

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY GLIDING CLUB INC

2007 ANNUAL REPORT



The Gliding Club entered 2007 with 4 aircraft out of commission, limited cash on hand and low flying levels. However, considerable effort by the club during the year managed to address these issues.

Operations

The club struggled to find the right recruitment strategy in the wake of VSU. The reduction in Sports Association funding meant that the club had to adopt a commercial approach to the provision of Air Experience Flights. Previously, they had been offered for \$20, including club membership. The new commercial rate was \$50. This resulted in a decrease in demand and we recruited a limited number of trainees at O'Week. Considerable effort was put into recruiting new members in the latter half of the year. This led to an increase in trainees and hours flown.

Highlights of the year included:

- 3 members trained to solo standard
- 7 conversions to new types
- Sarah Allen qualified as a new instructor
- 126 people flew with the club for the first time
- 561 hours flown, an increase of 32% over 2006

Considerable thanks must go to our instructors; Mark Newton (CFI), Dennis Medlow, Derek Spencer, Anthony Smith, Redmond Quinn, Cathy Conway, Peter Cassidy, Sarah Allen, Raj Bholanath, Anne Philcox, Nick Gilbert and Tom Wilksch, without whom we could not keep operating.

Thanks also to Tom Wilksch and Gabriel Haines for acting as contact person and organising each day's flying.

Recruitment

The club adopted a strategy of widening its recruitment pool to all SA students. Displays were mounted for O'Week, Re-O'Week, Flinders Uni, UniSA (Mawson

Lakes), Australian Air League (Parafield) and the RAAF Airshow. A strategic alliance was forged with the Australian Air League.

The strategic alliance with the Australian Air League resulted in a very profitable day when we raised \$1,270 by flying 21 AAL cadets and instructors. It is hoped that this relationship will grow stronger over time and see trainees coming from the AAL and staying with us when they move onto their tertiary studies.

The approach to UniSA has also born fruit with considerable interest being shown by the School of Aviation. This has resulted in one trainee during 2008 and this figure should grow if we are able to conduct training camps during University holidays.

A new approach to recruitment was adopted in 2008. We kept the price of an Air Experience Flight at \$50 but included free club membership for Adelaide University Students. People who purchased an AEF during O'Week also went into the draw to win a free aerobatic flight in a warbird. We also mounted a display for the entire O'Week. This strategy showed promise with a number of members recruited and we started this year with 6 trainees.

Thanks must be extended to Anne Philcox and Derek Spencer who put in many days manning displays in our efforts to recruit new members.

Aircraft

There was a considerable airworthiness workload during the year. The Motorfalke and Pik were returned to service. Unfortunately, the Bergefalke and Arrow could not be repaired due to problems in locating a suitable supply of plywood.



The Motorfalke has proved to be an asset at Stonefield where it enables us to continue training during the winter months when there is little lift. It also allows us to efficiently fly AEFs.

Fortunately, no aircraft were put out of commission by accident damage during 2007. However, the Pik had to be taken out of service for a 30 yearly inspection and the Club Libelle for an annual inspection in January 2008. In the same month, the Libelle was damaged in a heavy landing. This meant that we entered the 2008 academic year with no single seaters in service.

Thanks go to our airworthiness team led by Redmond Quinn and Anthony Smith for their many hours.

Airfield

Tenure at Stonefield was finally secured during 2007 and we commenced to transfer our hangars, sheds and clubhouse from Lochiel to Stonefield. Our considerable thanks go to the Sports Association for approving a grant late in 2007 to finance the relocation costs. We also acknowledge the considerable help of the AUSA Treasurer, Stuart Swift, for his help in obtaining the grant.

The club dug the footings and service trenches required for the 2 hangars. This saw Derek Spencer operating the Dingo digger through the night until 3 am in order to make sure the job got done. We are currently awaiting building approval from the local council before erection can commence.

Unfortunately, the airfield had been run down over the last decade as the Barossa Valley Gliding Club's membership dwindled and they were unable to fully maintain it. There is a considerable amount of rubbish to clear away. We have already taken several trailer loads of old winch wire to Adelaide for recycling. Work will continue to improve the amenity of the clubhouse and hangar area. We have also realigned one runway and cleared a number of landing areas to improve operations.

Social Events

It is apparent that the club's culture is one of the things that sets it apart from other gliding clubs and was largely responsible for attracting at least 2 solo pilots from another gliding club during 2007. The club organised a number of successful BBQ's at the airfield, an Annual Dinner at the House of Chow and a Christmas BBQ at the President's house. More social events are planned for 2008 in order to increase the fun factor.

Competitions



The highlight of the year was when one of our instructors, Sarah Allen, won the National Junior Gliding Championships in the club's Pik. This is the culmination of many years effort put into competition flying by Sarah. Another club member, Heath L'Estrange took out second place at the National Junior Gliding Championships.

Cathy Conway also competed at the FAI Open competition.

A number of members represented the club at the annual performance week where they received coaching in cross country gliding. Anne Philcox received the award for Most Improved Pilot.

However, more work needs to go into persuading club members to attend other gliding competitions such as the Club Class Nationals and Horsham Week.

Camps



The club organised another annual camp at Rawnsley's Bluff in the Flinders Ranges. Weather conditions did not generate the wanted ridge or wave lift but a fun time was had anyway. Four club aircraft, and a number of privately owned aircraft, attended. This is a popular event and we have now reached the accommodation limit for the area. Thanks go to Justine Thomson who organised the event.

A number of members also attended the annual gliding camp at Khancoban. The challenging nature of the terrain limits this camp to only experienced cross country pilots.

Finances

The financial position improved during the year due to increase flying, sponsorship money from a wind farm operator, an insurance payout and the Sports Association grant. However, early in 2008 we were advised of substantially increased insurance premiums. Insurance premiums are now the largest cost, amounting to over \$16,000 per annum, and we must now actively consider self insurance and other cost reduction strategies. Aircraft continue to be under utilised and fleet reduction must be considered. However, it is important that any reduction in fleet numbers be accompanied by a plan for a fleet upgrade in order to keep the club motivated.

Thanks to Greg Newbold for his work as Club Treasurer. Greg has worked tirelessly to keep the club focused on the need to develop strong financial management and address long term financial issues.

Strategy

During the year, the club held two strategy meetings for the entire membership and completed a strategic review. The club members are to be congratulated for their openness, honest and constructive feedback during this process.

One crucial matter we needed to resolve was the correct balance between use of instructors and two seater aircraft for Air Experience Flights and training. There was concern that over utilisation of resources for AEFs meant that trainees were not flying enough when they came to the airfield whilst failure to conduct AEFs on a regular basis could result in a reduction in recruitment. The good recruitment, and retention, during the start of the 2008 academic year indicates that the club has been able to strike the right balance.

The club adopted a Strategic Plan at the 2008 AGM. It should assist the club in balancing competing demands and develop a sound operating and financial basis for long term development.

Safety

2007 was a good year for safety with no major accidents. However, the club's Strategic Plan requires it to proactively manage safety. We have therefore requested that the UniSA School of Aviation conduct a safety audit of the club. We will also be holding a pilots' meeting to discuss any and all safety issues in an open and non-judgemental fashion.

Conclusion

2007 was a challenging year which saw an improvement over the club's nadir in 2006. The club's response to the challenge has been encouraging and promises much for the future. The club will have to continue its efforts to forge strategic alliances with youth and aviation organisations, market to the wider university community, increase aircraft utilisation, develop alternative sources of income and exert strong financial control.

Guy Harley
16 April 2008