
Newsletter of the Vintage Glider Association of Australia
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BRIDGEWATER REGATTA IS ON IN JANUARY

The annual New Year Regatta of Victorian members of the VGA will be held at Derby airfield, Bridgewater, from Saturday 4 January to Sunday 12 January.

Launching will be by Auster tug, by courtesy of the Midland Gliding Club.

Derby airfield has become a popular gathering place for vintage gliders because of its location in the midst of the State's wheat area.

With the wheat harvest over, the area offers good soaring conditions with plenty of safe out landing fields.

In addition to VGA members from the Melbourne area, it is expected that those attending next January's rally will include (as usual) Ralph Crompton with his Skylark 4 from the Barossa Valley club in South Australia and Bob McDicken from Sydney with his Grunau 4.

Ralph says he will probably be accompanied by another group from the Barossa Valley with their Super Arrow.

The regatta last January produced a record total of soaring, including many cross-country flights.

ANTIQUA AWARD TO THE GOLDEN EAGLE

The Golden Eagle, which has been flying since 1934, was given a special award at the annual fly-in of the Antique Aeroplane Association.

The fly-in was held at Drage's airfield at Wangaratta in Victoria.

The award was for the "most original aircraft at the fly-in this year".

The Eagle was taken to the fly-in, exhibited and flown by Ian Patching.

DEATH OF JIM ROBINSON

Many VGA members will already have learned of the death in late June of Jim Robinson, of Benalla.

Jim has been a member of the VGA for many years and was an active member of the Gliding Club of Victoria.

He started gliding 48 years ago. After serving in the RAAF and the AIF during World War 2 he lived for 10 years in Papua - New Guinea.

His death at 66 followed a sudden illness which was complicated by a heart attack. He will be missed by his many friends in gliding.

OUT IN THE WIND

by Allan Ash

One aspect of soaring as done in "the good old days", which is rarely if ever experienced by modern pilots, is that of flying a sailplane that has an open cockpit.

Even our vintage sailplanes - originally built with open cockpits, sometimes without even a windscreen - have today been modified to include an enclosing canopy.

Admittedly, this improves both performance and pilot comfort but it takes away something of what used to be the character of the sport.

There is something rugged, something rather masochist, in flying with an open cockpit with the wind blowing through your hair and stinging your face. Today, it is the pilots of ultralight powered aircraft who are enjoying this sensation.

Today's sailplane pilots can usually fly in comfort at great heights, thanks to the greenhouse effect of the enclosed canopy but back then it was usually necessary to don a jacket or cardigan before you took off.

Often, we forgot and suffered the consequences as the air temperature decreased with altitude. In fact, it was often said that the best way to ensure finding a thermal was to leave your jacket on the ground.

It was rather fun, too, to fly with an elbow jutting over the side of the cockpit and

even have a scarf flapping in the breeze. Somehow, it enhanced the "image".

An open cockpit offered another advantage. It allowed a pilot to spit over the side if he felt like it. Rather a vulgar habit but useful after a patch of rough air left the mouth dry and in need of some lubrication.

There were those who felt it was bad luck to spit from a cockpit. If you spat while thermalling, the legend went, you would lose the thermal. If you spat while gliding, you wouldn't find one. Well, it was a handy excuse, anyway.

There were those who were glad of the open cockpit when conditions got really rough, resulting in airsickness. I flew my 5-hour Silver C leg on the hill at Dunstable while on a visit to England in 1949. I was airsick most of the time and found it handy to be able to lean over the side.

One had to be careful while doing aerobatics in a sailplane with an open cockpit. Many a pilot lost his sunglasses, pen or other items during a stall, upside down at the top of a loop.

In those days, too, streamer cutting was an interesting pastime. The idea was to throw a roll of toilet paper over the side so that it unrolled, then dive on it and cut it to pieces with the wing as it descended. You can't toss a roll of toilet paper from an

enclosed cockpit.

The open cockpit also allowed pilots, soaring high in the air, to hear sounds coming up from the ground. Cars tooting, dogs barking, trains chuffing. They could all be heard from 1000-2000 feet.

It was easy, too, for those on the ground to hear the pilot if he was singing or muttering expletives.

I recal watching one pilot do a slow loop in a Grunau Baby. At the top of the loop came the plaintive cry, "God, I've stalled!" It was easy to stall a Grunau halfway around a loop. They lost speed quickly once the nose was raised.

And it was easy to hear approaching aeroplanes. One can still hear them today, of

course, but not so easily.

What used to be frightening in those days at Camden was to hear a Vampire jet engine and be unable to see it, often because it was skimming just below cloudbase.

Then there is the old tale (but a true one) of the pilot circling quietly above a river bank. He looked down and saw a young couple in a passionate activity.

Leaning over the side he called in a booming voice, "Naughty, naughty! God is watching!" According to the legend, the young man arose in a mighty leap that ended in the water.

Ah, yes. Something went out of the sport with the introduction of enclosed cockpits.

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GOOD SPRING FLIGHTS MADE IN HUTTER H17

While finalising the 20-year inspection of their Ka6, Dave and Jenne Goldsmith have continued to fly their Hutter H17 at Bridgewater.

Soaring conditions during the Spring have been quite good at times. During October, Jenne made two flights of $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours each in the Hutter, with heights to 5500 feet.

On the second of these two flights Jenne attempted a 70 km triangle from the Derby airfield, with turning points at Raywood and Serpentine, but had to outland on the last leg just 10 km from home.

The work on the Ka6 has included a respray of the entire aircraft.

SAGITTA TO JOIN THE MELBOURNE SCENE

Ross Nolan of Melbourne has bought the Sagitta, VH-GQS, from Geoff Parker of Adelaide and is carrying out a 20-year inspection on it before flying it this summer.

The Sagitta is of Dutch design and construction. The prototype flew in 1960. It is an all-wood sailplane with a maximum glide ratio of about 37:1.

It is likely that Ross will bring the Sagitta to some of the VGA regattas, to fly in the company of his father's Olympia (Yellow Witch) and Ka6.

COOGEE GETS A NEW PARTNER

Gerry Downes, of the Peninsula Gliding Club in Gippsland, has acquired a three-quarter share in the Coogee which has been owned for some years by Campbell Curtis of Melbourne.

Campbell has been unable to make the time to finish the restoration of the sailplane so was glad to take on Gerry as a partner.

Gerry will carry out the work necessary to get the Coogee back into the air. It is expected to take about a year.

The Coogee was designed and built in Melbourne and made its first flight in 1941.

WHERE ARE THE SCRIBES?

"Vintage Time s" seems to be struggling for news lately. It is difficult to produce a regular newsletter when the members don't report on their activities.

In recent months the secretary has written to at least a dozen members asking for news of their flying or building. Not a single reply has been received.

If the membership of the VGA is so dormant that it has nothing to report, perhaps a few of the older members could recall some tales of the early days of our sport.

Unless the flow of news improves, it is doubtful if the newsletter can continue.