

2008

“Thought I should write a quick note. A good number including Barry [Emms], Jude [McLennan], Dave [Griffin] and Nigel [Gatsch] turned up at South Brighton yesterday to a howling SE which was slightly more easterly than Sunday's one. There was a huge amount of sand, clean and hard. Made for good fast runs each way and brilliant fun at the Spit. The Spit was perfect for a very fast circuit and about 6 of us spent quite some time going round and round with a few spills included. It was a good as I've seen down there in 3 years. The trip back was about as fast as you can expect. I'd have to say Blokarting would appear to have turned the corner in Christchurch thanks to the likes of Jim and Graeme who have kept us enthused and informed. From 3 years ago when you pretty much had the beach to yourself you can now expect to find others to have fun with. Interesting how new people are arriving. Look forward to seeing you over the next few weeks.” Vaughan Lucking, 1 January 2008.

The inaugural World blokart® Championships were held from 28 September to 4 October 2008 at blokart® Heaven, Papamoa. Contingents from the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, Japan, the Middle East and Australia attended, ten countries in all. Organisers initially estimated that close to 200 competitors were likely to attend, with 96 eventually registering. The event was followed by the inaugural New Zealand Secondary School blokart Championships, 6 - 8 October.

Two members from the Club attended, Cameron Bennet and David Griffin. Cameron and David were the only two competitors from the South Island. When David was considering attending, he asked the NZBAI what standard of blokart® sailing was required to compete in the event. The reply was *“World Champs’ is over stating the aim and level of the event ... it is more a gathering of blokarters with lots of fun racing. All are welcome.”*

The following quotes from Cameron Bennett provide an insight into how blokart® racing was perceived and experienced in the early days of competition.



Club members Dave Griffin and Cameron Bennett,
World blokart® Championships 2008, Blokart® Heaven, Papamoa

“... short track racing on asphalt is FAST!, it's really a unique combination of motor racing (running race lines mark to mark) while also sailing the wind for speed AND trying to keep the competition 'shut-out'! It gets very technical and I learnt HEAPS in the first 2 days, finishing stronger in my division by Friday ...”

“20 rounds of racing were completed (only 5 rounds were required for the event to qualify as a world championship) over the 5 days in a variety of sailing conditions, with wind building through the week. 12-15 knots was typical, Wednesday had 20 knots with gusts of 30.”

“... in each round, points for each placing were totaled, and after the 8th and 16th rounds, your worst 2 results were dropped. races consisted of a 3 minute 'dial-up' which got a bit hairy sometimes as a dozen karts vied for the fast broad reach to hit the start line at zero. an electronic 'DUD' (from your transponder crossing early) announced you were too early and had to complete a short lap to recross. having your own countdown stopwatch was essential. it proved better to be late and fast than first across and slow as momentum could be carried into the first mark or 2 and places gained. You then had 5 minutes to complete as many laps as possible. The course varied with wind direction and strength (a downwind chicane in 20 knots takes balls...as Paul Beckett said: 'adrenaline is brown'). the race directors briefed us at each course change. some really absorbing battles took place and being so close to the action was exciting - who didn't layup far enough?, who over rigged? (sometimes a 4.0m proved faster to tack away ...)”

“Plenty of blowouts too as tyres (they are just wheelbarrow tyres after all!) were over-inflated and pushed hard in corners. A few prangs but a broken rib was the worst”

suffered. The Europeans developed an affinity for a boggy ditch at 'crash corner'. one could continue the race as on-track marshals (we took turns) could recover crashed karts and send you off again."

... there were plenty of pit-lane sail changes also as the wind changed and the more competitive sought an advantage. Some even ultra-sounded their wheel bearings each day and ran them with machine oil rather than more viscous (and therefore SLOWER grease ...) I just enjoyed being out there and mixing it up with a good bunch of people.

Grays Farm and Greenpark Sands, two locations on the northern side of Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora were identified as possible sailing sites. Grays Farm (lake-bed area) was too wet even in February 2008 to be used.

In November 2008 there was a call from the NZBAI for New Zealand blokart clubs, along with the NZBAI, to improve communication to help grow the sport. It was acknowledged at this time that the main issue for most clubs was finding suitable sailing venues. This has remained the key issue, for the viability of clubs, through to the present day.

The *CanterBreeze Blokart Club* website was created by Michael Griffen, son of member, Dave Griffin in 2008. In the 2008/2009 year, the Club's membership increased dramatically from 18 to 45 members. It is unclear what prompted this rapid increase in Club membership.

In 2008 some Club members started using carbon and ultra stiff carbon fibre mast sections, with conspicuous results over sailors using all fiberglass mast sections.

For the first time ever, the Club sailed from the South Brighton Surf Club to the Waimakariri River mouth, and had a "*hair-raising ride*" on the return reaching speeds of between 60 - 70 km/hr. "*Some had not experienced the scary feeling of traveling at those speeds and being blown sideways as gusts of wind propelled Blokarts even faster! That adrenaline buzz lasted about 15 minutes, being the time take at that speed, to return to New Brighton.*"

2009

In 2009 the Club changed its name from *CanterBreeze Blokart Club* to *Canterbury Blokart Club*, and in March of this year the Club gained access to the former RNZAF Base Wigram (Wigram). In addition to the sealed area (the hangar apron and runway taxiway, a total of about 31,721m²), the advantage of Wigram was the large areas of grass adjacent to most of the sealed areas. These areas provided generous 'runout zones' as well as space for sailing if required. RNZAF Base Wigram officially closed in February 2009. Committee member, David Griffin, was instrumental in brokering the

Club's access to Wigram with the Air Force Museum of New Zealand (AFMNZ) who leases their site from the New Zealand Defence Force. Incidentally, David Griffin was also the first Club member to take part in a national sailing event.

The Club immediately developed a professional and trustworthy mutual relationship with the AFMNZ that has continued to this day. *Track fees* (sailing on the hangar apron area and runway taxiway) per sailor per day were \$10.00. Total track fees paid to the AFMNZ in 2009/2010 was \$4,680.00.

During 2009 the Club produced its first Club sail logos (*cbc Canterbury*) as well as Club business cards. Allocated times on Sundays for casual sailing encouraged those not interested in racing to become members. Club subscriptions at this time were \$30.00.

The Club combined with *Urban Wheels* (Graeme Gordon - Christchurch blokart distributor & Club member) on a display at the *New Zealand Boat Show*. The relationship between the Club and *Urban Wheels* prevailed for many years.

In January 2009, member David Griffin achieved a speed record of 63kph in a *Production* blokart, with a 3m² sail, at Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora.

The inaugural Club Championships for *Production* and *Performance* class blokarts were held in 2009. This event has been held most years since then. David Griffin donated the *Griffin Family Trophy* (centre part of a wooden aircraft propeller that belonged to his father) for the Club Blokart Championships *Performance Class*.



The Griffin Family Trophy - the Club Blokart Championships Performance Class

2010

The year started with the Club hosting the South Island Blokart Open at Wigram. This was the first significant event hosted by the Club with about 40 sailors from across New Zealand attending.



The South Island Blokart Open, Wigram.

In 2010, the Club became a registered incorporated society (registration no. 2538276), formalising the Club's *not-for-profit* legal entity. Being an incorporated society was beneficial to the Club for a range of reasons, including when applying for funding grants.

The Club had a display at the *Boy's Big Day Out* and *Outdoor Expo* events, and the first *Technical Night* (tech-night) for members was held in October. The Club produced membership labels which were displayed on the member's blokart mast base. These were discontinued by about 2014. Club subscriptions were increased from \$40.00 to \$50.00, \$20.00 being the NZBAI affiliation fee. Track fees paid to the AFMNZ in 2010/2011 totalled \$6,640.00.

A deuce bar (used to join two blokarts, one behind the other) was purchased in 2010 and in May 2013 Club members Bob Jelley and Ivan Purtle set a speed record of 63.3kph at Wigram. Two full carbon masts were used and two 4m² sails.

A large high quality Club feather-flag was purchased with a donation of \$500.00 from member, Dave Ablett. The flag is still in use today primarily at national events and events promoting the Club. Dave Ablett also produced an intricately hand carved (in wood) blokart sail and donated this as a trophy to the Club. The carving, the *Dave &*

Rose Ablett Trophy, was awarded each year through to 2023 to the winner of the Club Blokart Championships *Production Class*.



To encourage Club membership and meet the expectations of some Club members, a *Cruiser Class* was introduced. And as part of the on-going development of health and safety measures, new member's blokarts were checked for unsafe or non-blokart components. This is a new member induction practice continued to this day. Blokarts purchased second-hand and from non-blokart club people are often found to include non-blokart components and other modifications, as well as blokart components which have been superseded (generally for improved safety, or more resistant to damage and failure).

The purchase of an electronic race timing systems was considered in 2010 but deemed ‘too expensive’. Club Committee meetings were held at a range of locations including public bars, member’s homes and the AFMNZ.

The Club was fortunate that the Canterbury Earthquakes of 4 September 2010 and 22 February 2011 (the February earthquake causing extensive damage and 185 fatalities in Christchurch), did not generally impact on the Club’s access and use of Wigram. However, following the February 2011 earthquake, the New Zealand Blokart Open, to be held at Wigram in March, was cancelled.