

Newsletter of the Vintage Glider Association of Australia
Editor: Allan Ash, 2 Heath Avenue, Frankston, Victoria 3199

A novice at large

by Tom Hanlon

Reprinted from August 1959 issue of "Australian Gliding"

This relates the story of beginner's luck on a first cross country flight.

It tells how I flew 138 miles in a Grunau Baby during The Southern Cross Gliding Club's camp at Narromine in central NSW.

Having gone solo only seven weeks before, and with 45 minutes as my previous best soaring flight, it was with some trepidation that I accepted the invitation of our instructor, George Detto, to hop in and have a try at Silver C distance.

It was just 12 o'clock when we released from the winch launch at 1700 feet and set off to hunt for thermals.

At about 1200 feet we got started with a nice 5 feet per second lift and were smartly raised to 3800 feet before I circled myself right out of it and just couldn't find where I'd left it.

As a Qantas Super Constellation was expected soon and would result in the 'drome being closed for the rest of the day, I decided to make off while the going was good.

About 10 minutes later I was

regretting this decision when we were down to 800 feet over a suitable landing place a miserable 7 or 8 miles from home.

It was while contemplating what the retrieving crew would have to say that a sudden whoosh shot the old lady's inside wingtip up in the air and we were turning in the opposite direction and rising steadily.

This time we managed to keep it centred and we were still with it when it petered out at 7000 feet.

Once more we set off northwards towards Gilgandra and Silver C distance.

At about 4500 feet we were in it again, this time a good 5 fps, and after a lot of hunting we coaxed the altimeter up to 9200 feet right under a nice little cumulus.

The clouds seemed to be too small for any cloud lift -- just a jumble of ups and downs that could not get us any higher.

By now I was acutely aware of another lesson I won't forget -- you don't go cross

(continued next page)

A NOVICE AT LARGE

continued from page 1

country dressed in shirt and shorts, especially in a sail-plane with an open cockpit.

My hands were blue with a dead-white colour at the tips and my limbs shook so that I had difficulty keeping control of the Grunau. I can't ever remember being so miserable and cold before.

With a few ups and downs we reached Gilgandra at about 6500 feet and with this altitude in hand it would have been silly not to continue and make the most of conditions so I decided to head on in the general direction of Moree.

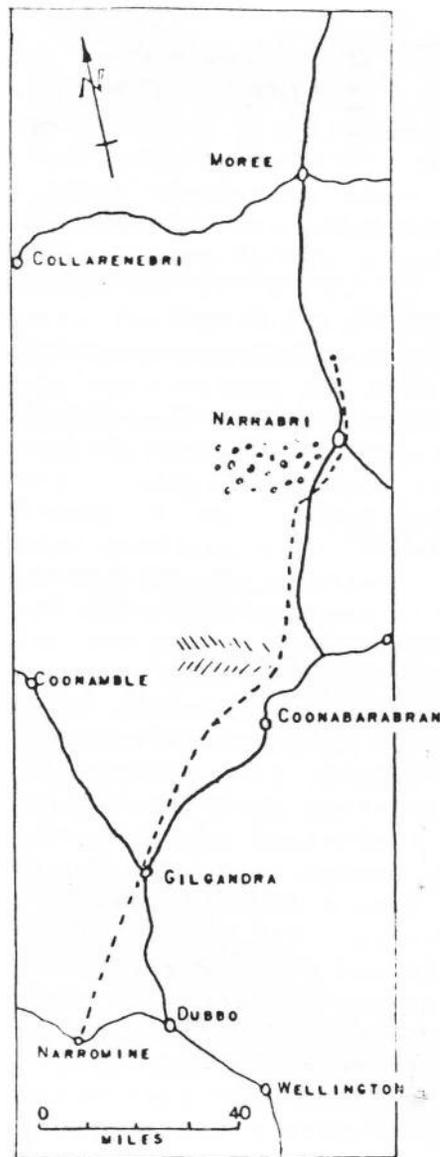
With the object of getting as far as possible I began experimenting with various speeds between thermals.

Most thermals took us a little over 8000 feet and rarely did we get below 3000 feet before finding the next, so 55-60 mph seemed about the right speed between the thermals.

Faster than this did not seem economical and above 60 mph the old dear shuddered a bit at the tail.

The wind was about 15 mph and steady but unfortunately a course straight downwind would have taken us over a 4000 feet high mountain range so we had to run crosswind for about an hour.

Later, I decided it would be prudent to go crosswind again for a while to miss the 20 miles of Pilliga forest



that might not have produced any lift.

There were only two other occasions when we came down to 1000 feet and each time, after choosing a landing place, a dusty field or some other area would give up a thermal and relieve the tension.

Five o'clock saw us nearing

Pilliga. The thermals were now finishing at about 7000 feet but did not seem to be diminishing in number at all. The question of when to stop was worrying me.

At 5.30 I decided it was time to go down. We could probably carry on for another hour or so but the country ahead was rough and scrubby, with no cultivation as far as could be seen.

There was no chance of making Gold C distance so the extra distance which could be covered was not worth the risk involved.

From 7200 feet we stooged around prospecting three different station homesteads and losing height with the dive-brakes half out.

We finally chose the house which had people standing outside it and came to rest near their woolshed at 5.40 pm.

It was Ray Curry's property 'Glenroy', and those kind folk couldn't do enough for a poor fool who found pleasure in dropping in on them from the sky, so cold and cramped that he had to be helped from the cockpit.

At about 7.30 the next morning, after driving all night, a dusty and tired retrieving crew arrived to find me quite rested and sitting at breakfast.

It was at least half an hour before they saw the funny side of it. As a penance I drove all the way back while they slept.

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A CHALLENGE TO MEMBERS

In this issue we feature an account of a 138 mile distance flight in a Grunau Baby. The flight was made more than 25 years ago by Tom Hanlon of the Southern Cross Gliding Club.

During the 1950s a number of Australian pilots made long flights in Grunau Babies. Good distance flights were also made in other sailplanes which are today classed as vintage.

The purpose of reprinting Tom Hanlon's story, and drawing attention to others, is to highlight the fact that such flights are well within the capability of today's vintage sailplanes, yet how long is it since anyone in Australia flew 100 miles or more in a Grunau Baby.

In times past, many pilots won Gold C and even diamond goal legs in Kingfishers and Kookaburras. Don Brown of the VMFG gained Gold C distance in the Golden Eagle, and not over the hot inland either, but on a flight across Gippsland.

With a new summer approaching, can we challenge our VGA members to attempt some daring flights in their vintage sailplanes?

There is no chance of setting new national records in them, but why not try to raise your own personal record? By doing better this summer than you have done before in your vintage aircraft, you will get a lot of satisfaction and may even inspire others.

In Europe and the USA, sailplanes in the Grunau Baby class have made flights up to 260 miles (420 km). Flights of this distance should be possible in Australia.

This issue also has a report of an 80 km flight by Dave Goldsmith in his Hutter H17. From memory, this is the longest distance flown in a H17 in Australia. Is it the longest flown in the world? It is doubtful, but it may be.

A couple of years ago Keith Nolan flew 514 km in his Olympia. As far as can be found, this is definitely the longest distance ever flown anywhere in an Olympia.

Also, a couple of years ago, Ray Ash flew 320 km in his Grunau 4. If it has been done once, it can be done again.

I'm not suggesting that our members should take unnecessary risks with their valuable and rare aircraft, but I would like our members to upgrade their performances in vintage sailplanes.

If our sailplanes could do well in the past (as they have demonstrated) they should do better in the future. Most are fitted with better instruments than originally and the pilots have more experience, better training and a better understanding of weather conditions and soaring techniques.

How about it, members? It is worth thinking about. The summer will soon be here.

Change of venue for regatta

The venue for the national vintage glider regatta in October has been changed from Blanchetown to Waikerie, South Australia.

Organiser of this year's regatta, Kevin Sedgman, said that, after looking at all the arrangements necessary for the event, he decided that the Blanchetown site would present too many problems.

The activities of the Scout Flying Club, which operates at the airfield, had fallen off a lot recently and, although the facilities at the field had been improved since the last vintage regatta there, much would still be required before it could be considered adequate for this year's event.

Consequently, it was decided that the Scout Flying Club and the Waikerie Gliding Club would combine efforts to hold the regatta at Waikerie.

The dates for the regatta are 27-28 October.

Kevin Sedgman said he had applied to the department of Aviation for permission to use a winch on the airfield over that weekend. He had also made enquiries about obtaining an Auster or Tiger Moth for towing the vintage sailplanes.

The Waikerie Club has offered the use of all its modern facilities to visitors to the vintage regatta. These include accommodation, air-conditioned dining room and bar and a big swimming pool.

Kevin said he would like to see many VGA members and visitors from interstate at this year's vintage regatta. He

suggested that groups might combine to rent an aircraft to fly to Waikerie for the event.

At least 12 members of the VGA in South Australia own vintage sailplanes and it is hoped that as many as possible will attend.

In addition, vintage sailplanes owned by non-members of the VGA will be welcomed.

Kevin said he hoped that sailplanes from other States would also be there to swell the numbers. It is likely that several sailplanes, at least, will attend from Victoria.

Soaring conditions at Waikerie at the end of October are usually very good and some task flying may be introduced to provide a spirit of competition among the pilots.

For further information on the regatta, contact Kevin Sedgman, 19 Karawirra Avenue, Rostrevor, SA 5073. Phone (08) 337 4083.

KOOKABURRA LEADING AN ACTIVE LIFE

Mike Valentine of Melbourne says his Kookaburra VH-GRX is now based at Euroa.

Though Mike spends a lot of his time visiting other clubs in his role as National Coach, the Kookaburra is entrusted to other local pilots who carry out a lot of flying in it.

SUPER GOOSE HAS A NEW OWNER

The EP2 Super Goose owned by Chris Deardon of Adelaide has been bought by Tom Hinton of Boort, Victoria.

The Super Goose, VH-GXK, was designed and built by Ted Pascoe in 1969.

Tom reports, "The Goose is a beautiful little aircraft in both design and finish. I've found that it is absolutely wonderful in flight. As I've only made two flights to date, I'm still getting used to the handling but I'm sure I'll be right at home in it very soon."

Tom also mentions a recent attempt at wave soaring in his Kingfisher.

He had a tow to 6000 feet

to explore wave lift above a cloud street. "I didn't gain any height," he says, "but I maintained my height for quite some time. It was a very interesting flight."

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Cross country in a Kingfisher

by Tom Hinton

The day before had been a ripper! We went around a 105 km triangle in 2 hours 12 minutes, including time on tow and side-slipping off 4000 feet at the end.

The next day, 19 February, was forecast to be even hotter so I set my sights on a triangle from Boort with Wycheproof and Swan Hill as turning points, a total of 222 km.

I decided that, if I had the time I would extend the flight by going further north to Nyah, where the Swan Hill club flies. This would make the total distance 260 km.

I launched in the Kingfisher VH-GLQ, at 11 a.m., climbed in weak lift to 1500 feet and set off downwind toward Wycheproof.

After having examined several landing places along the way, we reached Wycheproof an hour after departure and made a climb to a breath-taking 4000 feet.

It seemed to take forever to get to Ultima, against the head/cross wind, but by this time cloudbase was 6000 feet.

However, the clouds were not consistent lift sources. Several times, after getting under a "dud", I found after heading off that the cloud reformed on the sunny side and lift was good.

Three hours had now passed and I thought the day was beginning to go well but as we pressed on I found things were getting harder.

I was going slower now and still had the crosswind so we drifted off track. When I

finally worked out our position, we were west of Nyah.

Struggling over to the gliding club site, I saw the Kookaburra on the ground and nothing much happening, so I got a bit of height and set off on the next leg. Four hours had now gone by.

Despite having some slight help from the crosswind, I found it almost impossible to get even to Swan Hill, but after a last-minute save I climbed to 5000 feet.

Things didn't look too good but I pressed on to Lake Boga before chucking in the towel.

We had enough height in hand to return to Swan Hill aerodrome, so I landed there after being in the air for 5 hours 15 minutes.

A member of the local flying club gave me a lift to Mick Burke's place and after fixing his motorbike I borrowed it to ride home to Boort.

It was 10 p.m. when I got home, dressed in cotton shirt and shorts.

Two days later we loaded the motorbike into the Kingy's trailer and retrieved the sailplane. Just in time, too, as it rained on the way home.

I covered a total of 205 km not counting the motorbike ride. Nothing for the record books, I'll admit, but it was certainly an adventure.

NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR YOUNGEST KOOKABURRA

The last Kookaburra built by Schneiders has been given a new lease of life with a complete overhaul and repaint.

A group in Sydney bought the Kookaburra about two years ago and carried out a major overhaul on it, including the requirements for the 20-year inspection on the wing, though this was not due until 1986.

The Kookaburra, VH-GPE, is a Mark 4 version, fitted with dive brakes.

Ray Ash reports that the refurbished Kookaburra was test-flown at Mangrove Mountain near Sydney and handles well.

Ray says it goes up rapidly on a winch launch, gaining up to 1700 feet in short time.

No soaring has been done in

the sailplane because of the winter conditions lately, but Ray is confident it will give good account of itself during the next summer.

He says, "Rather reluctantly we have decided to sell the Kooka, because we don't have hangarage for it and out K7 is adequate for our flying needs. The price we are asking doesn't do more than return our costs to us. The Dacron covering alone cost several thousand dollars.

"Whoever buys it won't have to spend anything on it for a long time. The 20-year inspection of the fuselage is not due for two years and will need very little work.

Having finished work on the Kookaburra, Ray said the group is now thinking of building an ultra-light aircraft.



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LOTS OF GOOD SOARING AT BRIDGEWATER IN H17

David and Jenne Goldsmith report that they have done more flying in their Hutter H17 in the first six months of this year than in the whole of the previous four years.

Soaring flights up to 3½ hours have been made at their home base of Bridgewater in central Victoria.

David flew the H17 on an 80 km triangle and Jenne flew an out and return of about 55 km.

Both of them are enthusiastic about the delightful flying they have had in their little sailplane this year.