



WELCOME to the first newsletter for 2004. This year has started well with Alliance being awarded a grant from the Wheatbelt Development Commission. This grant will enable the Alliance to proceed with plans to erect further signs on the main arterial roads leading to the Avon region. Travellers to Northam on Grt Eastern Hwy have commented favourably on the aviation promotional signs at Clackline.

The Alliance also extends a welcome to Mr Gareth Lloyd who is establishing an ultralight training school at York. Aviation in the Avon is growing stronger which bodes well for business, tourism and employment. This newsletter will keep you up to date on progress with aviation in the Avon valley region.

Graeme Wishart

President, Avon Valley Aviation Alliance



GLIDING *Gliding Speed Record Attempt*

Having spent the last 16 years Gliding at the Gliding Club of WA, I have long held the belief that it is possible to break the Australian Speed record here in the Central Wheatbelt. This can be achieved by belting up and down a trough line.

In December I made one such attempt with the task Cunderdin Dalwalinu Cunderdin - 315 kms. The window for actually doing these flights is quite short due to the fact that the trough has to be developed enough to achieve almost straight flight without stopping to thermal. The task then needs to be completed prior to the thunderstorms or the sea breeze commencing. Leaving Cunderdin at 2.30 pm at 7000 ft, the conditions looked perfect with large cues stretching all the way to the horizon. My Jantar 2 carrying 180 litres of water ballast was barreling along at 108 knts pulling up under the cues to regain any height loss. I achieved about 80 kms without turning to gain height, and when I did stop, the climb rate was about 11 knts up to 10,000 ft.

I reached Dalwallinu in about 1 hour and 12 minutes with a speed of 136 kph. Bearing in mind that this was into a 50 kmh head wind, the actual speed would be about 180 kph. Having turned for home the conditions were still ideal and I achieved about 220 kph with the wind behind me. Now you've heard the story about the fish that got away. Well this is one of them in that with 90 kms to go, the sea breeze arrived, blowing the trough to the East. My only chance of getting home was to head East back into the trough line. Unfortunately my precious cues were heading east nearly as fast as I could and my flight ended on the Wyalkatchem Airstrip. I think the Australian record for a standard 15 mtr glider is about 180 kph.

So near but so far. But I will go fishing again soon.

Rod Carter



NORTHAM AERO CLUB *Member profile*



The members of the Northam Aero Club, have through the years left their mark and have made themselves known by many achievements, in ballooning, gliding, fixed and rotary wings. The certificates of records on the clubroom's wall are there to testify of the vitality of the Club and of its members. We plan to honour those members and their achievements in *blue sky* and to start with, we are presenting one of our outstanding members, former Club President Claude Meunier.

Claude was born in France and learned to fly in Tahiti in 1960. He became soon a flying Instructor. They were flying a Piper Cub J3 and various Jodels, all tail draggers.

After moving to Mullewa and getting his Australian license, Claude started to build a wood and fabric Jodel, VH-MAA. First flight took place on February 5th, 1985 in Grass Valley. His father, Robert, an ex-designing engineer for Dassault did help a lot. With his Jodel, Claude did win a lot of Air races, Air Rallies and other competitions.

The poor thing does not fly much these days.

Later, in 1990, with a desire for more speed and range, he purchased a V-Tail Bonanza VH-ILC. After fitting tip tanks, he flew several times to New Zealand and New Caledonia.

And in 1993, another big step, he bought a Piper Aerostar 601P VH-TAP and later a more powerful 602/700P, VH-XRD. The Aerostar, was designed by Ted Smith to be a fast aircraft. It was and still is the fastest piston twin ever built. That was the beginning of a series of long flights: New Zealand almost every year, Indonesia and Malaysia, twice Tahiti via Fiji, the Samoa and Rarotonga. Later with some extra tanks in the cabin, Claude flew to Hong Kong via Indonesia and the Philippines. In fact that trip was a sort of a dress rehearsal for a more ambitious flight: a flight around the world. That took place in 1996, flying East via Noumea, Fiji, American Samoa, Kiribati, Hawaii, the US, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Scotland, Europe, Egypt, Bahrain, Oman, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Early this year, Claude, with Club President Robyn Stewart as copilot, flew to Cambodia via Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. The highlight of the flight was the visit of the temples of Angkor Vat in Cambodia.

To be continued.....

Ross Clarke

PARAGLIDING & HANG GLIDING *Hanging Out in the Avon*

The Avon Region has been the focus of inland flying for Perth based pilots for about 30 years. Hang glider pilots were the pioneers of the numerous foot launching sites which include the popular Mt. Bakewell at York and "The Range" on Robin and Karen McKays property outside Toodyay. The younger sport of paragliding commenced in the Avon in the mid-80s and since then its popularity has steadily grown to a point that it can be safely claimed that along with parachutists, participants of both flying disciplines are probably the most prolific repeat visitors to the region. As both sports developed, the option of tow launching out of paddocks was realized and through the generosity of numerous Avon farmers pilots now regularly "pin off" in thermals at around 1000ft and go XC (cross country) at heights up to 10,000ft.

An early WA XC hang gliding record of 290kms set by Ray Chatfield stood for 18 yrs when he launched from Mt Bakewell and flew to Perenjori. That record was finally broken in Nov.'02 when Phil Wainwright tow launched from Wyalkatchem and flew 313 kms to a point North of Canna. State paragliding XC records are now being broken regularly as wing efficiency develops. In January '03 Mike Duffy managed 168kms from Mt. Bakewell to Miling which stood until the following Spring when Justin Post tow launched from Wylie and flew 235 kms to Perenjori, a very respectable distance by national and international standards which suggests the Avon region has plenty more to offer yet.

Julian McPherson

Skydiving

York has been a flurry of skydiving, however the big news was the Australia Day Lotto Skyworks display jumps that were all practiced and perfected at the Skydiving centre in York. We were blessed by the weather gods as we had absolutely beautiful jumping conditions! 47 jumpers, over four loads, performed various forms of skydiving, so there was something for everyone. The feedback from the public, the City of Perth and the skydivers (thank you) was amazing! Well done and a big thank you to everyone, the jumpers, ground crew, pilots and organizers. A special thanks to Stan (as always, a legendary effort), GT, Johnno, Grunter, Stots, Steph, Ian "Skydive Express" Washborne (the man with a face for radio) and the fantastic Dick Stainton for his effort on the water.



BEVERLEY SOARING SOCIETY Gliding

Ebone (Peter Etherton) is our new Australian 4 way champion. Ebone will be off to Croatia to represent Australia. The Shelver's, the team that came west (from South Australia) to train for the Intermediate 4 way, are now national champions. The team had 3 visits with over 150 jumps. Skydive Express jumpers Cameron Rolfe placed 3rd and Cedric Van Den Dorpe 14th at a swoop meet at the Ranch, USA. Fantastic going from the Aussie boys, well deserved congratulations.

Jump Milestones: Cameron Rolfe 5,000 jumps at 26 years old, Mel Burr 2,000 jumps, Lisa Perdichizzi 2,000 jumps and Paul Tait 1,000 jumps.

Not content with organising the State Freefall record, the team of skydivers at Skydive Express are also claiming the state record for night skydiving with a 16-way done on a beautiful full moon Saturday night (pictured below).

John Seman

The Beverley Soaring Society operating aero towed gliders from Beverley Airstrip is pleased with several young recruits from Beverley. Fifteen year old Adam Howell who attends Beverley High School has progressed his training to the stage where he is about to go solo. Gliding is a great challenge for youngsters who can fly solo a \$120,000 gliding aircraft before they gain a drivers licence.

Parents who encourage character development activities for their children could also consider gliding as a great teacher of responsibility, dedication and commitment.

Visitors are welcome to visit our operations on Friday, Saturday or Sunday.

Graeme Wishart

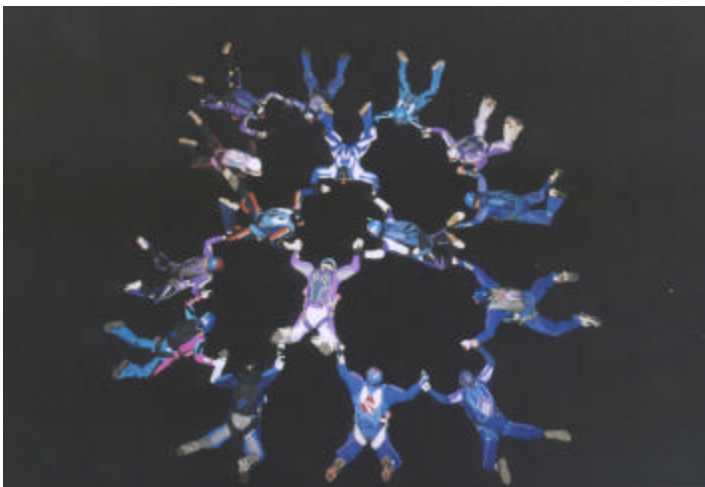
WINDWARD BALLOON ADVENTURES Season 2004

The Ballooning season is just around the corner with the 2004 season commencing on Saturday the 3rd of April running through until Sunday the 28th of November. Autumn is a delightful time for hot air ballooning in the Avon Valley, with cooler nights, still mornings and knowing that the strong winter rains and fronts a couple of months away. Bookings and gift certificates for this season can be made at the office during business hours by calling (08) 9621 2000.

For Hot Air Balloon enthusiasts and spectators the 'Nudie 16th Hot Air Balloon World Championships' will be held at Mildura, Victoria from June 26th until July 3rd 2004. This is a very exciting event as this is the first time the 'World Hot Air Balloon Championships' will be held in Australia. For more information go to the website at: www.2004worldsballoons.com

Check this out! Ballooning and Skydiving in the Avon Valley have recently featured in the February/March edition of the RAC's Magazine "Road Patrol". This article titled "Time for Soft Adventure" can be found in the Short Breaks section.

Damien Hays



LOOK UP! What's On in the Avon Valley

Skydive Express Networking Function: Wednesday 31st March, 3 pm, York, W.A.

Nudie Hot Air Balloon World Championships: 26th June – 3rd July, Mildura, Vic.

State Skydiving Championships: 8-way, 5th - 8th June 2004 (Foundation Day Long Weekend) York, W.A.
4-way, 2nd - 4th October 2004 (Queens Birthday Long Weekend) York, W.A.

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*****Our Next Meeting 6:00 pm 10th March 2004 Wheatbelt Development Commission Northam*****

What's New!

The group's internet site: www.avonaviation.org.au is now on line and ranking (with some search engines and depending on the search) in the top 10. Help Avon Valley tourism and make a link to this site and if you think you should be linked from this site or have any suggestions just email the webmaster (email link on the website).