



OGC Captains Log ~ Full Moon 13th April 2025

The coolest wee mountain gliding club in the world:

WOW! Yet again there is lots to report on in Omarama. In this issue of OGC Captains Log we cover, looking after our landout owners, an interesting interview with **Gavin Wills**, the latest Youth Glide news from Andrew, an impromptu farewell to some of our members, and notice of a Special General Meeting.

Farewell to some of our overseas pilots:

18th March: An impromptu farewell dinner at Ohau Lodge for Annie, G Dale, Kelvyn and Hue. You have all done so much for the Omarama Gliding Club. A BIG Thank You and you are all welcome back again next season!



Alex, Karen and Kelvyn relax at Ohau Lodge

Click on this link to see more pics from this night: <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EiYEF7qua/>

Special General Meeting Reminder ~ *Hot* news from our President **Alex Boyes**:

Fellow adventurers. As you've likely noticed, our little club isn't so little anymore. We're the fastest growing club in the country, which is both wonderful and slightly terrifying; especially since our volunteer numbers haven't quite kept the same enthusiastic pace. Our remote location (which, let's be honest, is why many of us joined in the first place) and the fact that we don't control our own launch assets are creating some growing pains that we need to address together.

By now, you should have received an email with the documents for our **Special Annual General Meeting** happening on **Saturday, 26 April 7:30pm** at the Terminal building in Omarama. I strongly encourage you to take some time to read through them, visit our website to check out the current usage statistics, and then join us for what promises to be a pivotal gathering. Come and have your say on our proposed membership structure and the potential tow plane acquisition! As we navigate these "victims of our own success" challenges. There's something quite fitting about making big decisions for our small club miles from nowhere, don't you think?

2.

Looking After Landowners in the Omarama area:

We all land out from time to time. Team OGC decided it was time to thank our landout strip owners. We got together 24 gift packs consisting of a bottle of Ruru Central Otago Pinot Noir, chocolate and a Thank You card with some contact details inside. Brian Sharpe and I recently set out down the west side of Lake Ohau and managed to cover four landowners. They were all very friendly and receptive. We are updating contact details for each landowner and Phil Plane is updating his database for an interactive map showing all our land outs. See a link to his map below.



Thank You

From the Omarama Flying Community

We really appreciate being able to use your property to land on occasionally. We try our best to land back at Omarama Airfield. However, sometimes the lift lets us down or we need to land in an emergency. We use the 'country code' when landing out.

- ~ Use airfields where possible.
- ~ Avoid paddocks with stock or crops in them.
- ~ Always leave gates how we find them.
- ~ Make contact with the landowner and thank them.

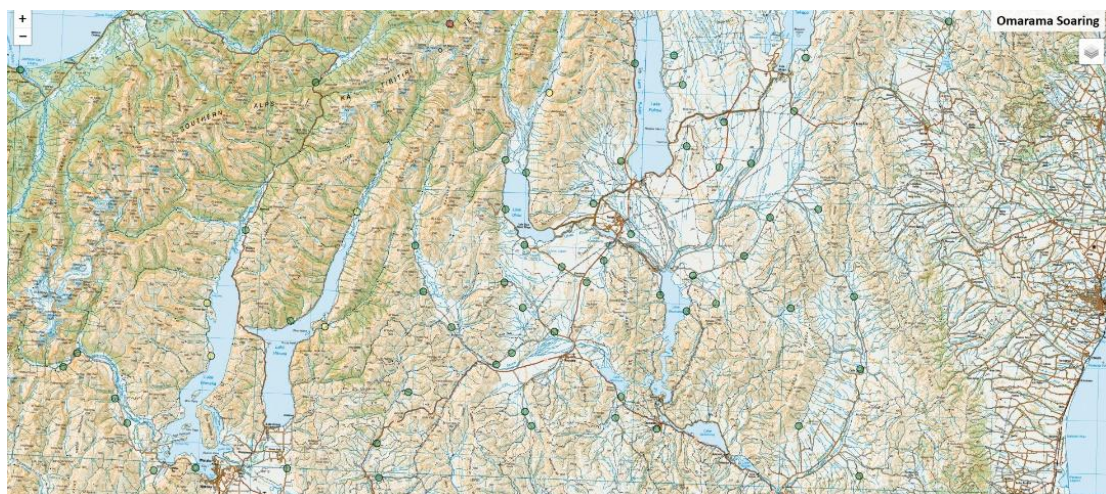
Note: All pilots operating in the area are members of a CAA affiliated organization and have comprehensive insurance cover should this be needed.

Below are some contact details for you.

Gliding: Rod Stuart 027 4344822
Hang Gliding: Tom Mulder 021 1481831
Omarama Airfield: Terry Jones 027 4521498

Gliding NZ: <https://gliding.co.nz>
NZHGPA: <https://nzhgpa.org.nz>
Omarama Gliding Club: <https://www.omarama.com>
Omarama Airfield: <https://www.omarama-airfield.com>

Picture: Aoraki Mt Cook taken from a glider



Phil Planes interactive landout map link: <https://omarama.net/waypoints2023/index.html>

Click on a green dot to see landout details. **Warning:** Information given may be incomplete or old. The OGC is continuously updating landout and landowner information. Please email the OGC with any new info you have.

3.

I took photos of the landout strips as we delivered gifts. They all looked great to land on!



Maitland looking north.



Ohau Lodge looking south



Ohau Lodge strip looking north



Ohau Downs looking North ~ recently tested by Justin I hear!



Clearburn looking South

A short History of Commercial Glider Flying in Omarama and 'Visions for the Future'

I had the pleasure of interviewing **Gavin Wills** recently. Surely one of New Zealand's most accomplished glider pilots and a pioneer of teaching mountain flying. At age 76 he comes with considerable knowledge and experience about the Omarama gliding world. Now there is a lot you can ask Gavin so he may feature again in future Captains Logs. This time I asked him just two questions. Gavins' answers are summarized below.

1. Can you please give me a brief history of commercial flying in the Omarama area?

"Commercial gliding at Omarama certainly did not begin with me! In **1997** my mum died and after selling her house I purchased a Duo Discus and registered it DD (This glider is still at Omarama, now registered NS). It was the first Duo Discus anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere. At the time I was CFI at Five Rivers and realized the Duo was perfect for teaching mountain XC. Later that year while building my chalet beside Tony Collins at Omarama I had an epiphany, realizing that Omarama was the perfect place for a specialist mountain flying school. So, the idea was born: a Mountain Flying school with one owner/operator and a single Duo Discus and no plans for expansion!

The initial courses proved very popular with Kiwis and visiting Brits. John Gorringe was on my first course run from the NZ room in the Country time Hotel. Now a chalet owner, he has visited Omarama virtually every season since! In 2000 while I was in Lasham giving Omarama talks it was John who introduced me to G Dale. In the early years I also had help from some notable guest instructors including Terry Delore and Max Stevens. Commercial gliding at Omarama actually began in **1985** when **Geoff Pywell** started operating a motor Grob 109 from the old town strip.

In **1986 Richard Halstead** set up **High Country Gliding** and eventually operated two Blaniks, winch launching tourists from beside the Countytime hotel. Richard closed down with the arrival of certificated Alpine Soaring, Richard continued renting out single seat gliders until about **2006**.

In **1994** Doug Hamilton became NZ's first rated commercial glider pilot and was granted a Part 135 license to operate his company, **Alpine Soaring** from Queenstown Airport.

In **1996** Doug moved Alpine Soaring to Omarama. In **2003**, after relinquishing his Part 135 certificate as unworkable for gliding, he sold the company along with its glider (the venerable Grob, MN) and rented his tow plane to **Peter Newport**. The company was then renamed **Southern Soaring**.

In **2007** Les Lamb purchased Southern Soaring with Chris Rudge as the Manager and Rod Dew as ground crew. Rod later became manager for us at Glide Omarama.

In **1998** I formed **Gavin Wills Mountain Soaring** which became **Glide Omarama**. Initially I operated under Doug's umbrella with DD and hired his single seaters and tow plane as required. That worked for a year until Doug decided to run the same courses and withdrew his services to Glide Omarama. We became competitors. In **2001** the old aeroclub hangar was renovated and the Terminal building was opened with **Southern Soaring** and **Glide Omarama** installed as **Omarama Airfield Ltd (AOL)** concessionaires.

In **2010 Glide Omarama** bought the assets of **Southern Soaring**, absorbed most of its staff, successfully negotiated with the **OAL** for an exclusive right to operate on the airfield and closed the company down. From **1998 to 2020** Glide Omarama business grew from 1 glider, 1 tow plane and 1 staff member to 11 gliders, 3 tow planes and 21 staff. In **2020**, just before the covid lockdown **Glide Omarama** was closed, and I retired.

2021 to 2025 ~ Following the COVID-19 pandemic, two new commercial operators commenced operations in Omarama.

Kahu Soaring is operated by **Milan Kmetovics**. Kahu now flies two Duo Discus (DD and FF) and operates with commercial glider pilots under the umbrella of the **Omarama Gliding Club**. Website: <https://kahusoaring.nz/>

Glide Queenstown is operated by **Angus Tapper**. Angus flies an Arcus motorized glider and maintains a CAA Part115 license. Website: <https://glidequeenstown.com/>

Both these companies have enjoyed a good summer season. Having commercial companies operating in Omarama really helps Omarama club pilots with launches on most flyable days.

5.

2. What would you suggest for the structure at Omarama Airfield and gliding in the future?

That's a big question! It's my opinion that:

1. The shareholders of **Omarama Airfield Ltd**, namely the **Omarama Soaring Centre** and the **Waitaki Council**, should clearly enunciate a **wide vision** for the Omarama airfield going forward with gliding at its center including broad costs and financing.
2. The **Omarama Gliding Club** should decide what role the club and its members want to play within this vision. (They would of course have significant input into the visioning process through their membership of OGC.)
3. There should be one only commercial gliding operator on the airfield to manage all commercial flying including aero towing and winching. Requirements for such a concessionaire could include:
 - Providing a manager and CFI to cover all airfield ops
 - Appropriate certification
 - Rename the "Terminal" building the "**Omarama Soaring Centre**"
 - Reasonable pricing for club members in recognition of their continuing close relationship.
4. Omarama should continue to be promoted as a top soaring site with a culture of "be safe and have fun"

To end this interview, I will leave you with a quote Gavin once received from Tilo Holinghaus, owner of the Schempp-Hirth factory:

"We do like to look after you, Gavin, because you operate more of our Duo Discus's than anyone else on the planet!"

Check out this very cool 5min YouTube video of Stephan Langer interviewing Gavin

Link: <https://youtu.be/T-zMwm4mARg?si=5Ao7fIjvO0FoqWZo>



A few words from Andrew:

Youth Glide is very much part of the Omarama Club. **Andrew Colby** and his wife **Erica** open up their home in Nimbus Place each time there is a Youth Glide camp. Andrew sends out a group email to all Youth Glide members and others. Andrew and I have agreed to share each others content as and when we see fit. And so here is Andrews' latest email sent out at the end of March 2025. Positive and informative!

BREAKING NEWS !!!!!

Its official this years Easter weekend will be a YGNZ mini camp "Hoo Rarr" I hear you all say and yes this means there will be a flying subsidy. The Easter camp will run from the **18th until the 21st of April** which , I believe is within the school holidays so hopefully limited school pressures. As always # 7 will be open from the night before (17th) with dinner available on request. So as its only 2 & 1/2 weeks away I would very much appreciate knowing who's in or a re-confirm by the end of the week. Graham will be away with Denise playing grandparents, Roger will be in attendance but might be feeling a little cold after their time spent closer to the equator. Also could you indicate your intentions around accommodation, the camp ground is open until the following weekend (ANZAC). Let me know if you need help with a-comm.

IN OTHER NEWS:

As the summer season comes to a close there have been a number of achievements worth noting since my last mail out. The most recent being **Sophie Girkins** solo. Those who know Sophie know she is a young women of few words but in possession of a steely determination and focus. She has only been flying with us a relatively short time but from day one has demonstrated a competence beyond her years. Well done Sophie!! Sophie has been very well supported by her parents Chris & Jacqui who have also made a great contribution to the team helping make the days on the airfield run smoothly.



Another fantastic milestone is **Tuulianna** gaining her C-cat instructors rating, very impressive indeed. What with **Hannariina's** recent solo the YG young women are leading the way.



7.

But not to be completely outdone congratulations to **Gideon Hodge** on his recent solo at Springfield and just because you weren't at Omarama doesn't mean you're not inline for a bucket of water (summer).



Other achievements of note is **Felix's** 300k flight in a PW5. Felix along with Amy had spent their summer break at Omarama being "team winch". I think the 300 had been a goal of his for a while, "excellent work Felix"



I'm now wondering what is the world record distance for a PW5 ????. Speaking of PW5 pilots Aaron continues his aviation journey, recently achieving his FAI Silver Badge height gain, a great start on the road to his full Silver award.

Outside of gliding **Bradán Foster** is currently up North representing his Surf Life Saving Club and the South Island in IRB racing, after he and his team finishing on the podium in the SL champs last month. Please let me know if I have missed any other notable achievements or interesting occurrences. I and others always enjoy hearing what our YG crew is up to on and off the field.

Hope to see ya soon

Andrew



Hugos Elevator ~ taken while driving over the Omarama Saddle with Marney

Links:

Email: flying@omarama.com

Check out our website: <https://www.omarama.com/>

Check out our Facebook Page and 'follow': <https://www.facebook.com/Omarama.gliding>

Check out our Airfield Calendar: <https://www.omarama.com/general-8> Here you will find flying weeks, course dates and competition dates.

Check out the OGC Planner: [Click here to view the OGC planner](#) See when club gliders are available. You can book on our website or simply text Brian Sharpe on 0272481780.

Join our club WhatsApp group: Omarama Gliding Club ~ All current members can add others to this group. Text your first name to Rod 0274344822 ~ ask and I will join you. Please keep your posts and pics on topic.

Get our weekly email newsletter: <https://www.pilots.omaramaairfield.nz/Pilots/OmaramaMailing>



Download the Omarama App: Search for Omarama App in Google Play or Apple App Store

Easter holidays are the first weekend after a full moon. 18th to 21st April

ANZAC Day is the 25th April ~ Why not take a week off and sneak in a last fly!

Hot News! Our third hang glider pilot member **Hagen Breuggeman** is **SOLO!** Congratulations Hagen! And congratulations to **Mike Epton** too! He recently completed his **XCP**. Well done, Mike!

See you at the Special General Meeting 26th April 7:30pm at the Terminal Building in Omarama

Happy landings

Rod Stuart

Club Captain Phone: 0274344822