

Wagga people's hobbies

MODEL PLANE BUILDER HAS "FLYING SAUCER" MODEL

Wagga canvas-worker, Norm Lancaster, of Tarcutta Road, who has been designing, building and flying his own model aeroplanes since he was 10 years old, has a model of a "flying saucer" in his collection.

The saucer is a shallow con-
(By Anne Scol)
cave disc about 17 inches across, made of light Balsa wood and fitted with an engine. Norm flies it on Sundays with the Wagga Model Aero Club.

He made the model from magazine instructions, and found it simple to build.

"I can't remember just how many models I've made — it runs into too many," Norm said recently.

"I started off making plasticine planes when I was about six and I've kept up an interest in all types of aviation since then."

"Although powered models can be bought for about £15, most enthusiasts prefer to make their own.

"There's a tremendous amount of mathematical calculation involved, and this puts a lot of people off the idea. Aerodynamic design deals with the many forces and pressures a model meets in flight, and it takes a lot of algebraic work.

Free flight models

"I'm only average at maths, but I have a friend who helps

me out with the tricky work," Norm said.

Beginners often construct their planes from kits, when all they have to do is fit the parts together.

At present Norm goes in mainly for free flight—which

means that the model is fuelled, and started up, and once in the air is on its own. But he also practises the control line method, where the plane is attached to a wire, and flies in circles around its owner. This is the method used for stunting and speed.

Free flight models reach up to 40 m.p.h. in the air, and the distance they fly depends on the amount of fuel they carry.

Norm recently sent one of his planes off from the club site in Fernleigh Road. It zoomed into the clouds, and that was the last he saw of it for a few days.

Some time later a rabbit was eating his lunch under a tree at Kapooka, and saw something silver in the branches above him. It was Norm's plane.

"It carried my name and address, but I was still very lucky to get it back," Norm

lucky to get it back," Norm commented.

Models are often lost in this way, by being caught in a thermal current, and once a plane reaches the clouds, the owner usually says goodbye to it.

Popular in America

The sport is a popular one in America, and some time ago reached such proportions that airliners were continually flying into models that crossed their route and often

had to change altitude to avoid them. Because of this, model aero carnivals were restricted to certain areas and times.

Model planes built in America before the war were large, usually with about a 10 foot wing span, but in recent years designs have been improved.

In Australia, model planes built today range from about 16 inches in wing span to 12 feet. The most popular size is four feet across. Most of these will carry about one fluid ounce of fuel.

Norm has attempted a little stunt flying, but hopes to do more soon.

"You have to be good," he said, "but it's all a matter of experience. The only way to learn in this sport is by trial and error."

Control line models reach a speed of more than 100 m.p.h., and can be spectacular, especially with team work—two or three planes flying in the same circle.

Jet models, too

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Recent progress in the field has produced jet models. The most satisfactory principle for small planes has been found to be that of the pulsating jet, and models powered in this way soar over the 100 m.p.h. mark.

Norm joined the forces during the war and served as a paratrooper for some time. He took with him an elementary knowledge of aerodynamics, as he had joined the East Malvern Model Aero Club when he was 13, and learned much about the subject there.

He was a founder of the Wagga Club about 12 months ago, and holds the position of secretary. He has successfully competed in the club's two carnivals.



Mr. Norm Lancaster with one of the model aeroplanes which he builds himself. This is a free-flight model with a wing span of four feet, and Norm says it has an "E.D. 2cc competition special diesel" engine.