

SPECIAL EDITION
OMARAMA GLIDING CLUB NEWSLETTER
JUNE 2024

It is with sadness we announce the passing of

“Chiefie”

EION COUTTS

“Coutsie”



***THANKS HEAPS CHIEFIE FOR YOUR HUGE AND AMAZING CONTRIBUTION TO
OUR CLUB***



“Coutsie” celebrating his 80th birthday at Omarama – February 2015

Left to right Graham Erikson, Coutsie, Denise Erikson, Tony Collins, Max & Patricia Stevens, Robyn and Peter Chadwick.

So many of our newer members will not know much about ‘Chiefie’ (also known as ‘Coutsie’) who gained his nick-name from the many years he was the Chief Flying Instructor of the Wigram Aviation Sports Club (name later changed to the Omarama Gliding Club). In addition ‘Coutsie’ was also seen frequently towing in the club tow plane Piper Cub ZK-BTF. Chiefie was to be seen on the RNZAF Wigram airfield every weekend, and at Omarama during the annual Christmas camp and did much else besides as he kept the “show on the road” on and off the field.

He was a calm and patient instructor with a great attitude who never ‘lost his rag’. He had hoped to achieve his 1,000km Diploma in his Cobra - towing from Wigram to release at Springfield which was what you had to do in those days. As Wigram was an active Military airfield during the week he only had the weekends available and then the North West wave X-C soaring weather had to come to the party. Unfortunately it wasn’t to be that he achieved his goal but he held a Gold Badge and three diamonds. Quite an achievement for those days.



"Coutsie outside his caravan at Omarama making a new tow rope

A real character - Coutsie was always well ahead of his time in the art of 'recycling'. Spare parts and required materials were sourced from sheds and garages, dumps and acquired from wherever (no questions asked!) over many years to create something new or for maintaining the old stuff. Eion was well-known for his ability to "fix" anything mechanical - tractors & cars were kept going forever and 'Coutsie manufactured winches' were to be seen on a variety of airfields over the years. *Jokes abounded but Chiefie "saved the day" on many occasions and ribbing was always taken in good humour with his good natured chuckle.*

Many gliding pilots were taught their flying and soaring skills by Chiefie who quietly took the RNZAF "wanna be Top Gun" pilots under his wing who would have got up to all sorts of hair-raising antics without Coutsie's wise counsel, set boundaries and firm guidance.



Coutsie's Winch at Killermont Vegas



Always on the job fixing something - helping someone

Eion Coutts – his love of aviation, enthusiasm & legacy to gliding will be enduring for many years to come. **Eion Coutts** is one of those 'gifts to gliding' for which we will be ever grateful!



Golf India India - Coutsie's much loved and cared for glider probably photographed on their last flight together

Fly on in the skies. You will be remembered in our memories and stories for years to come!



YVONNE LOADER