



Grant Finlay report and photographs

Christchurch modellers enjoy good conditions



Mike Sutton's Cardinal from Hamilton does some water work.



Scale Piper Cub float plane pilot flight planning.

The weather forecast for the Canterbury region on the last weekend in August definitely wasn't one that would make anybody want to turn cartwheels. Nonetheless, the one thing you can be sure of in New Zealand is that every day is going to be different, regardless of the weather forecast.

And so with that in mind it's not surprising that nearly 90 model aircraft pilots turned up at Lake Forsyth Reserve on the southern side of Banks Peninsula for the Christchurch Radio Fliers Club's annual Float and Field Fly-In. This year's event not only saw local pilots from around the South Island area but also a large contingent who had travelled from the North Island.

Saturday, despite the forecasts earlier in the week, proved to be one out of the bag with light winds and sunny conditions. Sunday on the other hand was the complete opposite with blustery winds and overcast skies. Thus where Saturday saw the skies filled with models operating from all of the four flight lines, Sunday had only a few hardy fellows testing their skills while the most appropriate use of the main runway came from the chap sailing a land yacht.

What sets the Float and Field Fly-In apart from most other model aircraft events in the country is the way the participants span most aspects of the airborne RC hobby. In other regions it's common for modellers to come together for organised rallies of similar aircraft such as warbirds, large models, gliders and other minorities. This fly-in is different, however, in that it welcomes modellers encompassing all manner of radio controlled aircraft types.

With four separate flight lines prepared by the organisers, the event easily catered for fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, gliders and electric powered types. Also, its location on the shores of Lake Forsyth made float plane (waterborne) flying

a major part of the event.

The fly-in was also open to the public free of charge, which always helps to promote the hobby.

Lake Forsyth is situated in a valley near Little River and runs out towards the open ocean at Birdlings Flat. Flying within the valley confines proves both spectacular and interesting. If you can imagine watching a model aircraft painted in camouflage colours being flown against a hillside background, you get an immediate appreciation for how well camouflage can work. This is just one of the features that make flying in this valley such an exciting challenge.

Although only part of the weekend's flying activity, the float plane aspect certainly added a curious fascination to the event for many of the visiting public. It's most likely that many would never have witnessed an aircraft take off or land on the water in real life before, having seen it only on TV or at the movies. Thus with models such as a one-third scale Piper Cub being flown from the lake, it made for great viewing entertainment with lots of excitement.

Flying from the water offers its own set of challenges, but for the most part, once mastered is pretty much the same as flying off the land, only wetter! It also requires a good boat for when the model ends up sitting in the middle of the lake with no engine running to taxi it back to shore or, worse, when the model finishes upside down in the water — and yes it does happen!

Supporting the event was a couple of model associated retailers displaying all the latest goodies, kit sets and accessories to tempt the participants into parting with their money. There was also a buy, sell and swap tent for those keen to exchange aircraft and all manner of parts and accessories.

Unfortunately, with the weather deteriorating on Sunday the

event was called to an early closure at midday with a lucky registration prize draw, followed by trophies for best flight, pilots' choice, oldest pilot and similar awards.

But despite the less than favourable conditions it was another successful event for the Christchurch Radio Fliers Club, one they can be truly proud of.



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