Approach

AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND
SUMMER 2025

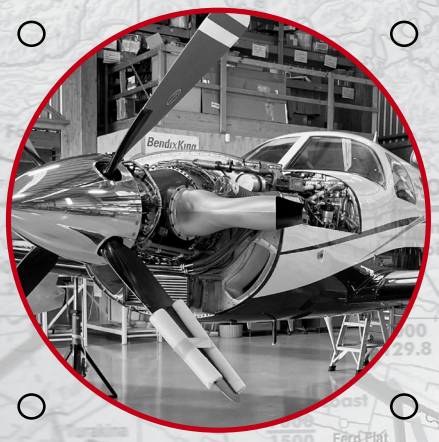
Taming the Taildragger

Flying in Botswana

Outback Air Race

Back to School

AOPA FLY-INS ○ INDUSTRY NEWS AND VIEWS ○ COMING EVENTS AND MORE



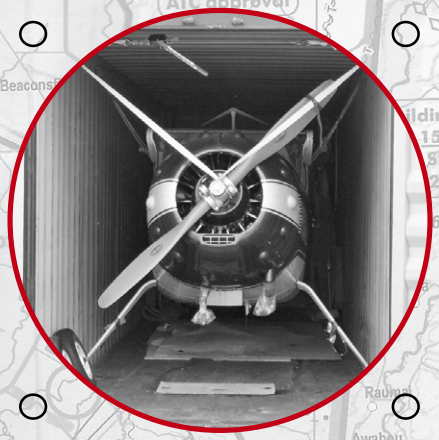
MAINTENANCE

REPAIR & REBUILD

ENGINES

AVIONICS

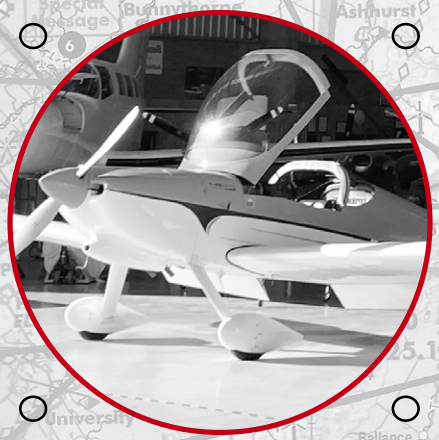
24/7 BREAKDOWN



IMPORT / EXPORT

TURBINES & JETS

GENERAL AVIATION



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Coming up

- Executive meet and greet Bridge Pa Aerodrome HB, 13 December from 4pm
- Healthy Bastards Competitions Omaka, 7 Feb 2026
- AOPA NZ AGM 2026 Greymouth, 28 February '26

For more visit www.aopa.nz

Cover photo: Neville Bailey in Bearhawk Bravo over the Rangitata River

Photo credit: Aaron Murphy

Contents

Regular Columns

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Deadline for ads, articles and photos for the next (Autumn) issue: **20 January 2026**.

President's Comment

As spring unfolds across New Zealand, we're reminded once again just how dynamic our flying environment can be. Recent forecasts of rain and gusty winds across many regions have kept pilots on their toes. It's a timely reminder of the importance of understanding current weather patterns before committing to a flight. Tools such as GoPreflight, MetService, Windy, rain radar, and other aviation-specific forecasts are essential in helping pilots identify fast-moving systems and make informed decisions during this transitional season.

DL9 Medical considerations

Recently, I've become more aware of the implications of the DL9 medical process for pilots aged 70 and older. The DL9 medical is governed not by the CAA but by the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA), and is a requirement for heavy traffic licences. To carry passengers in a commercial vehicle, such as a taxi or bus, or to fly an aeroplane on a DL9, you need at least a Class 2 with a P endorsement.

Your GP, who administers the DL9 medical, is not assessing your fitness to fly but to meet the standards of the DL9. They have the authority to refer you for a driving assessment if your medical history raises any concerns. In practice, if you're over 70 and referred for a driving test, it can prove both time-consuming and costly to pursue. For some, if your primary goal is to continue flying, it might be simpler – and incur similar financial costs – to pursue a Class 2 aviation medical through an approved medical examiner.

If you are over 70 and flying on a DL9, I encourage you to check with your insurance broker to ensure your coverage remains valid. It's possible that a Class 2 medical may provide a more straightforward and robust option.

Coming up

Healthy Bastards STOL Competition – 7 February 2026

As a proud member of the Marlborough Aero Club, I'd like to promote the return of the Healthy Bastards STOL Competition at Omaka Airfield. This friendly short field landing event is open to all types of GA aircraft and pilots who enjoy great flying and great company.

Last year, we had 25 aircraft participate as the event resumed, and we expect even more in 2026! Proceeds support Prostate Cancer Awareness, and the event is proudly championed by Dr Dave Baldwin, AME based in Palmerston North. Registrations open 1 December 2025 via the Marlborough Aero Club website – mark your calendars!

AOPA NZ Executive Meet & Greet – 13–14 December 2025

With the Executive Committee meeting at HB&EC Aero Club, Bridge Pa Aerodrome, we are hosting a casual Meet & Greet with members on Saturday afternoon. If you are nearby or able to fly in, please do join us for light refreshments and a chat with your Executive team. Details will be shared via Member e-coms and the AOPA NZ Facebook page closer to the date.

AOPA NZ AGM – 26–28 February 2026 in Greymouth

Please save the date for our 2026 AGM in Greymouth, kindly organised by Katie Milne and Ian Whitmore. More details will follow.

Feedback welcome

Recent AOPA gatherings in Haast and Darfield used the Fly-In Guide mandated by our Safety Subcommittee. The updated registration process was designed to streamline attendance and enhance safety. I'd love to hear your feedback:

- Was the registration easy to complete?
- Were the updates and information useful?
- Most importantly – did you enjoy the event?

Please email your comments to: president@aopa.nz

Advocacy

With regional councils under increased scrutiny from central government, now is a crucial time to maintain strong communication with your local councillors about the importance of general aviation infrastructure – particularly aerodromes. These facilities need to remain viable for hangars, aircraft, and future aviation development.

Our Advocacy subcommittee maintains a database of lease and rental comparisons, and we're here to support you in preparing tailored submissions for aerodrome-related issues. Please reach out if we can assist.

VNC Book

The Visual Navigation Chart (VNC) Book is currently being updated and will be available through the the AOPA NZ website, with our member discount as per usual. It can also be purchased through the AIP Shop.

We've also retained the current AOPA NZ advertising campaign for another season and are considering a new theme for the year ahead. Your feedback is invaluable – please let us know what you'd like to see.

Spring weather brings both beauty and unpredictability. Fly safe, plan carefully, and always check the forecast.

Blue skies,

Sue Kronfeld, President

Welcome to new members:

Thomas van Asch, Blenheim; Robert Brown, Waiuku; Andrew Adamson, Queenstown; Regan Brown, Hamilton; Edison Wang, Auckland; James Jarden, Wairoa; Charlie Bryce, Nelson; Karen Dalldorf, West Melton; Brad Newfield, Omarama; Daniel McCormack, Omarama; Geoffrey Brown Jr, Wellington; Jacob Hannan, Auckland; Darren Hooks, Wellington; Henry Savill, Waipara; Shane Phillips, Auckland; Po-Cheng Lin, Auckland; Steve Houghton, Pauanui; Glenn Carroll, Palmerston North; Pete Darling, Richmond; Rance Winter, Frankton; Brad Hewson, Lake Hāwea; Ben Carmine, Nelson; Lindsay Whelan, Ohoka; Grant Connell, Auckland; Malcolm Campbell, Christchurch; Laura Young, Blenheim; Haydn Ngan, Auckland; Sonya Meek, Dunedin; Dan Clearwater, Wanaka.

ThinkAviation flying scholarships

From 53 applicants ranging from school seniors through to pilots with over 300 hours' flight time, two winners have been selected for the AOPA NZ Charitable Trust fixed wing scholarships, launched by ThinkAviation in July.

Worth $5000 and $7500 towards costs of training, the scholarships aim to promote GA and to encourage more youth to take up aviation as a career.

Charlie Bryce of Nelson was awarded the AOPA NZ Trust PPL Scholarship. Involved with the Motueka Aero Club Young Eagles, Charlie works part-time to pay for his flying. Commended by his referees as having a strong work ethic as well as the attributes and motivation needed to be a good pilot, Charlie was described as a 'thinking pilot' who "is always critiquing his flying, trying to set a high standard."

The AOPA NZ Trust CPL Scholarship went to Karen Dalldorf of Christchurch. Karen gained her PPL at Bridge Pa while working full-time. Soon after gaining her licence she successfully represented the HB&EC Aero Club at the Flying NZ Regional Rally. After moving to Christchurch she joined the Canterbury Aero Club. In addition to winning the Aroha Clifford Memorial Cup for Airmanship, she has been awarded an Aspeq Scholarship for CPL exams by the NZ Airwomen's Association. References emphasised her passion for aviation, strong work ethic and ability to stay focussed under pressure.

ThinkAviation was established as the Trust's brand to encourage people to look at aviation options and learn about General Aviation. The Trust is funded by the generous support and donations of people who fly aircraft, or who are currently working in the industry.

New VNC Book

The new Visual Navigation Chart (VNC) Book, effective 20 November 2025, is now available. You can buy your copy through our website at the discounted member rate of $88.

To secure your current copy, log in to www.aopa.nz and you will find a link directly on the Home Page. It's also accessible through 'Member Benefits', listed in the 'Member Resources' drop-down menu - or if all else fails, type 'VNC' into the search bar. (To return to the Home Page at any time, just click on the AOPA NZ logo, top left of the search bar.)

2026 AOPA NZ AGM

Greymouth is the venue for the 2026 AOPA NZ AGM weekend. Mark it on your calendar for what is sure to be fun-filled and full-on aviation event.

The AGM is scheduled for the afternoon of Saturday 28 February, but you should certainly consider arriving early so you can enjoy Friday's packed itinerary of flying and other activities. More details on that to come. A highlight of the AGM weekend is always the annual Awards presentation dinner, with guest speaker, on Saturday evening. Sunday offers relaxed social time before everyone heads home – but why not add on a holiday exploring this lovely part of New Zealand?

Our block-booked accommodation is on a 'first in, first served' basis at Recreation Hotel, ph 03 7685154; email accommodation@rechotel.co.nz – please mention AOPA when booking. Other options are available: check the website for further information.

New drug and alcohol rules

Drug and alcohol management plans are now mandated for commercial aviation operations such as airlines and maintenance organisations, adventure operators, agricultural operators, air traffic services, airports, freight operators and more.

For Group 1 operators, fit-for-purpose policies covering education, testing, reporting and ongoing monitoring are now a legal requirement.

For more information, refer to Civil Aviation Rule Part 99. Full compliance is required across the sector by April 2027.

Vice-President's view

I recently attended the New Zealand Aviation Federation (NZAF) meeting.

Held every two months at Wellington Airport, the fifteen or so members represent the broad range of the GA sector, including AOPA, aero clubs, gliding, model flying, parachuting, historical aircraft, women in aviation, engineers, airshows, sports aircraft, Tigers, Warbirds, balloons and more. It also includes the Uncontrolled Airport Association and the Aviation Industry Association.

NZAF receives returns from its shareholding in Aspeq, which provides assessment and exam services for aviation, NZTA, FENZ and other institutions. It represents a huge number of GA interested parties at a high level and has the ear of the Minister of Transport, the CAA and has a seat on the Aviation Council.

At the meeting we were joined by the new Director of the CAA, Kane Patena, accompanied by Catherine MacGowan and Dean Winter. Kane introduced himself and outlined the issues that he saw with their operations and services. The Ministry of Transport recently issued their Aviation Action Plan. A key take from the plan is that the Ministry recognise the importance of General Aviation, and it was refreshing to hear Kane confirming the plan as his mandate for ten years into the future.

Kane emphasised that he had spent the last couple of months listening to the grassroots in aviation, and is keen to drive change in CAA operations, focussing on CAA being a facilitator of safety and security in aviation.

He sees the role of CAA as being to set the right policy and standards, engage with the grassroots, and provide a mechanism for licensing, monitoring and certification. He sees that the CAA has a purpose of ensuring safety, enabling innovation and improving efficiency.

The immediate changes that he wants to make are to update the rules; digitally transform their business operations; improve engagement and enable change of the existing culture; and to control costs. His key concerns are the timeliness of services, the responsiveness of services, and a 'can do' approach to enablement.

Good intentions and good to hear them. It's clear that Kane is very much aware of the culture change needed and is positive and enthusiastic about the task ahead. It will be interesting to see what eventuates.

AOPA NZ will be meeting with the CAA again soon and I will be keen to see how Kane has progressed his plans. We will also be updating our concerns over unidirectional runway lighting, the expansion and un-mandated use of CFZ frequencies, VFR flight in controlled airspace, unnecessary limitations on DL9 medicals and feedback on investigations of the Omarama accident.

Considerably more exciting news is that Bearhawk ZK-RJE is back in the air again. Thanks go to AON brokers, QBE insurers, Aerobuild Ltd in Nelson and heaps of advice from everybody.

Richard Eberlein, Vice-President

From the Editor

Early November featured the annual Taildragger weekend Fly-in in Hawke's Bay, an aviation highlight in the region for the last 18 years.

Luckily, this spring's volatile weather settled on still and sunny for the duration, with a weather window also allowing a sizeable contingent of taildraggers to make it up from the South Island.

Bridge Pa was this year hosting the main Saturday events, with pre-event and Sunday competitions centred at Waipukurau Aerodrome.

Taildragger weekend has often found me taking photos on the STOL landing line, but this year others were on hand for that task and my day was focussed in the Club's kitchen, quality catering always having been a much-appreciated feature of the event. I still found plenty of time to catch up with AOPA NZ members from out of town, however, a bonus of events such as these.

The weekend offered up another personal highlight. After months without any flying, and with the catering, competitions and catch-ups complete, Hamish and I went for a tootle in the Stinson, keeping a wry eye on the gaggle of taildraggers checking out local strips. I don't need a lot of flying, but it turns out I'd missed it.

Bridge Pa is hosting an AOPA NZ 'Meet and Greet' in December. This is a great opportunity to talk to the AOPA NZ Executive and fellow members. Please do take the opportunity to come along and chat all things aviation and beyond.

Around seventy visitors from under five to over eighty gathered at Bridge Pa for the annual HB Taildragger Weekend in early November.

A plug also for the AGM in February. Greymouth is a great venue and gateway to the wonderful West Coast. Come along and catch up with your aviation community; both the flying and the formalities will be fun. See you there!

Anna Mackenzie, Editor

DOC Concession – all in the detail

By John Evans

In the Winter 2025 *Approach*, I described our new Department of Conservation (DOC) Concession to land at Milford Sound Aerodrome. Thanks to those of our members who have since followed the process, as described on our website, when using this concession.

We have another renewed concession, 113670-AIR. This concession replaces 39539-AIR which allowed us to land on public conservation land, predominantly in the south of New Zealand. Our new concession 113670-AIR opens up public conservation land throughout New Zealand for our fly-ins.

What is a concession and why do we need it? A concession is an authority to conduct any commercial activity on public conservation land, and includes most forms of motorised recreational activities.

All public conservation land, under the management of DOC, requires a concession to lawfully land aircraft. Aircraft use (including recreational) is not permitted as of right, as defined in the relevant conservation management plans/strategies. There are different public conservation land designations, which apply to the landing locations granted, and these include Conservation Areas, Conservation Parks, Marginal Strips, National Parks, Recreation Reserves and Scenic Reserves. It takes a bit of reading, but each land designation has conditions stipulated within the respective area Plan or Strategy. The DOC Concession Permissions Advisor will read through the respective Plan or Strategy and approve/decline the request and allocate landings.

You can apply for your own concession to land on public conservation land, or use one held under a membership organisation such as AOPA or the Recreational Backcountry Pilots Association (RBPA). It is a pilot-in-command responsibility to have the necessary permissions/authorisation to land anywhere, be that a private airstrip, crown land, i.e. river bed/beach, or on public conservation land.

Our past concession, with the work led by Life Member Shaun Gilbertson, was granted in 2014, providing for access to airstrips in the Landsborough, Pyke, Hawea Valley, Wilkin Valley and Mavora Lakes during our fly-ins. This lawfully permitted our fly-in activity, following a challenging battle to obtain concessions to land on public conservation land in the early 2010s. DOC was highly adverse to lawfully permitting recreational aircraft access through granting landing concessions, while this recreational activity just continued to occur, as it had done so for decades. DOC proceedings and a conviction following an aircraft incident on public conservation land further prompted the need to lawfully permit the activity through a concession. After a lot of work, and political pressure led by the RBPA and supported by AOPA NZ, the mood within DOC changed, allowing recreational aircraft to land on conservation land, and concessions were granted.

Our new application was submitted to renew the concession in late 2023, with additional airstrips across New Zealand. In June 2025, we were issued the replacement. While the concession was granted with the new landing locations applied for, many had impractical allocations. I dug into the conservation plans and strategies and presented the case to DOC that increased allocations which practically enable our fly-ins to occur would be plan compliant. The only way to have a granted concession reviewed is to first present a case to DOC that there are grounds to reconsider the application. DOC then considers if they will reconsider, and in this case they agreed to proceed to reconsider. The Dunedin DOC team were very helpful in facilitating this process, eventually leading to the outcome we sought, granted in October 2025, now in place for the next ten years.

We have access through our concession to land at thirty airstrips during our fly-ins in the likes of the Hunter, Landsborough, Okuru, Rangitata, Molesworth, Taruarau, Arawhata and Pyke catchments, and on D'Urville Island.

The concession is not something we can describe in one sentence, and it is not a list of locations that are free for all. There are conditions associated with each airstrip and area, such as during the deer roar where there are balloted blocks, fishing seasons, grazing licence holders on some public conservation land, and of course, annual limits.

During AOPA NZ fly-ins where landing locations on this concession can be used, the conditions of those specific landing locations can be communicated with movements recorded, to be reported annually. Please email concessions@aopa.nz should you like a copy of the AOPA NZ fly-in concession.

Within the ten year tenure of 113670-AIR, it is likely we will see conservation plans and strategies renewed. While they will be publicly consulted on, it is unlikely that they will be more permissive toward aircraft activity, so an existing lawful right to exercise this activity is important.

Our new concession will enable our membership to explore so many spectacular airstrips in our very special backcountry aviation environment across New Zealand during our fly-ins. But please respect that privilege, recognising that it takes a lot of work to have a concession granted and there are specific conditions to comply with. Flying neighbourly and respectfully will allow us to retain access. But remember, you, as the pilot in command, must have the competency and aircraft suitable for a given airstrip within the backcountry environment.

Taming the Taildragger

By Neville Bailey

It's been said many times that in the world of taildraggers, there are those who have, and those who will. We're talking, of course, about the dreaded ground loop. And, in case that weren't enough, the possibility of flipping upside down on landing, AKA the nose-over.

Now the more pedantic among you are already quietly fuming. Yes, I know, I know, I'm using the term taildragger much like the Brits use the term 'carriageway', a fond carryover from a bygone era, yet a complete contradiction to the original meaning. But the term taildragger has a certain ring to it – it just rolls off the tongue oh-so-nicely. So indulge me, and let's continue shall we?

So what is a Taildragger? The term taildragger in this context is used to mean: a fixed wing aircraft with the main wheels forward of the centre of gravity. That's quite a significant point, because on a taildragger, most of the aircraft's weight resides behind the main landing gear, a design that makes them inherently unstable in yaw when on the ground. By contrast, on a tricycle aircraft, most of the aircraft's weight resides forward of the main landing gear, thereby causing all the forces to work in your favour... directionally speaking. And just for the sake of clarity, a taildragger – once in the air – flies like any other aircraft; there's really no difference. The 'issues' are all in the ground handling.

Is there really a problem? A quick peruse of insurance premiums for taildraggers confirms a rather inconvenient truth: a high rate of what is known in the industry as 'loss of directional control on ground (LODCOG)' type accidents. And the numbers don't lie. Researchers Alex de Voogt from Drew University and Kayla Louteiro from Fairleigh Dickinson University did a study aptly named 'Nose-Over and Nose-Down Accidents in General Aviation: Tailwheels and Aging Airplanes'. They note that "about 12% of all airplane accidents in General Aviation involve nose-overs and nose-down events".

Why fly a Taildragger then? That's a very good question. Who in their right mind would want to attempt to fly one, let alone own one?

Well, me for a start. And as it turns out, many of you too.

We've recognised some of the advantages that taildraggers can offer and that, despite the increased statistical risk, they are often well suited to particular operations, such as off-airport use. And we've noted that with a healthy dose of good training and plenty of practice, we can minimise some of those aforementioned pesky risks.

Some, like myself, have learned to fly taildraggers later on in life. We've listened to the cautionary-yet-well-intentioned advice of others, yet gone ahead and done it anyway, apparently defying an almost certain demise along the way. We've spent countless circuits and landings learning to keep the aircraft pointed straight down the runway, listened to analogies of poor shopping trolley design, and we've earned that sense of accomplishment as we eventually mastered the art and developed a feel for it. And many of us – for the most part – have managed to avoid the aforementioned ground-loop and nose-over.

The dreaded ground loop

For clarity, the term 'ground-loop' is used to describe when the tail end of the aircraft swings forward and overtakes the front. Because the centre of gravity on a taildragger is aft of the main wheels, if the aircraft is allowed to start yawing when on the ground and moving with any appreciable speed, the centrifugal force can quickly build, placing stress on the outside wheel and tire, often resulting in a collapsed undercarriage and damage to the wings, prop and engine.

The additional load placed on the outside tire can also peel that tire off the rim, as the tire is no longer able to rotate properly and becomes a very effective brake. It may then cause the aircraft to flip upside down. So while a taildragger nose-over can be caused by too much brake application while moving straight ahead, it can also be the result of the outside tire skidding sideways partway through a ground loop and creating a very effective braking force.

Yet manufacturers keep building them, because people keep buying them. There's a healthy market, largely because, in off-airport ops, taildraggers really come into their own.

Two of the main attributes are increased

prop clearance, and the increased ability for the main undercarriage to absorb the bumps in a rough environment. And of course there's no substitute for muscle memory. Bashing the circuit aptly describes it – practising until it becomes second nature, in varying conditions. It doesn't provide guarantees, but anything that can help to stack the deck in the taildraggers' favour is a welcome advantage.

In mountain biking they use the term 'sessioning', defined by Wikipedia as: "... repeatedly trying a difficult part of a trail, like a rock garden or jump, until you can consistently perform it." Now, I'm not suggesting you take your beloved taildragger into a rock garden or over jumps, but the concept of having a fun practice session for an hour or two with friends and their taildraggers can be a thoroughly enjoyable way to spend an afternoon, and a great way to practice skills.

But even with all of that practice, I still felt I could do with a little more control.

Brakes and ailerons

Early in my own taildragger experience I had two 'light bulb' moments – epiphanies if you like – where I learned something that I wished I'd learned much earlier. The first involved the use of brakes.

I'd already been cautioned to 'go easy' on the brakes to avoid a potential nose-over. But it also occurred to me that if a ground loop involves the back of the aircraft overtaking the front, then any heavy braking (which is applied to the front of the aircraft) would certainly exacerbate the tendency for a ground loop – particularly once the CG has strayed outside the tracks of the main wheels. In short, staying off the brakes greatly reduces any tendency for a ground loop, simply by removing one of the main forces that contributes to it.

So after several hundred landings in my taildragger, I started learning to land it without using the brakes, and it was a game changer! Sure, the landing ground roll is a little longer, but not significantly. And the brakes are still there if I need them. The thing was, prior to this, I'd started using differential braking as a crutch for when I felt I might be on the edge of directional controllability, and if I didn't correct that trait, it was destined to end in a cloud of dust and tears. It meant I had to become far more reliant on the aerodynamic controls, and use them to full advantage.

That led to the second epiphany. The reason I'd been using differential braking to maintain directional control when landing was because, while my crosswind technique was sufficient to get the aircraft onto the ground safely, once on the ground I was relaxing the controls somewhat. Sure, it was good enough for most aircraft, but taildraggers are not 'most aircraft' and they are intolerant of handling deficiencies. On a taildragger, much of the fuselage vertical surface area sits behind the main wheel, so any crosswind creates a much higher turning force into the wind than on a tricycle aircraft.

When landing in a crosswind, it's important to religiously apply into-wind aileron. Even more so in a taildragger. In my own aircraft (a Bearhawk), once both wheels are on the ground, I put the control stick on the stops (full travel) into wind. The down-going aileron generates more drag while the up-going aileron reduces drag, both acting in concert to provide a turning force opposite to the turning force of the crosswind.

An example to illustrate: if landing with a crosswind from the left, the wind component acting on the fuselage will cause the aircraft to try and weathercock to the left. By applying left (into wind) aileron, the increased drag from the right down-going aileron will create a force to turn the aircraft to the right. This helps to counter the weathercocking nature of the crosswind (once on the ground) and helps to keep the aircraft straight. It means that less rudder is required to keep straight, which in turn means that more rudder is available and therefore able to counter a stronger crosswind component.

Where to from here?

Taildraggers form a small group within the larger GA sphere. Even so, there are some extremely experienced operators out there; some Ag operators who have flown taildraggers for years with a ton of real-world experience and a few of our A Cat instructors come to mind. A couple of hours, perhaps once a year, with one will not only sharpen skills, but will also be 'more fun than you can poke a stick at' while you're out there doing it.

Chasing the challenge

By Chris Hoffman

So there I was, sitting at a desk with my name and a stack of folders and booklets on it, wondering what the hell I was doing there. It was a long time since I'd been in a classroom. Around me were five other pilots, the new intake of C-Category instructor pupils, about to embark on a twelve week intensive programme of study and flying at the Motueka base of Nelson Aviation College.

After introductions, our course instructors, Andrew and Chloe, asked why we were there. "Well," I said, "it's something I always wanted to do. I'm always looking for new challenges in aviation and doing a C-Cat was the next one." Little did I then realise how much of a challenge!

I started flying in Greymouth as a young junior doctor. After I sat my PPL flight test in Christchurch on 1 Oct 1985, I started CPL training. Unfortunately, my surgical training took up all my spare time, then came marriage and family. The CPL fell by the way, but I kept up flying until we moved overseas for three years so I could continue my surgical training. This turned into a fourteen year break from flying.

In 2005 when I returned to flying I had to re-sit some exams and a full PPL flight test. I enjoyed it so much it prompted me to carry on and complete my CPL part-time, finishing in 2011. "Why not carry on and do your C-Cat?" asked someone at the Club, but instead I set out to get my IFR rating. With this completed in 2014, I was kept challenged by the process of keeping current and flying in increasingly inclement weather. Finally, about three years ago, I thought about the C-Cat instructor rating again. But why?

I'm always looking for new challenges and the desire for constant improvement is good for my flying – it keeps me wanting to do more. Initially I thought about undertaking the training part-time, as with my CPL, and I'm grateful to Giles and Marcus at Nelson Aviation College who agreed to let me try.

At the beginning of 2023 I started flying over to Motueka every few weeks for lessons and flights, but soon found the demands of my work got in the way. Finally, I had to withdraw and we agreed I could come back and start again on a full-time course. It took me several years to finally organise a three-month break from work. To mitigate the loss of income I arranged a few long weekends back home working the Friday and Saturday.

My course ran from the end of June to the end of September. Before I went, I thought I'd better get myself up to speed in a C152, so arranged to do my BFR in one, sitting in the right seat. I thought that would be enough. It wasn't.

The course work for a C-Cat is considerable, and to start with I coped okay, partly because I'd already done the first six lessons part-time, partly because this type of study and group presentation is something I do frequently in my job. The intense training schedule sees you taught a lesson, in the classroom or the plane, then teaching the lesson, then being taught another. Bit like we did as junior doctors – see one, do one, teach one!

Most of the class had only recently obtained their CPLs and some had to spend additional time flying to get the required PiC time to sit a C-Cat test. They were more current flying the C152 to the CPL standard than I was and I had to work hard at this as well as remembering all the patter that had to be recited when

teaching the lesson. It's a rote learning task and there are no short cuts! Where I was more comfortable was teaching the lessons in the classroom, adding a few good yarns about things that had happened in my own flying – managing an engine failure, getting stuck in bad weather, flying on to short strips, etc.

I initially found spin recovery training tough but by the end of several flights I was managing it okay. Wing drop stalls and max rate turns needed lots of practice, as did the 'demonstration of the ideal force landing'. The 25 hours dual and 15 hours of solo consolidation over the twelve weeks was great. My flying improved enough to pass!

The flight test was a challenge. It's a long and stressful day, similar to some of the examinations during surgical training. The testing officer arrived early, about 8.20am, and as I was ready, we started. He selected 'basic stalls' as my lesson so, after he'd verified my logbook was in order, I gave the lesson. I then demonstrated the preflight and off we went with a max performance takeoff, then I taught the climb to 3000ft, where I conducted the stalling lesson. This was followed by a wing drop stall then I was asked to critique his, all good, so far. Then the steep and max rate turns. The Ideal Forced Landing was completed okay after a false start when I thought I'd mucked up the wind direction. This was followed by an Intro to Low Flying lesson. We finished with a flapless and then a short-field landing.

I was exhausted. Then came the Principles of Flight for several hours and finally questions on weather planning and the rules around instructing. There is so much to know, but I did enough to pass! The oldest student at NAC to pass a professional qualification.

The other students in my class took me to the pub for a celebratory beer. Their tests had been delayed a week by weather, so the hour was spent dissecting my test in every bit of detail. 'What lesson did you get? What did you do on the flight test? What POF…'

Above: Twelve weeks in the classroom, 8.30am to 5pm...
Previous page: In addition to the lessons, Chris had to get up-to-speed in a C152 - and it transpired that sitting his BFR in one wasn't enough!

They all passed, and are now looking at ways to pursue their dreams of flying for airlines like Air NZ. Me, I just did it for a challenge.

So now what to do with it? I'm still a full-time clinician but my intention is to try and take some Fridays and Saturdays to instruct at the Kapiti Aero Club, where two B-Cat instructors have agreed to supervise me. The next challenge is getting on with it; the next goal, B-Cat…

Work commitments and terrible weather have prevented me from flying since getting home after the course. I'm often asked if it was worth it. My answer is, 'You bet'. Lots of fun, great people, and good stories to tell. If you want a challenge – CPL then C-cat. I thoroughly recommend it.

Outback Air Race 2025

By Dee Bond

For the past twenty years I've had a bucket list item that this year, after having to withdraw due to COVID in 2022 and being wait-listed in 2019, I finally managed to check off. The Outback Air Race (OAR) is a navigation time trial, rather than a race, across the outback of Australia, organised as a fundraiser for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Uluru Ayers Rock; Dee onboard an RFDS aircraft with kiwi Flight Operations Manager Michael Jarman; OAR at Uluru (Photo Ed Jones, Team 14).

With just five hours on type since my 750XL rating in June 2025, the route saw us fly the new 750XL SuperPac from Hamilton to Mercer before heading to Kerikeri to clear customs for an island hop across the Tasman to Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. Next stop was Coolangatta, Gold Coast for border control clearances, where we met up with kiwi Andy Cardno, ferrying an aircraft from Italy to Timaru. As this was the first time the SuperPac has been to Australia, we took the opportunity to visit existing customers and all the RFDS bases up the eastern seaboard to Cairns. Neil and I were joined there by our crew for the race: Ray Long, our NZAero GM Engineering and Test Pilot, and Dr Anton Wiles, my aviation doctor.

After a stop in Mt Isa, and another RFDS base visit, we refueled at Alice Springs before heading to the start of the OAR at Yulara, Ayers Rock, taking the opportunity to fly a standard scenic flight circuit around the Rock in the late afternoon – spectacular. Over the weekend we met the 38 teams who had flown in from around Australia and NZ, half of whom were undertaking the event for the first time. Highlights here were the Field of Lights, and sunrise Uluru and Kuniya walk tour.

Like our own AOPA NZ safaris, it is wonderful to participate in an event where everything is pre-arranged at each stop – accommodation, meals, local tours and transport. It takes a lot of stress out of doing a trip like this. Kudos to all event organisers!

Leg 1: Yulara YAYE – YBAS Alice Springs, saw us released every three minutes in two groups, slowest group (<130kt) first, followed by a 45-60min break before the second group was released. As we had planned to fly the event at a TAS of 120kt, despite having a normal cruise speed of 155kt, we were the sixth aircraft away in the slow group.

From take-off we headed directly to the 'Gate Out', the start of the time trial for which we had submitted a flight note to the flight manager, time scorer and fines master, with our SAR time and elected elapse time between Gate Out and Gate In. We could elect any altitude above 1000ft to fly over the gates, and the winners were often flown at 8500ft. From Gate In, we could make an orderly and relaxed arrival at the destination airport.

Alice Springs offered our first day off, and tours to the Alice Springs RFDS visitor centre, and a tour of the West MacDonnell Ranges visiting Simpsons Gap, Stanley Chasm, Gall Spring ochre pit – the colours ranging from white, which contains the least iron, through yellow and orange to red, containing the most iron, found mainly in NW Western Australia and traded between aboriginal groups across the region, Ormiston gorge, and Ellery Creek Hole for a swim – cold!

Leg 2: Alice Springs YBAS - YTNK Tennant Creek. While the Out Gate was the Oolbra Dam and the In Gate was Kelly Well, there was not a lot of water in between! Although we did spot some cropping circles en route in the middle of the vastness. At least there was shelter from the heat when we got to the Tennant Creek Terminal. There was also a large drive-through shelter that had just been built for the RFDS, which allows patients and staff to transfer from road vehicle to aircraft in relative comfort out of the scorching sun.

Leg 3: Tennant Creek YTNK - YDLW Daly Waters. Prior to the 1:32 minute timed leg, we added another 300 litres of JetA1 fuel to ensure we had sufficient to get through to Tindal as there was no fuel at Daly Waters.

Daly Waters was a great stop, a one pub town with donkeys and horses meandering around, and the rotund pub owner driving a mobility scooter with 'Highway Patrol' on the front.

An eclectic collection of abandoned aircraft wrecks lined the main road, while 'Tim's Shack' held a great collection of vehicles and memorabilia collected over the years. It was here that the OAR held the Bush Poets night, with much hilarity.

Leg 4: Daly Waters YDLW - YPTN Tindal/Katherine. At Daly Waters airport we spied a Hardy Aviation aircraft dropping off fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) mine workers, and I went looking for the crew, only to find my DC3 training buddy Bryce Hard. The main runway was closed at Tindal, so we all landed on the taxiway. On arrival we were treated to a fast flyby by a couple of local F35A Lightening II jets. After watching a Police Pilatus PC-12 taxi out, one of our own called an emergency landing due loss of electrics, much to the consternation of the local jet jocks.

Up early for the Dawn 2 Gorge boat tour on the Katherine River, which was both informative and scenic. The afternoon was spent underground at the Cutta Cutta caves, while in the evening we were treated to the Katherine Outback Experience by horseman entertainer Tom Curtain and his team of riders, horses, dogs and goats, which was exceptional.

Leg 5: Tindal YPTN - YPKU Kununurra, via side trip to Darwin YPDN. An early start as Ray Long left us to return to work on this leg. After flying Gate Out Ray flew the diversion to Darwin, where we met the DC3 team I'd trained with for our DC3 type ratings back in February at Matamata, and visited the Darwin Aviation Museum before heading out in 40 degree heat for Gate In, sans Ray. I'd submitted a Flight Note with an elapsed time of 10hrs 4mins and we arrived overhead the gate +9sec from plan. Not bad considering there were also time zone changes to contend with, and everything race-related was measured in UTC.

At Kununurra one of the teams had a racehorse running on our arrival day, so many of the teams went to the races for the afternoon, before attending an art auction at the local gallery, raising funds for the RFDS. On our day off we took a tiki tour in the shared transport van to Lake Argyle, hiking and swimming before enjoying a stunning sunset.

Leg 6: Kununurra YPKU – YBRM Broome, saw us again depart the direct course in order to fly past the Argyle Gold open cast mine to the Bungle Bungles. After Gate In at Derby we diverted north to overfly the Horizontal Falls and mining islands en route Broome, avoiding the controlled scrub fires along the coast.

Broome saw us take a beach sunset camel ride, then dress up for an Aliens themed party at the hotel. The following day we visited Willies Creek pearl farm, no purchases, and the Malcolm Douglas Crocodile. Broome is a place I'll need to return to.

Leg 7: Broome YBRM – YOLW Onslow. To say the west coast, where dessert meets aqua blue sea, is spectacular is an understatement. It was hard to keep on track when there was so much distraction from frolicking whales. Here the town hosted a beach party for the OAR racers.

Leg 8: Onslow YOLW - YEXM Exmouth. After a day of resting a cough that was plaguing many of the racers, we woke to a beautiful sunrise and headed off down the coast for Exmouth, spotting even more whales. That night's accommodation was a caravan park with a welcome pool, where we were hosted by the Kailis family, who pioneered prawn fishing and pearling in the area. Unfortunately our planned snorkelling trip was thwarted by a thunderstorm squall, but we drove by the amazing satellite dishes and radio towers used to monitor the Asia-Pacific oceans and visited the local aquarium instead.

Top: Port Macquarie airfield. Left: Gladstone to Rockhampton. Below: Onslow to Exmouth; and the popular Daly Waters pub.

Leg 9: Exmouth YEXM – YCAR Carnarvon, our last day, saw us share Kiwiana gifts with the other teams before we launched for a side trip to Coral Bay for a snorkelling swim. After overflying salt Lake Macleod to the Gate In we broke off again to fly around Shark Bay over Bernier and Dirk Hartog islands to Peron Peninsula and Monkey Mia before our final landing of the race at Carnarvon. Spectacular beaches and sea life to be found here.

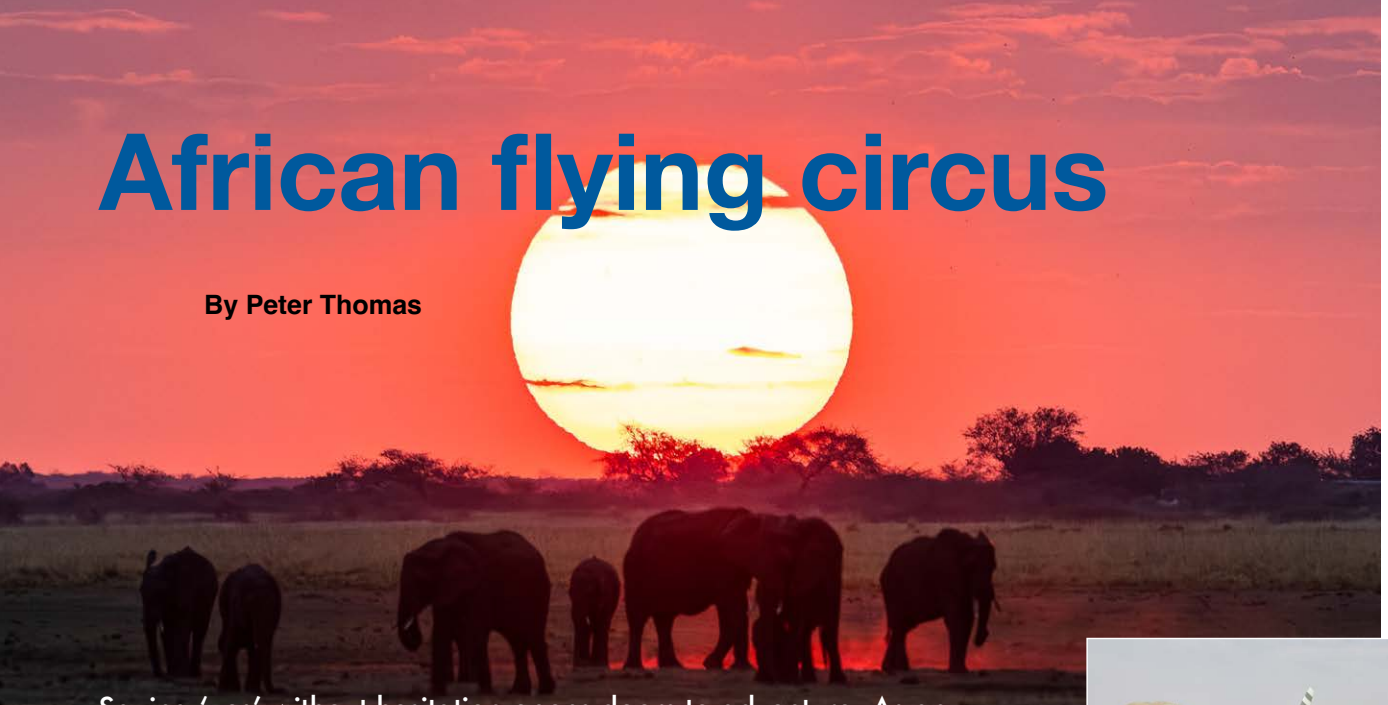
With a goal of $750,000, the OAR raised in excess of $1m for the RFDS. The weather gods were kind and the race teams all had memorable experiences, many planning for the next event, in three years, which will celebrate 100 years of the RFDS.

While making good timing on each leg of the navigation trial, our overhead positioning was "average", losing sight of the Gates as they passed under our long nose, and we were not competitive. Team ZIC, an RV7A, used crossed referenced computer models to fly their winning performance, while Flight Manager, The Wacky Warbos, came second, hand-flying their PA28-140, having won the last event in 2022. He tells me practice makes perfect.

Thanks to everyone who supported our fundraising effort, and to our sponsors, Lowes Petroleum and SuperAir.

African flying circus

By Peter Thomas



Saying 'yes' without hesitation opens doors to adventure. As an obsessive over-thinker, I try to remind myself of that handy little creed. January 2024 offered one such moment when a friend called to ask if I wanted to go flying with him in Africa.

It was a fairly loose invitation to say the least. No plans, dates or even crew at that stage. Just an idea. Denying my rational consciousness any opportunity to intervene, spontaneity had its moment and I agreed on the spot. Knowing nothing of the details, because there were none, my ever-supportive wife gave it the nod. The idea had been hatched and permission granted, best get planning before anyone changes their minds.

In the ensuing months, we formed a WhatsApp group 'African Flying Circus' and discussed plans. Flying in the African continent was an intimidating and possibly insurmountable challenge. As we researched, it quickly became apparent that we were going to need help, so we looked for local operators who could act as a guide. With only a couple of options available, we settled on flying with a tour company, African Flying Adventures. They organised aircraft rental and the itinerary as well as landing permissions, accommodation and many of the lesser details. Local knowledge is valuable when travelling abroad, and even more so when you introduce the complexities of aviation. Over the ensuing months the pieces progressively came together, culminating in a plan that was sure to be bulletproof, or so we thought.

We convened in Johannesburg in late September 2024, with plans to make our way around Botswana, with a quick foray into Zimbabwe, over a ten day period. Setting off from Lanseria Airport (FBLA) as part of a gaggle of four aircraft, we headed northeast to cross the border and land at Limpopo Valley airstrip in Botswana. Our group consisted of four kiwi blokes, a Dutch mother and son team, another couple from the Netherlands and our two tour guides. The aircraft, a Cessna 172, a 182, and two Cherokee 235s were fairly standard fare, all older models but reliable and they performed well. The 182 and 235s all had extended fuel capacity, however the 172 was much more restricted in its range, so fuel planning was a priority consideration for its pilot.

Some paperwork delays in Lanseria meant that we arrived in Limpopo Valley as the light was fading. The plan had been to clear immigration there and continue to another airstrip further to the west where we would be overnighting. However, with darkness upon us, a 30-minute planned flight metamorphosed into four bone-jarring hours in a jeep that I will never forget, nor do again. Fortunately, two of our aircraft had made the onward journey, so they were able to ferry the pilots back in the morning to fetch the stranded planes, sans any more jeep-induced torture.

Limpopo Valley (FLLV) was a well-maintained sealed runway of good length with a small pavilion-style outbuilding that served as the immigration office.

Some airports were operated by locals and others by government officials. The military were commonly present, arriving fully armed in jeeps to confirm that we were not running drugs or other contraband. We were frequently the only aircraft using the airports on our itinerary, and having filed flight-plans everywhere we went, it was clear we were out-of-towners. Despite their intimidating presence, the officials and military did not cause us any undue delays. The etiquette, as far as I could determine, was to speak when spoken to and not take any photos. Or at least, don't get caught.

We stayed the next couple of nights in a camp within the Limpopo Lipadi wildlife reserve, getting to know our new travelling companions. Being part of a group introduces an extra layer to the experience as you encounter other cultures, share stories and form new friendships. Shared experiences are always so much richer. I am writing this article from my seat in an Emirates A380 bound for Barcelona for a business conference. While in Europe, I'll be taking a wee side-trip to visit the Dutch couple from the trip. I'm looking forward to the chance to reminisce.

Taking off from the red-brown dirt strip at Limpopo Lipadi (FBLL), we headed north over the barren leafless sea of wind-beaten trees. Being early October, it was nearing the end of the dry season in

Botswana. The relentless heat, wind and dust had taken its toll on the land, and there was barely a sign of life. Although the area is occupied by small numbers of elephant, giraffe, wild dogs and various other species, we did wonder how they survived these harshest of months. The animals and land alike gasped for the first sips of the coming monsoons, little more than a month away.

Flying a light aircraft is a great way to get around any country. Being up close to the landscape offers a perspective that is denied by commercial travel. The slow pace of our little gaggle allowed time to take it all in, although the flying itself was, at times, less than remarkable. The barren landscape seems to stretch on forever. Thermal heating, commencing at daybreak, creates relentless turbulence, and the air is thick with haze from blown dust and the many wildfires across the landscape, some controlled, some not. The endless wilderness of lifeless scrub below provides no features to navigate by, and the only tools available are GPS and dead-reckoning.

The scrub finally gave way to a different desert: salt, as far as the eye can see in shimmering white with hues of pink, orange and red. The cooler and more consistent surface below made for smoother flying and imaginings of being Neil Armstrong crossing the moonscape. The Makgadikgadi Salt Pans, a dried-up lake, are the largest of their type on earth, covering more than 16,000km^2. During the wet season, the area becomes an oasis for wildlife. In the dry season, the salt pans are an ideal location for tourists such as us to sleep out under the stars, which of course we did. Our landing site was Gweta (FBGW), a small town to the north of the pans, with a basic gravel airstrip.

Our fuel stop was Matante (Francistown FBPM) in eastern Botswana. The huge terminal building, with 3km runway, was almost entirely deserted. Of the six flights expected that day, we were four. The only part of the terminal in apparent operation was a small section of the ground floor and a port-a-com where we paid our landing fees.

Kiwi contingent at Limpopo Lipadi airport. Previous page inset: Peter at Matante/Francistown airport.

European money followed (and created) the gold and gem rushes that have made their way through Africa like nomads. Once the riches abate, the infrastructure constructed to support the rush is left to slowly decay; developing nations simply can't justify the upkeep.

The fuelling itself was a debacle worth a mention. In 42°C heat, the fuel pump at Matante vapour-locked and refused to pour. Being a Sunday, and the national day of independence celebrations, help from an engineer was not forthcoming. The one remaining option was to hand-pump 600 litres of AVGAS into the four aircraft using a 9-litre bucket. We took turns as others sheltered under aircraft wings from the relentless heat and almost zero humidity. We ran out of drinking water three hours into the fuelling marathon. The safety issues are obvious (think fumes, static electricity, contamination…), and they were each managed in their own way. Not a situation I hope to repeat, but a cautionary tale, nonetheless.

Further north we visited Kasane (FBKE), on the doorstep of the Chobe National Park, getting up close and personal with elephants, crocodiles, hippos, baboons, eagles and countless other uniquely African species from the safe vantage point of a flat-bottomed boat on the Chobe river. Chobe is a lush and welcome relief from Botswana's dryness, and in contrast with our travels so far, it caters well to tourists, with prices that reflect the international acclaim. Good on them.

To the east, and across the border in Zimbabwe, the unmissable Victoria Falls (FVFA) are a well-known and much visited tourist destination. Even at the tail-end of the dry season, the remaining trickle of what the Zambezi river has to offer forms an impressive curtain of raging water. Viewing the falls from above delivered a unique perspective that is simply unattainable from ground-level. The vast delta stretching out before the falls, the jagged canyon walls sawn open by the cataract,

Memorable moments, from left: Mokoro excursion in the Okavango Delta; overnighting on the Makgadikgadi Salt Pans; stand-off in Chobe national Park.

Top: Dirt strip at Gweta, north of the Makgadikgadi salt pans – note the haze! Above: Victoria Falls was impressive even at the end of the dry season with diminished flow from the Zambesi River.

and the fertile plains beyond form an impressive vista.

The final leg of our journey, and without doubt the jewel in Botswana's crown, is the Okavango Delta. The Cubango River, originating in Angola, is one of the few aquifers that terminates at neither the sea nor a lake. Instead, it spreads like tentacles across the otherwise barren planes of north-eastern Botswana, creating a spectacular oasis where wildlife abounds.

Maun (FBMN) is home to a thriving airport with row upon row of Cessna Caravans lined up to provide an airborne wildlife viewing platform, or deliver tourists to the numerous five-star lodges dotted within the Okavango.

Maun is very metropolitan with a modern airport, shops and cafes, and the usual traps for unwary or perhaps just willing tourists. I was encouraged to see Botswana taking advantage of its potential in this area to grow its prosperity, but I do hope that they find the balance and maintain the essence of the unique and largely unspoiled region. To complete our round-trip, the final leg was a fairly long day departing Maun for Lanseria, stopping in at Gaborone (FBSK) for fuel along the way.

Flying in Africa introduced some variables seldom encountered in New Zealand. The aerodrome elevation at Lanseria was 4500ft, temperature 38°C and pressure, from memory, about 1002hpa, giving a density altitude of about 8600ft. Consult the POH of a C182, and you see that your maximum rate of climb has dropped by two-thirds, and your cruise performance will be maxed out at 60 percent or thereabouts. But Lanseria has a long, sealed runway. Translate the issue to Gweta at 3200ft with a gravel track of about 1000m, a stiff crosswind, no headwind, and your pre-flight performance planning at take-off technique suddenly draws into focus.

Engine leaning also becomes top of mind. In New Zealand, you might entirely forget to lean your engine without any real consequence. Try that in African conditions at your peril. Leaning the engine with care was a constant consideration, even during taxi and take-off. When you start to factor all the extra threats, it's hard not to be reminded of the Swiss cheese model of risk analysis. Constant vigilance is required to ensure those holes aren't getting wider and ominously lining up.

Overall, our obstacles were relatively minor and became more talking points than clear and present dangers. But it is always good to come home a little wiser, a little more experienced and with a camera-roll as unique as the memories themselves.

‘Oh, just take the tailwind.’

We’ve probably all heard it, or said it (or both). But what are we on about?

Let’s start with some of the symptoms on the approach glide path, at a normal airspeed for a normal landing area, and the nose attitude normal for a three degree slope. Add a tailwind, and we’re bound to observe some or all of the following:

- Higher groundspeed from the tailwind;
- Higher rate of descent to maintain the glideslope;
- Lower power setting, to increase the rate of descent;
- Higher workload (things happen much faster than normal).

On any given day, with a well set up stable approach, many pilots can easily cope with a tailwind on final. But the fun doesn’t stop there.

Let’s talk energy, specifically kinetic energy. It’s a property of a moving object and depends on the object’s mass and velocity. Seems straightforward. But did you know the rate at which energy increases with an increase in velocity?

The kinetic energy (KE) of an object is equal to half the product of its mass (m) and the square of its velocity (V), measured in joules or kilojoules (Kj). KE= $\frac{1}{2}m \times V^2$

Wind	*Energy (Kj)*	*Landing roll (m)*
Headwind 10kt	102	177
Headwind 5kt	139	189
Calm	181	200
Tailwind 5kt	230	255
Tailwind 10kt	290	322

Another way of putting this is that kinetic energy increases ‘quadratically’ by the square of the increase in velocity.

What does that mean in real life? Consider a C172 at a moderate weight of 2000lb and a 40kt touchdown. One Pilot Operating Handbook, POH, has this as a comment: ‘Decrease distances 10% for each 9 knots headwind. Tail winds up to 10 knots, increase distances by 10% for each 2 knots.’

Okay, energy has increased, but what does this mean?

If we take the 230Kj from just a 5kt tailwind and convert that to a zero wind day (so same speed in theory) what is the corresponding equivalent weight? 3300lb. Wow, that’s a huge increase. With the much larger increase effect for tailwind, it’s not a linear equation. One of the reasons for the big increase in landing roll is that the effect of aerodynamic drag is much less. Do you know what the performance charts in your aircraft indicate for landing with a tailwind?

Consequences include heavier braking, more weight on nose wheel, more chance of tailwheel raising. Even hitting rabbit holes harder. All of these are tough on hardware and worthy of consideration.

But what about controlling the aircraft in the tailwind, especially after landing? After touchdown, more aircraft energy equals more control forces required. Under ‘normal’ conditions, we often don’t use maximum deflection of controls to keep an aircraft straight on landing, so there’s likely some surplus controllability available, while the airspeed over those controls is sufficient. BUT, and it’s a big but, once speed reduces, things can get interesting. We need more of a deflection of the control surfaces to achieve the desired force, and might simply run out.

Midway through the landing roll, the aircraft might have reduced to 20kt groundspeed, but we only have the effective control of 10kt. Most aircraft rudders simply won’t respond to 10kt of ‘wind over the sail’, even at maximum deflection. Taken a step further, if there was a 20kt tailwind, there would be zero aerodynamic control at 20kt groundspeed.

We’re now relying even more on heavy braking, not only to stop the aircraft, but also to keep the tracking straight.

This is only exaggerated if any of the tailwind has a crosswind component, producing a ‘Quartering tailwind’. This is further exacerbated if the centre of gravity is aft of the main wheels.

So, in a taildragger, you must be straight, have good brakes and good traction. Especially in the last 100 yards with very limited steerage.

Back to our stable approach. One of the aspects we can easily be monitoring and that is a good indicator of tailwind, is the power setting. Wait a minute... How? If we are stable, at the selected airspeed, the attitude will be normal. But to maintain the glideslope, without ballooning up, the rate of descent will need to increase. To do so, power must decrease.

The stable approach not only has us set up for another great landing, but also gives a great chance of ‘picking up’ and adjusting for aspects that are not ideal – like an unhelpful, unforecast tailwind. Anticipation of a tailwind early, or going-around and considering other options, is good judgment. The earlier the go-around, the easier they seem to be.

One experienced topdressing operator had this advice:

- Make sure you can land on the spot, wherever the wind is coming from;
- A stable approach to a chosen aiming point is key;
- Hammer the circuit;
- Know your approach speed – no floating past the aiming point;
- If you’re going to an airstrip – do your homework;
- Practice landing with crosswinds and tailwinds at a big airport whenever the conditions allow, so you can learn to recognise the symptoms of both, and adjust accordingly;
- Tailwind overshoots are an eye opener, so overshoot a lot earlier;
- If landing on airstrips, you must be current and competent to assess the approach and landing properly;
- Believe me, the available length remaining just disappears!

So, should we ‘just take the tailwind’? Maybe we can. But maybe we should consider having a few things ‘going our way’. If the option of a headwind exists, we’ll have less energy, more time, more control and a better chance of a great landing.

No flying? No worries!

By Ross Millichamp

One of the AOPA NZ's biggest annual events is the Darfield Fly-in, organised by Charlie Draper and his team. In past years close to a hundred aircraft from all over New Zealand have parked at 'Drapers Strip' on Kimberley Road, enjoying the area's spectacular mountain and coastal flying.

The central Canterbury location allows a fair percentage of members to get there in less than two hours of flying, and its close proximity to the Southern Alps is always a draw card.

A couple of weeks out from this year's event, around 140 people and 80 aircraft had pre-registered and things were looking good. Charlie Draper and his team of organisers wisely delayed talking to most of the strip owners about access, however, until good weather was assured. "Those guys often go to a lot of trouble mowing grass and moving stock and it's unreasonable to put them through that if no flying takes place," he says.

As the 2025 event approached, however, doubts grew about the weather. The predicted strong westerly winds would likely prevent people flying in from outside of the region. The organisers talked to a number of farmers close to Darfield to have some strips available should the wind allow, but in the end no flying was possible.

Despite that, the fifty or so who attended the social events on the Friday and Saturday nights at the Kirwee Rugby Clubrooms judged the event a resounding success. A highlight was the presentation of the GA Champion Award to local flying legend Michael Oakley. Mike had been told of the award during the Summer Safari, but at that stage the actual trophy was not available, so this was a great opportunity to formally present it.

Acknowledgements due

Much work goes into events such as this, whether or not any flying takes place. Special thanks to Charlie Draper, Fred Bull, Mike Oakley and the Social and Safety committees of the Executive, as well as 'new blood' Ben Patterson and Helen Watson who joined the organising group.

Thanks also to the farmers who de-stocked and mowed strips that in the end were not used, and to Peter Morrison and Liz Nattrass who grazed the Kimberly Road strip off early and heavy rolled it to ensure it was in the best condition for the event. We are all grateful that they have kept the strip open despite significant changes in their farming operation.

Feedback since the Fly-in queried whether it could be moved to a time of year when the weather might be more favourable, however, despite two years in a row where flying was limited, the bigger picture reveals that only around 20% of Darfield Fly-ins have been affected by weather. Flying into the heart of the Southern Alps requires very special weather conditions and can be a no-go at almost anytime of year.

Charlie encourages pilots to stick with the mid-September event. "We must be due for good weather next time," he says.

Top: the presentation to Mike Oakley proved a Darfield highlight. Below: the planning team enjoying a little fun along the way!

Collaborative upside

While the Darfield Fly-in itself may not have seen much flying, there was plenty during the planning stages.

This year saw an invitation to participate extended to the Canterbury Aero Club. The club executive and management were enthusiastic but cautious, recognising that while the instructing team have extensive aviation experience, very little is in the 'off-airport' environment. Club CFI, Prince Joel, and Deputy CFI, Sarah Chambers were assigned to select strips that were a good fit for club aircraft and pilots. A plan was hatched for the pair to go flying with AOPA NZ Safety Committee Chair (and club member) Neville Bailey.

Neville flies a home-built Bearhawk bush plane and is very experienced in the backcountry environment. A recently-retired Boeing 777 captain, he also understands the safety environment the club must operate in. His approach was to visit potential strips with Prince and Sarah so that they could decide where club pilots could go.

Selecting suitable landing sites is not just about the length, width and surface condition of the strip. Backcountry strips are often plenty long enough for Warriors, Archers and Cessna 172s. It's the approaches, departures and go around options that are the critical factors.

Unfortunately the day selected for the reccie was typical of this spring – moderate westerly winds, getting stronger towards the west. The trio set off from West Melton in the Bearhawk, landing at Drapers and Harts (near Methven) before heading into the hills. After landing at Lake Heron they tracked into the upper Rangitata. By the time they got to Mesopotamia the wind was in excess of 30kt and a decision was made to overfly the strip and head back out to the plains.

Prince and Sarah of CAC joined Neville Bailey for a little off-airport flying.

After landing at Arundel they scurried back to West Melton to get out of the wind. Neville dropped off the CAC crew and headed back to his home base at Ashburton, where the wind was so strong that he simply parked the Bearhawk behind the closest hangar and waited for conditions to settle before getting it back to his own hangar. Tailwheel aircraft are fantastic for rough, backcountry strips but are difficult to taxi in gusty crosswinds.

Prince and Sarah, meanwhile, came up with a list of suitable strips: Mesopotamia was probably too stoney and Arundel had a difficult approach if landing to the east but was fine if landing to the west. The rest were fine.

Unfortunately, the strong westerly wind pattern continued and very little flying took place at the mid-September Darfield Fly-in. However, the seed has been sown and plans are underway to take a group of club and private aircraft back to these strips when the weather improves.

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Inspection oddities

By Jay McIntyre

Jay McIntyre is the owner, LAME and IA of JEM Aviation, Omaka

Apparently, my last article generated some great feedback… and some not so good! I personally didn't hear any of the great feedback, but I sure heard about the other feedback!

My apologies to Nick and the Aviation Radio team for mis-identifying the ELTs I referred to in the article as Kannad, when I should have written Artex. My late-night brain was thinking Artex but my fingers typed Kannad.

I'm glad to say that, so far, the information on pricing hasn't eventuated; I recently purchased an Artex ME406 battery from Fieldair for the usual $800. I'd love to hear more from the readers, so please don't hesitate to call or email!

Following on from last month's article, I am now the proud owner of the Arrow. Not sure what we're going to do with it, but if anyone is interested in a project, please do get in touch. Discussions with CAA have all been positive and an article in *Vector* is forthcoming. They were adamant they were not going to re-issue the AD in a repetitive form as it could have all sorts of flow-on effects, particularly with foreign regulators (don't ask me why!).

However, they did initially issue a Continuing Airworthiness Notice 05-017 'Airworthiness Directive Compliance'. As soon as I saw this, I had a bit of a wry grin and thought 'I know what this is all about…'. Sure enough, there was a specific reference to placards required by an AD being the operator's responsibility. Furthermore, and probably the best thing to happen, was that the September AD schedule cancelled DCA/PA28/174 and added FAA 80-11-02R1 to the NZ AD listing. This will bring the AD back to the forefront and ensure that all those aeroplanes out there without placards have them fitted. I should add that we found that the other Arrow on the airfield (a new addition to Omaka) did not have the placards fitted and I know of at least one other at North Shore without them.

Time to move on…

We recently had a Cessna 152 in for SIIDs inspections and were somewhat surprised to uncover major exfoliation corrosion in the LH wing main spar cap. The attached photos show the corrosion in its as-found form and after a bit of digging with a spike. This was not a recent thing and it is hard to know how long it had been there, but it should have been picked up years ago.

The corrosion was located in two locations on the underside of the main spar cap in the fuel tank bay, and cannot be seen without the use of a mirror or other such device when the fuel tank is fitted. Even with the wing off and the tank out, it is not that readily seen and we almost missed it as well. The wings were off the aircraft for the various repetitive Eddy-Current inspections required by the SIIDs and we also had a couple of nose ribs out of this particular wing for corrosion control purposes. It was only as the guys were setting up to rivet the nose rib back in that one of them spotted it.

How did we miss it given we had the wing off, the tank out and were carrying out detailed inspections of the wing? A talk and a think suggest that the man detailed to carry out the internal inspections of the wing got so carried away with his borescope, torch and mirror that he just plain forgot to inspect the 'easy part' of the wing. Human Factors at it again.

After engaging a design company and the services of Classic Aero Machining Services we were able to remove the inboard 24" of the spar, rivet in some doublers and return the wing to service. We believe the corrosion resulted from the steel fasteners passing through the spar that holds the fuel tank cover on. The rest of the spar showed no sign of corrosion at all.

Spar corrosion: image above left, shows it as found; image at right, after some digging.

One other oddity thrown up in these SIID inspections was that we found one of the tailplane attach brackets cracked.

The SIIDs only call for a visual inspection on these, but as they were sitting there, paint stripped for inspection, we elected to Eddy Current them at the same time as the Vertical Fin fittings (which the SIIDs called for), and detected the crack shown in the photos below. It's hard to say if we would have detected it in a visual inspection, as it was not as visible as in the photo.

An Eddy Current inspection revealed a tail plane bracket crack which was hard to spot visually; close up at left.

An aviation life: Bill Lamb

By Ross Millichamp

Bill Lamb recently hung up his headset after a lifetime of military, commercial, airline and general aviation.

Growing up on a farm at Balfour, Bill's interest in flying was sparked by two uncles who served as pilots in World War II. He was sent to boarding school at John McGlashan College in Dunedin then Christ's College Christchurch. He also held down a "very well-paid job" at the Mataura Freezing works during his summer holidays. "$100 a week was a lot of money in those days," he says. It allowed him to start learning to fly at the Canterbury Aero Club during weekends when back at the Christ's College boarding house.

He remembers that the total cost of completing his PPL was in the order of $400-$500. Another Sixth Form Christ's pupil, Robert Wilson, joined him and both were able to pass their PPLs shortly after turning 17. Bill recalls that his father was always encouraging and, despite not being a keen flyer, agreed to being Bill's first passenger after he got his licence.

At the end of high school Bill completed his CPL and instructor rating, and started working as a C Cat at the Canterbury Aero Club. Once again it was all self-funded through his summer job at the Mataura Freezing Works.

During this time Bill applied to the New Zealand Air Force and was accepted as an Officer Cadet for pilot training in January 1978 on Wings course 178. Most of the other candidates had little flying experience but Bill adopted a habit that was to serve him well throughout his Air Force career. "I learned to say nothing and do what I was told," he says.

In those days navigation was done by doing mental arithmetic speed over distance calculations. Miles per minute became the mantra they lived by, whether flying a trainer or a fast jet.

Bill's Wings course began in the Airtrainer then moved to the Strikemaster. That was a huge leap in technology and speed, the miles per minute going from two in the Airtrainer (120kt) to four in the Strikemaster (240kt) and later to seven and more in the Skyhawk (420kt). After graduating his Wings course, Bill was one of only two pilots accepted into the Air Combat Wing, his first choice. Unfortunately a number of Strikemasters had wing spar crack issues, so Bill and Mark Helliwell were sent to Wigram to fly the De Havilland DH104 Devon for a year at the Navigation and Air Electronics Training Squadron while they waited for the aircraft to be fixed. "It was a lot of fun and prepared me well for my future move into airliners," Bill recalls.

Back in the Air Combat Wing at Ohakea, Bill continued his training on the Strikemaster, including the use of weapons, formation flying, air combat manoeuvring or 'dogfighting' before moving to the Douglas A4K Skyhawk. He did a number of offshore exercises in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. He speaks fondly of the very close association they had with the US Navy and Air Force during these trips, something that probably happens less often these days with the loss of the strike wing.

During this time Bill experienced the loss of a close friend and flatmate when John Dick died in an A4 crash during a training flight in the Ruahine Ranges. Bill was on holiday in Australia at the time but hurried home when he heard. A US exchange pilot took control, having experienced this situation many times during the Vietnam War. He arranged for a group of colleagues to meet Bill at Whenuapai and fly him home to Ohakea in an Andover rather than having to make his way home alone on an airliner.

During his RNZAF service Bill worked on his ATPL subjects in his own time to prepare for a career after leaving the military. In 1983 he resigned from the RNZAF and applied for a role with Motorholdings in Dunedin, flying Cessna 404s on freight and charter operations. During the job interview he mentioned that he had 500 hours in Skyhawks and was surprised that it did not raise an eyebrow. He pointed to a Cessna parked on the apron and clarified that it was not the sort of Skyhawk he was talking about!

After six months at Motorholdings, Bill moved briefly to SafeAir in Blenheim, a subsidiary of Air New Zealand, flying the

Bristol Freighter. From there he moved to the parent company flying Fokker Friendships and Boeing 737s, primarily on domestic routes. Next came five years flying Boeing 767s around the Pacific and Asia. The 767 was one of the early airliners to feature a glass cockpit, which put Bill in a good place for his next move when he applied to Emirates Airlines, who were looking for pilots with glass experience.

He moved to Dubai and started flying Airbus 300s and 310s. His wife Penny adapted quickly to life in Dubai. She had expertise in the soft furnishing world and picked up contracts with an oil company that was building houses for its ex-pat workers. "For a while she was earning more money than me," Bill says.

Bill spent fifteen years working for Emirates in Dubai, ending up flying 777s on longhaul routes. Over time the routes got longer, which meant a lot of night flying, which did not suit Bill's body clock and led to a number of health problems.

In 2006, with his lifetime staff travel privilege in the bag, Bill did his final flight with Emirates and invited lifelong friend Rob Wilson along for the ride. Rob had accompanied Bill and Bill's father on that very first passenger flight all those years before.

Fellow Air New Zealand pilot, Peter McVinnie, met Bill when they were both flying 767s, and remembers him being great to work with. They had a very memorable trip to Perth when Peter, his wife, Bill and Bill's mother turned a three-day layover into a memorable break. They lost touch when Bill moved to Emirates but reconnected in retirement through the Tiger Moth fraternity.

Bill had intended to retire to Hawke's Bay but once again that glass cockpit experience was in demand. He knew the CEO of Pacific Blue, John Bartlett, who talked him into flying 737-800s on domestic and tran-Tasman routes out of Auckland. By getting Bill on board he also increased the average flight experience of his captains, which helped with the certification process.

In 2015 Bill was able to finally retire to the Bay, where he did a bit of work for the Dannevirke Flying Club and the Hawke's Bay and East Coast Aero Club as an instructor. He particularly enjoyed getting back into the cockpit with young aviators at the start of their flying careers, after decades of working with pilots who, over the years, had lost their love of aviation.

Restoration project

During his time in Dubai, Bill took on a Tiger Moth restoration project back in New Zealand. As an eight year old Bill had been taken on an aerobatic Tiger flight by Bruce Kingan, and had been fascinated by the type ever since. ZK AON was one of the first restoration projects taken on by Colin Smith at Mandeville, who went on to make a name for himself in this arena.

Bill's retirement Cessna 185, in livery to match Tiger Moth AON.

Pursuing his passion, Bill became heavily involved in the Tiger Moth Club of New Zealand and flew all around the country attending their fly-ins up until 2024. Always keen to share his love of the Tiger, some of Bill's notable passengers included a member of the Blue Angels US Navy aerobatic team and Lou Day, the former CFI of the Gore Aero Club, on his 100th birthday.

During this time Bill also purchased a Cessna 185, ZK DLY, from Ben Aubrey, which he restored and painted bright yellow to match the Tiger.

Well-known Tiger pilot, Amanda Rutland, recalls Bill bringing the Tiger, the 185 and a bunch of his friends to Tiger rallies, sharing the flying of both aircraft with her. Bill owned his aircraft until quite recently, selling the Tiger to Greg Smith and the C185 to Hank Sproull.

Looking back on his career, Bill is saddened by the loss of the fast jet wing of the RNZAF, which was cancelled by Prime Minister Helen Clarke's government just as they were about to transition to F16s. However, he does not regret missing out on combat. Both his uncles, who flew in World War II, and an American pilot he worked with at Ohakea, who had fought in Vietnam, described their experiences as "horrible".

Bill now lives in a retirement village in Christchurch where he is closer to his family.

Significant steps for the Trust

By Richard Bradley

After the AGM in Hawera I was appointed as an interim Trustee to replace the founding Chairman Sid McCauley, who stood down after the Trust's very intensive set up period.

It has been a very steep learning curve over the last six months and I have to thank the present chair, Mandy Deans, for helping enormously. I have been a strong supporter of the concept of the Trust ever since it was first proposed by Life member Brian Hore, possibly over ten years ago. I look forward to advancing the cause during my term.

We had our first face-to-face meeting since my joining at the blown-out Darfield fly-in. We were kindly hosted by the Darfield branch of Farmlands in their meeting room. Over two days we covered all aspects of the direction the Trust wishes to head. The strategic plan will be available on https://thinkaviation.nz website before too long.

The two inaugural scholarship winners were finalised (see page 3), in which we acknowledge the help of Des Lines, who assisted with the final judging due to declared conflicts of interest. Congratulations again to the successful applicants; we look forward to following your developing careers.

The judging showed that some of the applicants could benefit greatly from advice with their applications and interviews. Even choosing a person to give a reference can influence the standing of an application. Some applicants were already taking part in a mentoring programme run by a group in Canterbury, and the advantage this gave them was obvious to the judges. Consequently, we offered the winners a mentoring opportunity aimed at assisting with future applications for education, scholarships or even employment and general career advice, which both have accepted.

We are currently designing a survey to go out to all who showed interest in the scholarships but didn't apply, all who did apply, and to all the flying training organisations and aero clubs sent information about the scholarships to give to their members. We will learn from this and improve our 2026 offerings.

As a result of interest in our offering of mentors to the successful applicants, the Trust has developed a mentoring programme. We are putting together a list of AOPA NZ members who would be willing to take part in mentoring young people. Face to face meetings, while not a requirement, would help build relationships, and availability for calls or Zooms would be highly beneficial. We anticipate mentor and mentee being in the same geographical area where possible, with potentially a couple of get-togethers and a few calls over a period of years to help steer nominated young people on the right track. If you are interested and available, please register your interest at office@trust.aopa.nz or directly with myself.

The workload of the Trust in its formative stages has been and continues to be huge – too much for a volunteer trustee and so an executive officer has just been appointed. Dan Clearwater, who lives in Wanaka, will deal with the day-to-day running of the Trust but will also research where the Trust can best direct its efforts to do the most good, helping young people decide on their education and careers. Dan has a background in aviation and will add considerable horsepower to the Trust.

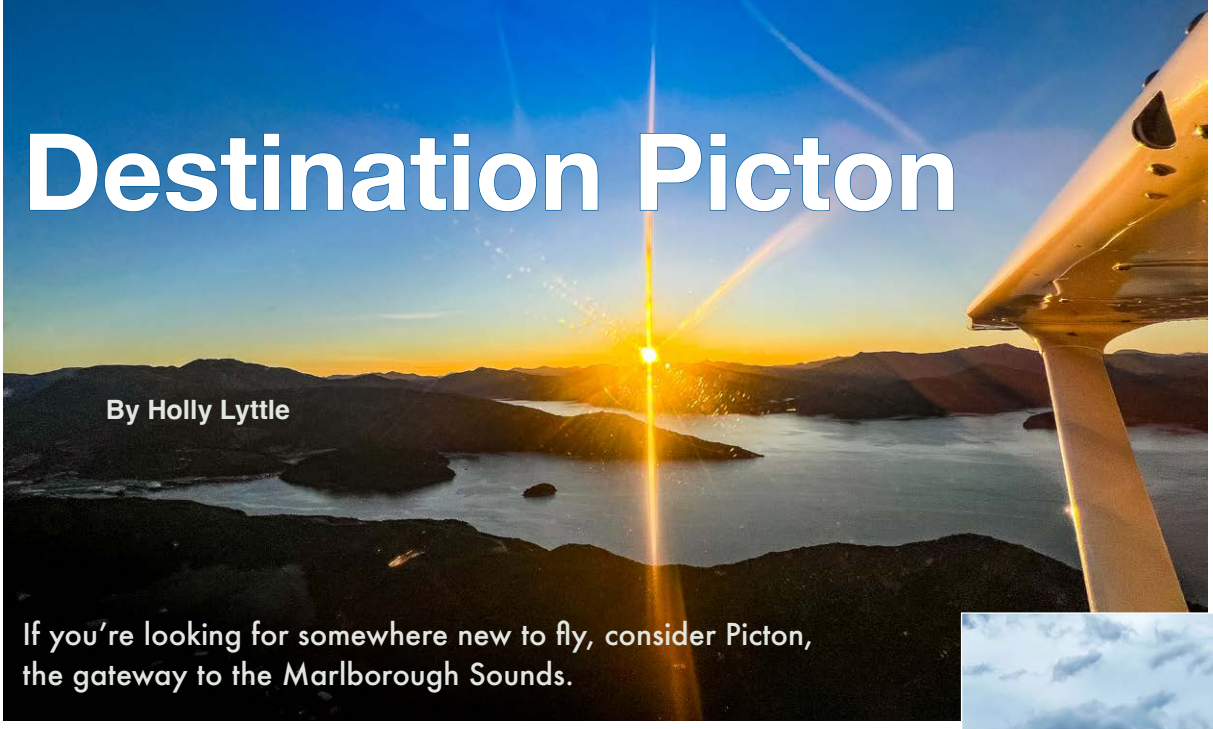
We see the Trust's purview as relating to education and careers in all aspects of aviation, ie, anything that is man-made and flies, including but not limited to pilots, air traffic control, engineers, avionics, drones and space activity.

The Trust was given a grant by AOPA NZ to get started, but there is of course an ongoing need for funding much greater than the founding body can be expected to provide. We will be seeking further funding in the not-too-distant future, so please consider whether you can contribute to this very worthwhile cause. A secure donation pathway is currently being established and we will let you know when this is operational.

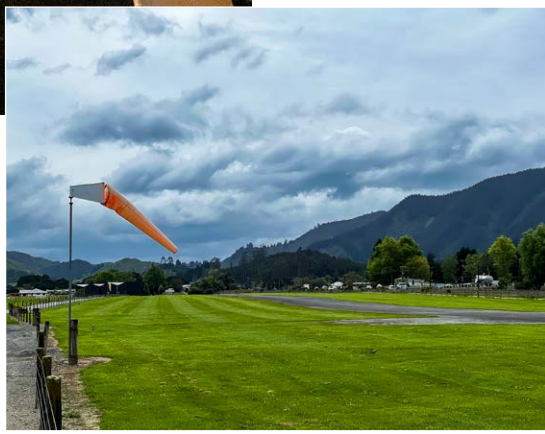
See you at Greymouth, 27 Feb 2026, for an update.

Destination Picton

By Holly Lyttle



If you're looking for somewhere new to fly, consider Picton, the gateway to the Marlborough Sounds.



Sunset flight through the Marlborough Sounds; Picton Airport looking north from Runway 18.

Nestled in the valley on the road between Blenheim and Picton, you'll find Koromiko, home to Picton Airport, owned and operated by Sounds Air. Landing here will give you the quickest access to a day or multi-day visit to Picton and all it has to offer.

The aerodrome is home to a number of residents and additionally hosts hangars for privately owned aircraft. With a 780m sealed runway and an elevation of 140ft, most GA aircraft are able to land here. There are also several flights a day from Sounds Air Caravans coming to and from Wellington. The runway vectors are 36 and 18, laying it parallel with the valley.

Keep in mind that permission is required from Sounds Air to use this airport. Please ensure that you speak to them and gain a briefing from their highly skilled pilots about the ins and outs of operating at Picton Airport before you begin your journey.

Whether you come from the north or the south you will be spoilt for scenery on your flight to Picton. Travelling from the North Island will take you across Cook Strait and through the Marlborough Sounds, which always provide stunning views. Coming from the south you can fly via beautiful snowy mountains and lakes, or past Kaikoura where you may spot some whales on your way.

Regardless of your direction of arrival, a flight through the Marlborough Sounds before landing at Picton is a must. A collection of river valleys that were drowned by rising sea levels after the last ice age, the Sounds feature forested hills that rise steeply from the sea, creating an impressive landscape to fly through. My favourite time for a flight through the Sounds is in the evening when the sun is low and casts some very cool light across the terrain.

The Sounds are prone to turbulence in most wind conditions so ensuring you fly on the windward side of the hills is advisable. Also, if you are flying in at a lower-level, caution is required where power lines cross the channels and valleys, especially through the Tory Channel. Paragliding also takes place in the hills surrounding Picton. They are normally pretty good at contacting Sounds Air if they are going to be operating, so you may be advised of this when you contact Sounds.

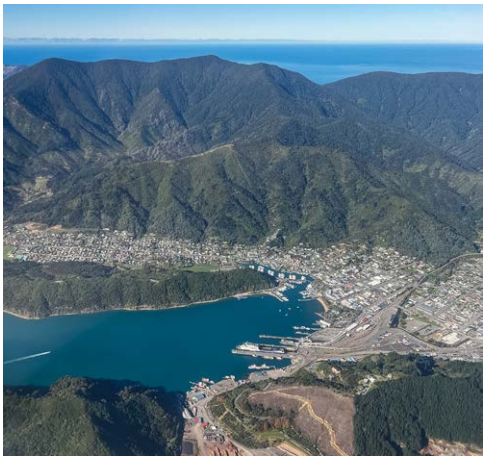
Ensure you have studied your Visual Navigation Charts to be aware of the surrounding airspace. Across Cook Strait you'll need to gain permission from Wellington Approach to fly above 2500ft. The controllers are helpful and, even if they cannot let you in due to arrivals and departures from Wellington, they will still keep an eye on you across the water.

If you're heading to Picton via Blenheim you will have to navigate around or through the Woodbourne Control Zone. The Controllers based at Woodbourne Tower are fantastic and will almost always give you a straight line through to Picton. In fact, they are so good they won the 2025 AOPA Award for most Helpful Control Tower, so come and pay them a visit to see why they were so deserving of the award! If you decide not to enter the control zone, Woodbourne Tower will offer helpful advice to keep you clear of their zone so you can safely track via the Omaka Transit Lane. This route will take you south of Blenheim township and out seaward of the cost at 1500ft.

Being located in a valley makes Picton Airport very prone to weather such as wind and fog, so you'll want to pick your day when coming to visit. If you find yourself there in an easterly, prepare for a turbulent ride. Due to the runway lying in the lee of the hills on the eastern side, this is the worst wind condition you can find yourself in. You'll also likely encounter turbulence in a westerly, but it is generally not as bad as the easterly.

A northerly or southerly wind is usually less of a concern, dependent on wind strength and whether or not it is likely to gust. Wind can change very suddenly in the valley and even moderate wind can lead to turbulence and windshear. Spring is when the wind is at its worst. By January/February the wind starts to ease and is much more stable through into winter.

Another factor you need to consider in



the cooler months is fog, which can linger in valleys for hours. Koromiko commonly clears by mid-morning; earlier if there is wind to move it along. Rain can lead to a very quick loss of visibility.

Speaking with Sounds Air before coming will ensure you are well briefed regarding local weather conditions and any forecast changes.

Landings fees are $25. This can either be paid over the phone when you speak to Sounds Air or you can pay on site at their terminal. There is parking available at the northern end of the airfield next to the hangars. Make sure to pack your picket kit in case the wind picks up while you are in town.

Unfortunately, Picton does not have fuel available, so factor this is when you plan your trip.

Around and about

Safely arrived and aircraft secured, there are a number of shuttles and taxis that will pick you up from the airport and take you into town to enjoy the many activities on offer. Locals recommend Picton Shuttles or Waikawa Shuttles.

Picton is full of friendly and welcoming people, and you will quickly see the strong sense of community.

Whether you are looking for a good walk, hike or bike, or would prefer a more relaxed visit including a nice meal in the sun on the waterfront, Picton will be able to provide what you're looking for. You might enjoy a gentle waterfront walk or a stroll along the track to Waikawa, or you might prefer to pack your tramping boots and make your way along the Snout Track to the Queen Charlotte Lookout or all the way to the 'Snout'.

There are a number of popular places to eat in Picton. Sisu Eatery provides European tapas style dishes great for sharing, Toastie Lords is your go to for a good old toasted sandwich, while Le Café provides a great venue for a relaxed breakfast, lunch or dinner with a view over the harbour.

You can also get out on the water, taking a fishing trip in the Sounds or hiring kayaks for an adventure into the bays that you flew over on you way in. You may even be lucky enough to spot dolphins.

With so much on offer to explore in the town you might want to plan for more than a single day trip to Picton. Accommodation is available in town in a hotel, motel or holiday park, or you can explore further and book into one of the many accommodation venues in the Marlborough Sounds.

As a backup up if weather or operational requirements prevent you from landing in Picton, Omaka Aerodrome is a short 12 nautical miles flight south with fuel and a car available for loan through the Marlborough Aero Club.

Next time you're looking for somewhere new to explore, consider Picton with its stunning Marlborough Sounds, great walks and fantastic eating establishments.

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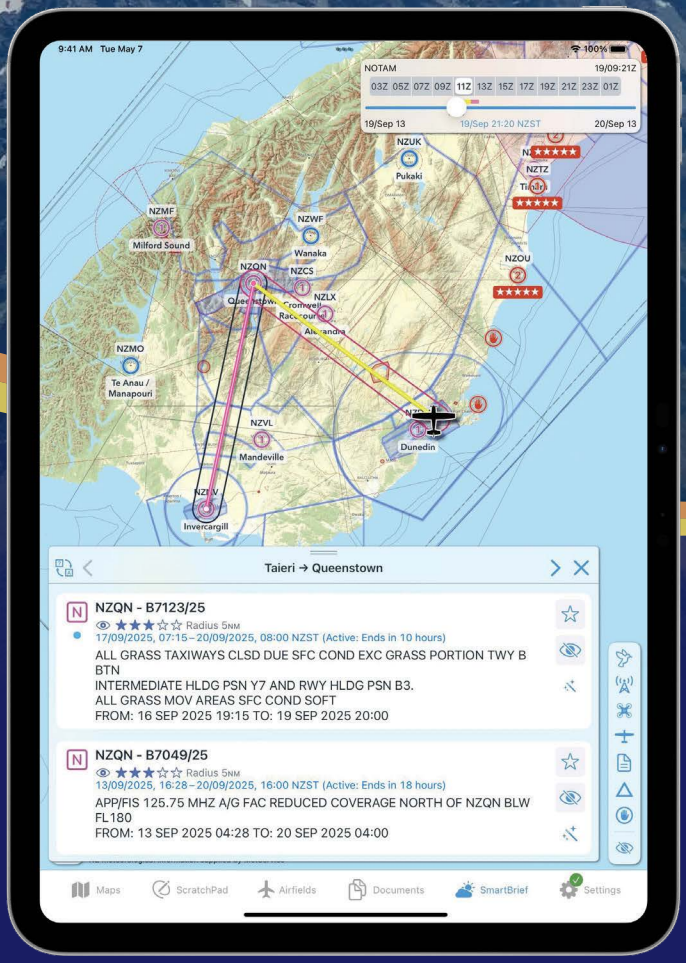

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