

Ohakea Training Camp; 24/25 November 2006

After what seems like years of trying, we finally had some almost flyable weather late November and took part in a joint training weekend with NZ Warbirds at RNZAF Ohakea. The event was brilliantly organized by NZAC member Squadron Leader Jim Rankin. Those who attended owe enormous thanks to Jim and his staff for making us welcome and providing wonderful hospitality. Around ten Aerobatic Club pilots participated including newcomer Rob Fry and his amazing Sukhoi Su-29.

Following on from some ordinary drizzly weather on the Friday X-country to NZOH, Saturday turned out to be sunny and clear. One of the reasons it was clear was the 30 knot wind was blowing the cloud away. Not to be put off, Dave Cranna was first into the air in his Zlin Z50. Chief Judge and critiquer, Ray Philpot, called for the usual vertical lines to make sure pilots could get the basics right. Although the line might start in front of Ray, it invariably ended up about ½ a mile downwind such was the freshness of breeze. It has to be said it was not the best conditions for critiquing. However, eventually all pilots had a flight before lunch which is more than we had achieved in the previous two years. During lunch wind strength increased to around 40 knots and a decision was made that all aircraft would require wing-walkers to and from the runway. Our second afternoon flight, Doug Brooker in NUT, was just airborne when the wind reached 50 knots and the decision taken to abandon flying for the day. Doug's landing roll was about 10 metres!

We enjoyed an excellent bar-b-cue on Saturday night and fell in love with the Officers Mess where drinks are "well" priced. Rob Silich shouted the bar for ticking over 1000 hours on his way down to NZOH and Doug shouted for amassing over 1000 hours in NUT; it was possible to get four sheets to the wind without sticking hands in pockets. NUT (only flown by a little old lady on Sundays) will be up for sale next year as Doug takes delivery of his new MX2.

Sunday morning brought the sad news that the Wx was about to pack it in and that we'd better be out of there by 10am if we wanted to get home. So, it was a disappointing end to what would have been a great weekend. We promise a training camp in the near future unhampered by the wrath of the weather gods.

The Tale Of The Lost Screwdriver **by Steve Taylor**

Sunday the 3rd of December was a perfectly flyable day so I went off to Ardmore to do some practice in the Edge. I needed to fuel the aeroplane and proceeded to do so, but I couldn't find the small screwdriver I use to open the fuel cap cover. I've got plenty of screwdrivers so the refueling was done and I completed the preflight. I then turned my attention to finding the missing tool.

I'd been flying on the 1st but didn't need gas so the missing article was not required. Prior to that I'd been in Ohakea for the training camp and the screwdriver was present during that weekend. The screwdriver is kept in a canvas pocket that is stuck to the inside of the turtle deck and it has a zip that I always check as part of the preflight. In

eight years I've never had the zip come undone so I assumed I'd left it undone when I left Ohakea (in a bit of a rush due to weather). I'd flown through a bit of turbulence on the way home to Ardmore and it was possible the screwdriver could have exited the canvas container.

My search began. First the seat was removed and the cockpit area thoroughly checked to no avail. I then removed the clear vision panels at the rear of the aircraft and had a good look inside the fuselage but nothing was found. I've now spent over an hour looking and found nothing so I took a break and mentally retraced my steps since the trip to Ohakea. I could have dropped it on the ramp when I finished refueling in Ohakea or I could have put it in my overnight bag. As I wasn't keen to go back to Ohakea and look for it I decided to go home and check; nothing. I've now successfully wasted most of the day but, as they say in sales, "persistence overcomes resistance" so back to the airfield I go and I decide to take the turtle deck off and have a better look inside the fuselage. It wasn't at all obvious but the screwdriver was eventually found but not where I thought it would be. As seen in the photo, the offending article had managed to wedge itself in the bowels of the fuselage in a position that was ripe for severely impeding the elevator operation.

The frightening thing with this incident was that I'd flown on the 1st with the screwdriver doing its own thing in the back of the aeroplane. You can never be too careful when it comes to this sort of thing and, although I didn't end up going flying on the 3rd, it was a relief to solve the mystery of the missing screwdriver.

