



Parys Airweek – Raising Awareness for the Recreational Aviation Enthusiast

The Aero Club of South Africa organised and hosted a very successful Airweek at the Parys airfield over the weekend of 10th to 12th March 2017, the weather turned out to be absolutely perfect for the end of the summer season.

The objective of the Aero Club to organise and host such an Airweek was to raise awareness of recreational aviation in South Africa and an opportunity for all the sections of the Aero Club to network and mingle with each other. Aero Club Organisers Richard Becker, Sandra Strydom & Chandre Steenkamp were already busy with setting up the field on Thursday to get the barriers, sound system and exhibitors areas marked out.

AERO CLUB Airweek 2017

Join us at Parys Airfield from Friday 10th of March to Sunday 12th March for the Aero Club Airweek where all the Sections of Aero Club are represented.

This event allows us to share information & knowledge about our recreational aspects in all our respective disciplines to meet and exchange views, see each-others flying machines, attend some hopefully interesting talks participate in a landing competition and watch some aerobatics. This event is not an air-show open to the public.

Flying events will take place most of Saturday.



- This event will include:**
 - Parachute Jumping
 - Ballooning
 - Spot Landing
 - Aerobatic Demonstration
 - Drone racing
 - Technical Forums

 - Also happening:**
 - Legendary Parys Club Breakfasts
 - Braais
 - Camping (with availability of portable showers)
 - Kiddie Entertainment
 - Beer garden

The invitation to attend Airweek 2017



The busy parking line-up on Saturday Morning

Some aviators already descended onto the field on Friday during the day to set up camp, although had a freezing night in their tents as the last remnants of the cold front passed through.

Saturday morning proved to start out as a clear day with pristine flying conditions, albeit a bit windy initially, which enticed many flyers to take to the skies towards Parys early on.

The Air waves were hectic before 8 am on the Parys airfield frequency with incoming traffic (ATC only came on line at 8), thus it was challenging for everybody to get to suitable separation in the circuit.

Fortunately 06 was in use so that landing aircraft could clear the runway fairly quickly. Once the ATNS team were in place, accompanied by safety office Nigel Musgrave and ground controller Paul Sabatier, they all did a sterling job to ensure a safe and memorable event.



The Gyro Line-up



The busy exhibitors' row

Soon, the aircraft parking area became full, and at the last count more than 120 aircraft arrived including; balloons, gyrocopters, aerobatic aircraft, powered paragliders, microlights, gliders, light sport aircraft, helicopters, vintage and veteran aircraft and so many variations of type and non-type certified aircraft, amazing to see all that aviation diversity in one place.

From the turnout over the 3 days, this weekend was an incredible indication that sport and recreational aviation in South Africa is alive and well. The organisers were caught off guard with such a very high turnout, so had to make additional plans for additional catering, but this was a good problem to have to solve.

Activities throughout the day was well choreographed, starting off with the SAPFA spot landing competition, which when it started had the wind at least on runway 24 which is much more spectator friendly to see how close the competitors could get to land on the line.

The format was loosely based on precision landings with two circuits, one being a powered approach with any selection of flap and the second approach had to be a glide approach with a power cut abeam the line at circuit altitude.



The microlights preparing for their turn at spot-landing

There were twelve competitors, which was a good turnout for such an event, ranging from microlights to the fast Saratoga. Flights were organised in groups of three aircraft to keep spacing in the circuit. The competition was won by a previous world landing champion Ron Stirk in his C150, followed by Marcel Griffioen in a Pipistrel Sinus (both were tied on 22 points but Ron's glide won the day). Alan Evan-Haines was third in a Super Cub and Rob Jonkers fourth in a C182 (both also tied with 150 points, but Alan's glide won his day). Frank Eckard, current world landing champion was in fifth place.



Ron Stirk – Winner of the Spot Landing Competition – Photo Garth Calitz

Throughout the day the skydivers were very busy, Graham Field the guru of skydiving from Rustenburg taking up many tandem jumpers to introduce them to the sport. A landing zone was specially marked out for the jumpers near the skydiving clubhouse and was a popular photo spot to catch them on their landing antics.

In the early afternoon there were a number of glider releases above the field to show off the gentle and quiet art of soaring. This was followed by some spectacular “mock” aerobatic competition demonstrations with a wide range of aircraft taking part from a heavy Boeing Stearman to the nimble short-winged Pitts Special.



Graham Field parachuting from a microlight

Just the day before, a seminar on aerobatic judging was held to train a new crop of judges, who then judged these mock display sequences, their scores being evaluated by the experts.



SAPFA Chairperson Jonty Esser taking off for his Aerobatic sequence in his YAK – Photo Garth Calitz

Another up and coming sport is drone racing, and just adjacent to the parachute landing zone a drone racing circuit was set up, which is laid out grand-prix style with chicanes, turning bollards and hoops.

The pilots all wear FPV (First Person View) headgear and fly small quadcopters fitted with a camera which is video fed to the headset. The pilot then sits in a comfortable chair and attempts to fly Star-Wars X-wing style the circuit as accurately and as fast as possible, the winner decided on a both these criteria.



The Drone Racing pilots – Photo Athol Frans

Watching these little machines dance around can make one easily seasick, the speed they achieve is easily 60 kms/hr on the straights with high G manoeuvres around the corners. Needless to say this became a popular place on the airfield to hang out and watch.

As evening approached, the wind virtually disappeared, and it was the turn of the Epic Aviation paragliders to take to the air to show how their powered paragliders could manoeuvre around the airfield, the weather being so calm they flew as much as the ambient light would allow.

At the same time, also taking the advantage of calm air the Sport Balloonists got their burners roaring for a nightglow spectacle showing off their bright coloured balloons.



The Epic Aviation paragliders take to the air in the late afternoon



Balloon nightglow under the rising full moon – Epic!

While the flight activities were happening all over the field, a number of technical forums were well organised by Karl Jensen in the skydiving clubhouse with a number of speakers taking the stage.

Tony Frost shared the outcome of the recent Aero Club strategy session held describing Vision 2032 as a 15 year forward looking view on Recreational Flying in South Africa, given that the Aero Club's Centenary is coming up in 2020, and a good time to be thinking about the future for our diverse aviation heritage.



Master of Ceremonies Karl Jensen and Daniel Ralefeta preparing for his talk on Commercialisation of Drones



The Vulcan Bomber

Colin Francis gave a very impassioned talk on the development and use of the Vulcan Bomber during the cold war period and its success in the Falklands war in the 1980's, especially the logistic challenges of deploying these aircraft so quickly and so far to achieve a successful bombing strike of the main runway of Port Stanley.

Daniel Ralefeta gave an overview on commercial application of drones, which is an ever increasing activity given the prolific number of drones being CAA registered for commercial use. He is also involved in the training and legislative aspects of drone use, as the education of users are becoming critical to ensure safe use of drones in various applications.

Next door to the skydiving clubhouse is the hangar and training area, and this was set-up for the Transformation & Development activities happening throughout the day, also hosted by Dan Ralefeta who is the current Aero Club T&D chairperson.

School children from the local community were treated to a number of activities, building delta darts under the tuition of SAMAA members, attending a talk of inspiration by Tumi Katsi who is under training to become an airline pilot.



Daniel Ralefeta with the youth development group

A replica Boeing 737 simulator cockpit was also on hand, where owners Pieter Kriel and Adrienne Visser first gave the children an introduction to the basics of flying controls and how they affect the aircraft's movement in the air. Thereafter they were offered to try their hand at taking off, flying a circuit and landing a simulated Cessna 172, which gave them the ultimate experience short of the real thing to control an aircraft.



School Children proudly displaying their completed Delta Darts
Photo – Athol Frans



Tumi Katsi giving an overview of what it takes to become an Airline Pilot



The Simulator team of Pieter Kriel and Adrienne Visser
Photo – Athol Frans



The youth being exposed to the Boeing 737 Simulator

And so came an end to the successful Airweek, some die-hards who overnighted in their tents were treated to a bonfire at the Skydive club and Aero Club organised braai, some took in and early night with others chilling in the warmth of the boma till late.

The Aero Club would like to thank all the helpers and supporters for making this event successful, Comav (for the sponsorship of the vests and caps), SACAA (for sponsorship received), Skydive Parys (for hosting Airweek at their clubhouse facilities), Montgolfiers Restaurant (for their catering service – with regret to also announce that Oom Fanie passed away on Sunday the 12th).

The exhibitors were The Airplane factory, Air Adventure Tours, Safomar, Aviation Direct, Century Avionics, PJ Aviation, Comav, Epic Aviation, Fly by Wire Aviation Art, Slush Puppy, Mobi Café.



Saturday Night Braai time

Sunday morning saw some early risers taking advantage of the pristine weather to take flight on some scenic areas around Parys, before the rest surfaced for breakfast to pack up and return to home base.

For sure, everyone will be looking forward to next year!



Sunday morning early risers



Some of participants and organisers at the BAFSA exhibition, Hanke Fourie, Daniel Ralefeta, Karl Jensen and Richard Becker



Neil Bowden's appropriately registered Sling ZU-OSH