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“a sort of
hush power”

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Plane Sailing

Lloyd Borrett from Corporate Data Processing, is a man in love with his sport. So much so he was inspired to put pen to paper and describe his feelings about his favourite pastime, gliding.

"During the southern summer the sun beats down to make inland Australia a paradise for glider pilots. In fact, pilots the world over are increasingly considering this country one of the finest gliding meccas. The flatness of our outback, combined with higher summer temperatures, draws pilots from everywhere.

It is an exhilarating sport. Whether soaring around billowing cumulus clouds at 8000 feet, or rocketing across country, landing in Farmer Brown's paddock when the lift runs out (it sometimes does), or scratching around at low level looking for lift, it is a thoroughly rewarding experience.

However, in all the time spent soaring, nothing compares with the thrill of thermalling with an eagle. To look out on the other side of the same thermal (a rising current of heated air) and find an eagle circling upward, looking curiously at the big white bird with the 15 metre wingspan silently circling in the rising air that his ancestors have been using for thousands of years.

It is not, according to my own 100 hours gliding time, a dangerous sport. Gliders fly slowly on approach; there is no fuel to catch fire; and glider pilots are well trained.

Modern gliders are made from glass-fibre, metal and aluminium. They are strong, light and flexible. The two seater "Twin Astir" in which I learnt to fly weighs about 400 kg empty.

However, when the lift is strong and flying fast is the order of the day, the wings are filled with 100 kg of water to improve the glider's 'penetration'.

Solar generated lift can be very strong indeed. Quite often I have been able to achieve climb rates of over 1000 feet a minute.

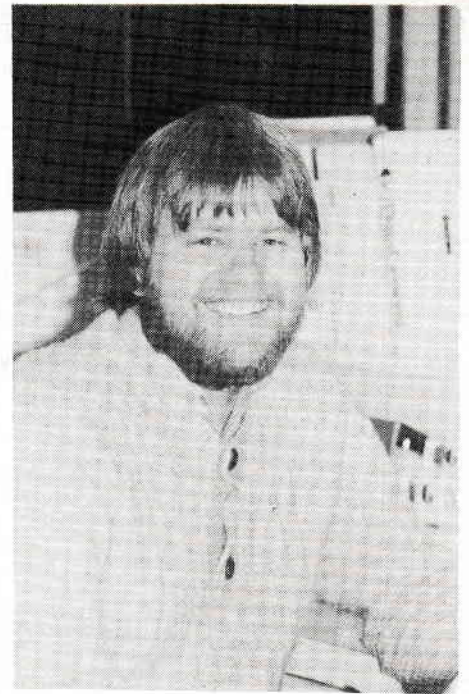
In these circumstances, it is easy to appreciate that gliders can climb to astonishing heights. The Australian height record for a glider is 31 700 feet and the world height record is 46 250 feet. Sailplanes regularly fly over Mount Kosciusko in the Australian Alps.

How is it done? The answer lies not in the wind, as with the comparable sport of sailing, but in the thermal lift, the rising air caused by the sun's heating action on the ground.

Sailplanes circle in this rising air and although they must fly 'downwards' at a shallow angle, the net effect of flying in rising air is a height gain.

Certainly there is a sound of silence — complete silence, but a sort of hush power. The wind sighs past the sleek fuselage and perspex cockpit, and the world revolves below you as you 'thermal' in the lift.

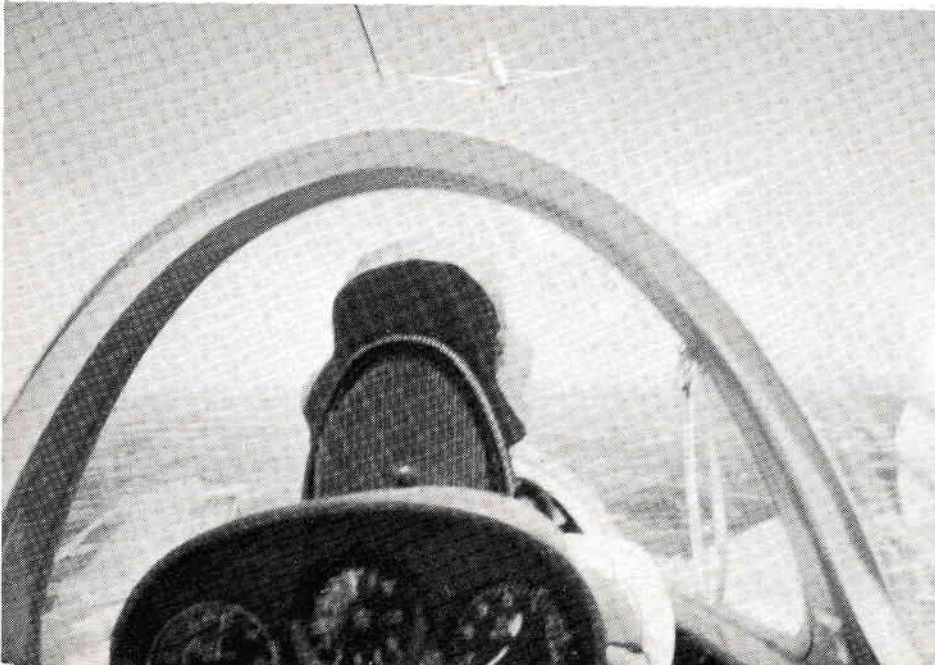
All this makes gliding one of the most thrilling adventure sports, an activity enjoyed across Australia by some 6000 pilots."



Lloyd learnt to fly at Waikerie in South Australia, arguably he says, the world's best soaring site. At the end of five days he was sent solo, and has now spent a total of 10 weeks at Waikerie over the past 30 months.

There are several full-time gliding operations in Australia at which you can take a 10 day course, which costs about \$800, and obtain a gliding certificate. Solo glider hire averages \$15-20 an hour at most clubs. When this is compared to the \$5000 required to obtain an unrestricted private pilots licence and a hire charge of \$50-100 an hour for light aircraft, gliding is a relatively cheap sport.

Lloyd 'flying high'



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