

This week, we get two EPIC flights:

Two pilots' stories of their first 50 km solo flights — both flown on the same day, no less!

IT ONLY TOOK 14 YEARS (Allen Pendergrast)

Good things take time, as the ad says and this 50km flight to a Torehape outlanding was a long time in the making.

On the Sunday morning, arriving early to prepare for my first outlanding and a possible 50km bonus, there was mild apprehension, but optimistically expecting everything to run smoothly.

My chosen steed, BI, was still out of action with no effective wheel brake. So plan One was down the drain. PW5 SB was sitting quietly at the back of the hangar and became choice number two. Until Kevin materialized and challenged me to a duel to decide who would be using it to conquer their respective 50k attempts. Kevin's ironclad booking on the website resolved that argument

My last option LW was off the menu as I knew one of the wingtip removal tools was missing. Compounding disaster on disaster. Kevin, always resourceful, scuttled around the engineering shed and miraculously produced a perfectly serviceable tool for the tip removal.

Finally LW prepared, my retrieve team (Keith M) standing by, self prep complete, lined up for launch I felt spookily and unexpectedly calm. Last minute tips and advice from Keith and away we went behind CNC.

Made a pact with Kevin to fly together South towards Huntly. He had launched first and I initially struggled to find lift, down to 1200', despondent, landing circuit imminent when a handy thermal appeared and at 3400' later, started the adventure South. Radio call from SB downwind for 36. My arch rival was landing.

Passing over Mt William, that psychological barrier, I felt freed from the shackles of G276, finally no limits, amazing sense of freedom.

Change of plan. Try for Patetonga. Skated South of Mercer to the Maramarua forest, scanning for landable paddocks there as now down to 2500' and again struggling for lift. Eventually found it and got some reassuring altitude and suddenly the goal was just over the Kaihere hills.

The Hauraki Plains, a welcome sight, full of nicely aligned, long, smooth looking paddocks. Glider pilot heaven. Made it to Patetonga, massively relieved and full of hubris till the dawning reality of landing hit.

An outlanding was the main point of this event so now the search for a likely paddock. Spotted the ideal landing spot near Torehape, long, in to wind, smooth looking, easy access from the road and clear of pesky electric fences at least 300 meters long.

Keiths final reminder. Just a normal circuit, good speed control, relax. All good till finals when I noticed a ragged line of old, black fence posts (not obvious from the air) across my path, then to my horror , slightly further on another row of randomly spaced posts.

Now committed to less than two hundred meters of landing space. Touched down on a very non smooth, bone dry piece of Plains farmland.

Huge sense of relief and accomplishment. It had only taken 14 years to reach this milestone but worth every minute.



“Just Do It” – (Kevin Johnson)

I’d been thinking about my 50K flight for a while, and after checking SkySight during the week, Sunday looked promising. Watching the forecasts, I picked Waiterimu, near the south end of Waerenga Valley, as my target — this seemed to offer the best chance of making it back to Drury (an additional goal I’d set for myself when doing my first solo XC flight).

Having a bit of time free one evening, I dialled up the approximate weather conditions in Condor3 and flew the southern part of the route in my simulator. It’s a great way to get familiar with a new area and something we’ve done when preparing for the club’s annual trips to Springfield or Omarama.

This was also complemented by using Google Earth to identify possible landout areas along the way, should they be needed.

Arriving at the field, I discovered that Allen was planning to do his 50K as well — so it was great to have someone to discuss, plan, encourage and fly with (and a bit of friendly competition can be a helpful motivator, especially when you've just landed back and he's still climbing away).

Once we had both gliders ready and trailers hooked up, we were good to go, but still a little undecided whether the turnpoint would be Patetonga or Waiterimu. A late review of SkySight with David Moody brought about another option — following the Waikato River south and turning at Huntly. After discussing it with Allen, this became the initial plan.

I launched first. Fifteen minutes later, I was back on the ground. Weak thermals and heavy sink from the easterly wind made getting away from Drury challenging.

Anton, in his usual sympathetic style, reminded me:

"Haven't I taught you to always look for lift on the upwind side?"

Taking that advice, I relaunched, towed east of the field, climbed straight to cloud base over Ararimu, and headed toward Mercer. Looking at the sky ahead and unsure where Allen had gone, I made the decision to stick to my original plan and head to Waiterimu.



Entering the Mercer MBZ, I switched frequencies and made a radio call. I'd done this plenty of times on dual flights, but doing it solo somehow seemed more challenging than I'd expected. Additionally, having to change to the Mercer MBZ meant the standby channel was no longer set to the chat frequency, and I needed to remember it — hot tip: 135.55 is not correct!

The flight down was surprisingly straightforward, following (the upwind side of) a convergence line curving east to the south of Mercer and down over the western side of Waerenga Valley. Managing to stay mostly in the 3000–4500 ft altitude band kept things comfortable, and landout options were always within range.

After reaching the 50K turnpoint, I added a few extra kilometres to be sure 50km had been achieved.

The flight back was almost the same route — until Pokeno, where it got interesting. I'd climbed to 3,500 ft and needed to decide on my route. I initially went east of Mt William, but sink and higher ground forced a path further west but without much lift around .

Reaching Ramarama at 1,600 ft, it was looking marginal. The airfield was in sight, but I wasn't sure I could make it — even on a long final without a circuit. I remembered a weak energy line from my first launch, pushed further west, and found the 500 ft climb I needed to get home safely. Woo Hoo made it!!

Once the decision was made to leave the safety of the local field, this actually turned into a surprisingly relaxed and enjoyable flight. One to remember.

Some interesting YouTube links

Across 3 Countries and the Irish Sea

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLT2P358YxA>

Ben Hirashima – Good commentary on in flight decision making and where to fly

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaO-J4A9pv8>

Chess In Air - Wave, Rotor, Convergence, and Thermals:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3RDXqGAN3Q>

For Sale - Discus2 CT



GFR is a 2004 Schempp Hirth Discus2-CT 18m. Solo 2350 turbo engine with approx. 30.4 hours at time of listing. GFR is a great cross country and easy to fly glider with the luxury of having a turbo engine for those days where you make a bad decision or the sky dies early. Starting your motor is annoying but it does save a landout retrieve.

Features include

- ADSB in, ADSB out
- Current generation near new LX9000 with Wi-Fi enabled and V8 Vario. LX Powermouse
- MT600 GPS tracker.
- O2 system. Bottle is carbon and outside of test so unlikely to be able to be filled unless you have a private filling service.
- 2 Avionics batteries (lithium) and a lead acid large capacity for the engine up and down. Comes with a charging board with all three chargers mounted for convenience
- Towout gear, hangar canopy cover plus sun canopy cover
- Pee tube



Possible hangar space available extra if you are an AGC member (club rules).

Cobra fibreglass top trailer

Price : \$195,000

Contact Keith Macy on 020 4169 9860 for more information

Newsletter Editor

We are still looking for someone to take on the publishing of the **newsletter**, so if you are interested (or wish to volunteer someone) please let me know at secretary@GlidingAuckland.co.nz

Also If you have an EPIC flight you would like to share, please send though

Kevin Johnson

Very **Temporary** Editor in Chief 😊