory visit this year, and establishment of a good database of airstrips. So, exploration of the area over Waitangi weekend. Sadly, the weather didn't really cooperate; only one day of cross-country flying in thermals.

My flight started with a look "down the Whanganui River"; there was a surprising (to me, anyway, my previous experience in the King Country was goat and pig hunting in steep country) extent of flat(ish) country adjacent to the river, with many airstrips (I guess, for servicing the adjacent hill country).

Find the airstrip

Looks like a good long strip

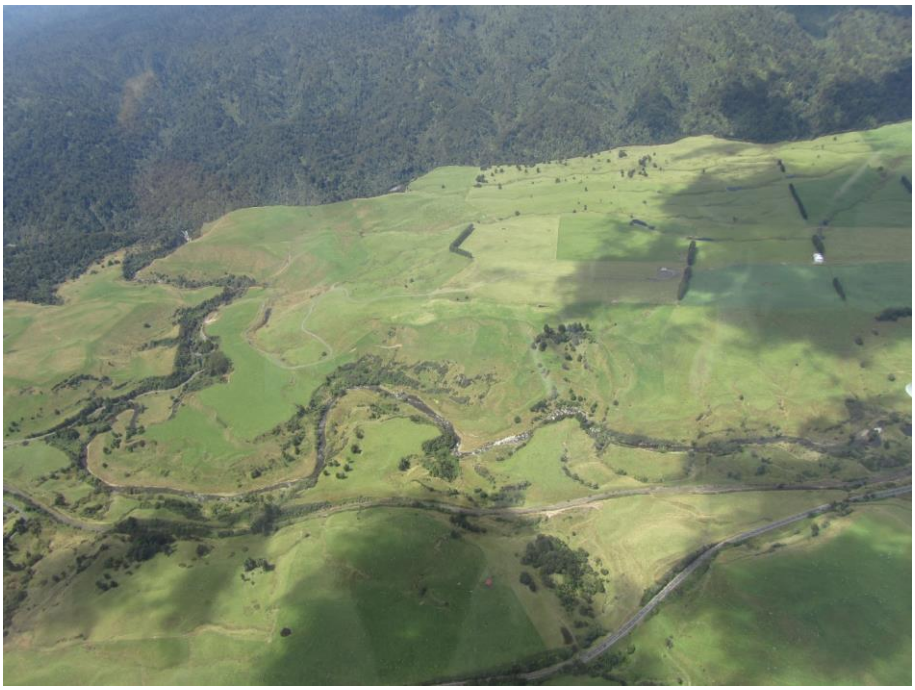
However, this sort of “open” country extends only a short distance downstream before the river valley becomes more narrow and steep-sided.

Next step was to return to the town, and explore up-river, towards the Southeast, following the highway towards National Park (and my notional destination of Ohakune). The terrain in this direction was quite different, more of a wide valley with lots of farms and flat paddocks.

Looking back towards Taumarunui; Owhango township in the middle distance (Pub with “Owhango Hotel” painted on the roof in giant letters!)

My Oudie was providing with multiple “green” options for landouts, although I didn’t find many of them from above 4,000 feet (2,500 AGL). That said, heaps of suitable looking paddocks in the part of the territory. Very pretty scenery too, with the upper Whanganui River running down the valley, farms on one side, bush and hills on the other.

Clouds were unreliable, although plentiful, so I tiptoed slowly South. Another (really long) airstrip at Manson’s Siding, then over the Raurimu Spiral, where the railway line climbs onto the volcanic Plateau.



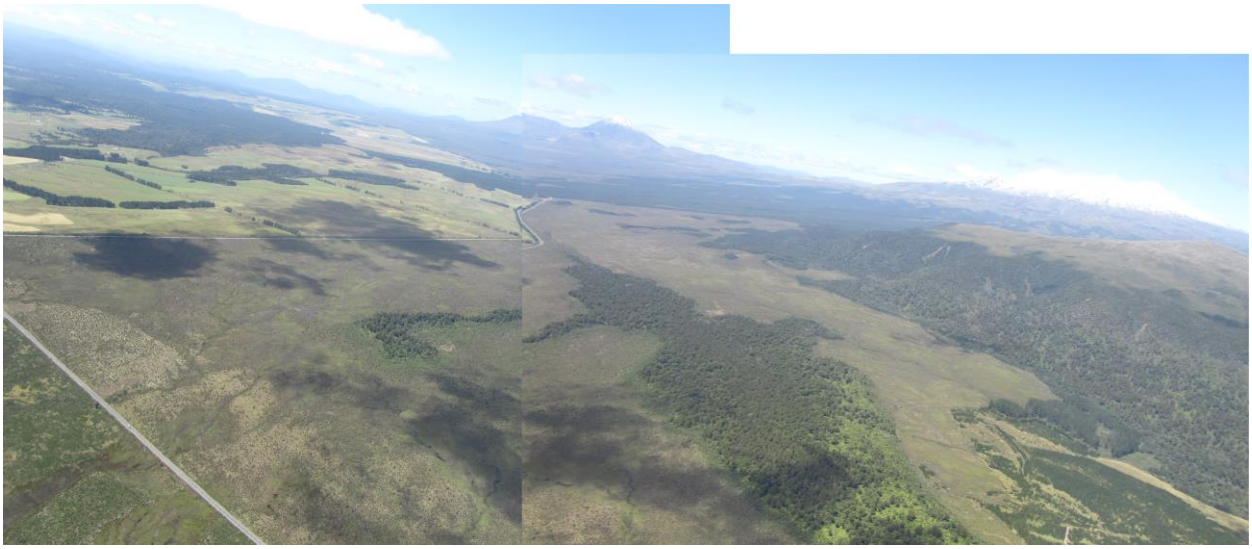
Road, rail, river, farmland with airstrip (partly in shadow) on the plateau, bush; Mansons’ Siding

Raurimu, with the railway spiral; Fresh snow (from Saturday) on Ruapehu; National Park township RH distance

National Park township is quite close to Raurimu, and significantly higher; there is a long airstrip in the NE quadrant between the highways (cloud shadows again, sorry!)

National Park airstrip in shadow, left of line of trees, 45 degrees clockwise from tree line.

Notice the farmland in the background, a long zone of farming activity stretching East towards Rotoaira and Rangipo (where the highway meets State Highway 1, South of Turangi). Again, positive expectation there will be landable paddocks (and probably airstrips) along the way. Here's a pretty rough panorama showing that there is plenty of unlandable scrub and swamp in the DoC estate (RH side of the road) with better options on the left.



Looking further SE towards Horopito and Ohakune, there was a bit of a jump over bush to the next region of paddocks, so I determined to go exploring to the North West after retracing my steps back towards Owhango, where I cut the corner and headed for Ohura. The number of "green" airstrips (and even the "not reachable" ones) on my Oudie diminished quite markedly once I crossed the Whanganui again, however cloud base was around 5,000 feet here, so I had margin for glide to landable places. Nevertheless, it was going to be quite a long glide if needed, so I made more of an effort to get high and stay high. Slow, but safe. There was the occasional airstrip on a ridge through here, and some referenced on the Oudie that were out of sight:

Ridgetop airstrip leading up to the "white dot" centre of frame

Big breath, and I could see Ohura township on some flats in a valley bottom in the distance, so kept tracking NW, noting the appearance of "Ohura A/S" on the device. I was also tracking into wind here, so on alert for sea breeze, the West Coast is not far beyond Ohura. Sure enough, as I got to my "turn point" the thermals died, and a right turn and scurry back into the hills was called for. From there I tracked "up" the valley leading from Ohura back to the highway, at first lots of flat paddocks in valley bottoms, then the valley narrowed and I was keeping an eye out for airstrips on ridges (and yes, there were landable opportunities, but "scattered" rather than "densely packed").

Ohura township from cloud base in the murky marine air; some good-looking hay paddocks nearby.

Once I reached the (Te Kuiti – Taumarunui) highway, I turned back towards NZTM, using the "pointy" landmark as a lead in.

How to find NZTM – pointy hill sticking up above the rest. View looking SE down the Te Kuiti – Taumarunui highway.

View SE towards town from near the pointy landmark.

The Taumarunui airfield is located in a valley ~North of the town; it seems this valley continues and joins up with territory we're familiar with around Benneydale. Because the weather was blue and weak over the next 2 days, I didn't explore this direction. That said, I noted that we had a turnpoint not far from town during the Nationals, certainly I could see the pointy landmark while struggling to get around on that task, and there were plenty of safe landings nearby.

So, "Could the Taranaki Club stage a Club Class Contest at Taumarunui?".

In my opinion, the answer is a qualified yes; there are significant areas of "generally landable" terrain, and there are also regions of "nothing but designated, usually ridge top, topdressing strips" that would challenge any pilot. Not a place for early cross-country flying, however for the disciplined pilot who manages a flight to always have a landing option available, quite acceptable. In many ways (as Glyn has promoted) this is no different from South Island Mountain flying, where the same strategy is required, albeit the altitude/glide distance numbers are different. The landout database is being prepared, and I suggest that with preparation, a new possibility has been identified.

2023 Birdy - a video from Gerard

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17O1d9sYo2E

Stefan Langer flies from Worcester, South Africa

Two video links of some flying from my old club in the Western Cape Province of South Africa - were sent to me by a friend in the US. Don't get the impression this is "normal" for that part of the world – it definitely is not.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OOXvAbCUcc&t=72s&authuser=0

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYr3DKGhQWs&authuser=0

Threat and Error Management

Adam Woolley
Courtesy Wings & Wheels

Photo by Sean Franke

As glider pilots, we navigate the boundless skies with grace and precision, but even the most experienced aviators encounter challenges. Threat and error management (TEM) is a crucial concept that empowers pilots to identify, assess, and mitigate potential risks before they escalate into hazardous situations. In this article, we delve into the realms of TEM and its application in soaring.

Understanding Threats

Threats are external factors that have the potential to compromise flight safety. They can arise from weather conditions, congestion in the air, or human factors such as fatigue or distractions. For glider pilots, threats may include turbulent thermals, restricted airspace, unfamiliar terrain, maintenance that hadn't been carried out correctly, tow out gear, forgetting to turn the flare on, etc. Recognising these threats is the first step toward effective risk management.

Assessing Errors

Errors, on the other hand, are actions or decisions that deviate from intended plans or procedures. They can be categorised as either skill-based, decision-based, or perceptual errors. In the context of glider flying, examples of errors might include misjudging altitude during landing or failing to properly secure cockpit controls before takeoff. By analysing errors, pilots can pinpoint areas for improvement and implement corrective measures.

Implementing TEM

The TEM framework consists of three key components: anticipation, recognition, and recovery. Anticipation involves proactively identifying potential threats and errors before they materialise. Glider pilots must stay vigilant and anticipate changes in weather patterns, other traffic (power or otherwise), or sailplane performance. Recognition is the ability to swiftly detect and acknowledge threats or errors as they occur. This requires keen situational awareness and effective communication among crew

members, especially in dual-control gliders. Recovery entails taking decisive action to mitigate the impact of threats or errors. Pilots must be prepared to execute emergency procedures, adjust their flight path, or seek assistance from others if necessary.

Practical Strategies for Glider Pilots
Pre-flight Planning: Thoroughly assess weather forecasts, airspace restrictions, and terrain features along planned flight routes. Develop contingency plans for unexpected events.

Situational Awareness: Maintain a constant scan of the surrounding airspace (meaning airspace, and for other airborne traffic which is around you) and terrain, aircraft state, systems within the glider, procedures for each situation, naturally with Mother Nature too. Use instruments and visual cues to monitor navigation, altitude, airspeed, and wind conditions.

Communication: Establish clear communication protocols with other pilots, ground crews, and air traffic control if need be. Share relevant information and coordinate actions to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings.

Crew Resource Management: In dual-control gliders, utilize both pilot's expertise and collaborate effectively to manage threats and errors. Establish roles and responsibilities to streamline decision-making processes. If in doubt, speak up, ask more open questions, always ensure that someone is in control.

Continuous Training: Participate in recurrent training sessions and proficiency checks to refine flying skills and reinforce TEM principles. Practice emergency procedures in simulated scenarios to enhance readiness, there's always something we can learn during annual check flights!

Threat and error management is an indispensable tool for glider pilots seeking to enhance safety and proficiency in their craft. By adopting a proactive mindset, honing situational awareness, and fostering effective communication and teamwork, pilots can navigate the skies with confidence and resilience. Remember, the key to successful flying lies not only in mastering technical skills but also in managing the dynamic challenges of the aerial environment. Safe travels and blue skies ahead!

Adam Woolley was born into the gliding world, being the 3rd generation in his family. Going solo at 15, his thirst for efficiency in soaring flight & quest for a world championship title to his name has never wavered. One big passion is sharing his experiences & joy with other glider pilots all around the world. Adam is an airline pilot in Japan on the B767 & spends his off time chasing summer around the globe. He has now won 7 national Championships & represented Australia at 5 WGC's & 1 EGC.

Yes, it DOES happen

Gerard Robertson

Pat Driessen had the shortest flight of the Central Districts contest when the engine on the Citabria coughed just as the combination crossed the southern fence line.

Pat and the Citabria made a successful formation landing. The glider was derigged; the towplane pushed (uphill) through the gate -a squeeze - and pushed back along the road and back to the airfield via an adjacent field.

The carburettor was found to have ingested a piece of foam from upstream; replacing the carb restored normal operation.

It was fortunate that this happened on the 20 vector, as the opposite direction meets the road, a light industrial area, trees and the river.

Update pictures from Gerard

Tim Brommhead after one of his epic flights

Gerard trying to contact wave

This edition of the newsletter was compiled by Peter Wooley – wooleypeter@gmail.con – 021 170 2009