

FLY ABOUT



OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE NORTHAM AERO CLUB (INC)
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Print Post Approval PPN: 639955/00013



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

April, 2006

MASTER PLAN PROGRESS We have held two meetings with Northam Town Council since the last issue of Fly About and there is some progress to report. The Council has voted to go ahead with the runway seal and the acting CEO is liaising with the Department of Productivity and Infrastructure to access our RADS grant funds. The most important feature of this is that the Council now regards the reseal as urgent and is taking steps to speed up the loan approval process so that the work can be completed before the cold weather sets in.

Building approvals for hangars are still being held up pending proposed changes to the draft Master Plan. The Council has several issues with the report, as have we, and these have been forwarded to the consultant for his response. The acting CEO has told us that the Council cannot issue permits until the Master Plan is accepted, even though the consultant has recommended that 12 hangars be built to the north of the existing line. We have maintained at both meetings with the acting CEO and the Mayor that, as everyone is agreed on these additional hangars, the moratorium should be lifted. However, the CEO maintains that the Council cannot implement just one part of a Master Plan. In other words, we have to wait until agreement is reached on the Plan's entire content, which may take months. The glimmer of light in this otherwise dark landscape is that the acting CEO has undertaken to reconsider his advice to the Council if a prompt resolution does not emerge.

On a positive note, the Club and the Council appear to be singing from the same hymnbook on the subject of future management. We have told the Council that we do not wish to continue as operators of the airfield under the existing arrangements because, according to the lease which governs our function, we have responsibility without authority. We are, to put it simply, doing their (the owners') job for them without adequate recompense and with no means of imposing rules necessary for the safe and effective management of an airfield. The acting CEO has recognised this, and will recommend that the Council replace our occupier's lease with a management lease which defines our functions and gives us the authority to enforce them. We have also foreshadowed a claim for an increase in the amount we receive from the Town and the Shire (\$5000 each plus \$1500 for maintenance per annum). The Committee has asked me to prepare a budget in support of this claim, based on the CPI increase since these payments were implemented around 1990 (about 50 per cent) and reasonable financial compensation for the myriad services we now perform free of charge. The idea is that the Club, as operator of the airfield on behalf of the two Councils, should relinquish its role as a volunteer force providing everything for nothing, and move to being a manager with sufficient financial backing from the owners to arrange for essential services to be carried out by professional service providers at a market rate.

HANGAR LEASES So that we are ready when Northam Town Council lifts the moratorium on building permits, leases are now being prepared for the four existing applicants. There's a huge amount of work involved in these – there have to be four copies of every lease, and each page has to be initialled by a veritable regiment of signatories. Then there are official seals, witnessing, and more palaver than the queen's coronation. Well, almost.

Our tireless treasurer, Joy Flegeltaub, has put in hours of work to ensure that our end of the approval process goes without a hitch. Thanks, Joy, you're a marvel!

CHEERS FOR CHARLIE Pearce Flying Club members have taken to CMP and she has flown 13 hours to the end of March – rather more than she was doing at Northam! The Committee has voted to extend our arrangement for a further two months, after which we will review the situation.

DAWN RAID SUNDAY MAY 21 There is some serious aggro building over the clash between the Lowlands Royals and the Northam Loyals on May 21. RAC Club Captain Mick Harcourt will spearhead the dawn attack on Northam (if they can find it) in a desperate attempt to win back the President's Trophy, which is almost glued to the bar at our Northam headquarters. A highlight of the day will be the presence of the Aero Club's Chipmunk, which will be flown by instructor Trevor Jones. Anyone who would like to fly the Chippie should ring me to book a slot. I've put my name down as number one – I learnt to fly in a Chippie more years ago than I will admit to and can't wait to reacquaint myself with this trusty aerobatic trainer. We'll be providing breakfast for the invaders and anyone else who wants to turn up. Please let me know if you're coming so I can ensure we have enough eggs and bacon.

POWER FOR NEW HANGARS We are approaching an electrical contractor to provide an up-to-date quote on the cost of supplying power to new hangars. The present transformer, which was installed by SECWA way back in the mists of time to service farms to the east of the field as well as Northam Airport hangars, has trouble coping with the existing load, and we have been advised that further connections are not possible. The Club has no obligation to supply power to hangars, and has only become involved because the power authority refused to read more than one meter on the airfield property. So we became de facto unofficial electricity suppliers and meter readers. We are now trying to find out how much it will cost to upgrade the system so that the costs can be apportioned. As soon as we know what is involved we will be in contact with prospective hangar owners. In the meantime, we're sorry to advise that it's just not possible to add more hangars to the grid.

CHEERS FOR CHARLIE The Committee decided at its April 23 meeting to create the portfolio of Airside Supervisor so that one person has responsibility for ensuring that the operational aspects of the Club's role as Airport Operator are carried out satisfactorily. The responsibilities include runway maintenance and safety, correct operation and maintenance of runway lighting, regular slashing of grassed areas, maintenance of taxiways and aprons, and other tasks connected with the proper operation of the airfield. The long-suffering Claude Meunier has agreed to take on this role, which will increasingly involve the appointment of contractors to undertake work on behalf of the owners of the field, Northam Town and Shire councils, and Northam Aero Club. Our thanks go to Claude.

Tailwinds wherever you fly!

Tony Rees
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SPECIAL COURSE FOR MOONEY PILOTS

By Tony Rees

I attended a special course for Mooney pilots, operated by the Australian Mooney Pilots' Association, at Jandakot recently and found it an interesting and rewarding experience.

As a recent purchaser (in partnership with Frank Kotai) of an M20J, I cannot think of a better preparation for ownership than that provided by the Mooney Pilot Proficiency Course at the Royal Aero Club from March 31 to April 2.

I guess the element which made the greatest impact on me was the uncompromising dedication to the idea of inspiring Mooney drivers to lift their game across the board. You can't impose standards by regulation; better flying comes from within and is fuelled by better knowledge. This precept extended throughout the range of subjects covered and left a really positive impression: that's it's worth striving to be a more professional operator. I'm not talking here simply about getting the speed right on approach so you don't overcook the landing – this is a fundamental change in attitude.

Most of us – and let me be the first to concede it – are amateur fliers. We do it, mostly, because we like it, and we don't do it every day. That puts us in a different category from those who fly for a living and exposes us to the dangers of complacency, sloppy (if not exactly unsafe) procedures, and the disadvantage of not being subjected on a regular basis to the rigours of professional aviation. So we have to try harder to maintain proficiency. A course such as the Mooney PPP provides an opportunity for people like me to learn a lot, have their piloting skills kicked into shape, and pick up on a very strong vibe that flying better than we did yesterday is the way to go.

I derived benefit from every session, and cannot recall a moment of boredom. That's a pretty good rap for a course that extended over three days. I am so pleased to have come away with a new understanding of leaning procedures and power settings. It was illuminating to have an expert explain that "oversquare" is okay. In flight I was able to experience the reduced noise levels of cruise at 25 inches and 2200 rpm.

Ways of avoiding a common source of damage to Mooneys – a too-fast approach followed by a bounce and prop-strike – was an informative pre-flight session, and the explanation of mishaps on go-around, when the pilot has to counteract a strong tendency to yaw to the left, excellent. Similarly, the stalling and incipient spins briefing was good preparation for the Mooney's exhilarating performance in this area! I found the emergency procedures unit a good wake-up call – how often, in between AFRs, do we actually pay them much attention? The pilot maintenance module provided a rare opportunity to look under the skin of an M20J under the tutelage of a Mooney-savvy LAME. Good practical stuff, as were the sessions on GPS and the aircservices system.

The highlight of any ground training, however, is its implementation in the third dimension. I've got to say that flying with Royal Aero Club CFI Werner Buhlmann, my instructor for the course, was brilliant. It's an absolute pleasure to learn from someone who is totally professional. The instructors' job with all PPP participants was to make them work hard and ensure they were ahead of this delightful but slippery aeroplane, and Werner certainly fulfilled his end of the bargain. From my point of view it was a labour of love, though, and I can say without hesitation that I am a more confident, and hopefully safer, Mooney pilot as a result.

I enjoyed the interaction with other Mooney enthusiasts and the chance to talk to people who are so knowledgeable about the marque.

To come away from the program with a new AFR and a superb Mooney Operations Reference Manual was an added bonus. A great first PPP for me – I can't wait for the next one!



Kevin Thomas and his Trinidad new paint job.



Caotain Tony fly testing VH-JTB

NEW AIRCRAFT FOR NORTHAM

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Proud new owner....
Wishing you a lot of fun with your new aircraft.

VALE MERV DUDLEY

AVIATOR



A phone call from Doug Thorley advised me of Merv's failure late last week. A phone call from the President followed asking me to make some notes about Merv and his involvement with Aviation. The task is not a difficult one due to Merv's RAAF history, Ag work and rediscovery of flying at the Aero Club.

Most of the members of Northam Aero Club would remember Merv more recently parked at the northern end of the taxi way reading the newspaper or simply going for a stroll around the airport perimeter checking on aircraft movements. What the more recent members may not know is how Merv teamed up with Ian Chambers (Chompers) of Ag Spray Aviation with spreading and spraying in the Avon Valley. In those days Ian operated a Cessna 188 throughout the extremity of the Avon Valley. The cockpit of a 188 was a tight squeeze even for Chompers and

Merv could often be seen climbing into the Hopper with newspaper or book for travel to site "steorage class." Merv and Ian were great cobbers and divided their time equally between flying, Aero Club bar, and discussing aviation at the Ag Spray hangar.

During this time Merv decided to try flying, bought a TIF and commenced basic training with a NAC Instructor. The Instructor was impressed with Merv's ability and during an after flying session at the NAC bar Merv enquired if he was entitled to claim credits against a licence for previous flying. The young Instructor explained that it depended on how long ago, what sort of flying and asked for his previous experience. Merv casually explained that he had instructed on P51's (Mustang) during the latter part of WW2. The Instructor held Merv in much greater esteem thereafter.

Several years later the Club had been cross-hiring DIB (I think from the Syndicate *Mos Air*, Masters Overton & Smith) and the cross hire arrangement came to an end. Good C172's were not so plentiful in those days and it seemed that NAC may have been left without an aircraft. Without any fanfare the aircraft was privately purchased and reinstated on line for hire through the NAC. It was not known for some months afterwards that Merv had purchased the C172 in order to keep the Club's Flying School operating.

Merv's involvement with aviation and the Aero Club has been significant. His association with the Aero Club was never ostentatious but was always offering assistance or opinions on all matters Aero Club

Most people in Northam would know Merv as a local identity but not as an Aviator. The Club and Club members past and present are fortunate to have known and flown with such a pilot. Condolences are extended to Merv's family on behalf of the Club.

Gren Putland

THE ELLUSIVE M4

Wayback over ten years ago my very good and life long friends, Maco Oiwa and Sabu Ischiyoshi, came to the NAC with a plan to set a new record for balloon duration in this state. In those years, there were many record attempts on both National and World records. This particular record was one that was significant in ballooning circles due to the innovative design of the balloon, made with a double skin layer that was intended to reduce heat loss through the fabric. Attempts in this aircraft were recognised as possible after others from their team made a flight from Mullewa to Victoria, in previous years.

The existing world duration record was then held by the Pacific / Atlantic flights of Lindstrand and Branson. Their aerostat was a capacity of 2.4 million cubic feet compared with the 210,000 cubic feet of Marco's innovative design. In the planning stage I needed for the flight to include small parachutes to allow dropping empty gas cylinders from the balloon during flight to improve duration. (In latter flights we found that the parachutes caused more damage to the cylinders being dropped than without).

So the stage is set for several bottles to be jettisoned during the flights in some very remote areas. Attempts were made in early '95 from Dalwallinu and latter (in middle of that year), from Southern Cross. This flight was successful in setting a new World duration record for the class of 41hrs 29 minutes. The actual duration was only minutes short of the Lindstrand flight in a balloon ten times the capacity.

For some years they remained where they fell. THEN, the idea of them being the catalyst for a bush trip slowly dawned on Gerry Sermon and myself. Over a period of time and during many expeditions the bottles have been recovered and placed back in my hangar at the Airfield. One cylinder jettisoned to the east of Dromedary Hills took several attempts to find and had the interest of Claude and others who made diversions from other flight tracks to have a look from the air. Eventually it was recovered and that left only M4 to be retrieved.

The area is between the Vermin Fence and Lake Deborah East. Having previously been to the site by 'scrub bashing', and used enough tyres and fuel to significantly effect the National balance of trade, Claude (who will not be left out of anything to do with records) demanded to be allowed on the next expedition. He also offered to provide an alternate method of search and this made his demand acceptable.

Provisioned with enough of all of the requirements needed for this type of trip, Gerard and Brian O'Neil departed NTM with a days head start, in order to find a location to the north of the Fence, that would suffice as a helipad. Claude and I departed the following day in his R44 for a leisurely trip to a predetermined bend in the fence. At the exact time we made contact on 'the numbers' and were guided to the spot. After recovering from the problem of having the cleared site marked with a cross instead of an H, we landed, helped set up camp, had lunch and formulated a search pattern.

Although the site was only 2nm distant from the camp the benefits of the R44 were instantly clear. The tracks we had made previously were still apparent and the scenery was spectacular. First we tried a pattern that set up parallel lines on the known track prior to during and after the drop site. Not that easy in the blustery conditions. We discovered a large and isolated grassed area to the north east of our area and also a rock area with what appeared to be an improved gnamma hole to the west. This watering place had been fenced and rock lined in some previous century. With a low pass we established that it was the home of a family of Quail. No sign of the cylinder!, so stop and rethink the pattern. This time we followed the inbound and outbound track to get an idea of possible options. Still no result!

Enough for that day and so back to camp for dinner, drinks and musical entertainment. As night fell, Claude explained his contribution to the evening. At time specified in hrs, minutes and seconds, and at azimuth and elevation there would be one of the communication satellites from the Iridium group turning and reflecting the sun to an earth location centred only two kilometres away. Right on time and through the light cloud the reflected flash lasted for approx 30 seconds.

Next morning and time to rethink. This time we intend to look at some areas not covered on the ground on previous trips. Very dense and low scrub that could easily hide a cylinder. All of this in deteriorating and blustery conditions. Initial operational concerns with the 44 overcome and the search continued for some more hours. At last the remaining fuel is needed to get back to civilisation and we have to set sail for NTM. A tail wind on that trip made the return leg fast, even allowing for diversions to avoid Wedgetails.

Gerard and Brian both arrive back after detours on the way home. We have declared that the cylinder *may* have been recovered by others. Then again we have made that declaration before; so better to say that at this time we have no immediate intention of a further expedition to search again for M4.

GREN PUTLAND





« X » marks the spot....



Lake Debra east, looking ENE



Lunch at 'Camp'. Lat S30.717° Long E119.283°



Water Hole near Lake Debra
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CIRCUITS & BUMPS...

Who kicked a hole in FESA water tank...
Some had fun but no success in the last quest for M4...
New paint job for Kevin's beautiful Trinidad...
Iridium sat was "spot on" time but clouds spoiled the show...
Finance Futures market review: For sale some ASIC cards to be delivered on March 31st (of which year...?)
Seen Robyn in town...Anyone remembers her...
New aircraft at YNTM....Prezis gets new toy...Congrats...
Who was parading his brand new ASIC/KGB/CIA ID card at comp(s)??
He/she who never had a "wheel up" should not criticize as one can have one anytime...
Vale Merv Dudley, quite achiever, great aviator and friend of the Aero Club.
Marc and Lila at Ian and Rhiannon's wedding, looking both younger than ever...
Congrats and best wishes to bride and groom...
Mooney free rides, ask Tony...
Joy on shopping spree in Melbourne...

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Sebastian De Beer
David Gillon
Murray Stuart Basham
Glen Millsted



Brian O'Neil at "camp" on Lake Deborah

Club Calendar

May 14th Committee Meeting at 10.00
May 21, Dawn Raid

Bar Roster

Opening hours
Saturday 5pm –7pm
Sunday 5pm—7pm

April	29 th & 30 th	Mike Bairstow
May	6 th & 7 th	Steve Vette
May	13 th	Claude Meunier
May	14 th	Tony Rees
May	20 th & 21 st	Matt Bignell
May	27 th & 28 th	Les Ballantyne
June	6 th & 7 th	Steve Vette

FOR INFORMATION
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