

Making Autogyros More Accessible

IN THE LAST few years there has been a worldwide surge of interest in autogyro flying. This has extended all the way from grass roots to the NASA sponsored CarterCopter programme in the United States. New manufacturers of recreational autogyros have appeared in several locations around the world and many of these new generation aircraft can be said to be of very reputable design and manufacture. Several aircraft types are now available for sale and import in New Zealand, fully built and ready to fly.

Available in New Zealand

Tony Unwin from Gyrate is based at Tauranga and is the importer and distributor of two such 'new generation' autogyros. Both are two place machines, the partially enclosed MT-03 Eagle coming from Germany and the fully enclosed Xenon from Poland. Other proven designs such as the Magni from Italy and Dominator from the United States are also available fully assembled and ready to fly in New Zealand.

Tony notes that until fairly recently, the only way that enthusiasts could legally fly an autogyro in many countries was to build one. This of course limited the number of people who could fly, since not everyone has the time or ability to spend hundreds of hours building a machine. "With the

aircraft availability and regulations that we have now, those people who just want to train, buy a machine and fly are now able to do so – and this brings the gyro into line with mainstream light aviation." Before becoming a NZ resident, Tony ran a gyro flying school in the UK, something he now does here in Tauranga. He says that in the UK, "new clubs are springing



John Rochfort flying his Xenon autogyro south of Dannevirke during the NZ Autogyro Association annual fly-in in January this year.

up and established microlight centres are expanding to offer autogyro training."

Involving Flying Clubs

Thus it is an exciting time for the sport and those involved in it. Tony sees no reason for New Zealand microlight clubs not to follow the lead of other countries and become involved in the gyro scene themselves. He is behind a movement to

spread the word and aircraft throughout the country. Tony is working to encourage flying clubs, both established and new, to consider the benefits of broadening their appeal by "adding one of the safest and most capable forms of flying machine to their inventory".

As Tony says "the proven reliability from recent trips around the NZ coast in six days or around Australia in less than two weeks may be a small step for man, but are a giant leap for demonstrating the capability of these aircraft as practical transport" – as well as being a marvelous toy for patch flying on the weekends. Planning to take the 'around NZ / around Oz' idea a giant leap further (possibly by flying from one to the other) is Taupo based pilot Sid Lane. See the picture and caption at right.

Tony sees several opportunities for making the sport more mainstream in New Zealand. The first is to be able

to introduce potential gyro pilots to flying clubs who have embraced this type of aircraft and made it available alongside the rest of their fleet. It would be fair to say that there is plenty of interest in the sport from the general public but a major stumbling block is simply access to aircraft and training.

"The aircraft access problem can perhaps be fixed by opportunities for syndication or club ownership in the same way that so many fixed wing aircraft are. There is no reason not to centralise advertising and franchise the product", Tony says.

Making training accessible

In regards to training, there are presently only a couple of active flying schools in the country. Tony with Gyrate at Tauranga, and Lloyd Heslop offering training in Nelson. Lloyd too sees opportunities for advancing the sport and while he considers Nelson as being an ideal place for learning to fly in terms of consistent weather and a variety of terrain, he also can't see why more clubs around the country don't embrace the sport and make it more accessible to their existing and future members. Existing microlight instructors who are interested in trying an autogyro are invited to contact Tony or Lloyd to discuss questions and thoughts about promoting the sport.

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Gyros are indeed becoming a more familiar sight in New Zealand skies and their increasing exposure at busy airports such as Tauranga is great for the sport and for encouraging its acceptance as mainstream rather than fringe aviation. Tony and Lloyd deserve every success for their efforts.

For more information

Contact Tony Unwin on 0800 359 249, email: fly@gyrate.co.nz, visit www.gyrate.co.nz or contact Lloyd Heslop on 027 442 4500, email: j.aberhart@heslops.co.nz



Tony Unwin piloting a MT-03 Eagle gyro. Well known New Zealand gyro pilot Sid Lane recently flew an Eagle gyro around the entire NZ coast in six days. Sid's gyro is presently being fitted out with additional fuel capacity and navigation aids. Rumour has it that the aircraft will be made capable of a trans Tasman flight. More about that in a future issue of KiwiFlyer.

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Membership of our Club is open to everyone who is interested in autogyros and only costs \$35 per year.

For more information, check the website or call Karen on (06) 327 8876

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