



The History Of the Orange Model Aircraft Club: The Years in Review

By Frank Smolle

The Orange Model Aircraft Club (O.M.A.C.) began at a time when the aircraft was at center stage on the world scene. A Trans Atlantic flight from the USA to Europe had not been attempted with a full-sized piloted aircraft, when the first of the enthusiastic adolescents of Orange were already building Model planes.

In 1919 Raymond Orteig offered \$US 25.000 to the first pilot who would attempt a non-stop flight from New York to Paris. As engine and instrument technology of the time was still in its fledgling years, this endeavor was not attempted until 1926, just three years, before O.M.A.C. became a club in 1929. One can imagine that the pilots of those times and the equipment they used were acknowledged and regarded as worthy of great honour just as now, the great pioneering astronauts of this the space-age are.

The founding President of O.M.A.C. was Alan Brown, Bill Faucett being the Secretary, further committee members included Dave Williams, Lester Ferrier, Colin Thompson and Noel Brown. The free flight plane "Starduster" that Alan Brown flew is still intact with it's clockwork servo functional, and is admired by members and visitors as it is proudly displayed in the O.M.A.C. clubhouse at present. Also, an annual competition is held in his memory, bearing the name 'Alan Brown.' For this occasion, enthusiasts travel from all over the State to be able to participate in this event.

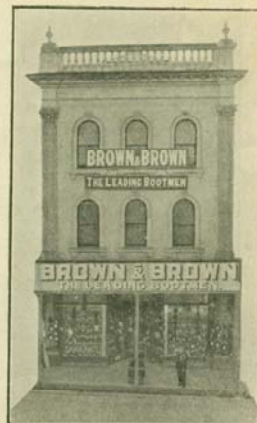
The first O.M.A.C. club competition was held in 1933. Alan Brown won the Parker trophy for *free flight*, flying a cabin rubber driven



model with a 90cm wingspan, the model landed in Howarth's orchard at March quite some distance from the place of take-off. (Left – 1928 picture of the main street of Orange)



Interior View of BROWN & BROWN'S Boot Shop.



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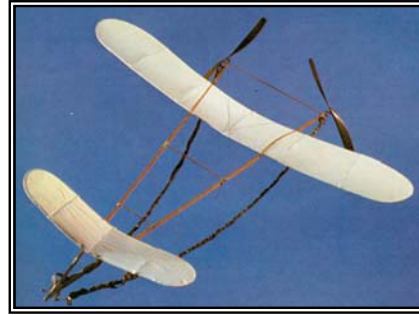
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 Opp. POST OFFICE,
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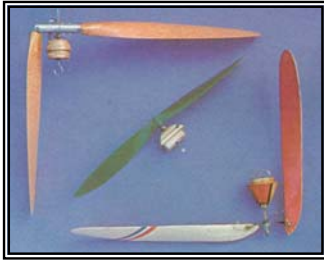
Alan Brown and his brother were part owners in the family business started as a shoe store progressing to men's ware, known as "Brown and Brown Men's Ware. The store was located in Summer Street of the C.B.D. Alan Brown devoted a small corner of the store to selling the raw material, parts and equipment needed to build and fly model planes. (Above – 1908 picture of Brown & Brown: Left – 1937 add for Brown & Brown)

In those early days there were hardly any kits available, one went to Alan and bought a plan, all the balsa-wood, and accessories. There was no iron-on fabric available only silk or tissue and dope (an adhesive made from acetone) that could be used to cover the planes. Though plane modelers would often use paper and dope, as this was the cheapest form of covering.

The youth of Orange began flying free flight planes in a vacant field on the then outskirts of Orange, where the Orange High School stands today and also some times met where the Orange swimming pool is today.



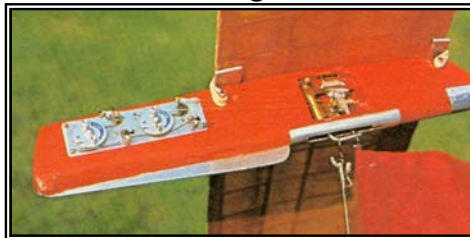
In free flight competitions, rubber band driven planes were released. A typical model of 1929 was an "A"



frame plane with two propellers (pictured above). Other more advanced planes had control surfaces, which were either preset before takeoff or, a clockwork timer (pictured below) which was set to manipulate the ruder and/or the elevator at a preset time. Keith Eyles following in his father's footsteps joined the club with Les Hughes along

with and a team of other young students from the Orange Rural School in 1934, to become a long term

standing members of O.M.A.C. for many years to come. At this time Keith built his first model, which flew for 2 seconds and then crashed. With the guidance of his



school-teacher (Walter Standing) and his father he became a refined builder. In 1939 Keith Eyles won the Mockler Cup free flight competition with his rubber-driven model, obtaining a flight duration of 23 minutes. During the years of the Second World War, Fred Eyles (Keith's father) continued club activities with Alan Brown, whilst Keith was serving in the R.A.A.F.

1940 is a landmark year for modeling in the Central West, A.G. Hull entered the Mockler Cup free flight competition with a petrol driven model in Bathurst, with no surprise he won. Subsequently the rules for the Mockler Cup were changed to level the playing field and accommodate petrol engines. The Mockler Cup rules for gas powered free flight models must have a 20 second engine run, with the longest glide time. Keith Eyles bought a small petrol engine and during 1941 and 42 won and received an American Brown Junior 1934 engine for three perpetual wins.

Control line planes emerged around the mid to late 1940's. It was around this time that Jim Lovick joined O.M.A.C. Jim's interest started with the fascination of engines, first just having them run on a bench,



then at the age of 13 started flying control line planes. Jim taught him-self to fly control line with a modified 'half A team racer', after that first flight he was hooked. The 'half A team racer' that he flew in the 1940's and 50's is still hanging in Jim's hobby room (pictured at left - 'half A team racer'). A team race competition consisted of two people, one to start the engine and the other to fly the plane. One hundred laps were to be completed in the shortest amount of time. Thus in a team race competition 2 or 3 pit stops were necessary to refuel the plane. Jim, trying his hand at free flight, purchased free flight plane from Alan Brown. Being warned not to put a large amount of fuel in the model, Jim thought the tank to be way too small. Jim wanting a long engine run filled the tank to its maximum and let the model fly, from the outskirts of Orange on the Molong Road, then pursuing it on foot for a kilometer. Six months later Jim was notified by the Orange police, and was told that the model plane was in custody at the station, as a farmer found it on his property 10 miles from Orange and handed it in. Thus Jim reverted back to control line planes. Jim later moved to Sydney to further his career in automotive engine knowledge.



Don Strachan joined O.M.A.C. in 1949 having an interest in scale like control line planes. Don flew with OMAC till 1953, when he was called away to play rugby for Australia in Fiji, again in 1954 played State Side against New Zealand, 1955 played for the Wallabies in New Zealand and in 1956, captained State Side for 5 years. Don continued his absence from modeling due to work and family commitments until 1986.

"I remember at Wade Park some O.M.A.C. members put on a control line demonstration and Jack Gray had a pulsejet plane. You could hear the sound from it bouncing off all the roofs of Orange. It had a sound that was somewhat a rhythmic roar. I am sure that all of Orange heard it. I think it was for the Cherry Blossom festival."
(Don Strachan 9/2/05)



In 1953 OMAC still flew control models at the property where the Orange High School (OHS) now stands. This photo was taken where the front door of OHS is now. (Picture supplied by Don Strachan)

In the late 1940's, early 1950's Stuart Lane and his brother Ronald (pictured right) joined O.M.A.C. flying control line planes. Ronald was keen but with the constant repairing of his planes he soon stopped flying. Stuart Lane continued flying, gaining state title recognition, where his photo was placed



on the cover of one of the modeling magazines. Ronald and Stuart's father owned a farm on Ophir road, where he leveled two areas so that the boys could fly their control line planes. Jim Lovick often visited Stuart and Ronald Lane, to fly on their farm. The farm on Ophir road is still owned by Ronald Lane. Now his son Scott Lane (pictured left) flies radio controlled aircrafts with O.M.A.C.

O.M.A.C. moving from the now Orange High School site to Ophir Road where the local RSL club owned a parcel of land allowing OMAC use of this land for flying. It was at that time around 1950, the first reliable Futaba and Kraft Sport Series radio control aircraft equipment became available. Before this the modelers had radio control transmitters, receivers and servos that had to be built by hand, from either diagrams or from kits and were only one or two channel radios. The popularity of OMAC and its model aircrafts rapidly expanded to peak at 140 members at one stage.

Before Jim Lovick moved back to Orange he was a member of the North Shore Aero-modeling club. Jim flew pulsejet (Dynajet) driven control line planes. Some of the activities that Jim entered were team racing, control line pattern flying, combat and public demonstrations. Several demonstrations were at the Sydney Show Ground with the pulsejet control line planes. Jim won state titles for combat flying in 1955, 56, and 58.

Jim Lovick moved back to Orange in 1958 to open an engine reconditioning business. Jim bought a Smog Hog plane from Keith in which he placed the latest single channel radio control. Soon after Jim met Tom Prosser who was using a multi channel reed radio with his magnificent model the Astro Hog. Jim saw that this was the way to go and acquired a Silvertone radio from John Marquette. As Jim was one of New South Wales best control line pilots he wanted to be a leader in radio

control. Tom Prosser supported Jim by fitting the radio into an Astro Hog and test flying it for Jim. Tom also traveled to Orange to teach Jim to fly.

“ Now Tom was unable to come for a couple of weeks and I was impatient, it couldn't be very hard, surely, all the controls seemed simple enough. Elevator up and down like in control line. Rudder left and right. Give it a go! Result – a damaged model and bent ego. Repair and have another go. This time a worse result, a written-off model. This radio business is harder than it looks.”

(The Pioneers of Model Aviation in Australia. p.180)

In 1975 Jim was approached by the County Council to fly a line across a half-mile wide gorge. Jim Lovick took on this task with Robert May. The process of how it was done sounds simple but it is the simple things that are the hardest to do.

Using a large model aircraft to tow a fishing line across the gorge drop the line on the other side and fly back. What was needed to the job thou two pilots were needed, one on either side of the gorge to take over control at mid point. Communication was handled by a two-way radio so as one pilot switched their RC transmitter off the other had too switch their transmitter on. At one stage of the flight with cable in tow Jim's son had to clime a tall tree to un-snag the caught line. Also the wind caused a problem, as the model flew the wind caught hold of the line the model was towing and bowed it out down wind. Having the model take off without a run way was simple, hand launch, but landing the plane without damage, with no runway and large rocks every were ended in a minor repair job and a new motor. To prepare for this monumental task Jim Lovick practiced at the Jack Brabham sports field, which was once the orange airport. Jack Brabham sports field and the adjoining golf club from opposite corners of the two properties, proved to be the length between the gorge cliffs. As Robert held the model flat Jim was unable to see it, only when Robert held the model showing the underside profile could the model be seen from that distance of approximately 1.5 miles.



With the expansion of Orange and more people moving to Clifton Grove, complaints about the noise were made. The RSL club, which owned the land felt sorry for the OMAC members and offered to relocate the flying field to a far end of the paddock. But complaints persisted by one homeowner. Complaints were aired in the Orange media direct

instead of to OMAC or the RSL. The movement to Jack Brabham sports field in 1978 was a temporary fix till a more permanent home for the club could be found. It was here at the Jack Brabham sports field that Jim Lovick and Paul Turner gave a demonstration with their pulsejet (Dynajet) driven control line planes, which drastically increased the noise levels. Needless to say local residents were not happy, but modeling enthusiasts were stoked. The demonstration took place just on dusk which made the plains look spectacular, the red glow of the jet pipe and the red to light blue glow of the after burn was a sight to behold. Due to fire safety, pulsejets were never used in radio-controlled models.

Warwick Gregory moved to Orange in 1975 already enjoying 20 years of control line flying and 5 years of radio controlled flying. For many years Warwick enjoyed sport models till in 1979 he started competing in scale, with a model of a "Pica Waco".

Warwick and Jim Lovick went door knocking around to the local farms to find a home for the club, as noise was starting to bother people living close to the sports field. Mr Melimic a farmer that owned a property about 8 kilometers out of Orange on Forest road excepted with joy, and it was there OMAC stayed for the next 25 years. In the first year the members of OMAC flew from the eastern side of the paddock, flying to the west. This decision was good till, rain came, and put the landing strip under water. The highest point of the paddock was found and the landing strip was relocated in the west of the paddock.

During the 1980's the club had a square concrete pipe, used to support small bridges of about 7 feet wide to go over small waterways. This pipe was nicked named "The Bunker", it was used to keep the club sit-on-mower and other implements. In 1989 the members decided to upgrade the flying field, and built a small garden shed. The bunker was then converted into a long drop toilet. Along with a club tent and borrowed tents many competitions and rallies were held, helping increase the clubs fanatical position.

In 1989 the club held a static scale competition in Robertson Park, which attracted modelers from all over NSW. At this competition some of Australia's best models were on display for the public of Orange. In 1991 the model aircraft clubs of NSW were invited to give static and flying demonstration at the 75th Anniversary of the Richmond RAAF (video footage is on the CD). In 1995 there was a hobby expo held at the Agriculture University in Orange where the club was invited to give a static demonstration. In 1999 the club expanded once more to build a

bigger shed used to contain a canteen and radio pound. At Christmas the club had parties at the flying field, and held free member barbeques once a month. On the 8th of May 2004 the club had to pack up and move from the Forest road flying field. On the 15th August 2004 the first flight of OMAC was held on the Field Days Site, and soon to follow was the first crash. On the 20th November 2004 was the first scale competition. On the 22 of January 2005 the club started reconstructing the clubhouse.

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