

# Classic Fighters Omaka 2009

Well what a spectacle this was.

For those of us who went to Blenheim, our planning started several weeks before the event. Our major challenge was finding accommodation, as everything in the area was fully booked. Our final answer, we thought, was to book a motel in Foxton and then travel backwards and forwards each day. While it might not seem like a logical thing to do the flight time is under 1 hour each way and the motel is within walking distance of the Foxpine airfield. However, I had contacted a former client of mine that had moved to Blenheim several years back and suggested we meet up. Graham asked where we were staying and I had told him



The Spitfire on a hot lap around the field.

our plight with the lack of places to stay in the area. They then set about trying to find us somewhere. As it was getting close to decision time, I booked the motel at Foxton, figuring this was our only option. At the 11th hour I received an email from Margaret, Graham's wife, to contact her urgently. I phoned and she said "you can have a house right next door to ours that is less than 15 minutes walk from the airfield!" I didn't take much convincing that this was indeed our best offer. To add to the already generous offer, we were told to help ourselves to food and a car that would be there for our use. The weather on Thursday 9 April was showery but the promise of better weather for Friday had us planning our departure for 8am. There would be both my Pulsar and Nookie Robinson's Tecnam Sierra RG leaving from Thames. This made it easy to plan, as we both travel at 120 - 125 knots. Bob Byal was to get airborne at the same time from Matamata in his Storm and we planned to rendezvous at Foxpine for lunch. Even with the difference in airspeeds between the aircraft the distance between us was never greater than 40 miles, which allowed radio contact and the ability to monitor each others' progress. The flight was like silk with less than 2 knots of wind aloft. Tracking via

Turangi and the Desert Road corridor we finally caught up to Bob at the summit of the Dessert Road. The outside temperature was a not too tropical 8 degrees and Bob and his passenger Evan Gray were feeling the effects of the drafts which seem to find their way in to an un-heated cockpit. As for Nookie, myself and my passenger Kevin Moir, the comforts of a heater soon had us warm and toasty in our little offices :-). Mt. Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe looked picturesque as we quickly slipped by and started a gradual decent towards Feilding.

The views along the Rangitikei River would have to be the most stunning anywhere in the country with the many viaducts that cross the river and the large flat table lands on the southern side. Surprisingly for such a glorious morning there was little radio traffic. At over 130 knots indicated, we descended into Feilding for the Oroua transit lane that would lead us to Foxton and the infamous strip of John and Jennifer Lester. John was on hand to welcome us and as often happens a group of aviators had gathered around the tables outside to judge the impending landings. I have suggested to John that he has some score cards made up for the viewers to hold up for the alighting pilots. I guess this may detract some pilots from wanting to go there if they consistently get low scores. In certain wind conditions it can make landing there a bit of a handful to say the least! We had all brought food with us in order to save time en route and after exchanging pleasantries it was time to move on. With our 'pretty' yellow life jackets on, we lined up on runway 27 and headed south along the coast. Passing Paraparamu we set heading for Mana Island, Ohau Point and White Bluffs for a Ponds Arrival into Omaka. As expected we had become separated across Cook Strait so we met up 10 miles from shore where we appointed Bob to fly lead formation and make all radio calls. Omaka can be a difficult



Two Fokker Tri-Planes lined up ready to go.

aerodrome to co-ordinate which runway you are to land on as there are so many vectors and some are right hand as well. With approval to enter we were closely followed by a squadron of Harvards and Yaks that had followed us in from the coast.

Safely on the ground we removed our gear and picketed the aircraft. We spent some time at the Aviation Heritage Museum before phoning Graham and Margaret for a ride to our digs. If ever you find yourself in Blenheim don't miss the opportunity to look through this most wonderful museum of WW1 aircraft.

Arriving at the house it was great to have such wonderful facilities and so handy to both the airfield and Blenheim township. I'm sure we all felt a moment of sympathy for some of the Te Kowhai boys that were Tenting! (Well maybe not) Temperatures the following morning saw some white stuff on the roof of the neighbour's car!!! Nookie and Max Dean seemed happy with the heat

pump in the lounge where they had slept although there were some complaints from Nookie about Max cutting firewood throughout the night :-). Saturday morning dawned

without a cloud in the sky and there was No wind! We made our way to the airfield on foot and took advantage of the two hours before the show to see the static exhibits. The place resembled a miniature version of the National Field days, held at Mystery Creek, near Hamilton with the number of tents and gazebos set up all selling their wares.

The show began with a gaggle of Chipmunks' and then the first of the WW1 aircraft. It is





Sunday morning was another "out of the box" day with "clear blue" in every direction. We prepared the planes for departure and this time we set off to the East to track to Cape Campbell and on to Masterton. Again there was little or no wind and the flight proceeded smoothly across

and scenery that one could take in and we were home again. It always surprises me how much gear can be fitted into a small space in this little Pulsar of mine. Spread out on the



great to see these planes from a bygone era in the skies again and New Zealand may have the largest collection flying in any one place. The smell of castor oil from the Gnome Rotary engines coupled with the staccato sound of the "blipping ignition" is something to behold. With many in period costume and military uniform you felt like you had been transported back in time. While much of the flying programme covered the usual display of Harvard's, Yaks and the Air force's Red Checkers and Iroquois, the air show had a flavour all of its own with the uniqueness that comes with the sound of planes and engines of yesteryear. WW2 was not without

Cook Straight. From Masterton we tracked north over Dannevirke finally touching down at Waipukurau. A short walk from the airfield had us enjoying a sumptuous lunch at the Hatuma Cafe. With bellies full and aircraft topped up we set heading for Puketitiri before crossing the Kaimanawa Range for Rangitaiki. Continuing on via the eastern side of Lake Taupo we followed the Waikato River for a time past Orakei Korako and Lake Ohakuri. A few miles south of Tokoroa I received contact from Dave Kilbourne in his Varieze. We decided to put

ground you would not believe it possible to get it all in.

These little creations we fly are not just aeroplanes but magic carpets that transport us to places beyond our wildest dreams. If you are thinking about learning to fly, building or buying a plane; ask yourself "What are you waiting for?" I've



down at Tokoroa and watch the model jets that were operating here. These are a "must see" if you ever have the chance. If you have a spare \$10,000 - \$15,000 you can buy something that is so realistic that it can be hard to tell the difference from the real thing! With some of the engines producing over 30lb of thrust, these can set you back as much as \$7,000.00! If your flying skills are not up with the speed of the aircraft this could be one very expensive hobby! One of the jets that we saw put through its routine was capable of 320kph. This is nearly 100kph faster than I cruise in the Pulsar! Albeit that it is a fraction of the size and at times blindingly hard to tell which way is up! The



This mounted Allison V-16 found in a shed and restored lightened up the crowd. But first after blowing the hats off those that crowded behind it.



learned in life that the only thing stopping you achieving your dreams is the planning. So start planning now before your life is over and I hear you say "you are too old to start!"

Will we see you on the next adventure?

*Cliff McChesney*  
ZK KFC

representation either with Spitfire, Mustang, Corsair and Kittyhawk all adding to the war bird array.

By 4pm the show was over and we made our way back to our lodgings. Showered, we took ourselves off to a restaurant for a great meal and a chance to catch up with our hosts.

sophistication of these models is amazing too with many having suspension and brakes.

With time marching on, we farewelled our model counterparts and set heading for the final short flight home to Thames. Seven hours of flying and friendship coupled with a fantastic air show and the best weather