

# Balloons Over Waikato 2011

Following up from her article on *Balloons Over Wairarapa* in our last issue of *KiwiFlyer*, Pauline Hickey wrote this report on the other annual BOW event, *Balloons Over Waikato* which was held at the start of April.

**THE SECOND** of the three regular North Island balloon events, this year's Waikato Balloon Fiesta was held a week later than in 2010, with high hopes of good flying weather and an abstinence of traditional Waikato fog.

Pilot and crew registrations opened on Tuesday afternoon followed by a Master Briefing at 6pm. This was held in a large conference room due to the number of pilots and crew attending (30 balloons brings about 170 people together), plus the Trustees, Hamilton Airways Manager, the Rockgas Manager, the Flight Director and the Fiesta Manager. This meeting covers general event information such as scheduled flight briefing times, refuel times, flight map updates and safety issues. Crew Chief's have their own additional briefing with the Flight Director. Once the formalities are over, it was time to meet and chat with the sponsors and other balloonists.

Wednesday morning began with the Mass Ascension which doubles as the sponsors and media morning, and a Hare & Hound task for the pilots. Our team hosted

sponsor Kingsgate Hotel and two of the Kingsgate staff rode with us for their first balloon ride (after hotel management chose to put all their staff names into a draw). We followed the Aoraki Balloon Hare and flew to half a paddock from it (there was



The Night Glow at Waikato University attracted a crowd of 80,000 (BOW picture).



A group photo of women pilots at Balloons Over Waikato. (Pauline at centre).

no cross laid out), but as we were not inside the paddock boundary there was no point in throwing the 'baggie' as we would just have to go back later and find it or receive demerit points.

Wednesday's afternoon flight was cancelled due to wind, the event being replaced by Crew Olympics. These hilarious tasks were enjoyed by all.

Contributed by Pauline Hickey

Thursday morning's briefing was earlier than usual to allow for the Dawn Patrol balloons to launch before dawn. An early morning breakfast for families is advertised as free to the first 2,000 people, and although it is always over subscribed I

haven't seen or heard of anyone turned away in all the years the breakfast has been running.

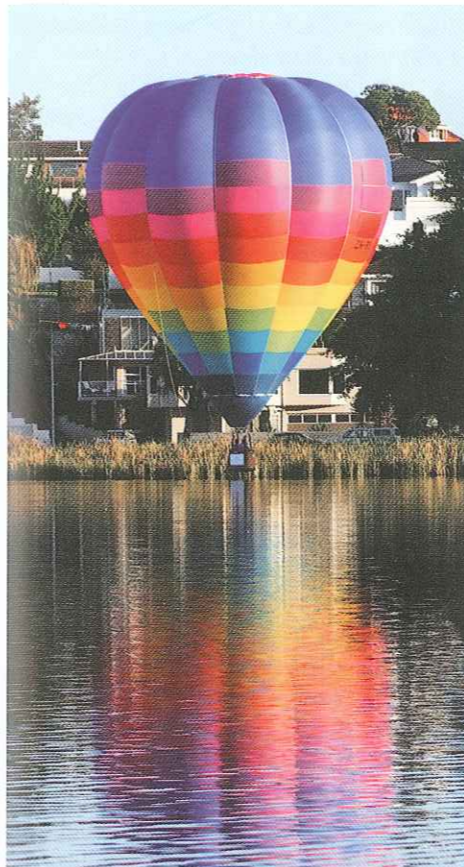
The morning task for the main fleet was to land as close to 'The Base' shopping centre as possible. A number of us chose the lower wind which has direction onto The Base, while others looked for a high wind and went off out to the east of the city at a reasonable pace. Our lower southerly wind died out to a breeze and then not even much of that. There was nothing higher up and we were now tracking for the target and a large SZ (Sensitive Zone), the Te Rapa Racecourse. (Balloons are required to fly over Sensitive Zones at 1000' AGL and preferably 1500'). With the racecourse in the flight path, those following

this route elected to land. I headed for a small park on top of a hill near my home. Goldilocks and Sno-bird also came in to join me there and the Clown landed down in Minogue Park central.

Thursday afternoon as usual was the schools visit, for which we drew Aberdeen Primary School along with our partner balloon Gail Dryland and Phoenix. It was a

very windy afternoon and inflating balloons to fly out was not an option. Instead we had a question and answer session in the school hall and turned on the fan for the children to walk in front of and look in the basket after Gail made an attempt to inflate.

Friday morning's task was a Judge declared goal – the shortest distance in 30



Rainbow competing in the shortest distance flown in 30 minutes competition at Hamilton Lake.

minutes. (The balloon that lands closest to its launch spot after 30 minutes continued flying wins). Three balloons were within 500 metres which was a great result. This usually means flying a box or in our case, just hanging around going nowhere and then landing on an edge of the lake. Andrée displayed excellent control landing as soon as possible after the 30 minutes were up, putting us down on the edge of the Lake to claim 3rd place at the task, a truly great effort from a 30 hour pilot.

Friday evening saw the burner parade down the main street. This year's theme was Flying Colours which gave a lot of scope for decorating baskets, burners and trailers.

Saturday morning was for the Cash Grab. This requires grabbing the key from the top of a pole and holding on to it to claim the cash on offer. This cash can range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 but it is fairly safe, as it is no easy task to fly within the rules



## KiwiFlyer Event Guide

July 3rd - 8th  
**Aviation Industry Conference Week**  
At the Amora Hotel, Wellington. See the guide in this issue of *KiwiFlyer*.

July 9th - 10th **AOPA Winter Fly-in**  
At Omarama. visit: [www.aopa.co.nz](http://www.aopa.co.nz)

August 5th - 6th  
**Gore Aero Club 50th Anniversary**  
Celebration meal evening of the 5th.  
Contact John Ibbotson. 027 632 5856 or email: [he@clear.net.nz](mailto:he@clear.net.nz)



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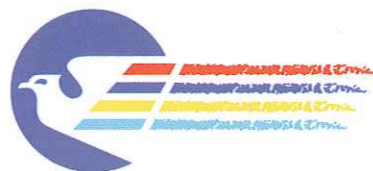
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