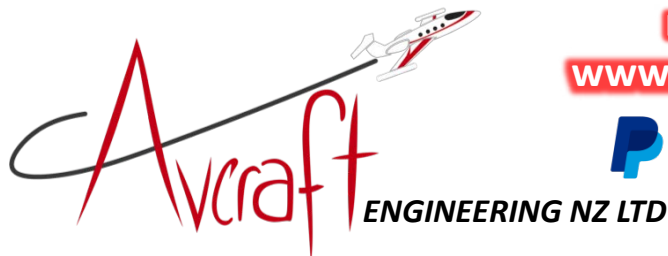


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Coming up

- Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot championships
15 February 2025, Omaka
- AOPA NZ 2025 AGM
8 March 2025, Hawera
- AOPA NZ Summer Safari
9-13 March 2025
Hawera – Te Kuiti – Taupo

Watch your inbox for
notification of One-Day Fly-ins

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Cover photo: The Stearman lines up
at HB Taildragger weekend 2024

Photo credit: Anna Mackenzie



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Deadline for ads, articles and photos for the next (Autumn) issue: 20 January 2025.



President's Comment

Summer daylight hours have arrived and planning for the 2025 AOPA Air Safari is underway. Arrival will be March 7, AGM March 8, with the flying safari running through to March 13, encompassing Hawera, Te Kuiti and Taupo. Register now online via

the AOPA NZ website to ensure you receive the updates.

Turangi Christmas fly-in is set for 17 November and I hope the weather gods will allow us to enjoy some North Island flying.

At a recent Aviation Federation meeting, also attended by the incoming CAA Board, there was an encouraging discussion of Just Culture, CAA staff induction for consistency of delivering advice, awareness of the skill base within the NZ aviation community, and the opportunity to introduce Aviation Federation members. Additionally, we discussed the ongoing pursuit of the mogas tax rebate, which has been an issue since Ian Andrews' presidency. We are focusing on identifying locations where ADS-B tracking is currently inadequate and requesting installation sites in these areas. Ian also highlighted the Australian government's White Paper on the future of aviation until 2050. This document is worth reviewing, particularly Section 8.

The Executive Committee had the opportunity to introduce AOPA NZ to the new CAA Board on 18 October. Discussion included Just Culture, identifying and introducing FAA rules for aircraft modifications, DL9 medical restrictions and frequency zones.

We held a strategic planning meeting on the same day to discuss our structure over the next five years. Our mission, 'enhancing the freedom to fly', reflects our role within the broader aviation ecosystem in New Zealand and our Association's

responsibility to contribute toward a unified approach as representatives of General Aviation.

Key initiatives include:

- Ongoing advocacy efforts with local councils and the CAA, supported by relevant data collection. Fund a contractor to resource the advocacy group of AOPA NZ
- Enhanced marketing strategies to strengthen our reputation and engagement with members, update social media tools and collect demographic data across the membership
- Maintaining and improving member benefits
- Aiming for a consistent executive committee size of ten, with an effective induction and succession plan
- Increasing AOPA NZ membership
- Utilising cloud storage for easy access to documents
- Via the social portfolio continue promoting camaraderie and upholding the safety culture within gatherings.

We welcome Roger van der Zanden onto the Executive Committee, filling the vacancy left by Stu Haynes. His experience will be invaluable.

The Executive Committee's face to face meeting took place 19 October. Amongst subjects discussed was fuel prices; we aim to explore future unleaded fuel options for aircraft owners in NZ. The safety portfolio currently undertaken by AOPA NZ will be reviewed and updated as required. More meet and greet functions will be held during 2025 to allow members to meet with the AOPA NZ Executive Committee.

Finally, I intend to step down as president at the March 2025 AGM. After three years, I believe it's time for new leadership to guide AOPA NZ into the next decade.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sue Kronfeld, President 🦋



November generally offers reliable weather in Hawke's Bay: spring is well established and summer

sending hints aplenty; docking (tailing for southerners) is a distant memory, and getting the swimming pool sorted is becoming a priority.

The first day of the CHB and HB&EC Taildragger weekend had that kind of feel. A healthy South Island contingent of Bearhawks and C170s swelled the ranks, adding much to the general merriment. The final day... well. I couldn't make the Saturday due to a family commitment, but no matter, I thought,

Sunday will have plenty to offer. And it did. Plenty of wind, heralded by a late burst of wintery cold. The South Islanders wisely headed early for home. Half a dozen hardy stalwarts braved the precision landing competition at Bridge Pa. I was grateful I could sit in the cone truck between landings, and I wasn't the only one to avail myself of shelter.

It was a good weekend nonetheless; great craic on the social side (heard a few stories from CHB...) and the photo opportunities were gustily memorable.

Warbirds Over Wanaka earlier this year peaked my interest in aviation photography, and it was great to have another excuse to get out with the camera.

Great also to read in this issue the experiences of two student pilots down

at Darfield. Both mention the wisdom to be gleaned from the gnarly old pilots who frequent such gatherings...

I was recently talking to one such gnarly pilot (inevitably searching for articles for the magazine) who told me that much of his current flying revolves around taking whoever is hanging around at the aero club up for a ride. What a great gift to give! Important, too, for building the future of GA.

If you see a youngster (or not so youngster) looking on longingly at activity on the aerodrome, why not give them a treat? Or, as Sue did at Darfield, take them along for a full-on weekend of flying, fun and learning. It's a gift that rewards both giver and receiver.

Anna Mackenzie, Editor 🦋

Keep your charts current!



The 2025 VNC Chart Book can be purchased from the AOPA NZ website; charts effective from late November 2024.

Just log in to www.aopa.nz then go to Member Resources, select Member Benefits, and click on 'Order your Chart book here'. AOPA NZ member discount applies.

Summer safari 2025

Hawera in south Taranaki will be hosting the 2025 AOPA NZ AGM on Saturday 8 March 2025... and now is the time to register!

Gathering on Friday 7 March will ensure plenty of opportunities for catching up. Check the website for details of our block accommodation booking but don't delay: once it's full, it's full.

The Summer Safari follows the AGM, and will see us roosting in Taupo on March 9-10 and Te Kuiti on March 11-12. Accommodation, especially in Taupo, is filling up fast, so make your bookings now.

More information is available on the website.

Changes at Whitianga

Due to increased usage, Mercury Bay Aero Club has recently funded substantial upgrades to the airfield and introduced changes to operating procedures for Whitianga Airfield (NZWT). The main 04/22 runway has been widened to allow multiple parallel strips, with only one in use at a time. The in-use strip is designated by marker boards, moved weekly, at the ends of the runway.

If taxiing or backtracking on 04/22, be sure to identify and use the correct strip (taxiing beside the in-use strip or on the grass is prohibited). New taxiways have been established on both sides of 04/22. Caution is required where Delta crosses runway 16/34; there are holding-point signs but a good lookout is needed.

Please ensure you check the latest NOTAMS when visiting NZWT as taxiways may be closed while improvements are made. Noise abatement rules now apply when departing on 04 or arriving on 22 (see the AIP Vol 4 NZWT aerodrome plates for details). The preferred downwind track is along the estuary river. All circuits for 04/22 are to the south of the runway.

You are also requested to use standard joining procedures and observe the correct circuit direction, as published on the AIP Vol 4 chart.

Safety tips at Omaka

Over the past year, Omaka Aerodrome has seen 28 incidents involving near mid-air collisions and non-standard manoeuvres during circuit joins.

Contacting ATC for clearance through Woodbourne controlled airspace, rather than manipulating your flightpath around it, will reduce stress and hurried decisions, as well as providing assurance that you're not busting airspace.

Airspace around Omaka is constrained to 0.5km from controlled airspace north and 0.5km from terrain east and south. The short downwind legs can lead to conflicts if not carefully monitored. Allow 0.2hr flying time for an overhead join, which will allow you to become situationally aware and to identify other traffic in the vicinity. Remember that NORDO (no radio) aircraft also operate in the vicinity.

Fly smart, stay aware and help ensure a safer environment for all.

Healthy Bastards gather in 2025

The biennial Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot Championships is rapidly approaching: mark 15 February 2025 on your calendar now.

Featuring precision landing and STOL take-off and landing competitions, the event sees aviators from across the country gathering in sunny Marlborough – and what better place for a February get-together?

Run by the Marlborough Aero Club and sponsored by Dave Baldwin of Bulls Flying Doctor Service, this has proven a popular weekend away in the past. Come along and enjoy the camaraderie and the competition. Visit www.marlboroughaeroclub.co.nz for further information.

Seven Cessna day

George Thompson of Te Kuiti took the opportunity in August to snap this line-up of Cessnas from C150 through to C195, causing the mag team to ponder the collective noun. A 'span of Cessnas' perhaps...



Welcome to new members:

Ken Nolasco, Feilding; Phillip Anderson, Hawera; Christopher Ward, Auckland; Bob Shearing, Christchurch; Ted Dickie, Havelock North; Wayne Puddle, Rotorua; Matt McLaughlin, Auckland; Karl West, Christchurch; Ryan Millen, Wanaka; Douglas Kruger, Silverdale; Stephanie Redepenning, Amberly; Greg Smith, Christchurch; Dave Brooker, Auckland



Vice-President's view

John Evans and Neville Bailey continue to be very busy advocating for our 'Freedom to Fly' in various District Council processes.

In the Spring edition of *Approach* we described a win in relation to Ashburton airfield landing fees, both in terms of one-off landings and the annual bulk landing charge. We believe it's important that pilots have access to affordable bulk landing charges at their home airfields as it keeps costs down for pilots and councils alike by reducing administration. A few years ago I landed at Kaitaia and paid the (then) \$10 landing fee to Darren, the ever helpful airfield caretaker. At the month's end I received a statement by snail mail from the Far North District Council, confirming that I'd made one landing at Kaitaia and that they'd received my \$10 cash payment. A week or so later I received a GST receipt in the mail. This process must have cost far more in staff time, printing and postage than the \$10 fee. Annual landing permits do away with this nonsense and ensure fees can go towards maintaining airfields.

The battle at Ashburton is ongoing, however, as the Council is attempting to increase ground rentals for hangar owners to what they describe as 'commercial rates'. We recently did a survey of ground rentals being paid by members and the range is

extraordinary, from just over \$2/m² per annum at Alexandra and Timaru to around \$35/m² at Napier and Hamilton. The Executive Committee is concerned about the move to charge commercial rates because it fails to recognise that airfields and recreational aviation are not solely about making money. Airfields are essential infrastructure, and not just at times of local and national emergencies. The move to centralise the health system means regional airfields are frequently used to move patients to cities for treatment. Medical specialists fly in and out of small airfields, often on charter aircraft, to conduct clinics at regional hospitals. The wider community benefits from the presence of local airfields and should contribute to their upkeep. Recreational aviation is also not just about fun and games. The private GA sector is a feeder to the commercial GA sector and the airline industry – just look at the number of AOPA NZ members who now have sons and daughters flying commercially.

There has been positive progress in the Timaru District Council district planning process, which was looking to severely restrict the use of rural airstrips due to perceived noise issues. AOPA NZ spent a fair amount of money being represented in the process, arguing that you do not need rules to solve non-existent issues. The independent hearing commissioners appear to agree, particularly given that the rationale behind such rules was not accompanied by evidence or analysis; a recurring theme in many district planning processes. The commissioners have directed the Council to come up with an outcome with us that resolves the issue. Fingers crossed...

South Waikato District Council has been impressed by the number of submissions received and the passion expressed for aviation during the current review of Tokoroa Airfield. AOPA NZ members and local pilots did a great job of presenting the message that the airfield is an important and valued piece of local infrastructure. Once again we await the outcome.

AOPA NZ also put submissions into the Mackenzie District Council planning process, but the outcome has been less favourable. We're pleased that the NZ Agricultural Aviation Association and NZ Helicopter Association have appealed the decision with the Environment Court, and will support them where we can. The RMA process is too much work and too expensive for a single organisation to bear alone. Collaboration among the GA sector is vital. The Executive Committee is giving serious consideration to how we fund these processes in the future, because, although we currently have good financial reserves, they could easily melt away in the pursuit of this work.

On a lighter note, on a recent trip to Oregon I visited the rambling Powells Books in downtown Portland. After scouring the fisheries and aviation sections, and already having more books than I could fit in my bag, I was drawn to an unimpressive looking book with the subtitle: 'The Finest Book on Aviation Ever Written'. Published in 1961, *Fate is the Hunter* by American airline pilot Ernest Gann is a beautifully written book about aviation with many still relevant messages. Try and find a copy.

Ross Millichamp, Vice-President 

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Getting it right at fly-ins

By John Evans

If you have attended a recent fly-in, you'll be aware of some of the work that goes on in the background. This article draws on material run in *Approach Winter 2023* and the video on our website '*Pilot Panel: Fly-ins*'. After reviewing recent fly-ins, the Safety Committee felt it would be useful to revisit this topic so that members can appreciate the reasons for the rules and systems that we ask them to respect, allowing us to continue to hold safe and enjoyable events in the future.

What are the important elements of a fly-in? Put simply, a plan, communication, registration, committee catch-ups, briefs, contingencies, places to go and, most importantly, good air-manship. Let's dive a little deeper into those elements.

Plan. We communicate with our members as early as possible on the intention to run a fly-in. We include details of the main venue, date and a general overview so you can register online, pencil it in and book accommodation.

Communication. Leading up to the date, there are prompts regarding when to book accommodation, registration, and when the Fly-in App is live. Closer to the time, calls will be made regarding weather and whether we need to postpone or cancel.

During the week leading up, things can be a little fluid as the weather systems become clearer, and available places to land are organised with our members who have those contacts. We try our best to manage this unpredictability with the likes of caterers and accommodation providers, but it is not always easy.

The week leading up is also the time for attendees to get the waypoints on their Electronic Flight Bag (EFB) and get their devices prepared and up to date.

Detailed registration. We like to gauge who is coming before the event so we know how to best accommodate everyone's needs (transport, catering, accommodation, intentions, currency, etc). We also ask for information about your key contacts, whether you would like to participate in a fly-in group chat (via WhatsApp) and links to satellite tracking services if you are willing to share them.

Briefs. We have a standardised briefing template for group leaders to refer to. It's important to listen to the briefs, even if you've been to the destination before, because there will be additional considerations for joining, local requirements, up to date conditions, parking space and so on. There will also be information on radio frequency to be used, etiquette when flying in a group, and contingencies. No one knows it all. As a fly-in participant, you might have an important nugget of information that hasn't yet been considered, so your participation at briefing time is vital, both as a listener and a contributor.

Finally, and most importantly, you should never land somewhere unless you are totally comfortable doing so. Ensure you have an alternative that will work for you and allow you to meet back up with everyone else. At a fly-in, there may well be more going on (traffic, new people/places, human factors) than when flying on your own accord or with some of your mates.

Contingencies. Emergency contingencies and plans have been a focus of the AOPA NZ Executive Committee and what material we have is freely available for any groups, so please reach out. We do not offer wrap-around services, but in the case of an accident/emergency, we have plans and will do everything we can within our recreational capacity as volunteers.

Concessions. We have a concession from the Department of Conservation to use certain strips on public conservation land (PCL). The details and limitations are important to understand and these are discussed in briefings. We have an application with the Department of Conservation in the process to increase the landing areas on our concession. Please note that our concession is limited to organised fly-ins and does not allow landings outside these events.

Private permissions. Owners of private strips are contacted in the lead-up to fly-ins. Conditions and requirements vary over time and may be affected by farming activities or changes in fences/ground conditions. As with the DoC concession, the permissions we obtain only apply for the fly-in. Our continued access relies on our respect for private property and its owners, something we never take for granted. In the past we have lost access to airstrips because pilots have visited strips after an organised event without permission. This is unacceptable and has consequences for everyone else.

General flying etiquette. Fly-ins require etiquette beyond that of our individual flying pursuits, particularly in the absence of promulgated AIP airfield details and joining procedures. First, remember that social camaraderie is foremost. Treat a delay at the fuel pump as an opportunity to have a yarn. There may be folk who take more time than you to start up, taxi and roll, or who choose to fly extended circuits. Do not stress, go with the flow.

Keeping in the agreed order when travelling between strips is key. We try to group similar capability/speed aircraft together, but if it means slowing down, just do it.

Standard conventions apply in the absence of other factors, stick to the right-hand side of valleys, fly left-hand circuits and adhere to the normal give way rules. All of these alleviate excessive radio chat. When it is your time to join, take what time you need to do inspections/overshoots, communicate what you are doing and never forego your right to a go-around, up until your decision point of course. Those flying behind need to anticipate that and leave ample room for those in front, even if that means orbiting well overhead before entering the circuit/approach. Communicate if there is any uncertainty around others holding/backtracking. If you are 'Tail-end Charlie' let those ahead know that you are airborne and make sure no one gets behind you.

Your preparation

Get current! A day of flying in new places/environments is not the day you get current! Some circuits at your local airfield during the lead-up is encouraged if you have not flown in a while. It will also help with your familiarity with your aircraft (including instruments, EFB) which is important because you will be facing a higher workload with other aircraft and people around and lots of information to digest. You need your attention focused outside the aircraft. You cannot afford to be behind your plane at a fly-in, fiddling with gadgets and getting airspeed/power settings/engine cooling under control.

Practise flying your aircraft and managing the engine at slower speeds than you are used to, in case you end up needing to make space between you and the person ahead.

Preparation. Review plates and the airspace you are going to be operating within ahead of time. Get familiar with your EFB and how to upload waypoints and display traffic. Get some help if you need it. Remember IMSAFE – do not come if you are sick/not up to it. But also, while flying is a great escape from the hustle of life, it is not sympathetic if there is a lot on your plate or you are negotiating weather and/or a tight schedule to make the fly-in and get home.

Insurance. You are required to have a minimum of \$1million public liability insurance to attend a fly-in. Read the information we provide leading up, and be prepared to listen throughout the fly-in.

Equipment. Take equipment suitable for where you are going. That includes warm clothing and rigid footwear when you may be flying around the mountains and landing in remote areas, even though our aircraft are typically toasty warm inside. You

could end up somewhere unexpected for any number of reasons. Tie downs always go with the plane, so they are not a hazard left in the ground and so your aircraft can always be secured. Take a hand-held radio if you have one. Consider your fuel load. Full fuel load will obviously reduce your performance margin, so take what you need depending on where you are going. Fuel stops are generally worked into the day, but fuel loading is principally a PIC responsibility and while some may have ample fuel for an intended route, you may not. Regularly check your fuel, as you cannot rely on your enroute cruise burn rate if you are doing a lot of short legs.

Brief your passengers and utilise them for traffic lookout and ground movements. Make sure they know how the doors shut and lock, where to locate emergency equipment, the ELT/PLB, where it is appropriate to push/pull when ground handling and the propeller (or rotor) hazards presented. Passengers flying with you more frequently may be able to raise your attention to things going on that look out of place. Brief, and keep an eye on your passengers around aircraft on the ground, particularly around other active aircraft.

What if something goes wrong?

We all know aviation is an unforgiving activity, and we work within an extremely regulated environment. But, as a recreational pursuit, we have no pressure from commercial drivers, and for recreation to be recreational, it needs to be enjoyable. At future fly-ins you will see QR codes, more easily directing you to our anonymous reporting form. The Safety Group reviews the input so it can address any possible issues. On some occasions it may require following up with a member. If we get in touch, please consider this part of the process and an opportunity for everyone to learn. Please openly share your observations/experiences with us.

As an organisation facilitating gatherings of aircraft and organising private airstrips to land on, there are two important and over-arching risk mitigations. The first is driving a safety conscious culture, where we share experiences, knowledge and at times provide guidance to each other. Fly-ins are fantastic facilitators of this. The second is you exercising your personal responsibilities as a licensed pilot, who is prepared, having read and listened to the information we provide, is current, is willing to learn, and is IMSAFE. 🦋



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Fresh off the line

Taking delivery of a new CT206HD

By Paul Hood

October 2022 we made the decision to upgrade to a new Cessna 206. So through Kath, the salesperson for our region based in Singapore, we put in the order. Via emails we chose the colour scheme and opted for the larger wheels with wheel spats.

Fast forward to the end of June 2023, and we were given a delivery date of 20 July. Three days prior to that, Cessna provides a three day induction/ familiarisation course at Wichita in the state of Kanas. A few more emails and phone calls and I managed to put the delivery back to 31 July, which gave me a week at Oshkosh. I flew Auckland to Houston then a connecting flight to Wichita.

Monday morning of the 17th, I met up with the instructor providing the course at the Textron Centre at Wichita Airport. On arrival I was introduced to the one other guy doing the course, Sid McAuley – certainly a small world. Mornings consisted of classroom work going over the G1000 nxi while after lunch was flying. Day one was VFR and day two we flew all the IFR approaches. Day three low cloud and mist kept us grounded.

Three days later I hired a car and made my way to Oshkosh, breaking the 13.5hr trip over two days and arriving at Oshkosh the afternoon before the first day. Being late to book accommodation, the closest I could get was Green Bay, a 45 minute drive north of Oshkosh. This was my third visit to Oshkosh and I'm still keen to return in the future. For aviators it ticks all the boxes.

I left the air show midday Saturday for the trip back to Wichita; I'd been instructed to be back at Textron Headquarters at Wichita Airport at 8am Monday morning

for a 40 minute flight to Independence, where 172s, 182s, 206s and Cessna caravans are made.

The instructor who was to fly me to Independence in the 206 demo aircraft had filed an IFR flight plan and gave me the left-hand seat, with a third pilot on board returning to Independence.

On arrival I was greeted by the delivery team, escorted to a briefing room where there was morning tea, a model of the new aircraft and various other gifts. From the window we looked out at my new aircraft. Whoops: the aircraft was not the same colour as the model. The model was the right colour. After explaining to the delivery team that the only input my wife Lynette had in the aircraft was the colour, they requested I leave the aircraft with them. I was due in Taylor, Texas that day, so suggested instead bringing the plane back in three weeks time for them to correct the colour issue. They agreed and offered us return tickets to anywhere in USA for two weeks while they repainted.

After doing a final flight with the test pilot to recheck all systems were working and up to date, I logged a VFR flight plan from KIDP (Independence) to T74 (Taylor Texas).

At Oshkosh I had subscribed to ForeFlight, which seemed to be the most popular and intuitive app for flying around USA; it also Bluetooths to the G1000.

The flight to Taylor took 3.3hrs, with Control vectoring me around Dallas B and C airspace.

There is no cost to logging a flight plan in USA. The airways controllers are very helpful and most of our flights were requested flight following. They are happy to vector you around military and restricted areas, although VFR traffic is able to transit military areas unless closed by NOTAMs. They are no go zones for IFR.

Having attended some of the Airway seminars at Oshkosh proved very beneficial. The biggest issues was understanding each other's accents, but we managed.

I had gami injectors and one mag replaced with a CDI, although after fitting the new CDI was found to be faulty so the old mag was refitted and the CDI sent back to Boeing. Lynette flew down from San Francisco to join me and we enjoyed a week's holiday, with daily temperatures getting up to 105-110o Fahrenheit.

On August 8 the plane was ready and we set out for Buchanan airport in Concord, California where I was booked in to do some IFR training with an instructor I'd met at Oshkosh. We decided to split the trip into three legs of around three hours each. The first took us to Tucumcari in New Mexico (KTCC). There were no other aircraft at the airport, but thankfully there was a courtesy car, as there were no rentals. The town, on interstate 40, was



Above: Cattle feedlots near Pueblo.

Left: Over the Rockies, Nevada.

a thriving destination during the era of steam trains, but died overnight with the arrival of diesel locomotives.

Our next leg took us into the South Colorado Plateau, with peaks 10,000–14,000ft and most of the low country around 7000ft amsl. Cedar City (KCDC) sits at 5600ft. The METARS at all the airport gave Density Altitude, which can be several 1000ft higher at that time of the year. Thank heavens for long airfields and a turbo charged aircraft.

Cedar City was quite a bit busier than

Tucumcari, with a very helpful FBO. They gave us a column shift Chev truck as a courtesy vehicle.

The final leg the next morning took us down to nearly sea level at Buchanan Airport in Concord. On the outskirts of Oakland and San Francisco, this is very active airspace with lots of busy airports in close proximity. We got a rental car and stayed ten days with Lynette's son, Tom and his partner Michele in Sonoma, from where I could commute to the airport for six days of IFR training. I wasn't able to

get my IFR ticket as not being a US citizen meant a couple of months of police checks, but the training was beneficial for future adventures. At the end of the course I flew the plane over to Petaluma (O69) next to Sonoma. We spent another couple of days with the family taking them for a local fly up and around Santa Rosa and back down the Sonoma valley, a big wine growing area.

Early on 19 August we started our journey back to Independence with our first leg of 4.3hrs to Alpine Airpark Wyoming.



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The flight took us into the high desert of Nevada, passing to the north of Reno – a little off track as we had to pass north of a TFR, ie, restricted airspace put in place around big events. This one was around the US President visiting Lake Tahoe. TFRs appear on the ForeFlight map and are well NOTAMed.

Close to Alpine we had to navigate around a few thunderstorms. On landing at Alpine Airpark (46U) we were welcomed by Jack Schulte, who kindly made room in his hangar for the 206. The next day Jack took us for a tour to Jackson Hole, a ski resort town twenty minutes down the road. Jack and Marion are always very hospitable.

Next day we got airborne for Pueblo (KPUB) on the other side of the Rockies. The weather was a little turbulent over the range, so we climbed to 17,500ft to get a slightly better ride. All airspace above 18,000ft in the US is A airspace, which is IFR only. The flight to Pueblo, just south of Colorado Springs, was 3.5hrs. Pueblo airport had a very good FBO with a nice lounge and rental cars. We spent two nights, which allowed a scenic excursion into Colorado Springs from where we took the very worthwhile cog train to Pikes Peak. The air was cold and a little thin up there at 14,000ft.

On returning to the airport on the 23rd, we found the FBO had refuelled our aircraft and, to our amusement, there was a brand new F18 parked in front of us. The FBO told us the delivery pilot had checked himself into a hotel while he waited for the engineers to arrive, having had to land due to a system failure. After a close inspection of the F18 it was back in the aircraft for the final 3.25hr flight to Independence. Once there we were flown to Wichita and on to Anchorage, filling time with an eight day Alaskan Cruise followed by another week with the family before returning to Independence to take delivery of N63PH for the second time.

Next leg was to get the aircraft to Las Vegas for the tanking and preparation for the trip home to New Zealand. Leaving Independence on the afternoon of 13 September we decided to make Dodge City (KDDC), a comfortable 2hr flight, our first stop. Dodge City is on the western



High desert, Nevada.

end of the Great Plains and is a big beef cattle area with big feedlots and lots of large grain silos. We hired a car and spent three nights, visiting Garden City an hour up the road. We saw very few animals grazing pastures. It is easy to see how our pasture-based system is economically and environmentally so much better.

Morning of the 16th, it was back out to the airport for the final 5.5hr run to Las Vegas, Nevada. By the time we'd loaded and preflighted the aircraft the fog was breaking up enough to get airborne. Once airborne, Kanas Centre asked us for an airport weather report before handing over to Denver Centre. Heading west was another cruise climb back into the southern Rockies. Just on three hours into the flight we decided to make a stop to stretch the legs and top up with fuel at a small airpark, Animas (00C) on the outskirts of Durango, Colorado. A bit of a chat with a couple of locals then we were back in the air. This leg took us through Utah then the top end of Arizona, over the northern end of the Grand Canyon.

LA Centre cleared us into Las Vegas B airspace and shortly after transferred us over to North Vegas Tower. With all the traffic, the tower had us do a go-round to create a little more separation. Once on the ground we were guided by ground ops to the parking area. This was to be our home for the next ten days. ✈️

In the next issue, Paul will continue his journey flying home across the Pacific.



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Avoiding the build-ups

By Chris Hoffman

I am sure you will have noticed the increase in thunderstorm activity that sweeps across the country from time to time. Every front coming in off the Tasman seems to have these embedded buildups due to increased thermal activity.

I checked in with ChatGPT and yes, there are more thunderstorms hitting New Zealand this year and yes, it seems to be due to warmer sea temperatures, particularly due to the ongoing global warming. This has created an environment conducive to heavier rainfalls and no part of the country appears immune.

Flying IFR in a light plane without oxygen presents a challenge when thunderstorms are about. A trip from Wellington to Gisborne a while back was a great demonstration of this. We were three mates flying three different planes; I was in my non-turbo non-oxygen C206 and filed an IFR plan at 9000ft, one mate was flying a turboprop C208 Caravan with oxygen, also on an IFR plan filed at FL150, and the other mate was in a non turbo C206 on a VFR plan planning to fly up the east coast. The weather report in Wellington was fine, as was the report for the destination, but the report warned of a front with possible CB activity mid-way up the North Island.

As it turned out, a line of thunderstorms sat across the Ruahines between Palmerston North and Hawke's Bay. They were sitting as discrete buildups on a stratus layer between 3000 – 8000ft and went way up over 20,000ft. I could see these pillars of cloud ahead as I tracked up the Kapiti Coast. As I turned east at Foxton I could see my way was blocked by several of these discrete towering cumulonimbus cells – best avoided!

The C208 was ahead of me and I could hear the pilot asking for a climb to FL170 before asking to deviate east around the buildups which were too high for him to go over. I thought I should pre-empt this by remaining in VMC and asking for a deviation off track to the north to remain well away from the largest of the buildups. They were like tall chimneys extending well above my maximum ceiling of 10,000ft (with a limited time of 30min up to 12,500ft as no oxygen). I ended up climbing to 11,000ft and deviating north of the weather under radar monitoring, and thus keeping well away from them.

The C208 went east to avoid the weather, but unfortunately the other C206 on the VFR flight plan ended up traveling up the east coast past Masterton under a low overcast. He struck some very heavy rain and turbulence as he passed east of the front, a very unpleasant experience. We all made it to Gisborne with a story to tell, but it left me wondering how else we could manage this situation, especially given our lack of real-time cockpit weather reports.

It seemed to me that if you can't go over them and you can see them, then you can go around them. This can be difficult when flying VFR under an overcast sky, and impossible when in IMC without some means of detecting them.

Time for a bit of research, and the best place to start is understanding the problem. Thunderstorms typically develop through three key stages, with an initial cumulus phase when warm, moist air rises rapidly and condenses into cumulus clouds. This upward motion is powered by thermal energy, which can be triggered by surface heating, cold fronts, or geographic features like mountains. As the cloud builds vertically, it becomes a cumulonimbus cloud, and rain, hail and lightning may begin to form. The mature stage is the most dangerous for aircraft due to intense updrafts, downdrafts, wind shear and lightning activity. Then comes the dissipating stage when, eventually, the storm begins to lose its energy source, causing it to dissipate. However, even in this stage, residual lightning and turbulence can pose risks for aircraft in the area.

On-board weather radar carried in large commercial aircraft primarily detects precipitation by emitting short bursts of super high frequency radio waves. These waves encounter the precipitation particles, such as raindrops, hail or snow, and are reflected back to the radar. The radar system measures the intensity and location of the reflected signals, displaying areas of precipitation as colour-coded patterns on the screen – often red, yellow and green, indicating varying levels of intensity. Although the price of this technology has reduced, it remains too expensive for most light GA aircraft.

Lightning activity increases significantly during the mature stage, which is when thunderstorms are most dangerous for GA aircraft. Turbulence, severe wind shear and hail can all occur, making it vital to detect and avoid these storms as early as possible.

After some research I found StormScope, which is a lightning detection system designed for GA aircraft. It detects and displays electrical activity from lightning, offering unique insight into storm conditions. Unlike traditional weather radar, which detects precipitation, StormScope senses electromagnetic pulses generated by lightning strikes. This capability provides pilots with an added layer of storm awareness, especially valuable for navigating through areas of unpredictable weather.

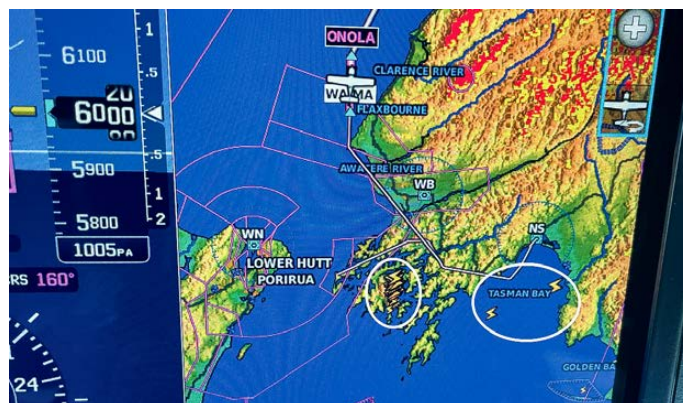
When lightning strikes, it generates radio waves across a wide range of frequencies. The WX-500's sensors capture these electromagnetic pulses, which typically fall within the Very Low Frequency (VLF) and Low Frequency (LF) bands. This unique approach allows the system to identify lightning strikes even at long distances, often beyond visible range, making it effective for GA pilots who want to avoid storm cells early.

To my delight I found that the StormScope WX-500 model was compatible with my Garmin G3X, and I was able to source one from the USA. The unit has a radio receiver with an aerial on the tail that detects electrical activity and can determine its range and intensity with enough accuracy to allow 'see and avoid' to be practised. The WX-500's microprocessor isolates and categorises the detected pulses, filtering out interference from non-weather sources, which ensures that only pulses generated by lightning strikes are processed and displayed.

After detecting a lightning pulse, the system evaluates its intensity and frequency. Single, isolated strikes are shown as individual dots, while more frequent strikes are grouped into clusters. These clusters indicate the presence of an active storm cell, providing pilots with a visual warning. The WX-500 refreshes its display every few seconds. This real-time data allows the detection of patterns of increasing lightning strikes, signalling the intensification of a storm cell.

The unit paints zigzag yellow lightning bolts on the G3X map page which slowly fade, thus all depictions are relatively current. The unit can detect electrical activity when on the ground out to 30-50nm prior to take-off and up to 200nm when airborne. I try to plan my flying to sit above or between layers, so the time spent in IMC when embedded CBs are forecast is limited. Flying in New Zealand I haven't seen the lines of CBs that block routes in the USA, noting that I don't fly when there is severe widespread storm activity.

Flying out of Nelson to Christchurch presented an opportunity to test the unit. The weather forecast was for broken cloud with a base of 1500ft and tops at 5000ft with embedded CBs. After filing an IFR plan I departed in VMC on the SID – a LUSRA 2 ROMEO departure to 6000ft – initially tracking north then turning east then south. My G3X was indicating activity to the



G3X display: large ellipse shows single strikes which were the smaller buildups; small ellipse shows a cluster of electrical activity indicating an active cell. Previous page: A CB to avoid when the anvil has formed.

north-west over Tasman Bay and to the north over Cook Strait.

As I popped out above the cloud layer, I could see in the distance the CBs that had created the electrical activity. They were bubbling up from the layer of broken cumulus I was climbing through. My G3X showed that my IFR route would turn me right well short of the CBs. I noted the StormScope had detected single electrical events indicative of these small buildups (seen above on the display in the larger white ellipse, added for clarity).

Further in the distance to the north was a larger towering CB which had triggered a cluster of zigzags on my map (shown in the smaller ellipse on the image above). They were about the northern end of the Marlborough Sounds but again I was turning right and heading south away from this monster, and I could see electrical activity on my G3X map screen was well away from my track.

I have not yet ventured out IFR near CBs unless I can get above the tops of the surrounding cloud layer. Best practice suggests the StormScope data is part of a comprehensive weather strategy. Close monitoring of activity over time is important as the lightning data is dynamic not static. Nor have I ventured out at night into uncertain weather when CBs might be about. Sometimes it is safer to stay under the cloud layer or not to venture out at all. The StormScope has been a useful addition to my panel display and I would recommend it for anyone undertaking GA IFR flying in NZ. 🛩️



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Darfield fly-in offers learning

By Charlie Hegan



This year's AOPA NZ Darfield fly-in was a fantastic event and also offered plenty of learning opportunities for those of us just starting out on our aviation journey.

AOPA NZ president, Sue Kronfeld has been my main instructor since I began my PPL training at Kaikoura earlier this year. When she invited me to the AOPA NZ fly-in at Darfield, I knew it would be a day packed with learning, but I couldn't have imagined just how much it would enrich my aviation experience.

The fly-in was based out of the Kimberly Road strip at Darfield, and aviators from all around the country were gathering. Amongst the many new faces, Sue introduced me to Louise (Lou) Woolf, a seasoned pilot with a wealth of experience, particularly in air traffic control, which opened up a whole new dimension for me. While initially flying seems to be all about controlling the plane, the importance of understanding the bigger picture was really brought home over this weekend.

Sue was flying Cessna C-172M EKP while Lou was in her trusty Cub, a plane with a rich history in the French Air Force.

I jumped at the opportunity to start the day with Lou in ZK-EJZ. It proved quite a contrast to what I was used to. Having primarily trained in light sport aircraft, the slower, more manual feel of the Cub was at first a bit jarring. It was a good reminder of how precise and nuanced flying can be, as well as of how differently planes handle various flying conditions, calling for individualised technique.

The day began when, with a group of about seven other aircraft, we departed Kimberly Road heading east towards the Ellesmere district, where a strip near the Selwyn Huts awaited us. It was a beautiful day for flying, though a bit of a challenge for Lou's Cub to keep up. Our second stop was a coastal strip near Motunau, reached via a cruise up the coast north of Christchurch. The rugged coastline below us, with waves crashing onto the beaches, was breathtaking, but what really stood out for me was watching Lou perform a perfect side slip into the runway. It was the first time I'd seen such a manoeuvre live, and Lou's precise control of the aircraft as she deftly navigated the winds and terrain gave me a firsthand lesson in handling challenging approaches.

We flew into two more strips in the Greta Valley and Cheviot regions, where we were greeted by local farmers who had kindly

opened their strips to us as well as arranging lunch. This was a chance to rest and refuel, and to enjoy conversations with other pilots – an added bonus of fly-in events. Lou's stories of her time with air traffic control in Christchurch, of managing congested airspaces, navigating unpredictable weather conditions, and co-ordinating multiple flights, opened my eyes to the complexities that exist beyond just piloting an aircraft. It hit home that flying isn't just about your skills in the cockpit but about understanding the whole ecosystem of aviation.

Exposure to the experience and wisdom of others is one of the biggest benefits of attending events like the Darfield fly-in.

After lunch, I rejoined Sue in the Cessna as we departed the Mina strip in Cheviot and headed south towards Macdonald Downs. This strip, nestled in the hills, presented another valuable learning opportunity. As we approached, we were hit by strong updrafts that made the final approach and base leg rather turbulent. Observing Sue's approach to the challenging conditions reinforced how important it is to stay calm and trust in your training when things get rough.

A personal highlight of the day came when we arrived at Rangiora Aerodrome for a fuel stop and Sue allowed me to take the controls of the Cessna for a circuit, coaching me through a landing onto the grass runway. The experience was exhilarating and a real confidence boost. It's one thing to perform a landing in a familiar setting during a lesson, but doing it at a busy aerodrome like Rangiora, surrounded by other planes, is another challenge altogether – and a proper taste of real-world flying.

Our next stop was Lou McAlister's strip, a truly special place where Lou keeps a collection of old restored cars and tractors. As someone with a love for vintage machinery, I could have spent hours exploring Lou's shed, but the day wasn't over yet. We still had one more leg to fly, back to Lou's family farm near Sheffield.

The narrow farm strip, tucked between two massive gum trees, was being buffeted by gusting winds. Ahead of us, Lou's expert handling of the Cub made it look easy, even though the width of the mown grass was barely wider than the plane's undercarriage.

amidst the fun



Watching her make that landing was both inspiring and humbling.

The Darfield fly-in offered invaluable lessons for me and my fellow Kaikoura student, Will, exposing us to a style of flying that simply can't be taught in a regular lesson environment.

These are the kinds of experiences that shape you as a pilot,

and I'm incredibly grateful to Sue and Lou for their generosity in sharing their time, knowledge and skills. A huge thank you to AOPA NZ as well for putting on such a great event. I'll definitely be back for the next one, and I encourage any student pilot to take advantage of such opportunities whenever they can. 🦅

Highlights of an unforgettable day



By William Rutherford



As a young student pilot from the Kaikoura Aero Club, my arrival at Kimberly Road was unforgettable. I'd never seen so many different types of planes. I've been spending plenty of time down a YouTube rabbit hole watching videos of planes and back-country strips, and then here they were: Bearhawks, SuperCubs, 185s and more, right before me.

As I walked down the field towards my instructor Sue Kronfeld's Cessna

172, I was struck by the enthusiastic welcome I got from so many complete strangers. Handshakes were fired at me from all directions – all keen to find out who I was and where I was from. The place was buzzing, everyone chomping at the bit to get airborne.

It proved a brilliant day flying in North Canterbury, first with Sue in the 172 then with Lou Woolf in her awesome wee Cub. I was blown away by the sense of community. Talking to other pilots about

their own journeys into flying and the possible paths towards aircraft ownership was also very helpful.

The hospitality provided by Stephen Grey and Lou McAlister were hugely appreciated. Both stops provided the perfect opportunity to meet people and talk flying. It was a brilliant day that I will never forget. A big thank you to Sue for kindly inviting me and to everyone for being so welcoming and inclusive. See you all next year! 🦅

VFR on top

There's an issue that can be polarising amongst pilots. Some embrace it, some avoid it. Let's look at the case for safe VFR on top, as it applies to those of us flying recreationally (CAR Part 91).

Why fly on top? Great question! Quite often it's smoother above the cloud than below it. Flying above cloud will usually put you above the terrain rather than amongst it. Navigation is easier, particularly these days with a modern EFIS and moving map. The sun is shining up there, and if the weather is 'on the deck' in places, it might be your best option, or possibly your only option, of getting to destination – noting, of course, that we always have the option to leave the flight for another day.

So, while you're down among the hills doing the proverbial scud run in the wind, turbulence and rain, I'll be on top going point to point in the clear calm air, basking in the sun.

But the main reason we would want to fly VFR on top, to throw the proverbial cat among those pesky pigeons, is that VFR on top is usually the safer option. (So there!)

Now stop panting, grab a coffee, calm down and read on.

What do the CAA regs say?

In simple terms, when flying below 3000ft we must remain clear of the cloud, and in sight of the ground or water with 5km vis. When above 3000ft (or 1000ft AGL, whichever is higher) we must stay 2km horizontally and 1000ft vertically away from cloud, and maintain 5km vis. (Remember 5-2-1). The reason

for the higher separation from cloud above 3000ft is so that we have time to manoeuvre if we encounter IFR traffic exiting cloud.

No problems with the rules then. We can climb up in clear air (5-2-1) to above the cloud, cruise above cloud (1000ft above if we're over 3000ft) and descend in clear air (5-2-1) to our destination.

In practical terms, there are a few things we can't do:

- can't be popping up through a layer of IMC;
- can't zoom up through a small hole; need to stay 2km from cloud (4km wide hole);
- can't 'dip a wing' in the cloud; need to be 2km horizontally away from it;
- can't skim along on top; need to be 1000ft above cloud.

Let's talk about risk

Ever since the Wright brothers were learning to ride their bicycles, any discussion of VFR on top has focused on the risks, and mainly the risk of an engine failure – to the exclusion of nearly everything else. Well, while you're busy digging up the engine failure statistics to substantiate those claims that you're about to make, let's talk about the risks... perceived or otherwise.

There's an interesting statistic about sharks. Mosquitoes kill more people in 24 hours than sharks kill in a century, but our minds focus far more readily on the risk of being eaten alive by a shark. Consider that next time you're eating your fish and chips (aka shark and tatties). We eat far more of them than they eat of us, yet our fear level suggests the opposite. Some clever academic labelled this 'Cognitive Dissonance', and it's exactly how our cognitively biased brains work.

Engine failure risk – We're all acutely aware of this risk, but let's give it some context. Single engine IFR is perfectly legal and regularly practised. Sure, it has the advantage of the additional pilot training requirement, as well as a documented departure and arrival procedure. But in terms of engine failure risk, this has long been deemed acceptable, just as single engine flight off-shore is acceptable, eg, fish spotting. That these are acceptable doesn't mean the risk no longer exists, but that we tend to accept risks when they're framed in a particular way. It could



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also suggest that humans can tend to focus on the wrong risks.

You might point out that it's the consequences of an engine failure above cloud that is the issue. Fair point. The real risk of an engine failure while VFR on top, as differentiated from IFR, is that it will likely lead to unintended flight in IMC when we're not equipped to deal with it. But consider also that the vast majority of VFR accidents below cloud are weather related, meaning they're not caused by engine failure at all. The statistics back this up. What the statistics won't show is how many weather-related accidents were avoided by pilots flying VFR on top (all while accepting a higher chance of an adverse outcome in the event of an engine failure).

The take-away point is that even if some individual risks increase while VFR on top, in certain conditions we may be reducing the overall flight risk by avoiding increased risk of VFR weather-related accidents below cloud.

Getting stuck on top – The main risk, of course, is backing ourselves into a corner where we can't find a large hole to descend through near our destination, exacerbated when combined with low fuel. This situation is similar to 'get-home-it is', when we should have turned back earlier but pressed on, hoping a hole would present itself. This is what IFR flight mitigates by having a published departure and arrival, and training to competently fly those procedures.

We could ask ATC or other pilots for guidance to a known clear area for descent. But eventually, we might be faced with two options, running out of fuel, or descent through cloud. Both options involve inadvertent flight into IMC. That's the real risk.

Loss of navigation – Another risk might be the loss of our navigation system, particularly if the enroute cloud that we're flying over is fairly consistent. When VFR below the cloud, we can more easily find landmarks to navigate by. However, in the situation where we're VFR on top with loss of a navigation system, we could avail ourselves of guidance from a radar controller, and if our aircraft has ADS-B installed, we could also get help from other pilots. So that particular risk isn't huge, particularly if we take a few measures to stack the odds in our favour.

Increased cloud top height – When cloud tops are already quite high it can be difficult to tell if they are gradually getting higher as our flight progresses. That's a very real risk if we don't perceive it until too late. Along similar lines, flying between layers requires a heightened awareness of becoming 'boxed in' by decreasing cloud heights above. Both can greatly increase the risk of inadvertent flight into IMC.

Inadvertent flight into IMC – There is a risk when flying VFR on top of inadvertently flying into IMC. It's not that the risk of inadvertent flight into IMC is only present when flying VFR on top, and it's not the only risk. The issue is that when flying VFR on top, most of the other risks, if they do occur, will eventually lead to inadvertent flight into IMC, when we may not be equipped to deal with it.

How can we mitigate the risks?

There are a few things we can do to really stack the odds in our favour, in much the same way that getting regular engine maintenance helps to keep the engine running reliably.

Weather – Ensuring that the weather at our departure and

destination allow both an easy climb to and descent from above the cloud. That's the biggie. If we know with certainty that it's a gin clear day at destination, our flight is going to be a far more relaxing one. Aviation weather forecasting, phone-a-friend, and webcams all assist with this.

Cloud tops – Ensure that the enroute cloud tops are at a level conducive to a safe and relaxing flight. If we find along the way that the cloud tops are getting uncomfortably high, turn around and go back. And just like your old instructor told you, if you're wondering whether you should, then you already should have.

ADS-B – Make sure you have ADS-B installed. Most of us think nothing of having an insurance policy on our aircraft in case the worst happens. It's a back-up measure in case, despite our best efforts, something still goes wrong. These days, having ADS-B installed (and using it) is a no-brainer. Not just for collision avoidance, but if, despite your best efforts, the worst case happens and you do get 'stuck' on top, either ATC or another pilot may be able to offer assistance.

Fuel – Take more fuel. Have enough to allow you to divert to another backup area that you know is definitely clear.

Instrument Training – We do some very basic 'under the hood' instrument training as part of our basic licences, even though flying IMC isn't legal without an instrument rating. If you plan to regularly fly VFR on top, then getting more regular instrument flying practice might also recognise the risk of inadvertent flight into IMC. In a similar manner to low level flying training, you shouldn't ever need to use it, but if all else fails, you're not 'learning to fight, in a fight'.

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A Cessna 180 comes full circle

By Anna Mackenzie

NZ-DOD's story is a classic of NZ GA, a story of adventure and endurance, family and fun, with the charming twist of coming full circle.

Purchased off the assembly line by Merv Halliday back in 1974 when, he recalls, the New Zealand dollar was worth US\$1.48, the six-seat Cessna 180J, s/n 18052392, was allocated the NZ registration ZK-DOD, painted on the aircraft in the Cessna factory in Wichita, with a temporary US registration, N46018, for its flight west to Oakland, California. Disassembled and packed, together with ZK-DOC, into a large wooden shipping crate, DOD arrived in NZ on 18 March and was then freighted to New Plymouth for assembly.

Two months later the aircraft was flown back to Ardmore and Merv took delivery on 21 May 1974, at a cost of NZ\$23,000 (the list price pre shipping and reassembly was US\$23,000). This was in an era of stringent importing restrictions on machinery and equipment, with import licensing and currency restrictions imposed by the Government

and the Reserve Bank. One had to have very good reason to qualify for an import licence.

Less than a year later, on 2 January 1975, the aircraft suffered extensive damage during a training exercise, ending up inverted. It was faithfully rebuilt in Dunedin and returned to Merv's care. In homage to Arthur Bradshaw, who flew his Percival Proctor G-AGWW, 'Kiwi Wanderer', out from Britain in 1950, and who Merv had always admired, he painted 'Wandering Kiwi' on the cowls. In preparation for many planned adventures, the aircraft was fitted with factory-installed long-range fuel tanks consisting of 35 imp gallons per side. To extend the range and allow oceanic flights, Merv installed 'Flint tanks' in both wing tips, providing a further 10 imp gall per side, giving around 9.5hrs endurance at altitude or 1235nm range.

Radios consisted of two Cessna 300

Nav-Com and two Cessna 300 ADF and a ten channel Plantronics HF radio. Merv never had Auto Pilot, DME, or GPS: "My compass and wristwatch were my back-up," he says.

His offshore adventures included flying to Norfolk Island, New Caledonia (twice), Fiji and many of the outer islands, Vanuatu and the Chatham Islands.

In November 1987, Merv's son Grant met the requirements to fly his parents out to the Chatham Islands in 'The Wandering Kiwi'. Flight time 4hr 40mins. They made the return flight direct to Invercargill, never previously done, with a flight time of 5hr 48mins, a record that stood for the next 32 years. Ironically, it was Merv who on 25 Aug 2019 chartered the aircraft, Convair 580 ZK-CIE, that was to better that record with a direct flight from Tuuta airfield on the Chathams to Invercargill in 3 hr 41 minutes. The return flight on the same day was 2hr 12mins



Far left: Arriving crated in NZ.
Left: Taking possession, 1974 – Ernie Halliday, Brian Mander and Merv Halliday.

– but the record for a single engine craft remains valid.

DOD was used extensively for traveling between the Hallidays' farm at Kamahi and their holiday home on Stewart Island. For many years the only place available to land near Half Moon Bay was on the beach at Horseshoe Bay – Merv's tally stands at 356 landings and he recalls that the beach 'certainly had its challenges'. It had a lawn area above the high tide suitable for parking. The island's west coast beaches were also frequented. "Over the years, DOD did a lot of beach work."

In February 1989 Merv received an unexpected offer of \$95,000 for the aircraft. With an almost time-expired engine – 1400hrs, with recommended time between overhaul (TBO) for an O-470-K being 1500hrs – and with the downturn in farming, he reluctantly accepted.

Simon Lusk retained DOD until 1992 when he moved on to an E model Hughes 500, selling DOD to ex-747 pilot Peter Grundy. A few years on, in July 1996, she was purchased – and rechristened 'Doddy' – by Nigel Griffith.

"Owning DOD was a life changing experience," Nigel recalls. "We picked the plane up from Okuku near Rangiora and flew it home. Nikki was pregnant with Jack, and our family adventures began. Doddy took us hunting and fishing and visiting family on the West Coast: amazing times. She took me to meet Mike Thomas at Cascade and then, thanks to Mike, the party really started!"

Having an aircraft with six seats and 230 horsepower made for some challenging takeoffs with a load, so when the engine was due Nigel upgraded to 300hp and an 86 inch Black Mac prop. Next came a pod and some 29 inch Bushwheels, opening up more country and scope for adventure.

"The day we stopped operating Doddy was one of the worst of my life. It was like losing a best mate."

It wasn't all bad though. DOD's next owner saw the aircraft return to the Halliday family, a generation on.

"As young kids there wasn't much of New Zealand that my sister Christine and I didn't get to see from the back of DOD," Grant Halliday recalls.

As soon as he was old enough Grant learnt to fly, gaining his PPL on 3 April



Once the 'bent bits' were removed, just the cabin remained... but determination won out.

1983. Two days later, Philip Kean signed him out with a 180 type rating in DOD. "There was still a bit of supervision/learning for a while from Dad, but looking back at it now, it was pretty good that he had the confidence/trust in me at the age of 17 to get around in his pride and joy."

Grant had done 200hrs in DOD before it was sold.

Many years later, in 2008, flying over the Ruahine Corner strip he saw DOD lying upside down in a pretty bad state after having a catastrophic failure of a gear leg (fatigue crack between axle bolts). As the accident report states, 'the aircraft was destroyed'. And Grant thought that was the end of that.

Months later, however, the fate of DOD was still niggling. He contacted Nigel and they came to an arrangement: Nigel kept the engine for his replacement 185 and Grant bought the rest.

"At the time I wasn't really in a financial position to be able to rebuild it and I was fully aware that it was going to cost more to rebuild than it was going to be worth but, for sentimental reasons, I didn't

want to see it being parted out."

DOD sat in Grant's shed for 18 months while he sourced and collected parts. In 2013 he bit the bullet and sent it to Aero Tech at Ardmore, where Kevin Paulsen started working his magic. "It was a bit of a shock to see what we were left with once all the bent bits were removed. Pretty much just the cabin area was left. The positive was that it is very reassuring to see the strength of the cabin structure in the event of an accident."

Over the next few years, when Kevin had time and as Grant could afford it, progress was made.

As Grant was flying internationally, he was able to bring parts home from the States in his luggage. "Try carrying a pair of undercarriage legs under one arm while dragging a suitcase with the other: that's when you realise how heavy those legs are!"

Large bulky items were shipped home in a container with a work colleague who had a Chevy car parts importing business. Being able to pick stuff up from LA or put stuff in a container that was

shipped weekly worked well, as ordering the parts required from Cessna often incurred a delay due to a wait period until they did another run of that part.

To keep the project moving the flying surfaces were shipped down to Richard McKay in Dunedin and, over the next three years, Richard built two new wings with the Flint tip tanks reinstalled, tailplane and the control surfaces. These were shipped back to Ardmore the same way they were sent down, in a furniture removal truck. "I was pretty nervous about the return trip as the cargo was now pretty valuable," Grant says, "but the truck driver assured me he knew how to look after stuff as he had a Harley Davidson."

With the fabrication of the fuselage and wings complete, a low time IO-520D engine was sourced in USA and a new 86" Black Mac 401 propeller was purchased from McCauley on one of Grant's trips to Oshkosh.

Deliberately, to allow for advances in technology, Grant left the panel till last.

"From the outset I wanted no round gauges, but that wasn't possible in certified GA aircraft. Even when early glass was available it was expensive, and you still had to have steam gauges as a



Three generations of Hallidays with DOD – from left: Merv, Emma and Grant.

backup. Just when I got to the point of having to make a decision, both Dynon and Garmin announced their approval for full glass panel in certified aircraft. Perfect timing!"

After a lot of research and another week at Oshkosh, the Dynon certified package was chosen. DOD was the first C180 in the world to be issued with the Dynon Certified HDX STC.

The aircraft was completely rewired with battery moved onto the firewall with LED lighting throughout. Grant considers one of the best modifications to be the installation of middle row C206 seats on rails (Kenmore STC). Though he no longer sits in the back, he still remembers how uncomfortable those utility seats were!

In February 2022, NZ-DOD rolled out of Aero Tech's hangar as a new aeroplane with the modern features that will hopefully see it right for the next fifty years.

Grant has no regrets. "The rebuild has been a massive undertaking in every respect with lots of highs and lows, however it is exactly what I envisaged when I took the project on. It was great to see Dad back in the left seat again, 48 years after purchasing DOD."

Both Merv and Grant are thrilled to see DOD hitting the skies again. But wait, there's more! The fourth generation of Hallidays to enjoy DOD, Grant's daughter Emma, was recently checked out in her by Phil Kean – a mere 41 years after he signed out her father in 1983. 🛩️

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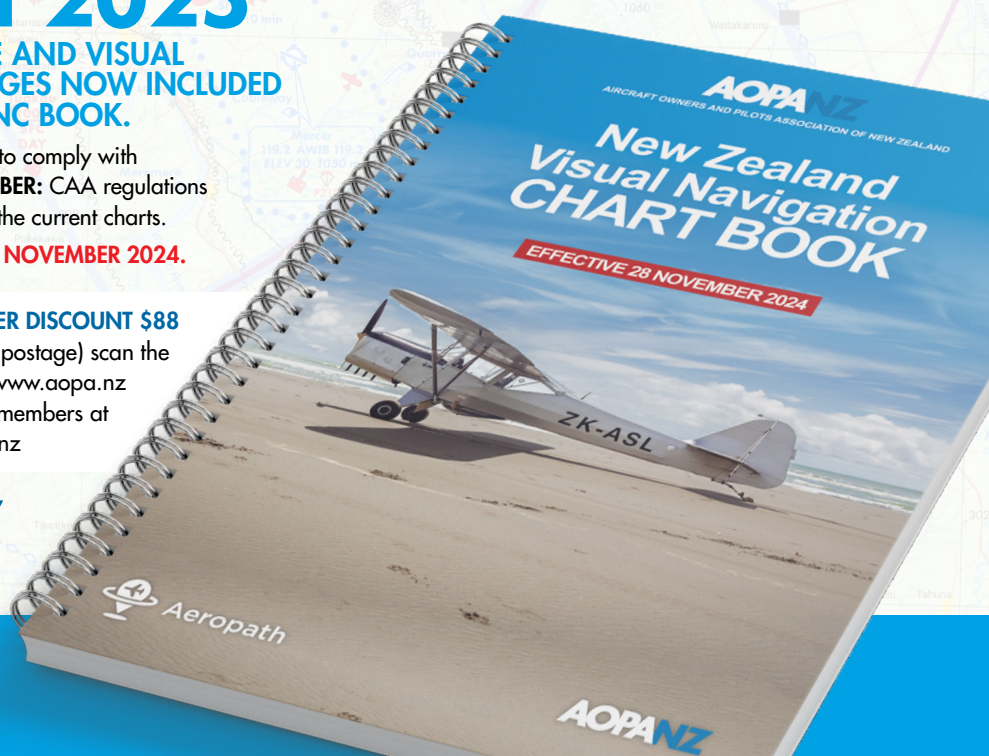
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Final fix in the DC-3

By Jay McIntyre

It seems that each time Anna reminds me an article is due, the next chapter of the DC-3 saga is happening, and so it proves again... I promise this will be the last instalment!

Last edition saw me heading back to Wanaka to show some interested buyers over ZK-JGB as part of a pre-buy inspection. A pleasant day's drive south, which doubled as a delivery run for a propeller for my brother's Maule, and a couple of days with family in Southland and I headed for Wanaka to meet the buyer's representatives.

Impeccable timing saw the trip coinciding with the first significant snow of the year and a couple of miserable weather days. I'd intended to spend a day getting the aeroplane ready for inspection and engine runs, but the weather was so foul I gave that one away and resorted to work-related paperwork. Luckily the following day, though bitterly cold, was marginally better, so after meeting the prospective buyer's representatives at the Wanaka Airport Runway Café we elected to spend the morning reviewing logbooks and so forth. This seemed to go well and when the weather later brightened somewhat we ventured out to look over the aeroplane.

The months since we'd been there over ANZAC Day weekend had not treated her unkindly, and our guests were genuinely surprised to find the aeroplane in better shape than they'd been expecting – checking over systems, they found that everything worked! Callum at Twenty 24 had recently completed engine runs, so we were able to carry out engine runs, demonstrating that everything was in order and that she ran very nicely. With nothing more to be gained we vacated the airfield to get warm, meeting later for dinner and some yarnning. As we headed homeward the next day I felt that everyone was happy and that it appeared we might have a sale.

Fast forward a couple of months and the sale had fallen by the wayside. Another DC-3, a bit more up-specced and competitively priced, had come on the market, essentially gazumping the sale. The decision was made to relocate ZK-JGB back to Omaka for final rectification and ADS-B installation.

Ferry permit in hand, the biggest problem turned out to be getting two rated pilots in the same place at the same time! Additionally, new batteries were needed to ensure that if an



engine was to be feathered in flight there would be power to do so. I could write a small novel on the trials and tribulations of getting these batteries from the USA to Wanaka. Suffice to say that I used to be worried that Boeing wouldn't get NASA to Mars... Now I'm more worried that they will get them there... Freight companies are another story too, but I'm sure you're all aware of that. In the end, thanks to the efforts of Callum and Performance Avionics, we were able to get the \$8000 batteries activated and I had them fitted in the aeroplane an hour before our planned T/O time on 11 October. Talk about eleventh hour stuff!

Matt McLaughlin and Matt White were our pilots for the trip and their careful planning saw us out of Wanaka and on our way north. A largely uneventful flight saw us in Omaka about 3pm on Friday. The LH prop sprang a leak about halfway to Omaka but it wasn't bad enough to have to divert.

This was the first time I'd had the pleasure of flying in the DC-3 and, with only two of these beauties left in the country (three counting the one that's sold and heading offshore) will probably be the last. I'm very glad to have been able to tick it off my wish list. A bit of stick time across the Canterbury Plains was certainly a bonus. Looking at the photo of a somewhat dishevelled engineer/pilot I couldn't help thinking I resembled Luke Skywalker in one of the later *Star Wars* movies: it certainly felt the part!

The last couple of weeks have seen work focus on getting ADS-B installed, however, that came to a crashing halt when we realised that, as she is over 5700kg, we'd need a Pt 146 approved modification...

My son is about to turn ten and things were put into sharp perspective when I realised that I'd been mucking around with this aeroplane since about the time he was born. Regardless, the project has been a hell of a ride and a real privilege even if it has probably put most of the lines on my face.

And if anyone out there would like a DC-3, the intention is that this airframe will be put up for sale to the highest bidder on 31 December 2024. 🛩️



District Plans: The Hearing process

By John Evans

We have been running a series on District Plans, looking into a variety of rules in new generation District Plans concerning aircraft activity in the General Rural Zone. Many of these new rules contain unreasonable setbacks and monthly movement limits.

Through the series we have looked closely at a variety of rules within plans and noise standards that can apply. We have provided our members with information on how the Resource Management Act provides protections for existing activities, either through an Existing Use Certificate or a Certificate of Compliance. We looked closely at the noise standards which regulate noise activities.

In this article, we will talk through our experience presenting at the Timaru District Plan Hearings.

Firstly, a simplified recap on how the District Planning process works. Each territorial authority in New Zealand (of which there are 67) has a 10 year District Plan – essentially, the district's rule book. Within these 10 year plans, council can introduce new rules under a Plan Change. The Resource Management Act defines the process. In short, it starts with a notified Proposed Plan with an s32 assessment report, invitation for submissions, invitation for submissions on submissions (further submissions), s42A report assessment of submissions made on proposed plan and the Hearing, with the Hearing Panel made up of Commissioners.

In December 2022, the Cessna 180/185 Group, AOPA NZ, SAA and Recreational Backcountry Pilots Association jointly submitted against Timaru District Council's Proposed Plan, rejecting a 500m setback and ten movement monthly limitation.

In July 2024 submissions were made at the Hearing by AOPA NZ members and by our lawyers, Wynn Williams, all of whom did an outstanding job.

We argued that the imposed restrictions were not adequately addressed or assessed in the s32 report. The argument was presented that no issue exists, therefore no need for heavy-handed regulation. The Commissioners appeared very receptive to the argument and the idea that the council was out solving (regulating) problems that do not exist. We were able to increase the knowledge and awareness of our recreational pursuit, and the use of rural land for aircraft activity.

What happens after a hearing? The process carries on, Commissioners issue Minutes, which ask submitters or the council for further information. Memorandums respond to the Hearing Panel. Finally the Hearing Panel makes decisions and notifies a Decisions Version of the Plan. At this point, the rules are legally operative. The opportunity is presented to appeal, this time to the Environment Court, within 30 working days. A court-appointed mediator considers the appeal and decisions are ratified by a judge of the Environment Court. The next appeal opportunity goes off to the High Court.

Following our Timaru District Plan hearing, the Commissioners issued a Minute, directing the council to provide a record of existing issues and the evidence to support changes from the Operative Plan. The Council's lawyers responded with a Memorandum of Counsel, clarifying its interpretation of the operative plan rules, detailing an investigation of one microlight aircraft noise complaint dated 2014 (which they had not released under their Official Information Act request in

early 2023) and detailed the council's desire to work with submitters to develop a solution. The consultant Reporting Officer followed up with a subsequent memorandum considering past activity was subject to Noise standards (50dB L10) and proposed setbacks be removed, but proposed plan activity would be subject to 50dB LAeq(15min).

We then responded to both memorandums, rejecting any assertion of the 50dB LAeq (15min) descriptor. We provided background on why L10 (operative plan) is very much different in its effect on the new 50dB LAeq (15min) (proposed plan), even though the planner considered it a like for like. 50dB L10 allows for noise levels to exceed 50dB for 10% of the assessment period, typically 15 minutes, therefore allows an elevated noise level for 90 seconds, sufficient for an aircraft movement. 50dB LAeq(15min) is very restrictive, in fact, it is 200 times more restrictive than the 55dB Ldn noise limit aircraft are to comply with at surrounding airports.

All of the above, including submissions, statements, Minutes, Memorandums and reports amount to well over 100 pages. All to regulate an issue that does not exist. We have publicly raised concern, as have our counterparts in the Agricultural Aircraft Association (NZAAA) and Helicopter Association (NZHA), re the effects of the infiltration in local democracy of consultants who write the rules to address non-existent issues with no knowledge of rural aircraft activity and the acoustic standards designed to regulate aircraft activity.

What is the cost of all of this? In short, a lot. Financially, AOPA NZ has contributed \$10,000, while individual AOPA members have collectively contributed an additional \$25,000. This has funded an expert law firm, alongside acoustic and planning advice. AOPA Advocacy and AOPA members have contributed hundreds of hours of volunteer time. Why is it worth it? Well, clearly we do not have the resources to fund all council plan fights, or the time. But when we have a local community, prepared to fund and make the time for a fight, it raises public awareness of council behaviour, and these efforts educate commissioners and consultants (who work throughout many different councils) on our activity, highlighting that it very rarely creates any problems and does not warrant the degree of regulation proposed.

It is not just landowners with private airstrips that this benefits, but ensuring the ongoing lawful use of rural airstrips for fly-ins, to land somewhere suitable for whatever reason, including training, as well as protecting the rights of those who



Protecting the right to establish and fly into privately owned rural airstrips is a key goal.

wish to establish an appropriately placed airstrip on their property in the future.

For many of us, our first introduction to aviation was through seeing aircraft operate off rural properties. NZAAA and NZHA appropriately advocate for the same rural land to be used for agricultural and helicopter activity which of course we support. This fight is unifying for the different sectors in aviation; a unified fight against the increasingly large bureaucracy and

rule book and, as we've seen, the bloat-ing of all of our rates bills.

All of this aside, we still need to consider the effect of our activity on others. This means flying neighbourly, through consideration of operating hours, flight paths, propeller/power settings and good neighbourly relations.

Let us know at advocacy@aopa.nz when you hear murmurs of any threats to our freedom to fly. 🛩️





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Flying Getaway...

Destination West Melton

By Ross Millichamp



NZWL is located 6NM to the west of Christchurch Airport, and is just a 30 minute drive to the Christchurch CBD. It is located on the south bank of the Waimakariri River and operated by the Canterbury Aero Club.

West Melton is built on dry, well drained land, has multiple vector options and is beautifully maintained by Jim Chapman and his team of volunteers. A busy clubroom is open during duty hours with tea and coffee making facilities, toilets and knowledgeable instructors onsite. A security person lives in a cottage on the field so aircraft parked there are generally safe.

NZWL is a busy training airfield with plenty of activity from private owners, club members and students from the club-owned International Aviation Academy of New Zealand. Visiting aircraft are welcome at West Melton but prior permission is required.

Jeremy Ford, CEO of the Canterbury Aero Club says, "We insist that visiting pilots contact us in advance in order to receive a full briefing, but we never turn anyone down."

To obtain permission ring the club on 03 3592121 and ask to be put through to the duty instructor at West Melton. They will send you briefing information and, importantly, note your name, aircraft registration and ETA on the whiteboard in the clubroom.

The need for a briefing is in part due to the amount of activity at West Melton and in part due to the complexity of the airspace that surrounds it. NZWL is situated in a 'pocket' to the west of

the Class C airspace which surrounds NZCH. A couple of permanently closed Danger Areas extend from the ground up to 1350ft on the western side, which adds to the cramped nature of the circuit, however, if pilots are well prepared and alert, they pose no problems.

West Melton lies within the Canterbury CFZ (119.2) and is surrounded by a small MBZ (also 119.2) which extends out from the airfield with a radius of 1.5NM. It has three runways/six vectors which cater for almost any wind direction. Whereas landing at Christchurch will often see light aircraft pilots forced to fight a crosswind to fit in with airline traffic, there is almost always an in-to-wind option at West Melton.

The main runway 04/22 is split into left and right vectors with 04R and 22L having a 612m sealed portion. Overhead joins are mandatory and are non-standard in that the join altitude of 1500 AMSL is only 1200ft above ground level. Circuits are all left hand and once again non-standard, with a height of 1100 AMSL, or 800ft above ground level. Planning an arrival into NZWL is the most important element given the congested airspace. If coming from the north it is best to stay west of the nearby transit lane



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*Above: West Melton CFI Sam Johnston puts a student pilot through her paces.
Right: Jim Chapman and his team of volunteers keep the field spick and span; the clubrooms offer a welcome to passing aviators, but please get in touch in advance.
Previous page: Canterbury Aero Club planes are regulars in the circuit.*



or you will arrive too low for an overhead join. Instead approach from the 'Watchtower' (an old firewatching tower now surrounded by irrigated pasture) and then towards the airfield. If coming from the west or south, track over the Danger Areas (there is a 150ft sandwich of airspace available between the danger areas and NZCH airspace). Tracking from this direction means that you'll arrive with the airfield on your left and be in the best position to start an overhead join.

Christchurch's ever-present north-easterly wind determines that 04 is the runway most often in use. The proximity of the danger area to the west significantly truncates the size of the downwind and final available when using 04, and the turn onto final is tighter than 90°. Take a careful look at the AIP plate, which shows what would be a normal circuit and the actual circuit. The Canterbury Aero Club has a rule that no more than five aircraft can be in the circuit at one time, partly because it can be full of training pilots and partly due to its truncated size. There are really no options to extend downwind to create space at NZWL. If you do arrive and find the circuit busy, just hold back and wait for things to settle down. The instructors in the air or monitoring the students from the ground will be expecting you and will likely ask someone to do a full stop to create space to let you in.

Although NZWL can be busy, much of the activity is predictable by the time of day. Club aircraft tend to arrive from Christchurch just after 8am and depart back just before 5pm. There are also breaks in activity around 10am, between midday and 1pm and around 3pm as individual lessons start and finish.

Once on the ground there are taxiways on both sides of each runway to facilitate a return to the clubroom and hangars. Ample parking is available between the clubroom carpark and the large club hangar. An RD avgas pump has recently been installed between the club hangar and the 04 threshold. Landing fees are a modest \$10, payable either at the honesty box or by eftpos in the clubrooms during duty hours.

There are a host of B&B's close to NZWL. Alternatively an Uber into the centre of Christchurch will cost \$65-\$70. In fact landing at NZWL and grabbing an Uber will probably be cheaper than landing at NZCH (which now attracts around \$50 in Airways charges) and paying for an over-priced Airport taxi! 🛩️

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Slow progress on unleaded

By Chris Hoffman

As a member of IAOPA, AOPA NZ receives regular reports on the activities of ICAO (the International Civil Aviation Organization, based in Montreal) via IAOPA's observer status.

Given that ICAO sets Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) on which our CAA bases most of its rules, it is important to understand what is happening at this international forum.

ICAO has recently rejected a request from the Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) operators (representing autonomous electric aeroplanes and drones, etc), to have segregated airspace, recognising that legacy aircraft (the planes we all fly) continue to use this space with their legacy avionics. These aircraft use GPS as the primary means of navigation, and the concern is the increasing risk of GPS spoofing, with up to 1500 interference events occurring daily around the world. The sending of false GPS signals is a major cyber threat and could lead to loss of control of unmanned aircraft.

Another current topic is the proposal to use true north for all navigation, basing this on GPS and no longer using magnetic compass bearings, given the problem of the continuing shifting of the magnetic north pole. The move to a true north system will involve a one-off but substantial cost to the whole aviation industry. For GA it would mean replacing all magnetic compasses with a GPS-based display that indicates true north. All navigation and airport runway designations would be in True. The study group looking at this has pushed any implementation out beyond 2035, and no final decision has yet been made.

The implementation of remote piloted aircraft systems continues to challenge the rule makers, in particular regarding procedures around loss of the command and control link to aircraft. The technology is progressing faster than rule makers can work which has led to a push from the AAM sector for a new way of introducing work into the ICAO process. This is likely to improve the speed with which ICAO produces its SARPs – time will tell.

AOPA US continues to push to resolve the impasse that has developed in the development and manufacture of unleaded 100 octane avgas. In 2014, the FAA formed PAFI (Piston Engine Fuel Initiative) to 'support evaluation of candidate-unleaded

fuels'. The PAFI process for identifying a fuel would be via issuance of an ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) spec, ie, a document that sets out the tests that each batch of fuel must pass. After PAFI spent US\$40 million of US taxpayer money without result, it was revived as EAGLE (Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions) in early 2022. So far all the fuels that have been tested through EAGLE have failed to deliver the performance required or have caused damage to the test engines or aeroplane fuel systems.

The FAA runs a parallel process of approval via an STC, and this is the path taken by private company GAMI (General Aviation Modifications, Inc). After ten years for development and testing, they were issued an STC for their fuel (G100UL) for all GA engines, including older warbirds and vintage aircraft. GAMI has so far manufactured one million gallons, available to distribute, but engine manufacturers and fuel distribution networks are refusing to endorse or move the fuel.

AOPA US has been running a very public trial of the new fuel in a Beech Baron twin with newly overhauled engines running 100LL in one engine and G100UL in the other and the early results are promising – less engine wear and cleaner running cylinders with perhaps slightly better performance.

The governing legislatures around USA are becoming frustrated. California has banned leaded fuels from 2031 if unleaded fuels are commercially available. Congress has passed legislation requiring airport and fixed base operators to provide 100LL until a replacement has been found. GAMI has developed the replacement and, with an STC in place, has the approvals to manufacture and distribute the fuel. There are no legal or insurance liability issues stopping the delivery of fuel.

In NZ we are unlikely to see unleaded 100 Octane fuel any time soon unless we can convince a local distributor to import the fuel directly from GAMI's licenced manufacturer in the USA.

For more on this, I recommend the AOPA US website. 🐦

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