



OGC Captain's Log ~ Full Moon 7th October 2025



How cool is this! Griz in his recently purchased 1975 Morgan sports car on Omarama Airfield.

The new Omarama Gliding Season begins:

A big welcome to Luca, Felix and Charlie who are on duty right from the start ~ well done you guys! Luca is our new resident tow pilot and instructor living at the airfield camping ground in a club caravan. Felix will be operating the winch and helping our airfield manager, Terry this summer. Charlie is our new OGC club manager and has found accommodation next door to the airfield. You will find her in the OGC office in the terminal building welcoming visiting pilots, organising the morning safety meeting and of course the famous Omarama 10 o'clock briefing. There is a lot of work behind the scenes to ensure operations are safe and that we all enjoy 'a great day on the airfield'. Rest assured Charlie's friendly personality and the team behind her will be working hard to ensure this happens! It is so cool to see a young crew! This summer there will be towing 7 days a week for 7 months, so make sure your plans are in place for a dose of awesome Omarama air!

In this issue of the Captains Log you will find an interview with Gavin Wrigley (Griz). What an interesting and colourful life this man has led! Griz gives us his account of Brian Sharpes memorial held in Hawkes Bay where Brian was posthumously awarded the FAI award ~ 'En temoignaga de Gratitude' (A token of gratitude). And a little more information about the positive changes happening on Omarama Airfield. The camping ground is open, and I understand dogs are now welcome provided they keep their owners under strict control!

2.

Living the dream in Omarama ~ the colourful life of Griz:

Gavin Wrigley is happily retired in Omarama living with his lovely partner Pam. We have all enjoyed his energy and enthusiasm for gliding in Omarama and I thought it was time to ask him a few questions and get the inside story of his life and what motivates him. Griz certainly played a big part in the OGC post covid years as our Chief Flying Instructor. He always takes a keen interest in students and visiting pilots. You will often find him in the briefing room at the terminal building conducting an instructors meeting, teaching his mountain soaring skills, or matching up instructors and students with club gliders for a day in the skies. He knows exactly where a student is up to with their flying and always has a wise word of advice for them. Griz at age 79 remains an active pilot, regularly taking to the skies in his shared LS4.

A brief life history:

I would need to write a book to do Griz's life history justice but here are a few highlights. Griz started flying in England with the RAF Cosford Club at age 16. He did 40 flights in a Slingsby T21 ~ 39 flights of 3 minutes duration and one of 4 minutes duration! He began his work life as an art teacher in Berkshire, England. After this he became a steward for BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) flying internationally for 4 years. Griz explained what BOAC actually meant ~ 'Boys Overseas After Crumpet!' Being a steward gave me twice my teachers pay, before allowances! "Lebanese gold with a Hong Kong suntan" He resigned and moved to America, purchased an old Buick and drove east to Colorado where he started working on ski fields. He was sprung with no green card and became a victim of 'ICE' (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) long before Trump even invented the term! He decided to head to NZ for the skiing and arrived 25 years later!

Australia:

He stopped in Sydney to work on his way to NZ. Griz enjoys working with young people and started work at a 'Community Leisure Center' in North Sydney, where he eventually became the director. Once again, he ran out of visa, but Malcolm Frazer offered an amnesty for working overstayers, so Griz became an Australian! He did a postgraduate degree in outdoor education at Brisbane and then moved to Darwin where he began an environmental education center. His son was born in Darwin. In 1979 Griz started the Northern Australian Gliding Club in Darwin with two Blaniks and a CallAir towplane. He went on to buy a Cirrus and a Salto for some time held two Australian gliding records. He was the first CFI at Narromine working for 'Soar Narromine'.



A CallAir towplane

Circumnavigating the World:

In 1985 Griz purchased a sailing boat and proceeded to circumnavigate the world, mainly accidentally, largely solo. He sailed with his partner Louise, and they gained a daughter in Rhodes, Greece. They parted company and the circumnavigation ended in 1991 when he sailed back to Australia. He worked on a fishing boat in the Kimberlies for a while. Griz started a company called 'Street Level Public Art' and worked part time at a school in a juvenile detention center, eventually becoming the principal. When asked how to get these kids interested in school by another independent school principal, Griz responded by starting a very successful 'learn to fly' program using a motor glider and microlites. Over nineteen consecutive years, 700 to 800 year-10 students were introduced to flying ~ they were sponsored, receiving 4 lessons for, on average, \$150.

3.

Omarama:

Griz moved, as a summer visitor, to Omarama in 2003 and started working for Southern Soaring and then Glide Omarama. For the first 8 years he would instruct gliding in Essington, England and return to NZ each summer to teach mountain flying. Later he became CFI for the OGC. Glide Omarama closed and covid hit. After covid Griz helped pick up the pieces at Omarama. He remained CFI and Keith Essex started towing with a Dynamic and Carbon Cub. The YSDCT winch continued to operate too. Griz took the role of conducting morning briefings when the OGC were asked to assume organizational control of gliding in Omarama by the Airfield Company. Brian Savage and Alex Boyes shared the role of OGC president, with Kahu Soaring and Queenstown Gliding forming new commercial companies. Many other club members pitched in and did what was needed to keep Omarama gliding alive. The OGC is 'One of the World's Finest Mountain Soaring Clubs'.

Introducing a manager to Omarama Airfield was Griz's idea. Brian Sharpe visited and said he would love to take on this role after a very successful campaign building up the Wellington club. Brian wanted to retire in the South Island and eventually live in Glenorchy where he has family. Griz slightly emotionally told me that Brian became a very good friend and together they successfully ran operations on the airfield for two years. They worked hard 'hands on'. The tow plane OMA was leased from Soaring Equipment Ltd. A gallant effort from two dedicated men!

The future:

I asked Griz what he thinks about the future plans for gliding in Omarama.

He replied: "It is great to see, finally, at a cost, that the right things are beginning to happen".

He who dies with the most toys wins:

Griz has managed to score well! A 1975 Morgan, a RANS microlite, an LS4 glider, a beautiful sailing boat, a Canadian canoe, a fishing rod, and a lovely lady in Omarama. What more does a man need?



Brian and Griz were both passionate about Morgans. Griz first purchased a 1935 Morgan in the 1960's. They both heard about a yellow 1975 Morgan for sale 'somewhere in Tekapo'. Before Brian passed he was delighted to hear that Griz had purchased the yellow Morgan. You can almost see Brian sitting beside Griz ~ two friends on tour together. The sky looks bloody good too!

Thank you for all you have done Griz ~ a champion OGC volunteer!



Bob Henderson presents the FAI award to Brian Sharpes son Marty Sharpe
En temoignaga de Gratitude (A token of gratitude).

Griz reports on Brians Memorial:

Brian's Memorial Event was, not surprisingly, very well attended. It was held at a favourite winery of Brian's, Clearview Estate. About fifty people were expected to attend, but more than 75 turned up!

In addition to Brian's three children, Marty, Monica and Toby and all his four grandchildren, the numbers were swelled by many Dairy Board colleagues, (now family friends), glider pilots and their families from Papawai and Omarama and others.

There were speeches remembering and praising Brian's huge contribution to Gliding, and several unexpected and only slightly expurgated tales from his Dairy Board days in Chile, Hong Kong, Germany and Wellington. All in good spirits and with love and gratitude.

One big surprise to everyone except perhaps Bob Henderson and Max, was the presentation of an extremely prestigious FAI award to Brian, received by his son, Marty. Brian did not know that he had been nominated for this, a process begun when he was alive, more than a year ago.

Brian would have been 'blown away' by this, I have no real words to describe how he would have felt, possibly overwhelmed, but honoured for sure.

The framed FAI award is to be displayed at Papawai.

OGC AGM:

Our club annual general meeting will be held on Sunday 26th October, 7pm in the terminal building. Please make an effort to attend. No doubt there will be an informal social time afterwards. BYO!

Youth Glide:

Some youth glide members will be flying with us over Labour Weekend 25th, 26th and 27th October.

A Youth Glide camp is being planned for 17th to 24th January 2026. Keep an eye out for more info on this.

More about operations in Omarama this season:

Most pilots will know by now that Omarama Airfield Ltd (OAL) has purchased OMA and CNC and is taking over tow operations this season. Have a read of the last captain's log if you want more information.

Te Toroa Gliding Club is negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the OGC to operate on the airfield. The OGC has the sole license to operate, and other clubs must now have a MOA to tow at Omarama.



Whio Glide

Great news! 'The Glider Café' has been leased and will be opening soon. Let's all support the new owners!

Here is an absolute classic gliding video well worth a second watch ~ Windborn—A Journey into Flight
<https://www.nzgeo.com/video/windborn/>

And a second watch of this video from Vancouver Island Soaring Centre is sure to get you in the mood:
https://youtu.be/EUWpkx2k8b0?si=nTVaDqxluJq_DD73

And if this video posted on our Facebook page doesn't get you excited, then nothing will! Enjoy!
<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/14MJx1xHirK/>

South Island Regionals:

The dates are 15th to 22nd Nov 2025. 16 keen pilots are registered to compete so far!

Here is a link to the GNZ events page: <https://gliding.net.nz/events/south-island-regionals-nov-2025>

We encourage free fliers to line up after the grid and join in for a fun flying week in Omarama.

Why not try to fly Phil Planes **Whio Glide** task and earn yourself a blue duck! Link here: <https://whioglide.nz/>
Team Athena (Charlie, Tuulianna and Amy) is competing in Oscar Rabbit! Felix will be competing in the "Paddock Weapon" PW5. Griz tells me UO and OD are available for the Regionals, and he is happy to arrange an experienced pilot to fly a task with you. Please email him on gavinwr@hotmail.com if you are keen.

Charlies Angels:

Charlie assures me that they will be operating the winch most flyable days for several months during the season. This will be good news for any students wanting to do training circuits. Andy Parish will be our CFI this season and we have both visiting and local instructors available throughout the season.

That's all from your Captain for now.

Wishing you all a fantastic start to the season and may all your flights be rewarding and enjoyable.

Happy landings

Rod Stuart rod.tropicool@gmail.com

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.
A new booking system is currently being developed and will be implemented before the season starts.

Join our club WhatsApp group: Omarama Gliding Club ~ All current members can add others to this group.
Text your 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

