



NAAG

Northern Adventure Aviation Group

Volume 1 No.9

Foxton Trip January 2010

I hope you have all enjoyed a relaxing time over Christmas and the New Year break.

With consistently unsettled weather we have had to delay our planned South Island trip for the moment but that does not mean we have been inactive. For Max Deane, this Christmas has been one of excitement and anticipation. A few weeks back, Max made the commitment to purchase a new

Max Deane (Left) takes delivery of Sport Cruiser ZK MBD from Anton Meier.

Line up of some of the NAAG aircraft all sporting Rotax 912 engines and five of our group now run Airmaster Constant Speed Propellers.

Sport Cruiser. Anton Meier of Aero Sport Aviation worked hard to make it happen and Christmas Eve was to be delivery day, however Murphy's Law intervened and it was not possible. So it was an anxious two day wait before Max took delivery of Sport Cruiser ZK MBD. Max has had a couple of conversion lessons to date and is looking forward to piloting his own aircraft on future NAAG expeditions.

The 6th January 2010 was one of those "out of the box" kinds of days and was begging us to go flying. I had despatched an email to the NAAG a couple of days earlier suggesting a flight to Foxton, but only a few were available. With a plan to visit the Windmill in the town centre I set about finding transport from





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the airfield. I stumbled across the information centre website and realised that Foxton had a lot more to offer than just the Windmill. One of the things I found was a horse drawn tram! Perfect, now if

The assembled team ready for more NAAG adventure.

I could just get that to the airfield that would be rather novel. Jim White was phoned, operator of the tram. He told me providing he could find a big enough area to turn the tram around, he would be happy to collect us. After exploring the possibilities, Jim phoned me back to say he could turn the tram around in the nearby racecourse and pick us up at the end of the airport road. I also found three other attractions on the website that would be worth a visit. Setting off on Wednesday morning I was in the air by 9.53 am. ETA for the group was midday as Jim was organised to meet us at 12.30 pm.

I chose to fly via Mt. Ruapeahu as this is always spectacular at any time of year. Tracking initially via Hobbiton to show my passenger,

Another load of happy travellers arrive back at the Tram Station Cafe.

No NAAG trip would be complete without a stop for food.

Brenda Scott, we made good time with a 5 knot tailwind. Our route took us down the western side of Lake Taupo, but due to cloud we were not able to get above 3,500 feet. I kept my options open as it was doubtful we could even transit via the Desert Road corridor as the summit is close to 4,000 feet. Abeam Turangi I could see the cloud had lifted and we were able to climb a further 1,000 feet to 4,500 feet. I could now see that the Desert Road would be passable even if we couldn't get to the top of





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the mountain. Suddenly there was a break in the cloud and I caught a glimpse of the top of Mt. Ruapehu. I began to climb and initially headed for Mt. Ngauruhoe.

The Crater Lake at Mt. Ruapehu is spilling over the top at present as seen in the small waterfall in the middle of the picture.

I started a right hand orbit a thousand feet below the summit and by the time we reached the eastern slopes we were level with the summit and able to eyeball about 30 keen trampers at the top. I'm sure some of them have some very good footage of me appearing from below the rim and then making a sweeping orbit before heading onwards to Ruapehu.

The Crater Lake on Mt. Ruapehu is full to the top and very turquoise in colour making a striking contrast against the snow. Descending from the summit toward Taihape gave a ground speed of 155 knots and we were soon over the table lands surrounding the Rangitikei River. Branching off at Ohingaiti, we descended into Feilding and the Oroua transit

A series of pulleys and chains delivered the shredded flax from the stripper.

Fibre from just one flax leaf!

lane that leads to Foxton. I had noted before departure that the Met Service was predicting strong winds at Palmerston North and in the Manawatu. We were not disappointed and although turbulence was minimal the landing at Foxton became quite a challenge.

Once on the ground I topped up my tanks and was just moving the plane to a parking spot when Max Deane and Lindsay Brown arrived





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together in Max's new plane. After one aborted landing attempt the second had us with our hearts in our mouths as directional control was lost in the final flare after a gust of wind blew them off course. With them safely out of the plane, we were able to joke about the unconventional arrival. But we were glad that it wasn't more serious!

In favourable winds the 23.5 metre blades produce up to 80 HP.

We made our way to the end of the gravel access road to meet with our transport. The group were 'gob smacked' to see a horse drawn tram as our ride to town, as I had told them I had organised a taxi. If ever you find yourself passing through Foxton take an hour or two to transport yourself back in time with a visit to some of the local attractions and a ride on this beautifully restored old tram.

Our first port of call was the Tram Station Café then a visit to the Flax Stripping Museum. Now I didn't realise the history of flax would be so interesting, but Tony Hunt kept us spell bound for an hour with the history of flax strippers that were set up in the Manawatu region. If you have the time, take a look at this fascinating website to learn more about the history and use of flax and how it aided our New Zealand economy.

<http://www.techhistory.co.nz/OntheLand/Flaxmilling.htm>

Now it was time to move on and look at the windmill. De Molen, a replica Dutch windmill, is the result of a dream by two Dutchmen that had a vision to build an authentic windmill in Foxton. With Tulip grower, Dirk van Til's



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inspiration, the windmill opened to the public in 2003. This is the only one of its type in New Zealand and is a real tribute to the determination and tenacity of these two men. While the NZ building code demanded the use of reinforced concrete for floors and some beams, most of the construction is timber and was built by a dedicated group of volunteers.

Flour is bagged as it arrives from the milling process a floor above. Note the extensive use of timber beams

Our final attraction for the day was the Mavtech audio visual museum. This is housed in an old picture theatre. We had considered passing up the visit here as we needed to be back at the tram station by 3.30 to catch the last ride of the day. Speaking with tram operator Jim White, he said he was happy to wait a further 15 minutes.

Well again we were wowed with a most impressive collection of old cameras, reel to reel tape recorders, broadcasting studios,

Murray Smith entertains us on a Whirlitzer Organ.

Here is just one shelf of old film, some of which still remains classified.

pianos, organs and reel upon reel of old movie film. I cannot describe, or show enough pictures, of what we saw in the MAVTECH museum in the limited space I have to write here. You will need to make a point of visiting the museum yourself and believe me, you will not be disappointed. There were still things that we didn't have a chance to see in Foxton due to time constraints, but it is only a short flight away and I am sure we will return again one day to see





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some of the other fascinating things that the town has to offer.

This visit changed my impression of Foxton entirely. Sadly most of us draw conclusions of the town from negative press regarding

Max Deane and Lindsay Brown approach the Kawhia Harbour

gang related incidents. With it getting late in the day, we boarded the horse drawn tram for the final time and the short ride to the Foxpine Airfield. With our landing fees paid and a bit of extra fuel aboard we were on our way home. The wind had not abated during the day and we pushed into a strong westerly wind for much of the journey until passing New Plymouth. From here we were provided with a smooth flight and stunning views of the coast.

Turning inland at Raglan we set course for home, following the Waikato River for a time north of Huntly.

I sometimes wonder how we will ever top some of our previous trips but we are constantly surprised at the number of fascinating things that this little country of ours holds locked away in small town New Zealand.

Our trip to the South Island is hopefully just around the corner but until we can get a few days of settled weather we will just have to stay with the day trips.

Cliff McChesney



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Cliff's Tech TIP—

Those of you who run the Rotax 912 engine will know that these engines have fixed engine ignition timing. This can often make starting difficult, especially in cold winter months. Having experienced a number of severe kick backs during start up I decided to purchase a Bully Hawk Soft Start Module for my ignition system. With it fitted, I now wish I had installed it years ago. Hot or cold, I can start the motor knowing there will be no harsh shaking and kick back. To describe what the unit does in brief is that while the starter is engaged the soft start unit hold the spark on one ignition system to 4 degrees BTDC allowing the engine to start in a lazy manner. The second ignition is grounded out during the starting process and only re-introduced when the engine is running. The module also retains the 4 degree BTDC advance for 3 – 6 seconds after the starter is released so that in the event of a non start the engine doesn't suddenly kick back. If you want to know more about the benefits of this product, purchasing and installing one of these units on your 912 Rotax, then feel free to contact me.

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