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Uni Gliding

August 2007

The Official Journal of the Adelaide University Gliding Club



Tom in the Pik (again!!) at the Flinders Ranges

Photo: Sarah Allen

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Editorial

Sarah Allen

Hi everyone!

The past month has been relatively busy for the middle of winter, congratulations to Anne Philcox for obtaining her AEF rating, congrats also to Mike Bruins for his B certificate and huge congrats to Gabe for his Club Libelle conversion.

A huge thankyou must also go to all those involved in the Pie Cart and getting it to the point where we could take it up to Stonefield for the first time, special mention to Derek's dad for letting Derek use his car to tow it up. I for one felt it improved the overall feel of the day no end and is a great step forward in helping more people enjoy their time at the club.

Not only do we have a brand new pie cart to play with, but thanks to the efforts of a hard working few we also have a number of new runways. They are smooth, highly visible and well help speed up operations at the launch point, especially on circuit details. Mark Newton talks more about these in his CFI report.

As anyone who is on the email lists is aware there has been plenty of discussion on the future direction of the club. To help give the club some member based direction about what to do about the current financial position of the club and where the club needs to focus there will be a meeting on Wednesday, 8th of August - details in the 'Upcoming Events' section later in the newsletter.

The RAF Edinburgh Airshow is due to be held in October, and huge thanks to Anthony Smith for campaigning hard to have gliding included as a static and hopefully flying display. Those who were there remember the success the club had at the Jamestown airshow in October last year and the club can use this opportunity to promote both the sport and AUGC. Anyone who can lend a hand should contact Anthony.

On the 26th of August at Balaklava Gliding Club is the GFA safety seminar. These meetings are intended to bring to the attention of pilots all relevant safety issues and rule changes. They are very informative meetings with presenters from many different aspects of gliding and vast experience. All pilots should make the effort to attend, more details are at the end of the newsletter.

Finally I'd like to thank all those who contributed to this months newsletter, especially Tom Wilksch and Mark Newton for there articles. To help keep our clubs newsletter interesting and informative, keep on sending through all your articles and in particular photos - Gabe I saw you with your camera at the giant bonfire the other night :).

Go Flying!!

Sarah



I just thought this was a rather hilarious photo starring Derek 'Dispenser' Spencer and Mark 'Tyles' Tyler.

August 2007



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
		1	2	3	4 Go Gliding!	5 Go Gliding!
6 Help at West Beach	7 Help at West Beach	8 Future of AUGC Meeting 7pm - Sports Association	9	10	11 Go Gliding!	12 Go Gliding! Try 'n' Fly Day
13 Help at West Beach	14 Help at West Beach	15 Exec Meeting 6pm	16	17	18 Go Gliding!	19 Go Gliding!
20 Help at West Beach	21 Help at West Beach	22	23	24	25 Go Gliding! Try 'n' Fly Day	26 Go Gliding! Balaklava Safety Seminar
27 Help at West Beach	28 Help at West Beach	29	30	31		

President's Report

Guy Harley

The Future of the Club

Times have been tough for the club. In the past 3 years we have been hit with the loss of the Lochiel airfield, Voluntary Student Unionism and poor aircraft availability. This has seen our total flight times and training activity reduced. It is now time to seriously re-evaluate the direction of the club and put in place strategies to make the club financially viable in the short to medium term.

We will be holding a meeting on **Wednesday 8th August 2007 at 7:00 pm** in the Sports Association Office.

Everyone who has a connection with the club is urged to attend including past members, current members, visitors from other clubs and those who simply came up for an Air Experience Flight. We particularly want to hear from those who have only recently joined the club. Please do not feel that you are too junior in the club or the sport of gliding to be able to contribute anything. There is nothing as valuable as a fresh perspective on a problem.

The aim of the meeting is to brainstorm and develop a consensus for future directions. It will not go down the path of SWOTS or "strategic planning" as they have been tried in the past. The latter seems to end up as a wish list.

Issues that may be addressed at the meeting include:

- Fleet composition
 - Strategic alliances
 - Marketing
 - Capacity management
 - Organisational culture
 - How we conduct AEFs
 - How we conduct training
 - Airfield development
 - Non-operating income and it's allocation to projects
 - Operating income and budgeting
- Cash flow reporting

Australian Air League

We had a very successful presentation to about 50 cadets at the Australian Air League at Parafield on Friday 29th June 2007. Thanks to Anne Derek, Mark and Genaya for helping rig the Pik and Anne and Derek for organising the poster boards.

We showed a gliding video to the cadets and then they all had a look at the Pik. Most interesting question of the night was "What happens if you strap a rocket to the glider and fire it whilst you are on a winch launch?" Answer: "You would end up in space shortly after the wings were ripped off the glider". Each cadet received

a complimentary copy of the club's DVD and a hand-out on the club

The Air League plans to visit the airfield in October and camp overnight. This should generate some revenue and trainees for the club.

Marketing

July will be busy with displays at the Mawson Lakes Campus of UniSA and at Adelaide University during Re-O'Week. We need numbers on the ground for both events. So please contact Anne Philcox (annemal54@gmail.com) if you are able to help at Adelaide University or myself (guy@harley.net.au) if you are able to help at the Mawson Lakes Campus.

One of the things that we are doing to encourage training at the club is to promote training packages. You can purchase a package that covers all costs to solo (including membership fees) for \$699 (non-concession), \$458 (Adel Uni student) or \$426 (high school student). They make an ideal Christmas gift for family members!

Air Show

We will also be mounting a display at the RAAF air show at RAAF Edinburgh on 27th and 28th October 2007. The air show will feature:

- ✦ Air Force F-111s, Hornets, Orions, Hercules, C-17 Globemaster and more
- ✦ Navy Seahawk and Sea King helicopters, plus the famous Dancing Squirrels aerobatic helicopters
- ✦ Army Black Hawk and the new Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopters
- ✦ US Navy fighters (tbc)
- ✦ Historic warbirds including the Neptune and World War 2 Mustangs, Spitfires and Catalinas
- ✦ Civilian sports aircraft

Static displays, entertainment, bands and lots more. Contact Anthony if you can help with the display or have any ideas as to what we can do.

Hangars

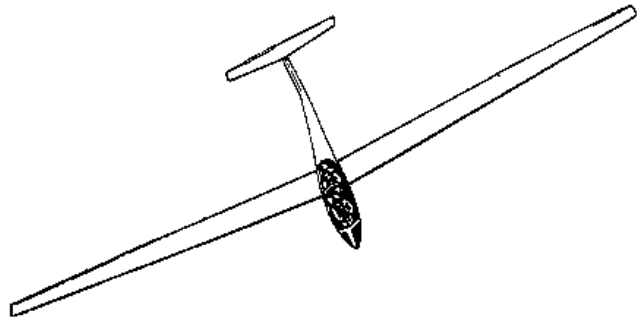
The hangars are finally going up at Stonefield. A determined effort by Redmond, Derek, Mark T, Nick and many others has seen the sites levelled, service trenches dug and the footings excavated for one hangar. There is plenty of more work to be done over the next few months. Could everyone please make an effort to assist as the sooner we erect the hangar, the sooner we can stop paying for the use of the BVGC and private hangars.

Aircraft Maintenance

September is developing as a busy time for aircraft maintenance. The Motorfalka needs to be signed out

by 19th September so Anthony will be starting work on it on Saturday 8th September. KRO is due for a Form 2 on 25th August so Anthony will be starting work on it on Saturday 27th August. All the work will be done at the airfield. Hopefully, this will see the Puchatek completed on the same weekend as the Motorfalke, depending on the amount of help from club members. If you want an aircraft to fly, get busy helping Anthony.

Guy Harley



Treasurer's Report

Greg Newbold

It has been widely known that AUGC's operating costs far exceeding our current income levels. This trend has been known since last year, in particular when, in December 2006, AUGC found it difficult to meet projected payments for the forthcoming month (then January 2007). Cash flow was only made healthy by an insurance payout from the unfortunate and regrettable accident, which occurred to Derek Spencer and Anne Philcox towing VH-GZM. Additional funds were made available by recalling money paid in advance for a new canopy for VH-GZM (knowing that it would be required as part of the repairs to VH-GZM in due course).

The funds received by the club at that time were for repairs to the aircraft and for the construction on a two-seater trainer. However, it has been acknowledged that the club (those volunteering their time for club projects and airworthiness) does not have the ability to undertake yet another project at this time and so has made interim plans to use BVGCs open two-seater trailer and/or the trailer for VH-GZQ (with thanks to Anthony Smith). Redmond Quinn has, sternly, asserted that \$6,000 must be set aside and made available for the trailer project.

It appears that these funds have already been allocated to another project. At the April Executive meeting the executive allocated a \$6,000 budget to construction of an AUGC hangar at Stonefield. Arguably, these funds seem to have been allocated in anticipation of \$10,000 being paid by Trust Power, being compensation to the club for the construction of a wind farm on the Southern Hummocks (and affecting AUGC's operation at Lochiel, resulting in-part, in our departure). These funds have recently been received (ground having been turned). Thanks to David Conway for his acting as point of contact on this.

Nevertheless, AUGC is currently playing a game with cash flow, and is eroding its cash reserve to operate the club.

The previous Treasurer's Newsletter report (May 2007) demonstrated that 2007 is currently on track to repeat 2006 flying total hours (425 hours), which is less than the (rather optimistic) budgeted figure of 525 hours (presented in Treasurer's Newsletter report April

2007). This decrease in flying hours and higher than budgeted expenses, equate to AUGC being "a loss making exercise". The "cushion" provided by grant funding from the AU Sports Assoc is now absent (owing to VSU) and AUGC has no option but to resolve this issue on its own.

Several grant schemes that the club is attempting to make use of to fund various capital and capital works projects. Mark Tyler and Sarah Allen have submitted a SA Rec. & Sport Active Club grant for FLARMS for AUGC aircraft, the previously mentioned funds from Trust Power, a capital works grant has been recently submitted to the AU Sports Assoc for hangar relocation, and a grant has been conceived for SAA to seek funds to fit Tost-style winch heads and Dynarope to a winch through the November round of the SA Rec & Sport Active Club grant scheme.

However, no grant scheme will provide operating funds. It is necessary for AUGC to cover operating costs, predominantly from membership, flying and AEFs (though BBQs etc help). At the prospective level of flying, AUGC are (arguably) offering aircraft at prices that do not cover their operating (insurance, maintenance and operating-on-costs, such as share of airfield payment, general insurance, etc).

In answer to how-to rectify AUGC's financial dilemma, there are two avenues, increase income and decrease expenses. Increasing income has been the subject of much discussion on AUGC-Exec mailing list (attracting and retaining members, catering to members needs better, comps and camps, etc). There has been little or no effort to decrease expenses. The June Exec meeting did discuss this option, and made one (and only one) suggestion...to lay-up VH-GTX (in addition to VH-WVA) for the 3 months leading up to spring, saving a mere \$150 or so. However, this was not actioned, and much discussion on AUGC-Exec mailing list resolved to reverse this decision and resulted in one generous offer by a club member to pay to ensure the aircraft is available for winter XC training (a new phenomenon for AUGC, and is the focus of the "Early Bird" trophy).

On reflection, that one (and only one) suggestion to reduce expenses has been made, which will impart

Treasurer's Report

nearly not at all on club finances, and that has already been reverse is the metaphorical equivalent of *spitting in the Murray River and arguing that the drought is over and irrigators can take all they want*. This option was not going to solve the AUGCs financial dilemma, however the fact that so much energy was spent reversing it, while little or no effort placed on searching for alternatives, is rather disappointing.

The flexibility that the club has spending Trust Power and Insurance payment funds does not apply to AUSA and Rec & Sport funds, meaning they can not be used to fund operating losses. Those losses will continue for the foreseeable future (until any long term strategy to increase income impacts on cash flow) and AUGC will again soon find itself struggling to pay operating expenses again (all too soon).

Some hard decision will need to be made. Some of these decisions will be to the detriment of current members (selling aircraft, taking aircraft off-line, increasing fees and charges). Some of these decisions will be counter to past practice (AUGC becoming less focussed on students). Some of these will require a compromise from members (operating one pure glider two seater and the MotorFalke).

In order to decrease costs (mindful that there is already much discussion about increasing flying activity or other income) AUGC might need to do such unattractive things as:

1. Increase flying rates, levies, launch fees and packages: to match costs.
2. Add surcharges for competition and camp bookings.
3. Remove the 3 hour maximum charge for declared XC flights.
4. Self insure VH-GZM, reducing insurance costs.
5. Sell one pure glider two seater, so aiming to increase MotorFalke use, or a single seater. Using the income to retire debt and so reduce interest expenses.
6. Retire VH-GTX, hoping that does not severely impact on total flying hours.

Make membership equal to (say) 15 hours flying, with a credit of 10 hours to member account to be used within the club year (use it or lose it).

Greg Newbold

Edinburgh Airshow October 2007

With the Edinburgh Airshow not far away I've included a few images from the Jamestown airshow as some motivation for everyone to be there!



CFI's Report

Mark Newton

We've had a busy month on the operations side of things. I'd like to outline a paragraph or two about some of the happenings. If you'd like more info, send me some email at cfi@augc.on.net. If it sounds like your question will be of general interest, I'll reply via augc-people.

Ratings

Anne Philcox is AUGC's latest Air Experience Instructor. Congratulations, Anne, I'm sure you'll do the job well.

If you're an AUGC pilot who's interested in becoming an AEI, please get in touch with me. You'll need to acquire a copy of the GFA Instructors Handbook and have a bit of training, then you'll be able to help the club out by flying AEFs. If you like flying with other people this can add a rewarding aspect to your flying, especially when you observe someone who received their first flight from you going solo.

Also due for congratulations are Mike Bruins for gaining his B Certificate, and Gabriel Hayes for his Club Libelle conversion. Well done.

SAGA Ops Meeting

Paul Mason convened an Ops meeting at Gawler on June 23. Notable happenings include:

* GFA instructors, coaches and AEIs are now "mandatory notifiers," which means that we have a duty to inform authorities if we encounter a minor who we believe has been mistreated. This change is part of GFA's accreditation with the Australian Institute of Sport, and is intended to fortify the perception of sports aviation as a safe and supportive pastime for young people.

* The GFA Ops Panel has reviewed our recent Ops Checks, and has recommended that we make a "wire launching in progress" call on the CTAF prior to each launch in order to notify traffic at the other

airfields in our local area about collision risks with wires. If you've been to Stonefield over the last few weekends you will have heard us making these calls something like, "Stonefield gliding traffic, sailplane Whiskey Victor Alpha commencing wire launch from runway 23, Stonefield gliding." My suggestion is that you make the call during the "R" bit in "CARD."

* A GFA Safety Seminar will happen in September, venue and date TBA closer to the event. I recommend that all pilots attend.

New Runways

We have three new runways; A new alignment for 05/23, with short landing strips at each end.

To avoid ambiguity we really need names for the landing strips which will be understandable by non-gliding traffic that we'll be sharing the air with. Thoughts on what we can call them without needing to remember our more runway numbers will be appreciated :-)

The landing strip at the 23 end is just long enough to allow a Standard Libelle to complete its rollout after an approach 3 - 5 kts faster than safe speed near ground in nil wind without using the wheel brake. In effect, that means the landing strips are only long enough for one aircraft, and if they're presently occupied you really should be choosing another airstrip instead of thinking you can cleverly pass over the top of an obstacle and land long. It also means that if you've just landed, you should be pushing your glider off to the side of the strip as efficiently as you can.



Flinders 2007

Tom Wilksch

For the past few years I have stood back as a large proportion of the club has upped sticks and moved up to the Flinders for the long weekend. The various excuses in my head included no time, no money, not rated, and the rather ludicrous: it's probably not really as much fun as everyone says.

With no actual exams this semester (only a huge amount of coursework) and a little money saved, I decided to try and make it this year. This was coupled with a girlfriend who was keen to fly there, and if I didn't take advantage of that I would be a very stupid person.

To further improve the outlook, Sarah offered to take me and Jess up in the Cessna with Nick, so it was the prospect of a 1.5 hour trip that finally convinced me.

Of course flying up is all very well, but after Sarah cheerfully told me we could take 15kg of luggage, I was presented with a problem. Luckily Nigel stepped in and took up the tent, stove and other assorted heavy stuff – thanks Nigel!

Camping at the Flinders can be summed up in one word – cold. Two words would give you 'bloody cold'. But give me a few more and I'd say 'bloody cold but well worth it'. The view in the morning was spectacular, with the sunrise peeking through the trees and lighting up the Chase Range. Getting out of the tent, starting a fire, cooking breakfast and seeing your breath in the air was very memorable. Still bloody cold though.

On to the flying! After hearing all sorts of stories about how nasty the surrounding area is to fly in I was pleasantly surprised. Yes, airfields are the only place you can land. But as long as you are sensible and conservative, there is really nothing to worry about. A quick check flight with Derek got me acclimatised with the area (and re-acclimatised with the Motorfalke!) and familiarised me with the terrible visibility in the late afternoon.



Then it was off to bed. -2° that night. Nice . . .

Next day started with a briefing. All made sense, so we all grabbed aircraft and got down to launch. I jumped in the Motorfalke with Jess and motored onto the marginal ridge. After running up and down and losing height, I decided to turn on the engine and have a look about. No problems, and I even got it into cruise mode first time. Hooray!

We motored around the south-western corner and found lift off the ridge there. However, with no land out options I wasn't game to turn off the engine, so we turned round and came back. More running up and down a marginal ridge and generally successful engine starts, and we landed after a pleasant flight. I say generally, because after I landed Dennis got me with a – "having fun with the ignition were we?"

Dammit he heard. . .

On to the afternoon, and after a bit of pin-the-pilot-on-the-glider I ended up with the Pik. Pilots on the ridge said it was booming, so I jumped in and away I went. Can't say I enjoyed the tow out much. Options go something like – land ahead . . . land ahead . . . land ahead . . . death . . . death . . . 180° turn. Lovely.

Onto the ridge and yes it was working. Big time! After saying high getting used to ridge flying again (ah yes, the sore neck) I pushed it down and was soon whizzing past the rock at over 100kts. I knew I would enjoy it, but really, three years is way too long to go without some ridge soaring. It is just incredibly good fun. Exhilarating, exciting, intense, those who were there know what I mean. Those who weren't really missed out.

After an hour or so I thought maybe I should make sure I wasn't hogging the aircraft . . .

'Rawnsley base, whiskey victor alpha'

'Whiskey victor alpha, go ahead'

'Anyone else want the Pik today?'

'Nope, it's all yours, knock yourself out'

Words of gold, thank you Newts!

So off I went again up and down the ridge having the time of my life. After a while I thought I'd have a go at finding some wave. Admittedly there were zero indicators of it, but you never know your luck. About 1km out from the ridge I heard Anthony call that he was joining so I called up to see who his passenger was, thinking they might have a camera.

'I'm flying with Jess' was the reply.

This was not something I was about to miss out on. Showing off to your girlfriend rates highly on my list of

Flinders 2007

(unnecessary) things to do, so it was nose down and 120kts back to the ridge. However, Anthony was looking after his passenger and his slow gentle flying meant the Bergfalke remained 30m out of reach above me! But after a while they came down to join in the fun.

Close to 3 hours ridge flying and a very memorable day.

That evening featured nice campfire, food, and company and a cold but comfortable night.

The next day started much the same as the last one, with lovely clear skies and not much wind. As the day progressed it became clear to those who tried and failed to stay on the ridge that it was a lovely thermic day anyway, so the flying was still good. I jumped in the Nimbus 4DM with David to give it a try.

We soon found a nice thermal, so we put the engine away, and up we went. We were joined by Newts in the Pik and spent a while lining up for aerial shots, only to find the camera I had been given was out of batteries. So out came my trusty phone for some low quality action shots!

After that we followed Nick in TX as he headed East round the Pound and then pushed on to St Mary's Peak. There were tourists up there, and so we handed control back and forwards as we took turns at flying back and forwards, grins plastered on our faces.

The ridges facing the sun were giving off nice strong consistent thermals, and with plenty of height and daylight left we headed across the Pound and onto the northern face of the Elders Range. There was still practically no wind, but again this side was facing the sun and giving lovely thermals up the side of the hill, making it practically ridge soaring anyway. We had a lovely time cruising back and forth along the face, spotting and occasionally dodging the eagles who called it home.

After a while we were joined by a timid Stemme (only 20m of span, the thing doesn't really fly, it falls with style) who we coaxed onto the range with us. A few more passes and photo opportunities and we both turned for home having picked up the necessary height.

The Flinders really is a beautiful place to

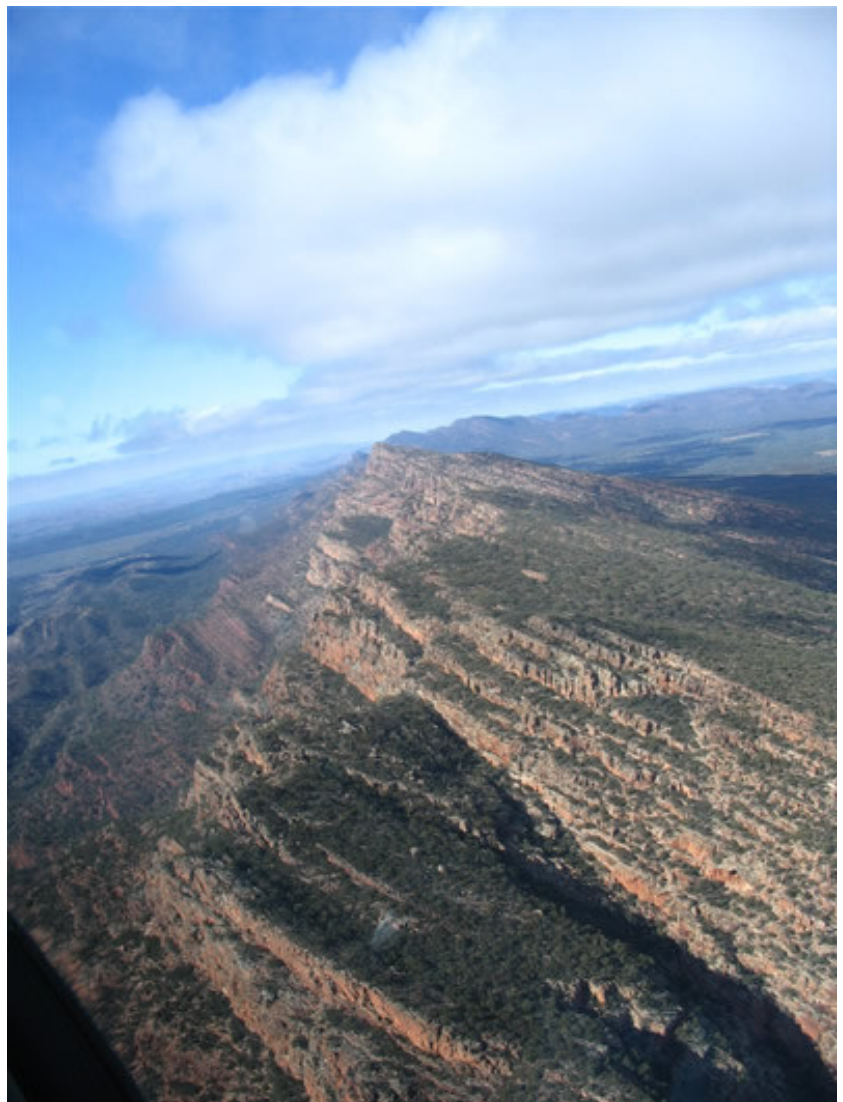
fly, and I was particularly struck by this on the glide home. With the sun behind you, the already red ground just lights up. Truly spectacular.

All in all, a fantastic trip. Big thanks to Sarah and Nick for the lifts in the Cessna, David for taking me along in the Nimbus, and everyone who decided they didn't feel like flying in the Pik while I was up in it!

I spend a lot of my time gesticulating wildly as I try to explain to non pilots why gliding is so much fun. I have found that showing pictures from the Flinders tends to have to most success. People sit back and say 'wow'. Still can beat actually being there though!

See ya there again next year. . .

Tom Wilksch



Mythbusting AUGC

Mark Newton

For the great enemy of truth is very often not the lie -- deliberate, contrived and dishonest -- but the myth -- persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

-- John F. Kennedy, 11 June 1962

In his President's Report published in the July 2007 newsletter, Guy Harley wrote about his opinions for how to improve AUGC's membership retention.

The article has kicked off no small measure of controversy in some circles, but not the same circles which comprise the readership of this newsletter. Since *Uni Gliding* forms part of the historical written record of the club, I feel it's important to ensure that a rebuttal shows up in the same place as the article which has sparked it.

Myths

As the opening quote from a different President suggests, first I'd like to talk about myths.

Myths are part of the glue which hold communities together. Myths are our stories, our oral history, statements of the beliefs and principles which guide us as we ply our course through treacherous waters, and some of the things which make us unique from other similar groups.

For all their benefits, myths can also be costly. When we believe strongly in myths even though the evidence of the world around us seems to contradict the mythology, we'll end up making decisions which ignore reality. Consequently, it's important to draw a distinction between the team-building effects of a myth when we're laughing about out-landing stories around the camp fire, and the policy-building effects of a myth when we're trying to chart the future course of the club.

For example: An enterprise might harbour the belief that it could offer its wares cheaper than its competitors' equivalents. Based on that belief, it might decide to offer lower-quality products and services to the marketplace, expecting to cash-in on cost-sensitive customers who will accept less quality if the price is right. If it turns out that the enterprise's belief that it can run its business cheaper is a myth which isn't backed up by reality, it'll be in a situation where its prices *aren't* cheaper than its competitors, but where its products and services are *lower-quality*. The reactions of its future customers would be inevitably negative.

When making policy, an organization needs to be careful to base its decisions on solid reality, rather than myths.

One thing I hope to demonstrate in this article is that one of the myths which we've been working under for several decades, namely that we can increase club membership by ever more aggressively pursuing AEFs, probably isn't true. And if that myth isn't true, that has some fairly major ramifications concerning how we market ourselves and how we conduct our operations. In particular, it's my observation that glider pilots who want to pursue gliding activities other than training and AEF-flying tend to leave this club. By spending the last 20 years operating the club as a machine designed to maximize our AEF throughput, have we driven away some of our most active members?

The President's Data

So has our club's President based his conclusions on myths or reality in the article he published in July 2007?

Let me begin by reproducing the data, then I'll examine Guy's conclusions and see if they stack up to the reality presented in his table, "New members and their flying hours 2000 – 2006". For each year, the table counts the number of new members, then tracks how many of them are still with us after 30 mins then at hourly intervals up to 5 hrs. While reading, bear in mind that we're counting new members, not AEFs flown (I'll discuss that more below)

Year	New Members	>30 Min		>1 hr		>2 hr		>3 hr		>4 hr		>5 hr	
		No	Retained	No	Retained	No	Retained	No	Retained	No	Retained	No	Retained
2000	73	22	30.14%	13	17.81%	11	15.07%	9	12.33%	9	12.33%	9	12.33%
2001	108	31	28.70%	19	17.59%	15	13.89%	10	9.26%	9	8.33%	9	8.33%
2002	74	32	43.24%	24	32.43%	20	27.03%	18	24.32%	17	22.97%	16	21.62%
2003	76	16	21.05%	10	13.16%	10	13.16%	10	13.16%	9	11.84%	9	11.84%
2004	107	22	20.56%	19	17.76%	16	14.95%	13	12.15%	12	11.21%	11	10.28%
2005	110	18	16.36%	11	10.00%	10	9.09%	9	8.18%	9	8.18%	8	7.27%
2006	17	11	64.71%	11	64.71%	9	52.94%	9	52.94%	9	52.94%	8	47.06%

Mythbusting AUGC

Note the heavy black line between the 2005 and 2006 data. The presence of that line divides the presented data into two incompatible groups.

Above the line, AUGC membership was “bundled” with the price of a student AEF. So, in order to be counted on this table, an individual approaching the club would need to commit between \$10 and \$20 (the cost of an AEF sold at the O-Week desk). Furthermore, the club subsidized 50% of student members' GFA membership, further decreasing the cost commitment required by serious trainees. Most of the people in the “new members” list never actually visited the airfield (especially in 2003 and 2005).

Below the line, AUGC membership was not bundled with the price of a student AEF, and, due to VSU, the cost of everything has increased. From 2006 onwards, an individual approaching the club *would not appear on this table unless they had committed over \$130*, comprising \$50 for their student AEF, and \$74 for their club membership, additional money for any flying they'd need to do after their 20 minute AEF in order to appear in the >30 min column, and unsubsidized GFA membership at 200% of the previous-years' costs.

We need to keep that distinction in mind when we're analyzing the data. There is a very real qualitative difference between the population of people who have shown casual interest at the O-Week desk, and the very different population of people who have laid real money on the table, and therefore expect real value. The latter group are “stickier” because they have more to lose if they give up; But we need to work harder to keep them happy.

Rebuttal of the President's Findings

Lets go through the bullet points presented by the President one-by-one and compare them to the data above.

Guy's finding: “*AEFs are a source of new active members.*”

There is little evidence of that in the data presented above. Guy has only been able to make the claim by contriving an artificial definition of “active member”: In Guy's analysis, a member is active if they've flown 30 minutes or more. Most AEF customers visiting us on non-circuit days could achieve that status *in their very first visit to the airfield*, and even if we never see them again Guy will still claim that they're “active” and count them as a success.

If you stretch “active member” out to 5 hours (i.e., the amount of flying time that it takes for a trainee to progress through approximately half of the pre-solo training syllabus), the results look somewhat different. During the timeframe covered by the presented data, there is *no correlation between the number of AEFs flown and the number of trainees completing more than 5 hours of air-time*. In particular, in 2005 (the last year of bundled AEF-membership packages) we flew the highest number of AEFs and achieved the lowest number of >5hr pilots.

The notion that we'll get more active members if we fly more AEFs is a myth. Examination of the presented data does not support a finding that “AEFs are a source of active members”.

Guy's finding: “*The average take-up rate for membership from student AEFs could be as high as 43%.*”

There are two flaws with the reasoning Guy has used to arrive at that conclusion.

The first flaw is that the presented data has only counted people who are already members, and doesn't tell us how many AEFs we flew; So it can't possibly conclude anything about “average take-up rate for membership from student AEFs,” without another column containing figures for total student AEFs per year.

But even if the data could support that inference, it'd fail due to the second flaw in the President's reasoning. Guy has used the 2002 “>30min” membership retention figure to make his assertion. 2002 is a statistical “outlier”, and care should consequently be shown in deriving any results from it. Those who have been with the club for a while will remember 2002 as a spectacular winter year, in which the Lochiel ridge was working so reliably on so many weekends that it was almost impossible for a winter AEF to avoid clocking up at least 30 minutes. Pilots who flew with the club during 2002 averaged longer flight durations than pilots in any other recent years as a result. (Personally, I logged 7.5 hours *in one day* during winter 2002)

This interpretation is borne out if you extend your view to the right-hand end of the table, and look at the retention figures for >5 hr pilots: Out of the original 32 that had more than 30 minutes of airtime in 2002, half of them left before 5 hours. This is perfectly consistent with every other year on the table, which always shows approximately half of our trainees leaving before they get half way through the syllabus. 2002's membership retention was no better than any other year in that respect.

Indeed, in making his 43% claim, Guy wishes us to ignore the 47% retention we achieved for pilots with >5 hrs in 2006! Out of 11 >30min starters, we still had 8 of them left after 5 hours. *AUGC has never, in its entire history, recorded a retention result as good as that.* Our 2006 membership retention perform-

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ance was utterly spectacular, even when contrasted against the 2002 data which Guy is holding up as the target to aim for!

Guy's finding: *"There is significant drop-off in active members in the 2 to 4 hour band."*

The club has known about this drop-off for several years. Innovations we've implemented over the last two years have been specifically targeted at addressing this drop-off.

The 2006 data shows some measure of success, although it's impossible to plot a trend from only one datapoint, so we need to continue our efforts for several years to adequately evaluate their success.

This need to continue them is why I have written this rebuttal: *Guy's recommendations undo the changes we've made in the last 18 months, and return the club to the way it has operated for nearly 30 years.* Those recommendations shouldn't stand as part of the written lore of the club without being challenged. I contend that the club's last 30 years of operation are not something the club should want to emulate, because they have resulted in stagnant or reducing membership, our most experienced members leaving gliding or departing for other clubs, and a mountain of debt. Furthermore, the data we have gathered since we implemented our changes *directly contradicts Guy's finding*, by showing that last year we didn't lose any pilots at all during the 2 – 4 hour band which Guy has expressed concern about!

Guy's finding: *"This drop-off was more pronounced when the club was actively promoting AEFs."*

In the last two years, we have increased our AEF activity, completely redesigned our marketing and promotional materials, increased our on-campus marketing activities, produced a promotional video which was screened on community TV. We have also repriced AEFs so that they don't lose money, enabling the club to fly virtually unlimited numbers of them without having to subsidize them out of other operations for the first time in the club's recent history. We've also changed the way we conduct AEFs, so that visitors attend the airfield on dedicated AEF days where they can share the experience with many like-minded comrades, and where we can optimize the entire club's operation towards making them feel welcome and worthwhile, and giving them the absolutely highest value experience we can possibly deliver.

I am astonished that anyone could express the view that we're promoting AEFs any less actively than we have previously.

Having said that, Guy's claim reinforces points I have made elsewhere in this article, namely that engineering the club around flying unlimited numbers of AEFs consumes enough 2-seater resources to drive away likely trainees who return to the club after their AEF, because they can't get the instructional time they need to make their investment in AUGC worthwhile. If we have a more pronounced membership drop-off when we "actively promote AEFs," how actively should we promote them?

Guy's finding: *"The drop off in active members can be substantially reduced (see the figures for 2002)"*

As discussed above, the 2002 figures aren't any better than any other year. Just like other years above the black line, around 50% of the new members who fly for 30 minutes have dropped out by the time they get to 5 hours.

One should also note that the 2006 data shows that we only lost 3 >30 minute pilots by the 5-hour mark, which is a better demonstration of "substantially reducing" the drop-off in active members than anything that happened in 2002. My belief is that we did something "right" in 2006, but we need to continue the experiment for a few more years to find out if it was a fluke or some kind of new beginning.

Guy goes on to express the *myth* that the data "... clearly establishes that the club does gain active members by actively promoting AEFs," and reinforces the point by saying that, "It is not a myth," even after including among his key findings the assertion that actively promoting AEFs causes a membership drop-off. His conclusion has been supported by artificially defining the phrase "active member" and by ignoring or misinterpreting most of the data. That isn't how you bust a myth, is it?

If one removes the 2002 outlier from the presented results, the conclusion is clear: *No matter how many new members we attract, between 8 and 11 of them survive until they're half-way through their training.* Even with the 2002 data included, one can assert that the drop-off rate in membership plotted against flying hours is constant after the 30 minute mark. Or, more succinctly: "AUGC membership comes with a half-life."

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Capacity Management

Guy goes on to claim that “there is no training bottleneck at the moment.” This is inconsistent with the views of our most active instructors, and the experiences of the trainees who leave us, and is also at odds with many, many years of club history.

By ignoring the fact that our 2-seater capacity is a limited resource, AUGC tends to “overload” days by scheduling too many trainees for each instructor/2-seater and by soaking up any excess capacity with AEFs. When a day is overloaded, trainees achieve no more than 3 circuits, the last trainee before last light often only gets one or two flights, and a trainee occasionally misses out altogether (look back at your own training – did that happen to you?). Furthermore, solo pilots can't progress passenger ratings, AEF ratings, remedial training, or other things which require 2-seater time. Indeed, often solo pilots can't even fly single seaters because every launch over the course of the day is a 2-seater launch, relegating our longest-term and most committed members to running wings and driving the winch. The duty instructor gets it in the neck from dissatisfied pre-solo and post-solo pilots alike, because he or she is the natural target of the angst and frustration which these days invariably produce. So, after all that is wrapped up, nobody wants to be a pre-solo trainee, nobody wants to be a post-solo pilot, and nobody wants to be an instructor.

AUGC has taken some recent initiatives aimed at mitigating those problems:

- The price of an AEF has been increased so that the club no longer makes a loss on them;
- AEFs are flown on dedicated AEF days, meaning that trainees who have shown the commitment required to come back after their first flight don't have to compete with uncommitted visitors for 2-seater time; and
- Several instructors have recently declared that they will refuse to attend the airfield if the flying list shows more than some threshold limit of “customers” for a 2-seater, which will turn the day into independent ops only. The motivations behind those decisions are varied. In my personal case, I would rather cancel training outright than waste our trainees time by making them spend three hours in the car to attend an airfield where they're only likely to get two or three circuits. We should simply not permit overload to happen anymore.

These actions are specifically addressed at reducing the drop-out rate in the 2 – 4 hour range. Once a trainee dedicates themselves to learning how to fly, it's vitally important to make them feel like it's worth it. Speaking for my own personal motivations, I want to be able to give each trainee 90 minutes of instructor time (not necessarily air-time) per day, or at least 6 launches on circuit days, even if the weather is bad, cables break, or we have an unexpectedly late start. Achieving less than that devalues the training experience, and *we already know that that is what drives our trainees away.*

Guy's suggestion that we have a capacity of 16 trainees per two seater per day is based on the club flying in excess of 45 launches each and every flying day (something we've never achieved for as long as I've been in the club), with a 2-seater taking every launch, and with trainees receiving just 3 flights. Yes, we can achieve that many trainees if we decide that the only thing the club is going to do is to carry out a training operation, and that experienced pilots' only role will be to run wings, drive winches and fly AEFs (assuming they can get an AEI rating – which is unlikely if the entirety of our 2-seater capacity is absorbed with pre-solo trainees)

But it's my contention that *nobody* in the club is prepared to operate that way. Club members have their own ambitions. It's unreasonable to expect them to sideline those ambitions for the sake of excessive training, especially considering the ongoing diaspora of ex-AUGC members who leave the club specifically because their ambitions have been sidelined to support training.

Some alternative suggestions

Rather than thinking about ways to turn the club into some kind of self-sustaining sausage machine which takes raw AEFs as input and produces winch drivers and Air Experience Instructors to complete the feedback loop, I'd like to think about how AUGC can improve its activity levels in a way that's consistent with the wishes of club members.

My proposals are:

- Continue AEF days, as a way of concentrating AEF load into times when it won't interfere with members' training opportunities, and where we can dedicate ourselves to making it a high-quality experience for large numbers of AEFs;
- Price AEFs to ensure that we make a worthwhile profit from them. Club members invest significant energy into making AEFs possible, and the club should get something out of that in return;
- Pursue alternative income sources (e.g., grants, corporate sponsorship, bank robbery) so that the club isn't financially dependent on onerous quantities of AEFs. In an ideal world, the club would be financially stable even if it didn't fly any AEFs at all, allowing AEF income to be our “cream” instead of our “bread and water”;

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- When people are prepared to join the club and commit to training sight-unseen, emphasize the optional nature of an AEF package, thereby lowering the barrier to entry by \$50. People who are enthusiastic enough to commit several hundred dollars without even trying it are probably the people who want to fly anyway, and an AEF package is unlikely to convince them any more powerfully than their actual commencement of training;
- Formally limit 2-seater load to 3 customers per day on days which aren't specifically earmarked as AEF days. That enables each trainee to get 90 minutes with an instructor and/or 6 launches, which should be viewed as a minimum requirement necessary to deliver value in exchange for the time and money which the trainee is spending to be with us. Note that this initiative is being carried out on a private basis by several individual instructors who are prescribing conditions on their donation of their personal time, but it should be a normal expectation, rather than an individual exception;
- Ensure that a single-seater is DI'ed and towed out to the launch point each and every morning, even if it looks like a circuit day, and even if there are only one or two reasonably disinterested individuals on field qualified to fly it. Opportunities for increasing participation will be maximized if the cost of exercising the opportunity is minimized: It's far easier to convince a member to get into a single seater and fly it if it's ready and waiting at the launchpoint than it is if it's at the other end of the airfield in a hangar waiting for its DI; and
- Find out what members' ambitions are, and support their fulfillment.

Conclusion

I'm not the only thinker in the club, and I know I'm not the only do-er either. I'm pretty sure that there are other people in the club who are reading this who have ideas which are every bit as good as the ones above, probably better.

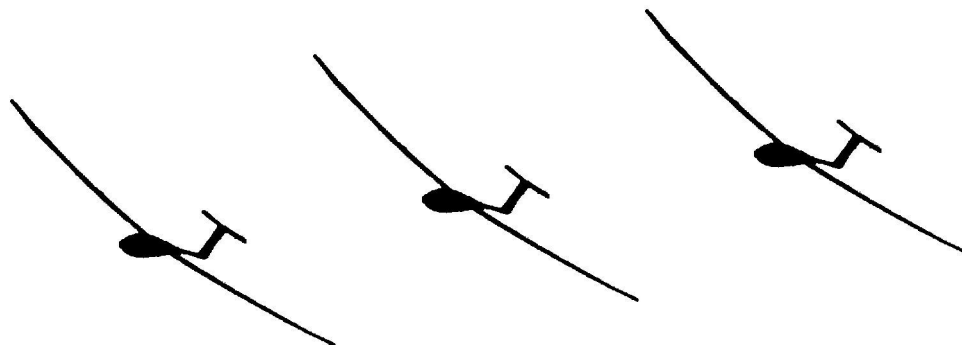
I'm also aware that these are controversial matters, and that some people in the club disagree with me every bit as strongly as I disagreed with last month's President's Report. So I invite discussion and debate, with a view towards forming a consensus (or, where consensus is impossible, an understanding).

The club *must* increase its participation rates. We should be looking at ways to increase the number of hours flown by each pilot member across the board. That means the club's operations have to be fun, even for the people who aren't interested in participating in an AEF-focused outfit.

The findings Guy has contrived from the data he presented have been known to be false for the last couple of years. The recommendations he has made based on those findings are more or less consistent with what we've been doing for the 25 years preceding 2006, and we *know* that following those principles will set the club up as some kind of AEF factory which encourages its most experienced members to leave.

AUGC has laboured under the myth that the key to survival is to fly billions of AEFs for most of its history. The data presented should reveal the falsehood of that myth: Varying AEF intake doesn't significantly affect the number of trainees on our books. We can sustain and grow the club *without* aiming for dozens of trainees and hundreds of AEFs by targeting our marketing towards people who already want to learn how to fly. Above all, we need to focus our efforts on making sure that we deliver value to those people who have fronted up hundreds of dollars to buy into a personal piece of AUGC's shared mythology.

The author wishes to thank Ben Ragg, Nick Gilbert, Derek Spencer and Mike Bruins for their assistance in reviewing this article prior to its publication. While many of their suggestions have considerably strengthened the article, the opinions and conjectures contained herein remain mine.



Stay In Touch

The club has an email group address, augc-people@lists.internode.on.net, that is used to either discuss or arrange things within the club. If you want to stay in touch with the club, subscribe to the mailing list by filling out the online form at:

<http://lists.internode.on.net/mailman/listinfo/augc-people>

You can still send an email to the list even if you have not subscribed to it. There is also an 'augc-announce' list for official club announcements, courtesy of our friends at Internode. If you are an AUGC member and have provided your email address then you will already be on this list. If you want to join this list or want to change your subscription, go to:

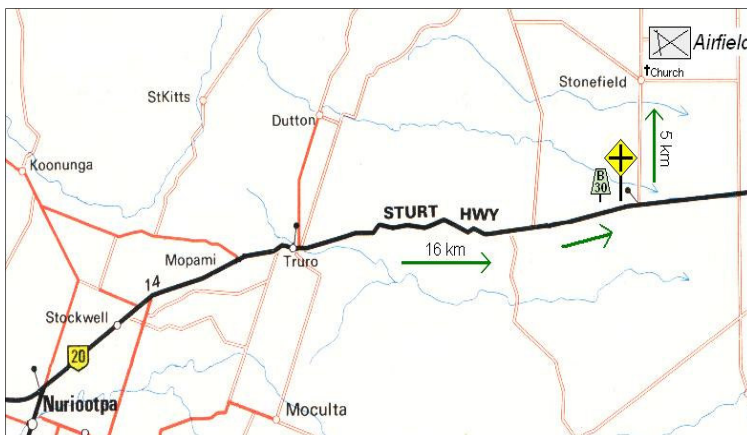
<http://lists.internode.on.net/mailman/listinfo/augc-announce>

You can also get the latest newsletter and up to date news on what is going on at the club's web page:

<http://www.augc.on.net/>

If your email address is on the membership database the club's Assistant Treasurer can send you your account updates over the internet. Send an email to: accounts@augc.on.net

Want to fly this weekend?



Want to go flying on the weekend? You must ring the club contact person, Tom, on the Thursday before between 8.00pm and 10:00 pm on 0412 870 963, (or by email: contact@augc.on.net) so that he can organise instructors and transport for those intending to fly. Members can book via the online booking system at:

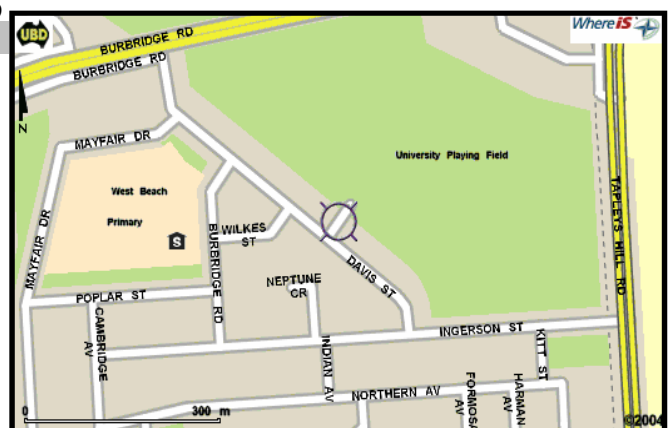
<http://booking.augc.on.net>

You can either drive up yourself by following the map at left, or Tom can arrange a lift to Stonefield either from the Adelaide University footbridge (meet at 7.15am to leave at 7:30 am), or from the Caltex Service station on the corner of Montague Road and Main North Road (meet at 7.45am to leave at 8:00 am).

Want to help at West Beach?

West Beach is where we carry out the maintenance and repair on our gliders and equipment. There are usually volunteers working down there on Monday and Tuesday evenings. The entrance is at the end of Foreman St, West Beach.

So you want to help fix the gliders at West Beach, but can't get there? A lift can be arranged from the Adelaide University footbridge at 7.30pm via augc-people@lists.internode.on.net.



Contact List

President:	Guy Harley	0404 177 342	president@augc.on.net
Treasurer:	Greg Newbold	0403 224 970	treasurer@augc.on.net
Secretary:	Mark Tyler	8523 1358	secretary@augc.on.net
Fourth Member:	Anne Philcox	0409 202 250	social@augc.on.net
Fifth Member:	Mike Bruins		fifth-member@augc.on.net
Chief Flying Instructor:	Mark Newton	0416 202 223	cfi@augc.on.net
Airworthiness Officer:	Redmond Quinn	8344 5331	airworthiness@augc.on.net
Contact Person:	Tom Wilksch	0412 870 963	contact@augc.on.net
Newsletter Editor:	Sarah Allen	0430 099 772	editor@augc.on.net

Upcoming Events

Wednesday 8 August: Future of AUGC

This meeting is aimed at brainstorming ideas to help AUGC with its financial situation, and give the club some direction for the future.

It is important that as many members as possible attend so if you care about the future of your club come along.

Time: 7pm

Location: Sports Association, Adelaide University

Wednesday 15 August: Executive Meeting 6pm

Come along and take an interest in the running of your club. All members welcome.

Please note that the venue is to be advised and the date is subject to change, watch the email list for further news.

Sunday 12 July and Saturday 25 August: AEF Try 'n' Fly Day

A weekend dedicated to introducing new members to our great sport.

Come along, meet some new faces and lend your enthusiasm to making this a great, fun weekend. Its also a great day to bring your own friends and family along to enjoy gliding.

For more information contact the contact person,
Tom

Sunday 26 August: GFA Safety Seminar

The GFA Safety Seminar will be held at Balaklava Gliding Club, located at Balaklava Airfield - 10km NW of Balaklava on Whitwarta Rd.

These meetings are very informative and it is strongly suggested that all AUGC pilots attend.

Time: 10am