



Middle Earth Flying School expands and converts to Tecnam

MIDDLE Earth Flying School at Matamata is a small training operation on a significant growth curve. With an emphasis on quality of training rather than quantity of students, the company has set in place a growth plan to expand without losing this focus.

New aircraft on the way

The company's present fleet consists of an Airtourer T4 and a PA-28 Cherokee. It is owned and operated by David Giles and Malcolm Reynolds, who had considered acquiring an IFR single in order to offer CPL instrument ratings, then went down the track of investigating "cheaper" light twins. However by the time engineering issues had been dealt to with such aircraft, the costs involved made the proposition uneconomic.

Then the Tecnam P2006T arrived in New Zealand. It was an aircraft they hadn't considered until the demo flight which answered all their needs, and David says that after flying the Tecnam, they couldn't look past it.

Middle Earth's new P2006T is due to arrive in a couple of months. A Redbird Simulator to go with it is pending and there is also a plan in place to purchase a new Tecnam P2008 which will replace the school's Cherokee that is now on the market for sale. The Airtourer (which has recently been re-powered to Lycoming T4 specification) will remain in the fleet.

The new Twin and Simulator are the first to come on line in the Waikato area and both will also be made available for use by other training organisations if required.

This expansion of aircraft is accompanied by an expansion of infrastructure. A new hangar complex and training facility is now under development, for which David says that contractors are about to be appointed.

Middle Earth Instructors and Students

David Giles' career began as an aircraft mechanic with Air New Zealand. After acquiring a CPL, Instrument and Instructor Ratings, he instructed at the Northern Wairoa Aero Club before spending 20 years in England, ultimately flying 757's for Monarch Airlines. He then returned to NZ and held the role of Chief Pilot for Freedom Air. Presently contracting overseas, David says that retirement is looming and that "having enjoyed a good life from it", he is very motivated to give something back to aviation.

Malcolm Reynolds began his career at Waikato Aero Club, then going on to fly turbo props for Eagle for five years. After heading farming for family and lifestyle reasons, he returned to aviation about four years ago becoming CFI for the Waitomo Aero Club.

David and Malcolm are ably supported by part time Instructor Tracey Gore. Tracey first flew solo at the Walsh School when she was 16. She went on to train at Waikato Aero Club and has since returned to Walsh as an instructor as well as being available to support Middle Earth students when required.

The team at Middle Earth are keen to recruit local self-funded students seeking personalised PPL, CPL and MEIR training, and particularly those wanting an instrument rating to go with their CPL. Outside of the local market which is limited due to the closed shop of student loan funding, the company will look to recruit overseas students. In support of this aspect of the venture, efforts are presently underway to obtain NZQA and Part 141 accreditation. David points out that although growth in the industry (especially in New Zealand) has been flat, there are a lot of airline pilots reaching retirement age in the next five years and that demand for pilots is set to grow accordingly.

A fresh training approach

David and Malcolm's training philosophy is much more about depth of learning and about "teaching flying" rather than "teaching the exam". Without

the constraint of teaching theory separately to secure student funding, their approach is to integrate flying and theory together so that relevancy is demonstrated and understood throughout the course. Malcolm says they aim to teach from the big picture to the little one. In other words, students are taught how to "think aviation" and how to feel and observe what is happening, before too much emphasis is placed on finer detail such as instruments and flying the numbers. David says that training is very hands on for the student, with Middle Earth instructors offering guidance and encouragement rather than continuous demonstrations, as well as

being there to make sure nothing goes wrong beyond the point of recovery.

As the training operation grows, David and Malcolm are keen to foster a culture that helps students to participate in the aviation environment and to observe and absorb the experience of others around them.

Middle Earth advantages

With the present growth plans taking shape, the School offers several noteworthy advantages in terms of location, instructors, and aircraft.

Matamata can be considered an ideal training field. It is uncontrolled and has low traffic, meaning that all flying time can be focused and very cost efficient. The airfield is large and offers a good amount of "aviation freedom", with ideal training terrain nearby. When required, controlled airspace is just a moment away at either Hamilton or Tauranga.

As Instructors, David and Malcolm offer airline and jet career experience having "been there and done it as a job ourselves". David points out that their vested interests are no longer in their own careers, but in those of their students.

And with a new Tecnam Twin on the way and a P2008 purchase pending, students can enjoy the privilege of flying in modern, new aircraft at very reasonable rates.

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Malcolm Reynolds and David Giles



Due for delivery in May is a brand new Tecnam P2006T.