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Summer 2020 Newsletter

Future Airport Possibilities: The West Auckland Airport Company Ltd is interested in working with an equity partner to develop West Auckland Airport Parakai into a Regional Airport to serve the 400,000 people for whom it would be the nearest Domestic Airport. It would have a larger population catchment than any other Regional Airport… e.g. larger than the successful Regionals at Tauranga, Nelson or Hawkes Bay.

For more information and a detailed discussion paper, click on Strategic Intentions

To show the possibilities, a photo of Nelson Airport is superimposed on the area at the same scale. Note that the Airport could be developed without disturbing the existing light aircraft runway or any houses.

Photo: West Auckland Airport, Parakai – with Nelson Airport superimposed to scale.

Expanding West Auckland Airport Parakai fleet: Family portrait: The West Auckland Airport's 'corporate jet' ZK-WIK, is below flanked by the two Tecnams that are on-line and available for flight instruction, and for hire by approved pilots. With the ZK-ECL being a low wing Tecnam 'Golf', and ZK-CDL being a high wing 'Echo' there is a choice of configuration. ECL is available for hire by all pilots approved for CDL, once they have a 'Golf' rating, which all the instructors are able to issue.

ZK-CDL was getting so busy that it has been pushing up against the practical utilisation ceiling, and so had become hard to book, especially at weekends. With both CDL and ECL sharing the load it is a lot easier to book one of these Tecnams now and November was the busiest month we've had for aircraft hire.

To free up the weekends for those who are working during the week, the midweek discount of $10 / hour continues to apply for flights on Tuesday - Wednesday - Thursday.

Note: ZK-WIK is used for Airport business and is not available for hire or instruction.

West Auckland Airport Parakai fleet, November 2020. ZK-ECL, ZK-WIK and ZK-CDL

Both ZK-ECL and ZK-CDL are 'on-line' and available for hire and instruction

Weather Station back again. After multiple failed attempts to set up a reliable weather station, it finally looks as though we have one that does work consistently to show the weather conditions at the Airport... developed by Hangar Owner George Richards. Just click on the 'Airport Weather' link at the top LH corner of the West Auckland Airport Parakai website, www.WestAucklandAirport.co.nz to see current and past weather, and camera to see fog / cloudbase to the South.

Fuel Types for Wet Wings. If your aircraft has composite 'wet wings' (where a fuel tank is created by sealing off part of the wing, rather than a separate tank), then the choice of fuel is important. The oil companies will meet the stated Octane and RON, but that doesn't mean a particular blend is suitable for every aircraft.

The aircraft designer will have made sure that all components are compatible with the straight chain hydrocarbons that make up the bulk of petrol, but they might not have allowed for ethanol. If the chemical design was done before ethanol blends were available, it’s possible that those blends could partly dissolve some sealers, fuel pipes, or the matrix in composite wet structures. A slightly more subtle possibility is that the aromatics (cyclic hydrocarbons) that are used instead of lead to boost the octane in modern Mogas, also dissolve things differently, so theoretically this could give a similar effect.

For metal wing aircraft like the Tecnams in the West Auckland fleet, less of a problem... aluminium isn't going to dissolve in any kind of fuel. It’s possible that the seals and fuel pipes could be affected leading to slow leaks, which would become obvious in plenty of time. And similarly, a composite tank that is separate from the structure will develop leaks gradually if its affected. But gradual weakening is not acceptable on a structural component like a wing.

For this reason, the Mogas we use at the airport avoids known ethanol blends, and the Airport's all composite 'Corporate Jet' ZK-WIK uses Mogas or AvGas in its separate centre tank, but for its wet wing tanks it uses old fashioned AvGas only.

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Refuelling Platform for High Wing aircraft: The refuelling platform provides a steady base for refuelling ZK-CDL and other high wing planes. It's well padded, but planes are fragile so approach carefully :).

The platform is kept at the refuelling point. Those who bring their own fuel in cans are welcome to bring them to the fuel apron and use the platform to put the fuel on board, which is better than refuelling inside a hangar and avoids carrying the cans so far from the carpark.

Pull back on the long handle to raise onto the wheels, release to lower.

First solo... for both the pilot and aircraft: Emma Lockie after her first solo, which was flown in the newly purchased Tecnam Golf ZK-ECL. Congratulations Emma, and instructor Kevin :)

Emma Lockie in ZK-ECL

Skydive Auckland 'Supreme Winner' Westpac Business Awards 2020: Skydive Auckland has won both the Marketing Category and the Supreme Winner of the 2020 Westpac Business Awards. And so deserved... tourism operations that previously depended on overseas tourists (like skydiving) have been badly affected by Covid and many have closed down.

Meanwhile, Skydive Auckland have got to work and been so successful promoting their services to the local market, that they have won an award. Congratulations Guys, a real achievement, especially now :) *"When the going gets tough, the tough get going"*

The SDA team 'scrubbed up' for the occasion. Well done guys

Aimm, ADSB and Airside Personnel Tracker: Our 'Aimm' airport intelligent movement monitoring computerised system now handles ADSB as well as Voice (which continues to be important, a 'Cockpit Voice Recorder' for airports in event of an incident), and some of our client airports have it doing the whole job of recording Takeoffs and Landings untouched by human hands, accurately and economically.

During the lockdown we also developed a new 'Airside Safety Tracker' for people who go airside, showing their position on a screen for the Safety Officer so it is immediately obvious if the fencing contactor decides to go for a walk down the runway.

Link to Airside Safety Tracking Personnel video

https://www.youtube.com/embed/LZnSM4rKRc8

West Auckland Airport Parakai to Greymouth and back: The DynAero ZK-WIK did a delivery of a whole-aircraft parachute to Greymouth NZGM. Considering the terrain around the North and West of the South Island, it's easy to see why the purchaser wanted the chute as a 'Plan B' in case Plan A didn't work out, and comforting to have one in WIK over that terrain.

The straight line route from West Auckland to Greymouth goes out to sea and doesn't make landfall until some 270 nautical miles later on the West Coast of the South island. A long way out to sea with a single engine, which can be avoided by taking a little longer, so the route was over land to near Kapiti Airport NZPP, then across Cook St at its narrow point and over the Alps to Greymouth.

Once clear of Woodburn NZWB control, a climb to 8500ft was possible (VFR 'Nose' altitudes: North Odd South Even thousands + 500), and the air was a lot smoother up there. Not quite so good was the fact that there was a 40 knot headwind... but better plugging into a smooth headwind than being hammered down in the valleys.

With its turbo ZK-WIK doesn't get tired at altitude and while the Indicated Air Speed (IAS) stayed the same, it picked up another 15 knots True Air Speed (TAS) in the thin air.

Southern Alps on the NZPP to NZGM leg at 8500ft

On the way back at 9500ft, the air was just as smooth at altitude so no need to hold the speed down to the VNO. There is controlled airspace at that altitude in the Cook Strait area, so being passed through Nelson control and Wellington control at 9500ft made for easy flying and Cook Strait went by quickly with the benefit of a 30 knot tailwind.

Down into Wanganui for a coffee and fuel, and back to West Auckland past the volcanoes in the central North Island. Nice flights with a good scenery and a chance for the DynAero to stretch its legs at altitude.

Alps near Lake Station airfield from 9500ft. Some deep valleys amongst the mountains.

Interesting Gyro flight last Summer… Destination: Mt Taranaki Crater Lake: Rod Willis writes of his Gyro flight from West Auckland to Dannevirke, and Mt Taranaki...

After attending another successful annual gyrocopter fly-in at Dannevirke my friend Kevin Soper and I were keen to take a more scenic route back to home base at Parakai. Flying around Mt Taranaki was something I'd always wanted to do and ideally to take a peek into the crater lake at 8,300ft.

Dannevirke Gyrocopter Fly-in

After leaving Dannevirke we landed at Hawera late Sunday afternoon to refuel, assess the weather conditions and get some local advice about flying near the mountain. Light winds and few clouds made it perfect conditions for the trip. My Calidus gyrocopter with its 914 Rotax has a good climb rate when one up but not so good when fully loaded. So we proceeded to unloaded everything that was not essential for the flight; lift jackets, spare oil, tool kit, etc but we hung onto the PLB!

Hawera Aerodrome with Mt Taranaki in the Distance

Climb out from Hawera

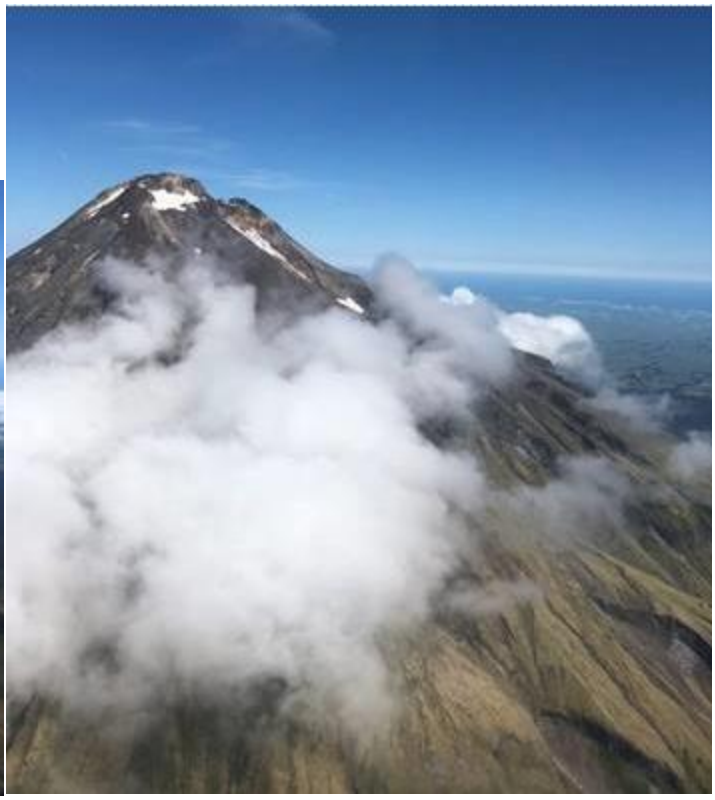
Looking East from 4,500ft

Taking off from Hawera we headed for the mountain. Engine set to continuous maximum power and at the Calidus's best climb rate speed of 50knots and began the long climb. We sat back and enjoyed the scenery as the mountain grew larger.

We discovered there is actually a second peak, Pouakai 4,600ft to the west main cone, with a large flat wetland area between it and the main cone, which has a river draining from the swamp. We had plenty of time to take in all the features as we performed figure eights as we continued to climb.

The upper surface of the cloud on the downwind side of the mountain was around 6,000ft which was a handy datum to visually asses our climb rate – very slow! We finally achieved a 1000ft clearance above the cloud and were able to safely circumnavigate the cone. The shear scree slopes were incredible to see close up and gave us an appreciation of how difficult a climb it would be on foot.

It just happened that the get Great Northern Race, comprised of over 22 fixed wing aircraft from North Shore were arriving at Hawera during our ascent. I enjoyed making a radio call "Hawera traffic gyrocopter MZM 3-miles to the east of Mt Taranaki at 7,000ft and climbing slowly…". On returning to Hawera we got a few congratulations from the North Shore guys very surprised that a gyro could achieve such a lofty altitude.



Looking East from 7,000ft

After a continuous climb of one hour and forty minutes my little gyrocopter had reached her limit but she'd done very well to achieve 7,300ft. We called it a day, closed the throttle and began a shallow dive back towards Hawera. It's an unusual experience in a gyro descending down thru 5,000ft in an eerie near silence.

Flight Path Track

Talking to the locals we were extremely lucky to have a day were the cone was not shrouded in cloud and light winds. We didn't get to see the crater lake but getting so close to such an iconic mountain was a fantastic experience.

Rod Willis

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