

Waikato Whispers



Waikato Hot Air Balloon Club: www.waikatoballoonclub.co.nz

CLUB NIGHT

CLUB DAY April 5th Flying if fine.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Club Day: Flying if fine. Details will be posted up on facebook. Likely meeting time 6:00am as daylight savings will have ended.

CANCELLED

JUNIOR BALLOONISTS

Time to get under way for the year. We have a new model balloon basket where we will not need to change tanks so we will hopefully spend time with this – ideally wet or fine as we should be able to set it up in the barn. It has both a main burner and whisper burner. During the year our plan is to at least start (if not finish) an envelope for this basket.



There looks to be by my count 53 model balloons at this meet.

Next meeting Sunday 26th April.

CANCELLED

PILOT TRAINING

Time to get back into pilot training which will now be combined with Club Day. IF we are flying then meeting time will be as posted then after flying we will meet back at David & Linda's. Otherwise 9am start. We will cover off Owning a Balloon – the pro's and con's – have a debrief on the morning flight and what you learnt during the fiesta, then a catchup on what we have done. We do have 2-3 new student pilots keen to join us.

Minimum age to join this group is 16.

CANCELLED



BOW FIESTA

Difficult times but everyone appeared to be having a good time. Some challenging flights – who got wet on the Thursday morning. Fiestas are all about having a good time. All fiestas are different, and we need to be able to adjust to each different style of fiesta. Really good to catch up with our Australian pilots.

The Unicorn was certainly popular and our club members crewing for Craig Farrell learnt a lot.

(Photo Wendy Peel)

Well done Natalie who was transferred from Sweetpea to the Snail as interpreter between the French-Canadian speaking pilot and Crew Chief and our local crew. The main challenges for Natalie were the technical terms



Can you go Ballooning in the Rain

One of the questions that balloon pilots get asked the most is “can you go ballooning in the rain?” Ballooning is a very weather-dependent activity, as the aircraft has no direct means of steering or facilities to control its response to the weather. Before flying, pilots have to research conditions and receive accurate weather reports from the MET office and other meteorological services for the period in which they will be flying. It is essential that the air temperature, winds, dryness and ground condition are of a good enough standard to make the balloon flight completely risk-free. The short answer to the initial rain question is therefore ‘no’, but there are a number of very specific reasons as to why we avoid flying in wet weather for the safety of the passengers and crew.



A pilot will look for ideal conditions when discerning whether it is safe to fly. Good visibility, gentle winds on the surface at 2000ft, a cool air temperature and no rain are generally the requirements pilots will need. For this reason, most [balloon flights](#) occur just after sunrise and just before sunset, as it is a little cooler and the weather is at its most stable period of the day. Ground conditions must also be suitable, and not water-logged, allowing tow-vehicles and trailers to drive on the launch site and follow the balloon to retrieve you from your end location.

So all this may make it more clear why balloons don't fly in the rain. The problem is that when the balloon envelope, basket, and the people inside it, get soaked by the rain, the whole vessel becomes significantly

heavier. This weight will drag the balloon down and can cause dangerous crashes as it will be very difficult to steer the balloon or prevent it descending at a higher speed.

Storms in particular are dangerous as there is the added problem of high winds and temperatures. Stormy weather is risky for any form of aircraft, but especially hot air balloons, as they are very weather sensitive, light and can be dragged into the storm, because winds accelerate and head towards building stormy spots up to 100 miles away from its actual position.

President	Mark Brown	021 912 679	waikatohotairballoonclub@gmail.com
Chief Pilot	Liam McGirr & Mark Brown		
Secretary	Wendy Peel	027 205 8885	waikatohotairballoonclub@gmail.com
Treasurer	Dave Norris		nenya@sironn.nz
Whispers	Dave Norris	021 351 957	nenya@sironn.nz

Fiesta Photos



BALLOONING HISTORY

Popular 1988 hot air balloon challenge from Perth to Sydney might be making a comeback

ABC North and West SA

By [Shannon Corvo](#)

Posted 21 Feb 2020, 2:26pm



PHOTO: [The 1988 Bicentennial Balloon Challenge involved roughly 900 participants.](#) (Supplied: Ruth Wilson)

In 1988, the Bicentennial Balloon Challenge saw 78 balloons travel from Perth to Sydney to celebrate 200 years since the landing of the first British settlers.

Key points:

- The 1988 trans-Australia Bicentennial Balloon Challenge may make a comeback next year
- It saw 78 balloons travel from Perth to Sydney in 16 days
- Advances in technology may make next year's proposed event safer

Fifty-two of these balloons were shipped from overseas countries such as the United Kingdom and America.

Hundreds of participants travelled for 16 days, stopping at regional locations on their way across Australia, including at Kalgoorlie, Kimba, Barossa Valley, Mildura and Broken Hill.

Bicentennial Balloon Challenge director, Ruth Wilson, is planning a similar event for 2021.

"I'm working on doing a gas balloon race across Australia next year," Ms Wilson said.

"At this stage, it would be from Perth across to Sydney because the upper winds blow from the west most of the time.

"I just need to find a hydrogen sponsor or some more funding to get it off the ground, but I'm working on it."

The event is still in the planning stages, but Ms Wilson said there will be stopovers in regional towns: it just has not yet been decided where.

"You have all the crew chasing the balloon — they have to sleep because the balloon would fly for three or four days non-stop, to see which one could fly the furthest to win the race," she said.

"But then we would create stopovers and communication with the locals."



PHOTO: [Director Ruth Wilson \(middle\)](#) congratulating a team that won the [Barossa Valley leg of the balloon challenge](#). (Supplied: Ruth Wilson)

One of a kind challenge

To win the 1988 Bicentennial Balloon Challenge, the pilots in their air balloons had to try and throw a marker onto a target at each location.

One of these pilots was now 72-year-old Graeme Scaife, who was one of the last participants to be registered for the event.



PHOTO: [Director Ruth Wilson](#) said [78 balloons were involved in the challenge, including 52 from overseas](#). (Supplied: Ruth Wilson)

He used to run a photo lab in England, but one day he spotted two hot air balloons flying over his house in West Sussex and decided it was his calling.

Mr Scaife's sponsored balloon was sent from the UK to Sydney, where it was then driven to the challenge start point at Perth.

What followed was 16 days of tiring work, partying and mingling with the locals at each stopover.

"You go out and fly in the morning and then you can go and sleep during the day and then you go out again at about four o'clock in the afternoon and try and fly," Mr Scaife said.

["When you finish flying in the afternoon, you tend to all go down to the nearest pub and there's loads and loads of people."](#)

Mischief along the way

It was when the group of about 900 participants made it from Mildura to Broken Hill that some unusual and dangerous incidents happened.

"We all went to a bar at Silverton and I always remember they had a horse in the bar and a parrot that drank out of a beer can," Mr Scaife said.

But that wasn't all.

"They decided to put a gold nugget up on a post in the air and the balloon had to fly in and if you grabbed it, you got a \$20,000 gold nugget," he said.

"These American guys flew straight into the top of a house with an air conditioning unit on it and knocked the air conditioning unit off.

["The balloon caught alight and then of course he went shooting up into the air and broke three ribs."](#)

Despite some injuries and broken bones, Ms Wilson said all 78 balloons made it to Sydney, and David Levin from Boulder Colorado in America won the overall challenge.



PHOTO: [Overall winner of the balloon challenge, David Levin, speaking with the youngest competing pilot, Mark Wilson, from Sydney.](#) (Supplied: Ruth Wilson)

Advances in technology

Ms Wilson said next year's proposed event would be easier to organise than the one in 1988 because of technology.

"[Back then] I wrote long letters letting different contacts in the different countries know this event was on," she said.

["You can imagine letters coming in and out of from overseas and a few faxes darting back and forth.](#)

"It [next year's event] would gain more exposure just because of the nature of life these days through social media and television."

She said today's technology will also improve the safety of the event.

"In some of the weather conditions there were a couple of injuries," Ms Wilson said.

"We didn't have access to the meteorology and the weather information that is now so readily available."