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West Auckland Airport, Parakai: The current panorama. Starting at the carpark at the left, is the Pilot Lounge and Airport Office off the deck, then the Hall. In the distance is the Skydive Auckland base by their parachute landing zone with the flags, and on to the Tower and Engineering with the DynAero ZK-WIK parked outside.



Waap Panorama

West Auckland Airport around 1995: The airport, then known as Parakai Airfield, when there was skydiving, flight training in Cessna 152 and 172 aircraft, and Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) operations to Great Barrier NZGB. The runway was limestone, giving an all weather surface though with lime dust during the summer and lime mud during the winter.



West Auckland Airport (then 'Parakai Airfield') mid 1990s

Airport Authority Application: In the 1980s there was no problem having Parakai Airfield on land zoned as 'Rural' with consents to operate as an Airport, as the requirements were similar. But, in the last 30 years the Airport and Rural requirements have moved far apart and its no longer an easy fit.

So we made application to be classed as an Airport Authority. Building of hangars, taxiways etc would be a lot easier operating under the 'Airport' rulebook rather than the 'Rural' rulebook.

Thank you to all those who made submissions to the MoT in support of our application. Nothing further to report yet... we will keep you informed.

Recent visitor to West Auckland: ZK-SLS is a Maule M-5-210C, with large tyres to take advantage of its ability to land slowly on rough surfaces.



ZK-SLS

Safety Committee: The Waap safety committee met recently to review procedures at NZPI to see if any of the risk factors had changed. The committee was satisfied that nothing significant has changed and that the AIP instructions for NZPI are still appropriate for the levels of various types of activity.

Glider camp at Omarama: Continuing the recent South Island aviation theme, this photo is from an Auckland aviator who was assisting at a 'Youth glide' camp at Omarama in the South Island... business houses sponsored a lot of young people the costs of getting their glider 'solo' rating... happy kids seen here celebrating their achievements.



Omarama NZOM, 'Youth glide'

More South Island safari photos...: The West Coast of the South Island has wild weather and only a few harbours. The little town of Charleston was a working port in the early days when the only practical way in or out was by ship. Would have been a brave skipper to take his small sailing ship in here... but they did, typically by attaching lines to ring bolts set into the rocks and winching them in and out.



Port Charleston

Relaxed lifestyle: Karamea. Karamea town is up a long no-exit road from Westport, at the southern end of the Heaphy Track much used by local and overseas hikers to cross from the West Coast of the South

Island to its North Coast near Takaka. Its a relaxed place, no-one comes to Karamea for a high-stress lifestyle. On the side of the road to the Airport (1.5 km out of town) there is a pile of nicely cut firewood free for the taking, and even an axe conveniently supplied for anyone who wants a workout splitting wood... the local equivalent of pumping iron at the gym.



Side of the road near Karamea Airport

Lake Station, NZLE: Lake Station is in the South Island near the Nelson Lakes, with St Arnaud town around 10km away.



ZK-WIK at the 'Terminal One' at Lake Station NZLE.

Lake Station NZLE is the location of the annual 'Brass Monkey Fly In' each winter, when there is often snow on the ground, the airfield being at 1700ft. The 'Brass Monkeys' presumably being those who bring tents and stay overnight on the airfield, rather than going to the excellent alpine style accommodation in St Arnaud.

The terminal and viewing deck are appropriate for the level of activity, which seems to be mainly gliding from the very long runway. Many such airport buildings have a key hidden somewhere for the benefit of aviators in the know, but ZK-WIK's crew couldn't find it. The plane was picketed and the crew hitchhiked into St Arnaud to stay overnight, being dropped back in the morning by an obliging worker from the upmarket hotel.

Wanganui NZWU: On the way back from the South Island, the Dynaero ZK-WIK stopped at Wanganui NZWU, refueling both the humans and plane. There is a good cafe that seems to be open all day. A common VFR route along the West Coast of the North Island takes you past Wanganui when positioning for the transit zone under the Ohakea Military airspace, so it is a convenient place to stop.

Wanganui is quite busy at times with its regular Passenger Transport (RPT) flights, two of which are on the apron in this photo. It also has a lot of training flights, with the flying school that used to operate from Feilding having moved to Wanganui. The overseas students mostly fly Piper Tomahawks, one of which is taxiing out here.

Heading North from here, its possible to straight line to Raglan up the Wanganui River and to the West of the volcanoes, or continue round the coast at low altitude if the weather doesn't allow the inland route.



ZK-WIK at Wanganui.

Whangarei Heads: Flying between Manaia and Whangarei Heads, heading south past the Oil Refinery at Marsden Point. This is a scenic area, and nice to visit with a stop for lunch at the excellent cafe at Whangarei Airport... or to visit the Whangarei Flying Club at their base at the Western end of the hangar row.

There are a few points to be aware of in this area:

- A flight training area for Whangarei NZWR is just north of here at Ocean Beach (just behind the aircraft in this photo).
- There is a restricted area of around 1 nm centred on the refinery, so go around rather than over it... quite apart from the legalities, could spoil your day if you were overhead when they had some kind of emergency and needed to flare off the product under high pressure in the retorts.
- Fishing kites are often flown off the long beach south of the refinery (Ruakaka and Waipu beaches), and not always below the 500ft limit. So if there is an offshore wind, its best to fly down on the landward side... or quite a bit higher and close to the beach. Kites have been seen well above and out to sea of an aircraft flying at 600ft down this beach.



*Whangarei Heads. Mainiaia Mountain to the right and Marsden Point Oil Refinery on the point in the centre.
Whangarei Heads mountain just off the picture to the left.*

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