

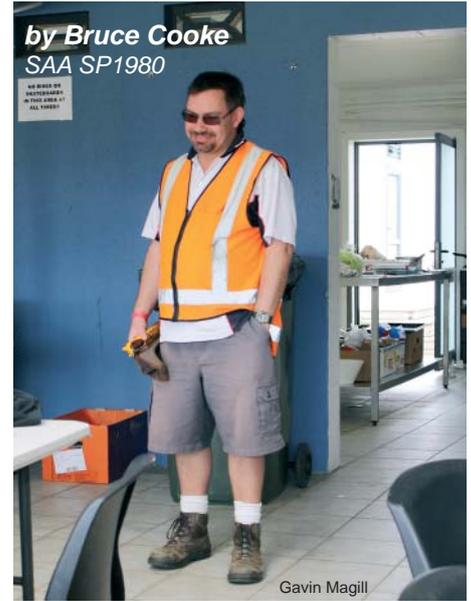
# From afar to Black Sands 2013



Photographs: Grant Finlay, John King and Gavin Magill

Grant Finlay

Bruce Belfield departs homewards in his Canadian Home Rotors Safari.



by Bruce Cooke  
SAA SP1980

Gavin Magill

Bruce Cooke speaks after Sunday lunch.



Grant Finlay

The Waikato District Council's mowing efforts make a very tidy airfield.



John King

Peter Beer has found an appropriate registration.



John King

Cliff Bellingham's work has resulted in a tidy Minicab.



John King

Brian Taylor's Jodel tries to claim a certain British origin and its combat record to date comprises one cow.

FOR NEARLY A DECADE, early November has brought a pilgrimage of small aeroplanes and their occupants to the normally quiet seaside community of Raglan, on the North Island's west coast. The combination of spectacular flying scenery, an excellent venue, an interesting and convenient town and cheerful hospitality continues to draw aviators to the Black Sands Fly-in.

This year marked the ninth time the Waikato Thames Valley Chapter has organised this annual event, and by now experience has produced a streamlined and efficient operation, allowing more time for chapter members to mingle with visitors from all over the country, even as far away as Fairlie.

As always, a few early arrivals crept in on Friday afternoon ahead of the main rush on Saturday morning. The Waikato District Council had mowed the airfield to a specified pattern, presenting a very tidy appearance and making it easy to distinguish the runway and taxiway alignments (although a wobble on one side of the runway was noticeable from the air!).

Raglan's marine microclimate means weather always has a degree of uncertainty, but despite a somewhat chilly and stiff southwesterly breeze and passing squally showers, a good turnout of aircraft arrived by lunchtime on Saturday. Parked aircraft, both fixed and rotary wing, stretched down the entire northern side of the runway, with a number of extras on the south side parking area.

In the headquarters in the



Long-time AAC/AASA stalwarts Don Wilkinson (left) and Alistair McLachlan walk the line.

Raglan Kopua Holiday Park, Bruce MacDonald and his team of kitchen helpers had turned out a hearty meal of mutton and vegetables to be consumed while fluent aeroplane was spoken.

Unfortunately the gusty conditions and erosion from recent storms meant the planned beach flying workshop had to be cancelled this year. Such is the nature of the exposed Tasman coast, but there's always next year.

Although many aircraft headed home after lunch, a good number stayed on in the excellent campground facilities and enjoyed the various eating spots in Raglan town across the footbridge.

The following morning brought better weather and a number of additional arrivals. As always, attendance was less than Saturday's, but a good deal of local flying was carried out.

Plenty of helpers assisted Bill Sisley to dismantle his Europa for return to Katikati by road after he discovered a split fuel tank the previous day. A number of other pilots pitched in to get Bill and his passenger home by complicated means, and other Europa owners worked together to supply a perfect, customised Europa road trailer to take the aeroplane home safely. Such is the community of recreational aviators!

Although numbers were lower than in some previous years, the fly-in was considered a success by all involved. Bookings have already been made for Black Sands 2014, the important 10th anniversary, on 7-9 November 2014. Put this weekend in your diary now as the annual pilgrimage to Raglan is not to be missed!



The early bird catches the best lighting conditions (Sunday morning).



A quick check for fit followed by much dismantling, and Bill Sisley's Europa with split fuel tank is ready for its road trip back to the Bay of Plenty on Gavin Lee's trailer.





John King

Raglan aerodrome has never looked tidier or more attractive.



Grant Finlay

Grant Wisnewski departs in the Stinson 108.



Grant Finlay

Sometimes the simplest colour scheme is the most effective, as with Chris Schoen's RV-7.



John King

Bent wings are still popular...  
... but Trevor Davies flew his Murphy Rebel all the way from Fairlie.



Gavin Magill

Saturday was breezy and ranged from bright sunshine to showers.



John King



Grant Finlay