



Cat. No. 0027

Sydney Soaring Club's Slingsby Gull 4, c. 1948 - airframe parts



[The Gull 4 VH-GFA: photo from Jenne Goldsmith]

The Gull 4 airframe components held by the Museum are from the aircraft formerly registered as VH-GFA. The Gull 4 was designed and built by Slingsby Sailplanes at Kirbymoorside, York in the United Kingdom.

Through the agency of Doc Heydon, VH-GFA was acquired in 1949 by the Sydney Soaring Club, New South Wales, from Philip Wills of the United Kingdom who had flown the glider in the World Championships in Spain in 1948. The Gull 4 arrived in Australia in April or May 1949. It was taken to Parkes aerodrome in central NSW at Christmas 1949 and a series of excellent cross country flights were made. The most outstanding flight achieved was a distance of 192 miles (307 km) to Culburra near Nowra by Fred Hoinville to complete his "Gold C". This was the first official Gold C award to an Australian pilot. Other good flights were 158 miles (253 km) by Doc Heydon, 156 miles (250 km) out and return by Mervyn Waghorn and 141 miles (225 km) by Len Schultz.

At the end of 1950 the Sydney Soaring Club took their Gull 4 to Narromine, which is about 300 km west of Sydney. The hot conditions with a north wind

were pretty promising for soaring when they began flying. Martin Warner took the Gull 4 to 13,000 feet in the Narromine area on Friday 22 December. On Saturday 30 December, a south westerly change was forecast. Martin Warner made a local flight in the Gull 4 during the morning in hot northerly wind conditions. He took off again soon after midday. The arrival of the change was heralded by a line of thick cumulo nimbus clouds that appeared ahead of the front. Warner released from the aero-tow and was lifted up into a dark cloud. The glider rose rapidly to 25,150 feet and Warner passed out through lack of oxygen. He recovered minutes later when the glider had spiraled out of control to a much lower altitude. It exited the cloud about 4000 feet. However, Warner found himself over the scrub covered hills south of Dubbo and had to crash land the glider into the tree-tops on a hill side. He managed to extricate himself from the wreckage and walk for about an hour to seek help. Fortunately he was not seriously injured.



This altitude flight (a record) was the first of three incidents that resulted in extensive damage to the Gull 4. The second was after the ownership of the glider had passed to J.M. and W.P. Iggulden, Victorian Motorless Flight Group. It spun off a winch launch and crashed at Berwick. The third instance occurred at Bacchus Marsh when the pilot also lost control while being winch launched.

He had the good fortune of landing on a stook of hay and was unhurt. The glider was possibly owned by Ron Geake at that stage. The glider has been repaired by Schneiders on at least one occasion. After the last crash they made two spar booms and these with the rudder and fuselage wreckage have been stored.

J. M. (Jack) Iggulden flew the Gull 4 in winning the National Gliding Championships at Benalla in January 1959.



[Photos of the Gull 4 rudder (left) and fuselage (above) – B. Duckworth]