

49th Multi-class Nationals – Dalby - October 2010

There's an old adage that "the best practice for a competition is a competition", or so that authoritative journal, the Chinchilla News, recently quoted in an interview with Lars. So it was good to have a trial run for the nationals at the annual Gliding Queensland Easter competition. We went through all the daily procedures of weather, task setting, gridding order, reflight area, self launching procedure, finishing and so the list goes on.

This year we had an added challenge. Chinchilla airport is now at the centre of the rapidly developing gas industry on the western Darling Downs. We have had many competitions at Chinchilla over the last 13 years but this year for the first time we had a charter Dornier 228 scheduled to arrive and depart night and morning on each business day.

The morning 8.00 am arrival and 8.40 am departure didn't cause any problems. However the afternoon 3.30 pm arrival and 4.10 pm departure was always going to be challenging. As everyone who has flown in Queensland knows, you need to be home by 4.00 or at least safely on final glide. And by the time you get around to early April, the days are even shorter. The thought of 40 gliders finishing as a twin turbo-prop tried to take off or land, requiring the entire area within the gable markers to be clear of gliders, was not good.

From the outset on Thursday, the last business day before the public holidays, we had a long talk to the two pilots about what a gliding competition was all about. Needless to say it was a bit of an eye-opener for them.

The competition operations team gave the issue a fair bit of thought over the next few days and talked it over with some of the experienced competition pilots. We came up with a few ideas on what to do, most of which centred on using the cross strip as the main landing area.

We give it a trial run on a day when the Dornier wasn't coming in. Most of the gliders landed on the cross strip and with one or two exceptions all achieved reasonable separation. Not surprisingly there were a few things that didn't work and we amended the procedures accordingly.

The Tuesday after Easter the Dornier arrived in the morning and the pilots advised that the afternoon charter had been cancelled. That made Tuesday easy.

Come Wednesday and it was the real thing. We set the tasks and finishing procedures accordingly and with the good will of everyone it all went very

smoothly. Thursday was not quite as successful, but Friday went without a hitch and we farewelled the Dornier for the last time.

It was interesting to see how we could adapt our procedures when we needed to, to accommodate other aircraft and how with the cooperation and good will of everyone, it could all work.

One of the things a number of pilots commented on was the general increase in traffic in the area. Not only charter flights, but also ultra-lights, helicopters, aerial survey flights and significantly increased GA traffic. We all have Flarm but there is an awful lot of other traffic out there as well.

On the way back from Chinchilla I spent some time at Dalby going over the operational procedures while it was all fresh in my mind. The runways and airfield in general are in very good condition, with a good surface and excellent grass cover.

A few things have changed since last month. We are now accepting a maximum of 66 entries. We expect that all 66 places will be taken and we will run a wait list so that we can replace any pilots who have to withdraw before the competition starts.

The dates for the Queensland State Comps and the Boonah Grand Prix have changed, please check the respective websites.

Check the website <http://www.ddsc.org.au/dalby2010/index.html> for the latest news or email me rhenderson@iinet.net.au.

This month we have included some more photos from the 2004 Dalby Nationals to remind you what the place looks like.

Ralph Henderson