

Tokoroa: The end of the Fly-in Season

Contributed by Bruce Belfield

THE TOKOROA Fly-in has traditionally been held on the last day of daylight saving to catch the last of the 'long' weekends. This was not to be in 2010 though. With Easter being earlier and to avoid clashing with other events, we chose to use Saturday 17th April. It was a lovely warm clear day on Friday and the weatherman promised a fairly good weekend. The V8's were on in Hamilton so the weather had to good! We had a few aircraft turn up on Friday afternoon.

Richard Martin and Mark Malone landed in the Mooney M20C, then the two Mosquito helicopters of Oskar Stielau and Blair Hollands and also a few of the gyro guys arrived as well. Blair was quick to get his machine in the air and was soon enjoying exploring the area around the Tokoroa Airfield in near perfect conditions.

The Tokoroa theme is 'anything goes' and one thing we encourage in particular is for you to enjoy yourself. Camping is not a problem - Richard enjoys that option every year including the frost on Saturday morning. Those who didn't want to camp out spent the night in our clubrooms and got our ugly-duckling fire cranking to keep the place warm.

A frost in Tokoroa nearly always promises a good day but the weather decided to change its mind. It ended up getting quite cold and the cloud came down to about 2000 feet (remembering that Tokoroa is at 1200 feet). Fortunately it started to clear at about 1pm and warm up as well.

A total of 30 aircraft were counted and some may not have come due to the weather although the poor conditions did seem to be localised around Tokoroa. Phill Hooker brought his Bell 47 over the Kaimai's and was kept busy for quite some time giving rides around Tokoroa for people who wanted a Bell Helicopter experience.

It was good to see aircraft turn up from north of Auckland, Whakatane, Tauranga and all around. RV's, Gyro's and the little FW 190 from Tauranga put a display on

for locals. There was a bbq on at lunch time with the usual steak sandwiches and sausages with onions with plenty of tea and coffee.

Generally, we don't advertise this day to the public but with Hooks bringing over the Bell 47, the local radio announcer "Curly" from Classic Hits pumped in the advertising. I heard it a couple of times and it sounded great.



Scenes from the Tokoroa Fly-in on 17 April. Pictures by Bruce Cooke and Bruce Simpson.

Hooks suggested the week before while I was nursing a bad knee, that we should do some beer bottle opening with the helicopters (as per the recent NZ Heli Champs at Whitianga). I didn't really feel in the zone to be doing a job like that but thought it would add to the events of the day. So I quickly got down to making a rig to hold half a dozen beer bottles (I had to beef it up with some modifications after using it - nothing a bit of HT9000 won't fix) and tied it down to an old bbq table. A few of us managed to get a couple off and some were better at it and got more off. (This is a lot harder than it looks.) I still reckon Phill's opener is for elephant beer ie. rather larger bottles than normal!

Murray Belfield took the guys that wanted to do some extra flying on a flight to Murray Matuschka's Farm about 10mins south of Tokoroa and on a direct track to Taupo. He has a small uphill strip and the cross wind did make it an interesting landing. He has a deer farm as well as a few different animals such as Zebra, Thar etc. There is an old Hughes 500 and Nomad there. Both are replicas made out of junk and look good at the entranceway to an old

woolshed which he uses as a conference centre. In one level he has a huge amount of deer heads on the wall (at least 100) and then on the next level hundreds of different firearms as well. He makes a lot of his revenue out of school trips and also builds life size animals for clients all over the world out of fiberglass and netting. It was worth the trip if you went and if you didn't - there is always next year.

I took the heli boys on a tiki-tour through some of our scenic forestry valleys and gorges and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It appears they don't have a lot of that sort of terrain in the big smoke. I also had a lot of fun in the SAFARI, even getting to chase a bunch of deer (if only we had a rifle!).

Gary Skudder and I had cranked up the Pakeha hangi (steamer) during the day and the food was ready for the masses on Saturday night. Tokoroa Aero Club encourages you to stay over and enjoy our hospitality and hopefully share some good

stories. They do seem to get better as the night goes on. Those who did stay enjoyed the kindly donated food consisting of a feed of venison cutlets, shrimps (thanks Richard) as an entrée and then some lovely wild pork and steamed vegetables (thanks Gary), all washed down with ample refreshments. It was a good night and I look forward to the next one.

The next day, we were greeted with perfect weather and no frost. Richard and Mark went off for a flight to Taupo and I took the Mosquito boys for another flick around the hills. A few other planes turned up on Sunday - an RV and the Tiger Moth of John Pheasant (this is one fine looking machine). Most visitors packed up about midday with goodbyes exchanged and everyone looking forward to next year.

I am hoping to have a helicopter meet here at some stage soon for pilots to enjoy exploring the country we have around this area. I'd like to see what support I have and if it looks like having a good turnout I will start looking at dates. Winter flying is superb around here; clear days and lots of lift. How about it? email: brucenik@xtra.co.nz or phone: 027 696 5159.