

Tales from the Coromandel (Part One)

Well, I seem to recall telling you about my last oil change on the Pelican about a year ago and here I am again back in oil change mode in Martinborough, 1 year later and another 50 hrs flown by!

But there is more to it than that. Adventuring throughout New Zealand has highlighted to me what a spectacular country we live in and how enjoyable it is to be able to explore it so well in a Pelican. You all need to get out there while we have great weather.

Our summer has been one to remember since we have never seen flying weather like this for so long. Arriving in Whitianga, to see 12 Debenham Drive materialising from dream to reality, has been an adventure in itself.

Garth, a 30 year Whiti man, likes to tell a yarn or two so here is one that captured my imagination....

" **The expense of a Whiti boy invited to an out of town wedding** was something hard to cope with in days gone by. It was a major expense when getting ready for the big event. Why? Not only had to get a good shirt to go with the board shorts but had to register the car, get a WOF and fuel it up!"

You can see why it was an enjoyable time exploring Whiti and surrounds. After tying down beside Buster's place, I wandered off to pay landing fees and have a coffee at the new Warbirds Cafe, meeting up with Cathy and hear some of the background to this new venture. Then to pay landing fees while I relaxed with a coffee in the sun on her deck with the aromas of fresh food from the ovens waffling past me. A quick catch up with Marilyn in the Aero Club office had me up to date before taking a walk into Seafari Motel with my wheelie bag trailing along behind. Beaut day for a walk.

I found Glen reading a flying story on the back steps, in the shade (what else would he be reading?), learning that he had been off work for a month with an ankle replacement and was frustratedly waiting for it to repair. After a short catchup and guidance to our room, he offered Pelican accommodation in a hangar near the Aero Club, as it was free till the weekend. A relaxed start to the holiday and a short afternoon of showers next day with fine conditions once again returning had this option taken up the following day. Return of fine weather had me champing at the bit to get flying again so Anne and I took off to explore the area between Whiti, Optito Bay, Matarangi, New Chums Beach, Coromandel town and airstrip before a return to Whiti. Blue sky and calm air made this an enjoyable beginning.

Nopera Fly in April 2013

Hopewell Lodge has offered a BBQ fly in towards the end of April for any interested flyers....

Just letting you know that I have Friday 25 to Sunday 27 April OFF in anticipation of being able to get a suitable pattern to negotiate Cook Strait. I plan to be there on 25th and stay at Hopewell Lodge if weather suits. We should be able to get at least one day at Hopewell within a 3 day pattern. Hope you can make it from wherever you are....an email or contact by phone to me will give me an idea of who may be able to get there so I can coordinate with Hopewell Lodge and the team.

<http://www.hopewell.co.nz/>

After a couple of days on the building site with our builders from Hamilton and local team from Whitianga, we took the opportunity presented by good weather and flew to Waihi Beach for a quick catchup with Gavin as he had just arrived from Whakatane and was to leave the next day for Auckland. This time he was without his Europa and travelling by car. Anne and I both enjoyed a sunny warm afternoon with Gavin and a look around Waihi Beach after a late lunch at the Flip'n Bear Cafe at the airport, arriving back at Whiti just as the sun was going over the mountains to the west.

Chris and Wendy arrived for their adventure weekend on Friday evening, with kayak aboard, so we were ready for a good weekend catchup. This started next day with a ferry trip planned to Cooks Beach landing, walk, then Pelican ride. Chris and I were to kayak to Flaxmill Bay to catchup for the walk but the outgoing tide against an easterly swell, next morning, had us chickening out of this plan, so it was walking for all of us instead. Finding the recently painted Tsunami markings along the walk reminded, us of the exposure NZ has to this event. Fine morning walk and a quick coffee before return to Whiti.

This little adventure was captured back at Eggsentric Cafe, in Flaxmill Bay, with a walk through this arty cafe to feel the ambience of its surrounds among the trees. "Beer?" Chris offered at 11am!Aahha.... 'Another "3 mountains and an antipasto" day out is it?'just like our old days of exploring in Auckland.... "Righto Chris, make mine a Coro Gold" (no flying today then! Who cares....too nice to miss this adventure) Of course this led to a very relaxed day, walking the Whitianga Hill back to base afterwards, kayaking around the marina in calmer waters during the arvo and an very convivial evening of eating and imbibing fine wine(wine that we enjoyed), with the flying sortie deferred till the next day.



A calm sunny morning greeted us, perfect for Pelicaning. Chris was first in the queue, to experience the joy of squeezing himself into a tight enough package to get into the Pelican and after a quick "briefing" and warm up, we were away to Coromandel, off runway 22, following the reverse flight-seeing path that Anne and I had taken earlier in the week.....Landing back at Whiti it was decided not to take Wendy as the air was not as smooth as it had appeared before first flight, so tying the Pelican down again we were entertained by an impromptu Airshow of Titan Mustang, Glassair flybys and a Tiger Moth performing aerobatics above us. "Is this normal?" Chris enquired. "Yep" I replied (for a weekend in Whiti anyway). A relaxed car trip and coffee at Kuaotunu, car tiki tour to Opito Bay, filled in the rest of the time before they headed back to Auckland. Check this out http://youtu.be/qu2IA5EM9_U for a fine laid back time in Coromandel/Whitianga!

A most enjoyable and relaxing catchup after many years apart since our move to Wellington.

Other building related events took place in the days following, with a car trip to Hamilton, (overnight in Raglan), to view an RV7 project at John's place, overnight Thames, before a return to Whiti had me





once again wanting to get airborne.

Next adventurer in the Pelican was Glen, who being grounded with his ankle repair, had been unable to get airborne in his RV7A so was keen to go flying again. The 1 hour Pelican flight seeing adventure took place in due course but only after getting Glen aboard with even more of a squeeze than it had been with Chris! Why? I learned that not only did Glen have a bionic ankle but bionic knees as well that didn't bend too well! "This building lark is a bit hard on you Glen" "Combination of that, hunting the Coromandel ranges and the 24 marathons probably didn't help, Wal!"

We traversed the beautiful Coromandels in that late afternoon sun and flew a low level sortie along the coast from Colville to Coromandel town. Spectacular in the low sun conditions with all the bays, buildings and sights magically illuminated. A quick right hand down wind at Coro airstrip (a spare \$10 landing fee burning a hole in my pocket) had us on the ground there to answer Glen's question "what's the surface like there now?"suitable....



Glen regaled me with stories of hunting and exploring the mountains behind Whiti, giving tips on how to get up to Castle Mountain, where to park, the day trek to Thames via the Pinnacles and flew us around Castle Mountain en route to Whiti, to take in the view. Magnificent!.....

Your tiki tour guide

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