

FLY ABOUT



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

April, 2007

GLENN HAWSER IN CAR CRASH Our best wishes go out to Glenn Hawser, our Jabiru instructor, and his wife Nikki, who were hurt in a car accident when returning from Northam on Sunday, April 22. Glenn had been unable to fly the Jab back to Wyalkatchem because of thunderstorms and elected to return by road. He says he was “a bit sore and bruised” after the crash, caused by debris on the road after a downpour near Dowerin. Nikki, however, injured her neck (painfully but not seriously, Glenn said), and had to be airlifted to Royal Perth Hospital. She was expected to be released in a couple of days. Their small daughter, who was in the back, escaped with a seatbelt bruise. It’s bad luck for Glenn, who has been working hard to build up the Jabiru side of our operations. I’ve told him we will do anything we can to help and I’m sure members will join me in wishing Nikki a speedy recovery.

SAAA FLY-IN ON MAY 19-20: Plans are well advanced for next month’s fly-in by members of the Sport Aircraft Association of Australia’s Jandakot Chapter. About 30 aircraft are expected, and Bunbury Aero Club has advised that 10 planes are coming from there, too! Naturally, NAC members are invited. Please advise Matt Bignell if you wish to attend (for a nominal charge) so he can advise the caterers. On the Sunday, the program includes a time trial, a streamer-cutting event, aerobatic display, model display and spot landing competition.

GRAEME’S SAVANNAH This looks like being the next maiden flight at Northam. The King Savannah did its first engine run last week and Graeme is reported to have sported a smile that stretched from Northam to Mollerin. He has done a very professional job in an amazingly short time to bring his aircraft to first flight stage. It’s a tribute to his dedication and craftsmanship, and the no-nonsense Savannah – which will take off and land on a virtual postage stamp – will be a welcome addition to the Northam fleet. Well done Graeme!

HANGAR PROGRESS Nice to see some action in the building department. Allan and Lois Hayes’ smart green hangar – the first in the new row – is just about ready, and Phil Pusey is putting finishing touches to his. Steve Vette is making progress, too, with the frame now complete, and is confident things will move more quickly now that he’s sacked his builder.

BALLOONS ARE BACK The season is under way and it’s great to have those huge, colourful shapes in our skies once more. Hot-air ballooning is a magic experience, and if you want to give someone near and dear a pleasant surprise for a birthday or similar I couldn’t think of a better choice. Contact Windward Balloon Adventures on 9621 2000 or Avon Valley Ballooning on 9622 8805.

PLEASE DON'T USE THE TAXIWAY AS A ROAD Cars have been using the taxiway parallel to the runway as a short-cut from the north end of the field. Would the guilty parties please use the road, because cars cause corrugations and aeroplanes can be damaged by the resulting rough surfaces. Over the years various impediments, including star pickets and logs, have been put in the way of motor vehicles, but these can be dangerous and may involve the Club in liability claims. The only solution is not to use the taxiway as a road. As soon as the Shire machinery is on the field (waiting for rain), we will arrange for an earth barrier to be built.

PROPOSED NEW AIRPORT RULES The airfield's owners, the Town and Shire of Northam, have proposed to exclude certain aircraft from operating at Northam as part of new arrangements for the management of Northam Airport. These are: gyroplanes, weight-shift control aircraft, powered parachutes, hang gliders, parasails and gyrogliders. If you have a view on this, you are invited to contact the Town's manager, planning and development, Chadd Hunt.

May you never have headwinds except on take-off and landing.

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CLUB CAPTAIN'S REPORT

The April club competition was held in perfect weather conditions. It involved a flight from the airfield and back via the sewage ponds, army camp, Muresk, Spencers Brook and the Western Power depot. Pilots had to answer questions based on ground features – for instance, how many tennis courts are there at Muresk?

The winner was Ian Berry, with Robyn Stewart and Errol Croft filling the minor places. Our next club comp will be held in June because in May we are hosting the SAAA fly-in and the previous Sunday is Mothers Day.

– **Ray Howell**

NEW ZEALAND AND BACK – WE MADE IT!

Claude Meunier and I are back, and in one piece, from the epic flight of my life – to New Zealand and back. We flew Mooney MIP nearly 8000 nm, with legs across water up to 483 nm. That's a long time to listen to a single engine, which fortunately ran beautifully during the whole trip.

The only problem we had was with the VHF radio, which decided to introduce a huge amount of static on reception. Because my HF radio didn't have the right frequencies we had to do all our reporting via passing jets on VHF. We would call them on 123.45 or 121.5 to relay our position reports to New Zealand or Australia. Nice blokes at Pacific Air, Qantas, Virgin etc, bored out of their brains at 40,000 ft and happy to talk to someone flying something a bit less mundane. I asked one 747 skipper what it was like up there and he said it was great except for the breakfast they'd just been served. I told him Rees in-flight catering only ran to a soggy sandwich.

For me, the over-water segments were the most testing – Claude, having flown around the world, was somewhat more sanguine. As a small-aeroplane pilot, when you're sitting up there at 10,000 ft for nearly four hours, the world takes on a different perspective. Sure, GPS makes navigation a bit of a doddle, but there is still an enormous thrill in seeing the huge, threatening hills of Lord Howe Island looming out of the murk; the larger and more friendly mass of Norfolk Island; and the top end of New Zealand. We did a fair bit of flying in cloud, or over the top of cloud, but it was pretty benign. What was a little more concerning was our lack of alternate fuel. We didn't have enough capacity to return to mainland Australia, for instance, if we arrived at Lord Howe to find it was clagged in. So we had to ensure we had a CAVOK forecast before setting off. As it turned out, this was no problem. We had marvellous weather, really, and just punched through mid-level cloud.

Norfolk Island is an interesting place, with its horrible penal colony history and Bounty survivor genealogy. Very green, and an anomaly in governance terms because it's not quite part of Australia and not quite not, if you take my meaning. Semi-independent, and a thorn in the side of the Canberra bureaucracy. I like the place.

New Zealand was awesome – talk about a paradise on our doorstep. Spectacular topography, with mountains, lakes, rugged coastlines and countryside as green as England. We were blessed with almost perfect weather for our trip and had a marvellous run. A Kiwi mate from the last Flying Doctor air race, Rob Mackley, flew up from Auckland to meet us at Kerikeri, on the top end, with a folder full of NZ maps. Great bloke.

He owns a Mooney Ovation (plus a C-model and a Cessna Bird Dog) and is restoring a Lockheed 10 (similar to the Amelia Erhart aircraft) from scratch. Huge project. He's got the wings and centre section done, and has a meticulous engineer working full-time on the fuselage. His hangar, at Ardmore, near Auckland, puts even Phil Pusey's in the shade: apart from being about half an acre in size, it's got amazing electric doors which fold into the roof. MIP was honoured to spend a night or two there.

Our flight to the NZ south island was great, with perfect weather and a clear view of Mt Egmont, NZ's answer to Japan's Mt Fuji. It's a dormant volcano which is almost perfectly symmetrical. The over-water bit to the south island seemed pretty small beer after the Tasman.

The Omaka Classic Fighters Air Show was the best aviation event Claude and I have ever attended. New Zealand has a fantastic record for restoring old aeroplanes and you couldn't have seen better examples than at Omaka, at the north end of the south island. They had seven Fokker Triplane replicas, a Sopwith Camel with the original rotary engine that ran on full throttle all the time and had to be blipped by cutting the magnetos to slow down, a Nieuport and a Pfalz. Some of these were built for the movie *The Blue Max*. They put on an amazing ground attack display, with the allied troops firing from the ground (all their gear looked very authentic – they even had a working WWI tank!) and British and German aircraft mixing it in the air. It looked like a scene from that amazing Howard Hughes movie *Hell's Angels*, with aeroplanes filling the sky. Truly awesome dogfighting stuff.

The WW2 sequence was an approximation of the attack on Pearl Harbour, with Yaks, Harvards and Nanchangs dressed up as Japs and a couple of lovely original Kittyhawks leading the almost non-existent American response. I don't think I've ever seen so many radials and heavy metal together at one time.

They also had four de Havilland Dragons/Rapides flying formation and a breathtaking display by a Corsair. Terrific stuff. Mustangs too, of course, and a Percival Proctor, a Miles Messenger, Piston Provost, Moth Minor and two Beech Staggerwings restored to better than new in NZ, one for an American airline pilot. Staggering. Also some precision aerobatics from the NZ air force using Airtrainer CT4s. Very polished, lots of panache. I paid \$100 for a flight in a Catalina, which was great. Those two radials throbbing away were pure music.

Peter Jackson, the director of *Lord of the Rings*, has spent a packet creating a WWI museum at Omaka and it is truly mind-boggling. It's a series of dioramas with aeroplanes and vehicles, weapons and troops, and draws strongly on Jackson's movie background.



Auckland . . . kitted out for their next over-water flight, Claude and Tony talk to Mooney owner Rob Mackley. His Cessna Bird Dog is in the background.



Approach to Lord Howe Island . . . MIP on short final for runway 10. We were lucky enough to escape the turbulence that often makes landings there hard work.

We stayed in a cottage surrounded by vineyards only a mile or so from the airfield and had some very good food and wine with Rob and his lady friend, Althea. The only off-key bit of our trip happened in Blenheim. We were on our way out to dinner when Althea was stopped by a random breath-test unit. The cops were the rudest I've encountered for many a year and threatened to arrest Rob when he asked to accompany her into the booze bus. She'd had two glasses of wine and was well under the limit, but from their reaction you'd think she'd just murdered the prime minister. Dickheads.

After the air show we flew further south to Queenstown, which must be one of the most lovely spots in the world – lakes, mountains, trees. Wow. We stayed with some Perth friends who were there on holiday. Along the way we flew round Mt Cook. It was quite other-worldly sitting up there at 8,000 feet in brilliant sunshine looking at the snow and glaciers. We were also lucky enough to fly into Milford Sound, a spectacular fiord which is usually socked in – it's the wettest place in NZ. Some of the locals were quite envious that we'd scored a good day.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime flight. You enter, at low level, a narrow opening in the rocks, which rise vertically each side of you to about 4000 ft. About three miles in there's a tiny airfield which services the tourist industry. Landing there consisted of going downwind at 300 ft towards a vertical rockface, then banking at the last moment to do a split-arsed turn on to late final. Bloody hell, what a blast! I found out later that if you continue up the fiord it widens out and allows a gentle turn on to final. But I didn't know that then! Flying out was great, too, almost clipping the right side of the gorge as we climbed out over some incredibly rugged terrain.

From Queenstown we flew back to Auckland to do an oil change. It's fairly straightforward in the Mooney and we were able to use the facilities at Rob's hangar to sort it all out. We also opened the oil filter to see if there were any nasty bits of metal in there. None, I'm glad to report.

We stayed overnight at Kerikeri, then headed off for Norfolk again and Noumea. What with Claude being French, it seemed a good idea at the time. Claude had friends there (he lived in Tahiti for 20 years and moved around the islands a lot). Unfortunately he picked up a stomach bug and was ill for a couple of days.

We flew over to the Isle des Pins for lunch one day – a true South Sea island paradise. Then it was back to Norfolk because we didn't have the range to fly direct to Lord Howe. But this time we were getting to know Norfolk quite well, hiring a car and driving to all the major spots of interest. Lord Howe and Norfolk are not exactly on the A-list for cuisine.

Both seem to serve over-fried fish and squid rings coated with breadcrumbs that look as if they'd glow in the dark. Interesting flashback to the '70s.

The return flight was good, too. We'd had good luck with the winds and managed to get groundspeeds around 150 knots most of the time. It was nice to hit the Australian coastline again, though the contrast between rural Australia and NZ was vivid. Australia's drought-stricken face really shows as you fly over mile after mile of burnt earth. It makes me angry to think of the neglect and greed that has resulted in this sorry state of environmental affairs.

We were away for just on three weeks and I now feel quite happy to rest on my laurels for a while. My thanks to Claude for passing on his knowledge of international aviation and for being a most pleasant flying companion and co-pilot – it was a fantastic experience.

– **Tony Rees**



Omaka Air Show . . . seven replica Fokker Triplanes put on a fantastic performance in a World War I ground attack sequence

CIRCUITS AND BUMPS

Big smile on Graeme's face as he successfully runs the Rotax ...

Goodbye Theo. Fair winds on your last flight...

Saw Phil and Wendy at Omaka. Where was your Mooney Phil ??

Jabiru in hangar, thunderstorm over Wylie....

Waiting for the rain to start earthworks on the second row of hangars....

Some progress on the new hangars.....or lack of.....

Where is the crane? Where is Steptoe?

Tony and Claude back from Kiwiland.....still talking to each other??

The saga of the radio in the Mooney....

To save Avgas, just try rain water...ask Frank.

You should have seen the smile on Prezi's face after his landing in Milford Sound...

Wishing Nikki a prompt recovery...



Club Calendar

Committee Meeting – MAY 13th @ 2pm

Bar Roster

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

MAY

5 th & 6 th	Les
12 th	Claude
13 th	Tony
19 th & 20 th	Steve
26 th & 27 th	Joy

JUNE

2 nd & 3 rd	Gren
9 th	Claude
10 th	Tony
16 th & 17 th	Matt
25 th & 24 th	Les

Please make arrangements to swap with someone if you are not available on your rostered day(s).

FOR INFORMATION
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