



Waikerie Gliding Club News January 2026

Well, one would think that there might not be a lot of news, but things have been happening!

Albeit there has been no flying at the club for some time, with the exception of the two Arcus that have been flying recently, club members have indeed been keeping the flying fires flickering.

Firstly, the LS4 has been doing a lot of flying at the hands of a very promising Adelaide Soaring Club junior, Max Scutchings who has rented the glider for the summer. He placed 4th at the Victorian State Championships and 3rd at the South Australian Championships. He is absolutely enamoured by the glider, enjoying every minute and doing it proud on our behalf. He is hopeful of perhaps flying 200hrs over this soaring season.



The LS4 is in careful hands and here it is in the hangar at Gawler.

John Spronk has been flying his ASW20 at Mildura off the winch.

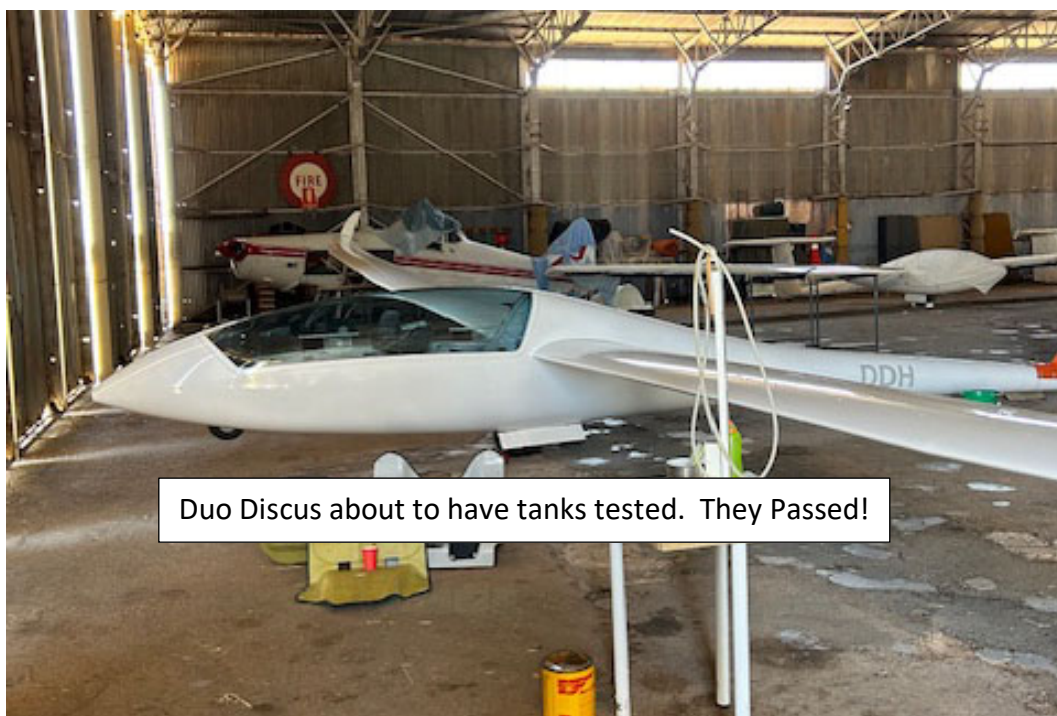
Adam Stott has purchased a Hornet and built a hangar at Gawler for mid-week flying

Bill Mudge, Craig Vinall and David Pietsch have flown their biennial flight checks at Gawler.

Adam Stott (Hornet) , Sid Nankivell (LS3) and David Pietsch (JS1) flew at the State Contest at Gawler. Adam placed 4th, despite taking the last day off David 5th (starting his engine twice! Yes twice. One of them was glide from 7800ft agl to an engine start at 1300 ft agl encountering just two small bubbles along the way which died, resulted in the only 'outlanding' of the day and a score to match. Ah..... "such is life"!!) and Sid 8th who didn't fly one day and along with most of the field called the last day off.



Over the last few days, Craig Vinall, John Ridge and John Spronk have been conducting the Annual Inspections on the club fleet to have them ready for the return to operations. The Duo and K21 have new maintenance releases and John's 20 also. Craig's 33 is having its 5 yearly engine overhaul conducted by Grant in the workshop and should be ready to fly shortly. The Discus is yet to be done – any volunteers?



Duo Discus about to have tanks tested. They Passed!

John Ridge has treated the corrosion on the outside of the AVGAS Fuel Tank and applied the paint.



John Ridge hard at work on the AVGAS tank

Craig will be off to Tocumwal to get a bit of currency in his AS33 prior to being joined by his wife Lesley, John Spronk with his ASW20 and John Ridge at the Horsham for the Horsham week.



As has been reported elsewhere the club decided to re-spar the tug in light of the mis-drilled holes in VH-WGC, its immediate grounding and the uncertainties around CASA responses and eventual inspection program. Thus far it appears that the decision has been validated, based upon the experience of other Pawnee operators. Apart from significantly increasing the life of the aircraft, it also will avoid expensive NDT testing for a number of years.

Sincere thanks to all the club members and friends who have donated over \$55,000 towards the tug wing rebuild. And likely there is more to come.

As members are aware we have been privileged for Brad Edwards and Edwards Aviation to take on the re-sparring and re-fabricing work. This has been extraordinary kind of Brad as he has his team replace both spars in each wing and he personally is well on the way to re-fabricing the first wing. We cannot say how thankful we are that Brad has taken this task on. Our Pawnee is the second Pawnee that Brad has taken on and he has at least two more to go, including his own. He is an absolute champion!!!!

The wings were transported to Armidale in the K21 trailer via Bathurst where the new spars were picked up. Four-day trip for Craig and Spronky!



Fabric on underside of right wing



Right wing turned over and being prepared for upper surface fabric.

Initially it appeared that the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had ignored the Argentinian Airworthiness Directive (AD), but quite recently the FAA have followed a similar path to CASA, with a similar onerous and expensive inspection regime proposed. The Soaring Society of America is now challenging the proposed FAA AD leaning heavily on the work done in Australia by Anthony Smith who has been at the forefront of this issue. It will be interesting to see where the FAA go on this one. Whilst this might result in an outcome that is much more 'lenient' regarding inspections in the USA, CASA would still have to adopt any changes. Notwithstanding any outcome here, it is far too late for us. The club had to move ahead last year and based upon input from Anthony and the timeframes involved re sparring was considered the most reliable option.

Having recently spoken to Brad, who is also competing in the National Championships starting next week, in his JS3, the right wing is covered and, with a bit more stitching of the upper fabric, is ready for painting. The left wing will be out of the jig very soon and will be ready for fabricing once the first wing is painted. Brad reports that the left wing trailing edge had to be replaced and fortunately we sent across the necessary parts which we (with Mark Morgan's help) had found stored in the loft of the igloo hangar. (Gotta be lucky sometimes!) Then the wings will need to be brought back and fitted to WGC using the gas filled wing struts borrowed from HZY, the annual inspection carried out and returned to service. Once the aircraft is returned to service no spar inspections will be required for 5 years and, if an AMOC being prepared for re-sparred aircraft is accepted by CASA, wing inspections will be delayed 'indefinitely'.

Of note, the Adelaide Soaring Club (ASC) had generously promised us the use of one of their Pawnees until WGC was back in the air and on occasion it appeared imminent, but ASC were stymied at every turn and have had only one tug available for themselves for the entire period. Thank you, ASC.

HZY is unserviceable due the wing spar issue for the foreseeable future. A small number of tows were conducted using a Dimona but it was considered a failure with very poor take off performance and engine overheating issues.

There was some thought of conducting winch operations but with the ongoing possibility of the ASC tug 'just around the corner' it wasn't pursued. Further, the complications of arranging a winch, mixed operations with General Aviation, reconfiguring the airfield and for those of us with long memories 900ft winch launches did not appear to be appealing. Of course a powerful winch compared with the old side valve V8's and light weight cable would give a much better result.



So we were left with no launching capability.

The club infrastructure is being looked after with our caretakers, Tony & Georgina Magnoli doing some excellent work.



Extra paving has been laid to the washing line and caravan park, the pads and lawns maintained and weeds under control. Thankfully due to the dry weather, there's little or no calthrop on the pads. The caretakers have also replaced all the flywire screens on the clubhouse, installed a rotating beacon on the tractor along with hi-vis vests for safety when working on the airfield. The caretakers caravan position has been enhanced with a concrete slab, pergola and a rainwater connection. This will make it more attractive to the next couple. See photo's below.



Our finances continue to take a pounding, and these are some of the things that had to be addressed lately -

The members kitchen HWS had to be flushed, the bar fridge needed re-gassing, the hangar outside LED light replaced and repairs to the nose of the ASK21. The building insurance was a shock, coming in at approx. \$8600 – a 21% increase. Bill is contacting the Council to establish the reason. A fire extinguisher inspection required update of several units. Regular costs include electricity, water, internet, waste charges and trailer registrations. Cost of three Form 2 kits was over \$800.

Additionally, club members contributed in keeping the infrastructure up to speed. One of the Weather Cameras was replaced after a lightning strike. (But now we seem to have lost the East facing camera.). The clubhouse radio has been made serviceable including a new antenna, all yet to be fitted.

When we're back in operation, there will be many members who will need BFR's and instructors are due for a Flight Instructors Refresher Course (FIRC). Bill has been hounded by many people who have flight vouchers, so these will need to be attended to soon. We will be welcoming a new member, Bernard LeRiche who owns a Std Cirrus (GOO) which is already here in its trailer and will eventually be hangared in our hangar.

Finally...

Our immediate aim and energies have been the Pawnee wings. This is obviously a priority. However, once the wings are returned and the Pawnee is back in the air, the focus will shift to getting members back in the air. We are hoping members will respond accordingly to support the club. Next, we will need to decide on the program for this year and the next flying season. Orange Week will be run again in November, and it might be possible to run some maintenance courses in the off season. Hopefully, we will be able to run the SAGA coaching week after Christmas and bid for the Stage Championships. Finally, we will be doing as much training as possible.

This whole episode in the Club's history has been very frustrating and annoying. However, we have had few options and appreciate everyone's patience and assistance in our fundraising. There is now at least some light at the end of the tunnel.

Regards,

Waikerie Gliding Club Committee