

The magazine for recreational pilots



Pacific Flyer

November 2002

ISSN: 57.00
ISSN: 1441-1121

Aust \$5.95
ISSN: 1441-1121



Gas Bag Basics
Big Fat Blimps

Mountain Flying



Print Post Number PP 343 695 000 02

Building a Tecnam Golf

I Had a Dream ...

This article received or 12 month free subscription

Ruth Presland

I was staring at a shipping container plonked on the tarmac in front of me. We had just taxied up to the Tecnam hangar at Ardmore in trusty ZK-WNG, a P96 Golf after flying up from Wanaka, to see a successful Warbirds. It was another fantastic trip but right now I couldn't stop my mind running through the whirlwind of events that lead to this moment.

Ten months ago I was sitting in a carpark in complete horror, having just received a phone call from my dad, announcing he had just flown the plane of his dreams, and he was selling the Cessna, and going to buy one. I had asked him what it was, and his reply was "A fantastic microlight called a Tecnam!"

I knew that dad had been through a bad confrontational time with the CM in regards to keeping his medical, but I hadn't realised he had answered an advertisement in the Farm Equipment News and gone up to Dargaville especially to get his microlight certificate. My thoughts were he had lost his marbles and that ma, being a pilot also, would be able to talk some sense into him.

Next thing I know ma is off to get her rating as well, so curiosity got the better of me and I accompanied her to Dargaville. After three days of travelling we arrived, and there I met Bert Gregory and the Tecnam ZK-EKO. This was a really smart aeroplane. Bert took me up, and after my flight, I was beaming. I loved it!

Later I met Bruce Lambess, whose enthusiasm for flying changed my life. He convinced me to return to the RAAZ (Recreational Aircraft Association) AGM in November. I was really glad I did because I met a fantastic group of people, including Giovanni Nustrini, the agent for Tecnam. He had his brand new P92 2000 RG there, and his P96 Golf 100. Through a turn of events I ended up obtaining a rating in the Golf, taking it back to Keri Keri for the night and back down to Giovanni's base at Ardmore, the following morning. I had a great flight, and just began to understand what fantastic machines they were.

Returning to Queenstown, I could not get this beautiful aircraft out of my head! Early December, Giovanni phoned me out of the blue, and said, he needed a pilot to fly his Golf, ZK-WNG with him, and his new RG around on a South Island tour. This sounded like the opportunity I had been waiting for! He said I had a few days to think about it, but I made some phone calls and gave him my answer in under half an hour. I was delighted because I was going flying... in a Tecnam!

Despite atrocious weather, the tour was a success and in those two weeks, I learned a lot about the unique capabilities of the Golf and the RG. I had a good knowledge of the South Island conditions, and having done most of my time on a heavy

Cessna I was really impressed with the Tecnam's. In turbulence, their ability to fly slowly, (bad weather configuration), their fast cruise, their short field performance, especially in crosswind and their ground handling in gusty conditions. I was hooked!

Giovanni could see this and we sat down together on two occasions under the wing of the RG to formulate a plan, where I could become the South Island agent. To do so I had to own my own demonstrator.

To achieve this I could see I was going to have a radical turning in life. So I took the leap, got a loan, ordered a plane and Giovanni lent me WNG while my plane was built, painted, test flown, shipped out and delivered to Ardmore.

So here I was, having just arrived in WNG, staring at this container. I had spent the last 6 weeks, imagining it bobbing over the seas, and now here it was sitting on the tarmac! "That box is far too narrow to contain my plane let alone two!"

I had been thinking of it right from its inception in the factory in Naples. Imagining it slowly coming together, with the skill of many Italian hands, imagining it taking aerodynamic form and quietly growing in its individuality. Becoming different from the other Golfs, Echo's and RG's being built beside it. Then finally being painted, its tyres touching the Italian soil and grass, then leaving that ground for the very first time as it was put through the initial test flight at Castelvolturno airfield.

I was bought back into reality with Giovanni saying, "Shall we have a look at your plane...?" We wandered over and as he bent down to cut the plastic customs tape; I suddenly wondered who closed the door in Italy. The doors swung open and the nose of the first Golf greeted me.

It was a real sense of olive groves, summer, fast cars, and happy people talking very quickly. This was the life of the people who had all joined to bring my plane to me. The enthusiasm, in which these planes have been designed, built, test flown and carefully packed into the container, filled me with delight.

Inside, they were fitted together snugly; noses facing opposite ends, with their wings and elevators packed into sponge-lined wooden cradles alongside. They had really glossy paint and were sleek and racey.

I crawled under the first Golf to see mine. I was so amazed that this slick machine was my own. I was really impressed with the paint scheme. I had chosen blue and white, perfectly matched with the blue tint of the canopy. By now (and for the days to



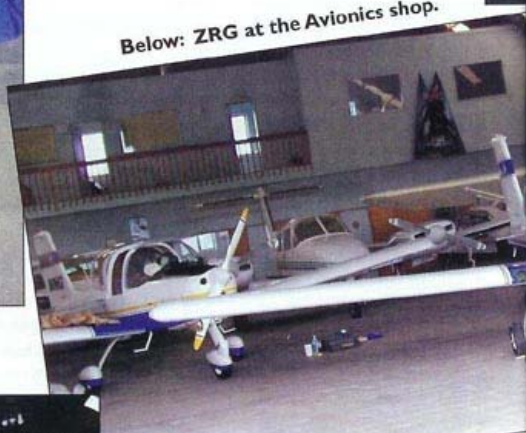
Left: Ruth inside the container.

Below: Ruth and ZRG's tail coming out of the container.



Left: Kevin with ZRG's box of bolts and screws.

Below: ZRG at the Avionics shop.

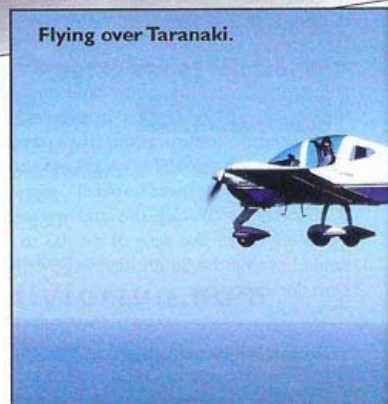


Below: Kevin checking the wings.



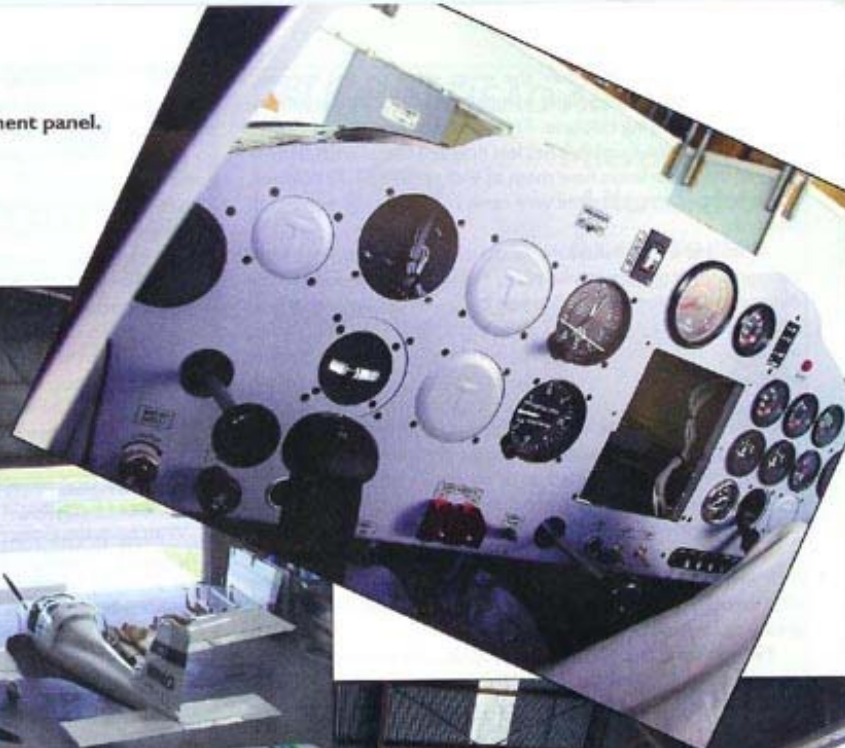
36 Pacific Flyer November 2002

Flying over Taranaki.



Right: ZRG's instrument panel.

Below: Hangar shot of Golfs.



Right: Looking down ZRG's wing.

Below: First solo prep.



come...) I had a sore face from the huge smile! I peered into the cabin and saw my keys hanging in the ignition. BOY, I could not wait for the day when I would be turning those keys! I knew it would be very soon. Reluctantly darkness was falling so it was goodnight to the Golfs until the morning.

First light, I was up and out to the airfield with spanner in hand. I was to undo the bolts that held curves of steel over the tyres, which secure the aircraft for their journey. At 8 o'clock the engineers turned up, and the 4 of us (Well...1 was supervising!) wheeled the Golfs out and led them into the hangar. I opened the canopy of my plane. The smell really hit me, so nice and new, all modern materials combined to create this, like a new car I surmised.

Inside the cabin were all these carefully wrapped brown paper parcels of odd shapes. I took great delight in fishing them out; it really did feel like the best Christmas ever! With my Golf facing out towards the runway, and WNG looking on from the back, we lifted the wings out of their cradle. Once manoeuvred onto the carry through spar, Giovanni and I held them steady while the LAME, Kevin, put the bolts in. After the wings were on and torqued, Kevin put on the elevator and torqued that also. The result is a very striking all flying tailplane. This is an excellent design carried on from Partenavia because it has less drag and better pitch stability. Many of the big airliners have them, as well as the ATR-72 tailplane, which are manufactured in the very same factory where my aircraft was born.

After that I watched as the ailerons, flaps and fuel lines were connected. My plane was assembled so I wheeled it around to the Avionics shop, for the installation of the radio, intercom, and transponder. The avionics can be factory fitted in Italy, but having it done here gave me more time to decide what I wanted. Despite being fully corrosion proofed at the factory, because of the extreme NZ conditions, the "corrosion X" treatment is applied to all Tecnam's arriving in the country. It is sprayed throughout the internal surfaces of the aircraft. It takes an hour and if repeated every three years, gives a lifetime of corrosion protection.

Back at the hangar I found the other Golf assembled and it was only lunchtime! We said goodbye to the engineers then started on the finishing touches. The first thing was to give the planes their identity. With today's modern materials, I marvelled at the effectiveness of putting on vinyl adhesive registration. It looks great and took only 5 minutes to apply.

Next it was some final instrument installation, riveting the metal registration plate in the cabin and placarding. While this was going on, my attention had turned back to the brown paper parcels. Now it was time for the beautifying process. Each moulding revealed a remarkable achievement of Italian design. For example the nose wheel fairing and the spat. They are elegant, lightweight, and clearly show the flair that is characteristic of the whole aircraft.

Rex Kenny from CM arrived to inspect the aircraft and issue the permits and although I knew he had seen many of them before, I had great delight in showing him my plane. The documentation, for the Tecnam's, is very thorough. Each plane

comes with a flight manual, service manual, two textbooks on the Rotax engine, a flight log and a CAA maintenance tech logbook.

By now I was incredibly excited, because with the completion of the paperwork, it was down to the final inspection, a run-up, and then a test flight, with 25 litres a side (2 hrs plus reserve), ZK-50M was the first. Giovanni went through the service manual checklist, which included looking inside the inspection ports, checking the engine and all aspects of the aircraft, again. When he came back he said it climbed like a rocket, and flew like a bird.

Next morning ZK-ZRG received the same treatment, except this time I could feel nervous excitement. After the complete inspection, we jumped in and I started my plane up for the first time! It sounded really smooth and quiet. After the run-ups, I jumped out and watched ZRG taxi away to the holding point. I noticed there was quite a wind but I was still impressed the way my plane leaped into the air. It was so high by the time it went past me; it didn't come out in the photos!

Giovanni headed up to a safe altitude, over to the training area to do his in-depth evaluation. These are various configurations of stalls, turns, climb out, cruise, unusual attitudes and recovery, a dive to VNE and of course landings and ground handling. What one would expect on a "post re-assembly" test flight.

On his return, I went running out and he opened the canopy and grinned, "You have got a good plane here, Ruth". He went on to say that he didn't even need to adjust the trim tabs, it was fast and just knew how to fly. WNG must have been murmuring advice throughout the whole night in the hangar!

So it was finally my turn. The feeling was of complete freedom coupled with the acute awareness that I was solely responsible for the welfare of this machine. I didn't have time to dwell on my not so graceful landing in the 15-knot crosswind, because ZRG was going straight to work. We had a demonstration arranged at Whenuapai Airbase, and since it was Giovanni's patch, he flew. To my delight we were cleared overhead by the Auckland International Tower. I was like a tourist excitedly pointing out the Boeings!

Once there, the wind really got up, and after 4 demos we opted to make tracks, to beat the rain. Giovanni proved to me that there was such a thing as a perfect crosswind landing (23 kts cross component), on the grass at Ardmore; we stopped in about 20 metres. I was really impressed.

First thing the next morning I was up again, and had two really good flights, and later in the day, at sunset, the 4 of us went up together. WNG, who taught me to fly the Golf, Giovanni who made flying Golf possible, and ZRG, a dream made into reality, from a lot of forethought and perseverance.

With both the Golfs ready for home it was time to take leave of Ardmore. The next day was clear, with a light southerly. We did a beautiful formation take off. We have learnt to fly every

journey in formation, and this trip was no exception. Anyone passing would have seen two Golfs travelling in close formation, right down to Lake Wanaka. Once clear of the zone we could see Mt Egmont in the far distance. We were cleared overhead NP airport and west of the mountain, what a sight that is.

I was glad for my sandwich as we crossed the Strait (over a hundred miles of water). We were cleared to descend into the TMA at NS from 6,500 ft and were on the ground after 2 hrs 42 mins. Slower than usual due to the southerly, but good as far as comfort and cost went. My plane had used 47 litres, the other Golf an extra litre (just to keep up with me!)

The next leg took us down the Southern Alps, east of Mt Cook at 9,500 ft. I was making the position reports, and I wondered if anyone would see these "ultralights" whizzing past and think, "What was that?"

We were approaching Minaret, on the shores of Lake Wanaka, our destination for the day. We did a formation fly past, up the strip, then out to the bay for a gentle reversal turn and back over the strip for landing. Ma and dad were there to greet us and they thought the arrival was the most beautiful thing they had seen. I hopped out and proudly announced "5.4 hrs from

Ardmore! Better than 5 days!" (I was referring to the delivery flight of their Hughes 300 back in '79, which I accompanied them on).

Suddenly my plane was the centre of attention; the bumblebee population were taken in by the combination of blues. We laughed at the time, but now I make sure I keep the canopy closed when I go to Minaret.

After celebrations of a reality that had only been a thought on a piece of paper 4 months before, next day it was an early start to deliver SOM to its proud owner in Gore. We were greeted by a smiley face and then to our delight Golf arrived that we delivered to a farm in February. It was so neat to see three Golfs lined up and we were all smiling!

Thus ended the delivery of my Golf, now ZRG, is based at Wanaka airport, and has officially started work as a demonstrator for Tecnam. He was christened on a warm April evening at Minaret, in the mountains. I smashed a bottle of bubbly on his leg and made a fumbling speech... I had a dream. I had the support from the people that believed in me. There is nothing like owning your very own aeroplane.