



# NAAAG



## Northern Adventure Aviation Group

Volume 3 No.05

# Classic Fighters 2011 Omaka

With only a handful confirming their desire to join us on our trip south to Omaka, I finalised plans with Graeme and Margaret Virtue for the use of their son's house. Right down to the wire, we had people opting out and new ones joining in. I had asked several if they would like to come with me as passenger and while I was able to find a passenger for Nooky, until the day before it

*Cape Campbell is always a welcome site after crossing Cook Straight.*

looked like I was going on my own. While visiting with my accountant on Wednesday, she asked about my plans for the weekend and when I told her that I was off to the Airshow at Omaka she suggested that her husband, John, might like to go. A call later that evening had John saying he would love to go and then later that evening I received an email from Harry Gallagher asking if we had room for two more. We were now six in number so it became

*It might be Auld & Crusty but when the guns fire... cover your ears!*

*Fokker Dr. 1 Rittmeister Manfred von Richtofen is nowhere to be seen*

viable to accept the house offer. The major fly in the ointment was the weather factor! While Thursday and Friday were good over the entire country, Saturday and Sunday at Omaka were decidedly wet! If we left for home on Saturday afternoon after the Airshow, then we would run out of daylight. Coupled with Easter weekend we had no guarantee of finding accommodation anywhere





along the route home either. We decided to play it safe, going down Thursday and returning Friday.

The initial plan was to get away from Thames at 9 am and track down the centre of the island to Raetihi, with a stop at Wanganui for lunch. Now we all know about best made plans! Nooky set off at 8.30 am to collect Noel Bailey from Te Kowhai Airfield. No sooner was he in the air and Noel phoned me to say Te Kowhai was in thick fog! I tried to reach Nooky

*Bristol Fighter.*

*V-2 Rocket (Vengeance Weapon 2).*

on the phone but my calls went unanswered. Finally Nooky returned my call saying he was at Raglan. I rang Noel and suggested he drive to Raglan and I would meet them both there. So with a delayed start we finally made it to Wanganui some 30 minutes late. Harry and his passenger, Lloyd Renwick, were waiting for us on arrival. Wanganui was busy with several arrivals and I was lucky enough to be first of a line of five aircraft waiting to get fuel at the pumps. As usual, we enjoyed a good brunch and then went through planning of our arrival procedure for the restricted airspace around the Omaka airfield. Getting into Omaka involved timing our arrival to either the second or fourth quarter of the hour. The other two segments allowed airshow participants to practice their routine. Well, Harry made it in time for the last 15 minute slot but we were just a minute or two too late. We tracked out to Cape Campbell, at the north eastern tip of the South Island, to fill in a few extra minutes.

*Albatross D.Va has its wing mounted radiator filled with water.*

Tracking back via Lake Grassmere (where our salt comes from) we



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joined in line astern to track via White Buffs, the Vernon Works and then the field itself. We were asked to join overhead to allow time for 7 Fokker Triplanes to get airborne. What a spectacular sight to see from the air. Unfortunately I wasn't quick enough to get a photo. On the ground we were guided by a quad bike to our parking. Even with the diversion for fog and extra 15 minutes out to Cape Campbell we had completed the flight in three hours from Thames.

*Affectionately known as the 'Brisfit' or Bristol Fighter.*

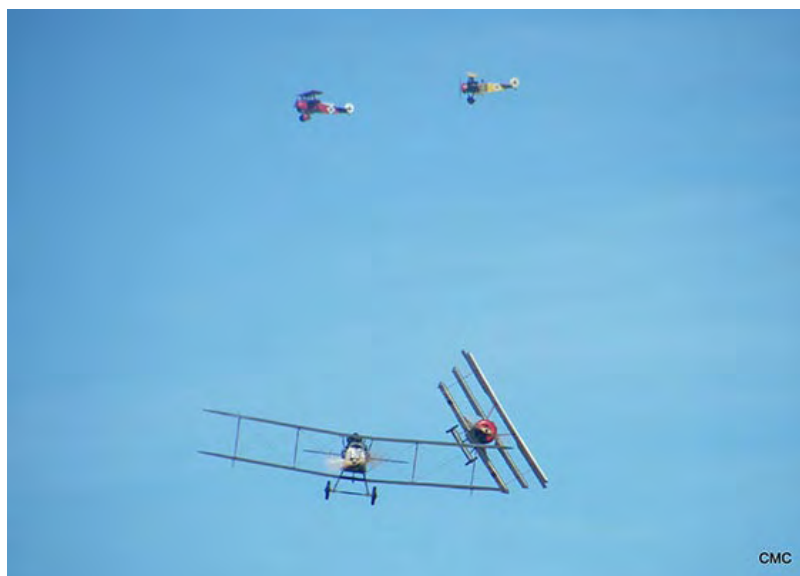
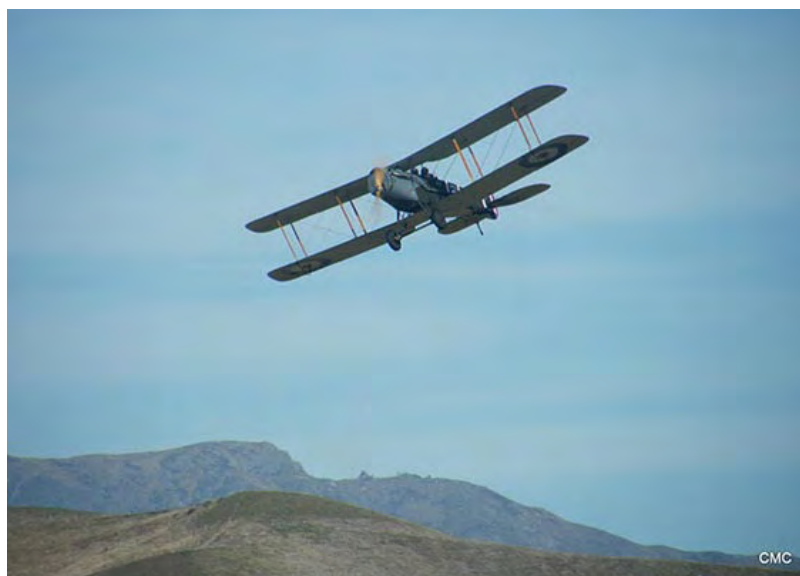
Graeme Virtue arrived shortly after our arrival, having watched us fly close by his house on the last leg into the field. We made the most of our time looking about the exhibits and the frequent air displays. We had the added benefit of seeing the FW 190 fly. This was grounded later in the day with damage to its propeller. We also watched at the completion of his display as he taxied to the pumps and took on 500 litres of fuel in two tanks! I'm glad I am not paying his fuel bill! The other thing of humour was while watching the pictured tank a guy got in and shouted that he was about to

*The dogfights appeared to happen in slow motion.*

*A sight that you probably won't see anywhere else in the world.*

fire the side guns. While I was about 4 meters away and stuck my fingers in my ears, Nooky was about two meters from the muzzle and just stood there. As the guy fired off several rounds I could see that Nooky had gone instantly deaf! He said his ears were still ringing 30 minutes later! Was it loud? You betcha! In future I think we might be quite some distance away!

With a relaxed atmosphere we were allowed to get up close and personal with some aircraft that have not been





seen in the sky in any number for over 90 years. Fokker Triplanes, Bristol Fighter, Albatross, Sopwith Camel and Pup, Triphound along with many second world war aircraft including Spitfire, Mustang, FW-190, P-40, Messerschmitt Me-108 and Corsair. There were many others but I won't list them all here.

With the sun getting low on the horizon and temperatures starting to cool we made our way back to Graeme and Margaret's house.

*Spanning the eras, Fokker Triplanes, Tiger Moth and Spitfire.*

*Master Chef Simon Gault's Thunder Mustang.*

After a welcome cup of coffee Graeme then shuttled us to their son Stephen's house. We got cleaned up ready for tea. About this point I realized I had not packed my jeans so would be limited to the one pair of shorts I was wearing! Fortunately it wasn't too cold and I didn't freeze! For dinner, Graeme and Margaret suggested the Blenheim RSA. Well, this would have to be the nicest RSA I have seen anywhere in the country. It seats over 120 with a separate fine dining area that seats another 100. The carvery has recently served over 1050 meals in one night. I think it must have been close to this figure when we were there as we had to wait for some time to get a table and

*The Mighty P 51-D Mustang*

then the queue at the servery didn't stop until 9 pm! We whiled away the hours before heading back to the house. With more small talk before bed it was soon 10.30. Up early the next morning I got eleven litres of fuel in the container I had with me. I took this out to my plane and added it to the fuel tanks. This now gave me full fuel should I want to go home direct without stops.





Being Easter Friday, nothing much was open so I shuttled our crew down town to MacDonaldis. Perhaps not the best choice for breakfast but it filled a spot. We then collected our gear from the house and made our way back to the airfield. To our surprise they wanted \$60.00 per day for each of the three day event. Normally the practice days are half price. Having planned to be away by 2 pm we didn't think it represented good value for money so watched most of the displays from the fence by the Aviation Heritage museum. Several of our team took advantage of the time to go through the museum. This would have to be one of the best museums anywhere as it involves our infamous Weta Workshop team who have created some excellent backdrops for each of the displayed aircraft. You will just have to see for yourself when you are next visiting Blenheim.

About lunch time we were accosted by a volunteer wanting \$60.00 from us if we were going to stay watching from the fence! This made our minds up that we were now ready to leave. We really didn't want to pay \$60.00 for 2 hours! We made our way to the aircraft park and prepared the planes. We were soon in the air making our way across Cook Straight. I made the most of several photo opportunities of Harry and Nooky's planes.

We tracked to Foxton where we landed at Foxpine Airfield. Jennifer Lester was on hand to welcome us, as has been the tradition at this airport for many years. Nooky and Harry added fuel to their aircraft and we were soon winging our way north again. Harry took a direct route while Nooky and myself headed for Feilding and up through Taihape via the Rangitikei River.

Winds had been light and

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variable making for a pleasant flight. Transiting via the Desert Road corridor the weather ahead suggested we might have made the right decision in leaving early as black clouds formed above us.

*Nooky and Harry formate for photos.*

I remember making comment to Nooky on the radio that I thought that it might be raining within the hour. Just minutes later there were spits of rain on the canopy! Making it past Turangi, black clouds ahead had us wondering if our passage ahead would be blocked. Crossing the north-western shores of Lake Taupo we again had rain on the screen. Conditions were difficult for a time but just prior to reaching the Waikato River the rain cleared and visibility improved. We followed the river north to Lake Karapiro where we branched off to do a quick orbit of Hobbiton to show my passenger. Arriving back at Thames just after 4 pm, we had packed a huge amount into our one night away.

Thanks Graeme and Margaret for organising everything you did and we will look forward to returning in 2013.

Safe flying,

*Cliff McChesney*

*Midle: The crew at Foxpine*

*Bottom: Home via the Rangitikei River*





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