

THIRD NEW ZEALAND GLIDING CHAMPIONSHIPS

The third New Zealand Gliding Championships were held in the McKenzie Basin at Omarama, South Island, early in January. The area is a system of glacial valleys with steep, high ranges of hills on both sides. These valleys are as wide as 20 miles in places, and covered with a rough tussock grass which hides some rather frightening boulders. Because of this stoney situation, the briefings included descriptions of local top-dressing airstrips.

Eighteen gliders were entered including four Skylark 4's, three K-6's, two K-7's and four of the various types of Dart. Five days of competition were possible out of the eight days of the championships' period and everything from good wave to very weak thermals were experienced.

As seems to be the tendency these days, there were a majority of closed-circuit tasks. Scoring was on a modified version of the Wallington System.

FIRST CONTEST DAY—SATURDAY 8th JANUARY

An anticyclone covered the Tasman Sea giving blue skies with scattered cumulus marking moderate to strong thermals. The task was twice around a 74.5-kilometer (46.4-mile) triangle. First launch was taken by Gerald Westenra (Skylark 4) who was also first home in the fastest time, two hrs. 13 min. Second was Peter Heginbotham (K-6) with two hours 29 min., followed by Keith Wakeman (K-6). Heginbotham was the only pilot to use the newly granted cloud flying regulations. He entered cloud for a short climb to 8600 feet before his final glide. (Under the new regulations gliders are allowed to fly in cloud when flight information is received by radio. However the area around Omarama had been cleared for cloud flying without the need for radio notification.)

	Speed	Points
1. G. Westenra	41.7 mph	1279
2. P. Heginbotham	37.1 mph	978
3. K. Wakeman	32.1 mph	802

SECOND CONTEST DAY—MONDAY 10th

High upper winds (110 knots at 30,000 ft) indicated possible wave in the higher levels with moderate thermals lower down. The task set by John Messervy was a 124-km. (77-mile) triangle. Fastest time was set up by Gordon Hookings (Skylark 4) in two hours four mins. He found wave on the first leg and turned the first turning point at well over 10,000 ft. Both Westenra and Heginbotham used only thermals to complete the course.

1. G. Hookings	37.1 mph	1176
2. G. Westenra	31.9 mph	875
3. P. Heginbotham	29.4 mph	699

Cumulative: Westenra, 2154; Heginboth, 1677; Hookings 1341.

THIRD CONTEST DAY—TUESDAY 11th

With a cold front approaching and obvious wave indications a long distance task was probable. At an

early briefing John Messervy confirmed this with the task pilot selected goal. Some solid thinking went into these goal declarations. A 30% bonus hung on their achievement. Launches were to 2000 ft. on to the ridge just downward of the gliding site and very soon most of the gliders were well on the way. It took some time to establish in wave and in fact Heginbotham was down to about 300 ft. at one stage before getting away eventually to 24,000 ft. Several others also were quite low and one or two had to land.

The day's winner turned out to be Errol Carr (Dart 15) who reached his goal at Picton 492.5 km. (306 miles) away, just missing his third Diamond. However, Picton was as far as he could go without crossing Cook Strait or landing in an irretrievable area. Keith Wakeman (K-6) was second, reaching his goal at Tua Marina 474.5 km. (294 miles). The first eight placings all exceeded 300 km. (186 miles). With his flight Errol Carr can claim both the New Zealand Goal and Distance records.

E. Carr	306 miles	1176
K. Wakeman	294 miles	875
G. Hookings	259 miles	699

Cumulative: Carr, 2100; Wakeman, 2064; Hookings, 1950.

The next day was of course a rest day so a wonderful barbecue was held that night on the banks of the Ahuriri River. The long-distance retrieves arrived back during the day. Errol Carr's crew spent 33 hours in the car towing the trailer about 800 miles in all.

FOURTH CONTEST DAY—THURSDAY 13th

A ridge of high pressure was centered over Omarama. Strong thermals were forecast but certainly did not eventuate, in fact some pilots would swear that there were none at all. No one completed the task, an out-and-return to Lake Tekapo Hotel—134 km. (83 miles). Only 5 competitors scored. Peter Heginbotham managed to push his K-6 37 km. (23 miles) to take first place with 778 points.

1. P. Heginbotham	778
2. E. Williamson	477
3. I. Evans	185

Rain on the next day meant that there was only one more day of competition to go, with only 515 points between the first and second places. This was becoming a very close contest.

FINAL DAY—SATURDAY 15th JANUARY

The ridge of high pressure was still over New Zealand. The task was twice around a 62-km. triangle. Once again very stable conditions meant that thermals were few and far between. The condition, as it turned out, were simply too weak to make it a contest day. So the new New Zealand Champion, the winner of the Open, Open Handicap and Standard Class championships was Peter Heginbotham. And another victory for the K-6.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Championships was notable for the large contingent from Germany with the following types: one Austria SH, one Austria SHK, four Phoebus, and two Zugvogels.

From England, Alf Warminger and Anne Burns arrived to compete and we had competitors as well from Southern Rhodesia and Zambia. The meet was keenly contested and resulted in a narrow win for Rudi Lind-