

FK-Lightplanes in NZ

REPRESENTED in New Zealand by Ron Donaldson of Polaris Aircraft at Matamata, FK-Lightplanes offer three models of aircraft covering much of the light aviation spectrum. Designed in Germany, manufactured in Poland, and exported to more than 23 countries, the aircraft are particularly popular in Europe. In 2009, readers of *Aerokurier*, one of the larger aviation magazines in Europe, voted FK-Lightplanes first place in the Best Ultralight Brand category ahead of 47 competitors.

The company was formed in 1959 by Otto Funk. Current aircraft include the FK-9 Mark IV and ELA versions, the FK-12 Comet biplane and the FK-14 Polaris. In New Zealand currently are a FK-9 Mark IV which is on line at the RNZAF Aviation Sports Club at Whenuapai undertaking towing duties, and a FK-14 Polaris domiciled at Matamata which Ron has been using as a demonstrator and has on the market for sale. Ron is quite keen to import a Comet in the near future and is seeking expressions of interest in this model.

The FK-9 Mark IV and ELA

The FK-9 is a high wing aircraft having a composite fuselage which includes a tubular steel cockpit frame designed for crash protection. Wings are of carbon fibre construction and the tailplane is aluminium. The FK-9 offers up to 800km of range and cruise speeds of over 200km/hr. Stall begins at 64km/hr. Up until recently, power options have been either the Rotax 912 or 912-S. Purchasers can now also select a turbocharged Mercedes M160 smart car engine of 600cc offering 102hp which uses a claimed 9 litres of fuel per hour.

Another option is folding wings. These require no special tools and just one person to fold the wings flush against the fuselage in barely 5 minutes, providing for economical storage and also offering the ability to tow the aircraft behind a car.

Cockpit doors are large and operated by gas struts and the cabin is roomy at 42" wide. Seat backs are adjustable and there is good luggage room available which is accessible from an external door.

The FK-9 is available in either nose or tail wheel configurations and can also be fitted with a factory tow hook.

A new FK-9 version designated the

ELA is now available which offers full glass cockpit options, a new engine cowl, winglets to improve efficiency and stall handling, new window panels and more.

Glider towing at Whenuapai

The FK-9 Mk4 which is on sole towing duties at the RNZAF Aviation Sports Club at Whenuapai has been well received by the



FK-9



FK-12



FK-14

club. Tow pilots who have flown it so far have all been impressed, with the aircraft showing a 200-300 fpm improvement in climb against their previous Cessna 172 tow plane, when towing the twin Astir. A report in the February 2011 issue of *Soaring NZ* (the *Gliding NZ* magazine), noted that "out of position work proved to be no big deal, though acquiring a big bight in the rope while in the 'I cannot release' position gave a big yaw which was easily brought under control with minimal loss of speed... Crosswinds have proven not to be an issue... and fuel consumption looks to be half that of the 172... It does not have

the performance of a 235 Pawnee, though it will give a 180hp version a run for its money." That's not bad for an LSA that can also be registered as a microlight.

The FK-12 Comet

A lightweight, two seat sport biplane, the FK-12 Comet boasts a variety of innovative features. It has a laminar wing with flaperons and claims the fastest power to speed ratio of all its competitors. The mechanical flaperon system gives the Comet high agility combined with a low landing speed, offering manageable handling for average pilots with some taildragger experience.

The cockpit can quickly be converted between open, closed, or front covered with the rear having an open or bubble canopy. As with the FK-9, an option exists to fold the wings back, and power is by either Rotax 912 or 912-S. The aircraft has demonstrated ultimate loads of +16 and -7.5G, cruises at around 180km/hr with a stall of 65km/hr and a Vne of 220km/hr. This aircraft is also available as a fast build kitset.

The FK-14 Polaris

The FK-14 Polaris is marketed as a fast cruiser. It has a one piece canopy lifted by gas struts. Again powered by the Rotax 912 or 912-S (Ron's has the 912-S), the FK-14 cruises at up to 250km/hr and climbs at up to 1500fpm. As with the FK-9, stall begins at 64km/hr.

The high cruise speed is facilitated in part by an electric Fowler flap system which allows wing extension of up to 20%. As with the FK-9, construction is of composite materials with a tubular steel cockpit frame for crash protection. The wing structure is a carbon/nomex sandwich. The fuel tank is situated outside of designed

crumple zones and again there is plenty of storage space for luggage. Some of this space on Ron's FK-14 though has been taken with a ballistic recovery chute which is a factory option for both the FK-9 and FK-14. The FK-14 is also available in either of nose or tail wheel configurations.

For more information

The FK-9 and FK-14 can both be registered in either of the microlight or LSA categories. Ron welcomes all enquiries and says that test flights can easily be arranged. Contact Ron on 027 333 3831, or email: donro@kinect.co.nz