

The 2011 Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School

NAMED to commemorate pioneer New Zealand aviators Leo and Vivian Walsh and held at Matamata since its inception, the Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School is now in its 45th year and can proudly claim to have issued more than 1250 ab-initio (from the beginning) students with their Scout Wings. Many of these return to the school in later years to advance their training and to assist as staff, while more than 20% have continued on to professional aviation careers. Many more retain flying as a leisure activity.

Run by SCOUTS New Zealand, the school does give preference to Scout and Guide enrolments up until the end of August each year, with remaining places after then open to anyone. In 2011, a total of 68 students arrived from all over New Zealand, this year ranging from Balclutha to Kerikeri.

The school began in January 1967 when the Scout Association of New Zealand held the first Venturer Scout Flying School. The school was the idea of the late George Arkley, a National Scout Commissioner and member of the Royal Aeronautical Society (RAeS). With the success of the first school, the NZ Division of the RAeS offered (through NZ Aeronautical Trusts Limited – a Trust Company funded and controlled by the Division) to provide a financial subsidy and the services of members to assist in maintaining the professional standards of the school.

The Training Programme

Students at the school are fully immersed in focused and effective aviation instruction for two weeks (7-21 January). There is a great sense of community about the event, and when combined with social and other activities, CFI Mark Woodhouse rightly describes the course as being more like Outward Bound with wings, than a typical flight training programme.

Most students arrive with no experience. They enter a structured programme consisting of massed air exercise lessons and pre flight briefs with instructors that are conventional to 'industry standards'.

Having seen the school and looked over the exercises and comprehensive manuals, it is fair to say that best practice standards are adopted and in some cases, probably being set. There is no doubt that this is a most professional introduction to aviation for the many young people present.

As well as 8 hours of flying, the theory training includes courses on: Theory

employers. It is the same for all other staff. In fact, the Walsh operation has no salary budget at all. The school's primary expense is aircraft hire, though this is often made available to the school at favourable rates.

Venturer and Ranger students pay an ab-initio fee of \$1390 (\$1590 for others) which covers all camp fees and a minimum of 8 hours flying. Several High Schools throughout the country also receive Rotary sponsorship for a limited number of applicants.

The substantial level of community and corporate support received by the school is a good indication of the quality of the Walsh operation. More than 50 organisations and individuals provide sponsorship ranging from operational

support to quite substantial flying scholarships, cash grants and student prizes. In particular these include NZ Aeronautical Trusts Limited, Airways Corporation of NZ Limited, the Civil Aviation Authority, Air New Zealand, the NZ Division of the Royal Aeronautical Society, RNZAF, Aviation Services Limited, Walsh Flying School Trust, and Rotary International.

Location, Airspace, and Staff

At Matamata since the Walsh's inception, the field is a perfect location for training. Airspace for the two weeks is divided into four quadrants, allowing for training to commence immediately on leaving the field.

For the duration of the school, a 3 mile radius around Matamata airfield becomes controlled airspace below 3500 feet, from 6am to ECT (and two nights to midnight), all courtesy of an Airways mobile tower and a control staff of 6. The team endeavours not to impose on locals – in fact the school provides a good opportunity for local 'patch' pilots to participate in a controlled airspace environment. By monitoring Matamata's MBZ frequency, the controllers also serve the important role of warning itinerant pilots of the airspace designation if they are not as current with NOTAMS as they perhaps should be.

Airways staff also provide the Aviation Law and FRTO briefings for students as well as encouraging students to visit the



The official Walsh Memorial Scout Flying School Team Photo 2011.

of Flight, Air Traffic Control, Aviation Engineering, Rescue, Meteorology, Aviation Human Factors, and Aviation Careers.

Training flights usually last about 40 minutes. When ready, students are assessed for their first solo and then sent out for a circuit on their own, usually within 7 to 10 hours of time in their logbook. In 2011 all ab-initio students achieved their first solo, many with very little time beyond the School minimum of 7 hours.

Returning students are also welcomed, often having accumulated some 10 to 30 hours towards their PPL during the year. Night flying opportunities are made available on a couple of evenings all the way to near midnight and this year four of the most experienced Walsh students were also each given six hours training towards an aerobatic rating. This generous gesture came via the RNZAF, who based two CT4E Airtrainers and two Pilot Training Squadron Instructors on camp for a week.

Funding and Payments

Many of the staff are long term volunteers to the school. CFI Mark Woodhouse for example, attended his 18th Walsh this year, the last 14 of those as CFI; and there are many others who have accumulated the best part of a year or more of voluntary Walsh service.

The majority of Instructors volunteer their time, or are sponsored by their



All the key theory subjects are taught and comprehensive training manuals are provided.



A flypast of an RNZAF B-757 was flown by Wing Commander Chris Clark and ex-Walsh student Flying Officer Ben Woodhouse.



Aircraft cleaning duties easily became fun in the hot weather.



A traditional first solo dunking is an unavoidable experience at the Walsh.



Bianca Barbarich-Bacher was awarded the Walsh Trophy and \$1000 flying award from Mr Allen Williams for "Best all round ab-initio student in Flying, Exam & Leadership" The Trophy was presented by Captain Neville Hay, Director of New Zealand Aeronautical Trusts Ltd.



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tower to see how control operations work.

In 2011 the Walsh was comprised of 60 staff. 28 of these were Instructors, including 4 A-Cats and 15 B-Cats.

The school endeavours to make junior instructor positions available to ex Walsh students and there were a couple who undertook their first dual instruction this year. It may sound like there are plenty but the school is always keen to hear from Instructors who may be keen to help out, especially those holding B-cat ratings.

The Walsh Community

As much as it is about flying, the school is about teamwork, participation, and respect for each other and the event itself. A tent city is created on the airfield and students are responsible for all aspects of the camp during their stay. These include meals, facilities, cleaning, aircraft care, etc.

Family Day on Sunday saw more than 110 visitors arrive to observe the operation and enjoy a bbq as well as aircraft handling demonstrations. Though not prohibited, visitors at other times are discouraged in order that students keep their focus.

The school also has a strong social side including a half day trip to Mount Maunganui, trips to hot pools, table tennis, volleyball, and of course the swimming pool. Returning students also attend a dinner in Matamata.

Next Year

The 46th Walsh will be held in January 2012. There is no doubt that this is a fine way to introduce young people to flying in a very professional environment. Wise candidates should be considering their applications now.

The CFI Viewpoint

Contributed by Mark Woodhouse

WHILE THE Walsh is certainly a major aviation training operation, and one which we all try very hard to run professionally, its appeal is much more subtle.

In 24 hours we transform the usually sleepy Matamata aerodrome into the busiest pilot training location in the country, which at its peak has more daily movements than the average day at Van Nuys, the busiest general aviation airfield in the world.

Then, after 12 and a half days we pack up and go home. Sometimes I think we need our heads read! It only works safely because of the dedicated professionalism of the instructors and support staff.

So why do we do it? Well, there is certainly the camaraderie of spending time with others of like interest. And a chance to imbibe a little and to tell a few stories, tall and short. Many good friendships have begun at the Walsh. There is always the opportunity to learn from others, and often an opportunity to fly interesting aircraft that you don't see every day.

But I don't think any of these is the real reason most come back year after year. It is the look in the eye of the students. It

is such a buzz to see them grow so much in such a short time. We give the students back to their parents and guardians as different people. Young adults with a bit of self belief.

If I can solo an aircraft, I can do anything! The Walsh certainly had a profoundly positive affect on my two sons, both of whom went on to careers in aviation.

It feels good to do something for others. Most of us are where

we are today as the result of the help of others, with little chance we will be in a position to pay them back directly, so we pay it forward.

All of the flying Instructors and most of the support staff are volunteers, which I sometimes think makes their management just a little different. They are there because they want to be. If they can't do their job well, it's probably because we haven't done ours well.

Simply put, it is a privilege to serve. I s'pose I'm a lifer.

Woody the CFI

By the way, stay away from the edge of the sky, for there lurks the Taniwha.



Walsh CFI Mark Woodhouse in his B777 office.

My time at The Walsh

Contributed by ab-initio student Averil Read

Averil Read is a typical example of an enthusiastic Walsh student. Aged 16, she is in Year 13 at Pakuranga College and was able to use her Walsh experience as a residential project for a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Hillary Award. Averil says she is intrigued by flight and has always enjoyed looking at her late Grandpa Ron Oliver's flying things and wondering what it would have been like to fly with him. Ron flew Catalina Dumbo missions in the RNZAF during WW II, later joining TEAL as a Ground Engineer and then Flight Engineer. Averil writes:

FOR AS long as I can remember I have had two dreams – to sail around the world and to learn to fly. I went to Walsh to tick one of these off my list but I also learnt how to use a deep fryer, having to cook 120 pieces of fish and 20kg of chips for dinner one night.



Averil Read is already looking forward to next year's Walsh.

At Walsh we were divided into Flights, a group of 16 who became your 'family'. On the first night we sat awkwardly in a circle saying our names, where we were from and how much flying we had done (for me only an introductory flight three years ago). By the end of the school everyone was great friends.

Kitchen, cleaning and other tasks were rotated between each Flight. 'Duty Flight' involved waking at 0515 to ready the planes for the first flight. I liked this duty as, although it is cold, it is quite nice up at that time and we got to get extra sleep before breakfast at 0800. And we found ways to make duties fun. On the last morning cleaning the toilet block turned into a water fight...

But Walsh is about the flying. Most days I flew just after breakfast and again either just before or just after dinner. It was amazing, in just over a week, to go from having pretty much no idea what all the dials and knobs were let alone when to use them, to completing circuits with minimal input from my Instructor and finally him getting out of the plane and I was sitting lined up for my first solo. It was the most amazing feeling that I will never forget when part way around the circuit it sunk in that I was flying solo! Back on the ground and paperwork filled out I got the traditional buckets of water tipped over me and hugs from my friends. The day I went solo was also the day of the ab-initio (first year students) exam. One of the most annoying things at Walsh was studying for that exam. It's so hard to concentrate with a Harvard doing aerobatics above you. But we all managed to pass and go solo, so every ab-initio was presented with their Scout wings at the Wings Parade on the final night.

It was really sad seeing the tent 'city' collapse, the planes take off for the final time and the control tower turn back into a truck. Only 48 weeks until next year's school!

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