

TOM GRIEVE

Instructor dies after scattering friend's ashes



SCOTTISH microlight instructor Tom Grieve has died after his flexwing crashed in Thailand while he and a passenger were scattering the ashes of a friend.

Tom, 57, a former member of the Connel Flying Club in Oban, was flying above Pattaya Bay off the south coast when his engine stopped. He was trying to land when the Quik GT450 clipped a pier. He died in hospital from chest injuries.

Passenger Patrick Esser, 31, from Lyme Regis, who suffered a broken arm, said: "My friend Stuart Long had died of throat cancer aged just 41, and we were about to scatter his ashes in the sea.

"We were at about 2000ft when the engine cut. Tom tried several times to start it but failed. He was gliding it down and aiming

for a large piece of concrete to land on. We must have been going about 70mph when we clipped something. We went head over heels and crashed into the water upside down."

Tom, who lived in Pattaya and worked as an instructor at the Nongprue Flying Club, was an experienced pilot who had received two major awards for outstanding airmanship.

The Thai authorities are investigating the crash.

Below we print two tributes to him, the first from his friend David Whitelaw, chairman of Connel Flying Club, and the second from John Hamnett who, as a young Sapper with the Royal Engineers on Operation Crown in Thailand, built an airfield which is now used by microlights.

An exceptional friend

TOM came to the club in 1989, flying a Flash 2 Alpha.

He immediately became a great member, with his enthusiasm, outgoing personality and friendly nature brightening up many a dreary west-coast day.

He made a full contribution to the construction of our hangar and clubhouse, willingly lending his labour and skills wherever and whenever needed.

Tom showed an interest in flying over long distances, and it was not long before he had covered most of Scotland. By that time I had done several flights in the UK and down into France and Belgium. He used to discuss these in detail and was very taken by my comment that the only difference between doing these trips and flying locally was that each flight ended up at a different airfield.

Tom became very friendly with Pete Oldham, who was at that time our assistant instructor and who sadly was later killed in a flexwing accident in Africa, and together they quietly set about entering the annual Dawn to Dusk competition. It was no surprise that they won, with their flight following the Prince Charlie Trail.

That was followed by another win the following year, following the first postal flights of the Northern Isles.

This served only to whet Tom's appetite for challenge, and in 1994 he set off to Shetland with Hugh Knox in a flexwing



Tributes to Tom in Pattaya
(photo: John Hamnett)

and an AX3, both powered by two-stroke engines, followed by the first microlight crossing of the North Sea to Norway, then down through Europe, England, Wales and Ireland before coming back to Oban. They were awarded the BMAA's Steve Hunt Trophy in recognition.

The next adventure was the circumnavigation of Australia in three flexwings with Chris Cullen and Keith Ingham, which took in around 10,000 miles and again won the Steve Hunt Trophy.

All Tom's flights were done without following ground support, and he also raised significant amounts for Amnesty International and Flight Aid through his flying.

Tom's wanderlust next saw him heading out to Thailand and, having obtained his instructor rating, he set up his own flying school, subsequently moving into autogyros as well.

He kept in contact with us through regular emails and whenever back in Scotland he would return to visit the club, regularly inviting us to go out to visit him and experience the Eastern hospitality.

We have lost an exceptional friend, pilot and adventurer, and our thoughts are with his friends, his family and his partner May, who will miss him most of all.

David Whitelaw

An old-time adventurer

I WAS in Thailand to participate in a remembrance ceremony with other Operation Crown veterans.

After travelling in the region for a while, I left with two other companions for Pattaya, to participate in some local flying with Tom, arriving on Sunday 18 November.

To find on arrival the awful news of his demise the day before was a shock, to say the least, not only for myself but for his many friends and family, and I stayed in Pattaya to attend his funeral and cremation.

Tom was generous to a fault, helping other people, including myself, to realize dreams and ambitions – as he was doing for Patrick Esser on this occasion.

His microlighting career is that of an old-time adventurer who loved a challenge, and who was one of the forerunners to today's horizon-busters.

John Hamnett