



Nhill Anson Newsletter

Issue No 5. 14-01-2010

Highlights in this newsletter:

- Fly-In to WWII base in October a great success.
- Memories surface at the Nhill Fly-In.
- Sales of new book exceeds expectations.
- Avro Anson restoration progress.
- Membership of our supporters.

Fly In to Nhill WW2 RAAF Base.

The Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre (NAHC) committee was ecstatic at the response to the Fly-In held on the 28th of October as part of the Back-To-Nhill celebrations. In some ways the Fly-In started on the preceding day when several planes landed at Nhill on their way to Jamestown in South Australia. A Kittyhawk, Mustang and Yak-9, all fighter planes from WWII, thrilled a waiting crowd of about 200 people as they flew in formation low over the Nhill Aerodrome. A Victor Air Tourer and a helicopter flew in later also on their way to Jamestown.

Next day a grand parade through Nhill's main street was watched by one of the largest crowds seen in Nhill for many years. The parade finished about noon and organisers of the Fly-In wondered how they were going to induce the public to relocate to the Aerodrome. By this time about 30 or 40 planes had landed at the Aerodrome and the Fly-In was underway. By 2 pm cars were banked up for more than two kilometres and organisers were working hard to speed up access to the parking area.

A crowd estimated at 2000 people watched as even more planes landed. Others flew most of the day giving the Wimmera Air Cadets experience in a busy airspace. Although the event was not organised as an air show, some pilots gave impromptu demonstrations of their skills and their plane's features. The official count of 62 planes included some vintage aircraft and unusual types. One of the local aero club members commented on the features of different planes as they taxied past or flew overhead.





Other features of the day included a marching display from the Air Cadets, a drive past of vintage vehicles, displays of aircraft engines and a variety of other memorabilia. The day was one to remember and the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre committee is now wondering what it can do next year to keep up the awareness of the historical value of the Nhill WWII RAAF base. The committee is determined that the story of the WWII RAAF

Base at Nhill will be told to modern generations and that a significant part of Australia's wartime contribution will not fade from memory.

Memories surface as former trainees return to Nhill.

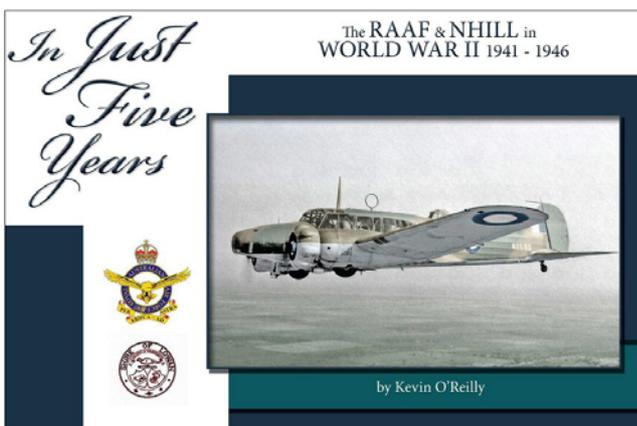
A group of airmen from WWII were at the aerodrome prior to the book launch.

They are named from left to right: Merv Schneider, Nhill; Stan Guilfoyle, Melbourne; Kevin Cass, Hamilton; Noel Parsons, Rainbow; Vern Gerlach, Lilydale; Jim Campbell, Hamilton; Arthur Platt, Wauchope, NSW; Bert Tucker, Perth, WA.



Almost 100 Nhill residents were at the Aerodrome to join an information walk of the WWII

site. The walk was organised by Kevin O'Reilly, author of "In Just Five Years" a book about the history of the air school that operated at Nhill between 1941 and 1946.



In Just Five Years

Available Now
\$45 Plus Post

Sales Exceed Expectations

About 200 people attended the official launch of Kevin O'Reilly's book, "In Just Five Years". There was standing room only when Air Commodore John Clarkson spoke of the tireless dedication of Kevin O'Reilly as he researched wartime records and contacted dozens of people to develop a remarkable history of Nhill's WWII RAAF Air Base. Don Kube of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre and Merv Schneider of the Nhill sub-branch of the RSL both commended Kevin on the accuracy and detail of his book.

During drinks and nibbles following the launch a team of people helped Kevin with the practical side of selling books while he signed them. Sales have continued at a good rate and it looks likely that the supply of books may run out by mid 2010. This is a quality production that should be of interest to anyone from the Nhill district and also anyone interested in aviation, especially in relation to WWII.

Please refer to the following website for additional information. www.injustfiveyears.com and contact Westprint by email info@westprint.com.au or by phone on 03 5391 1466 for postal sales.

WAAAF Involvement at Nhill

There are few, if any, locals in and around Nhill who can say they knew all that is in Kevin O'Reilly's book "In Just Five Years'. Hardly anyone under the age of 50 knows anything about the Air School, as it is generally referred to by locals. Certainly few would realise that the Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force had a strong contingent at Nhill. The following quote is from "In Just Five Years":

Since the WAAAF were formed in March 1941, at any given time there were approximately 60 on strength at Nhill. They had their own living quarters on a compound at the base with one officer in charge with a rank of Section Officer. WAAAF were involved in many areas including administration and clerical, the motor pool, packing and maintenance of parachutes, fabric repair of planes, the technical library, cipher decoders, film projection, radio signals and the direction finding transmitter hut.



Avro Anson Restoration

Work is still continuing on the Avro Anson restoration. However, space is now at a premium and it is expected that it will soon be necessary to shift the machine out of its small shed and into a much wider building capable of accommodating the plane with wheels and engines attached. A temporary set of wheels is being attached to enable the plane to be moved for sand blasting. Original Avro Anson plans have been used to manufacture replacement timber trusses for the roof and door and hatch frames are being added. There is a plan or drawing for every part of the plane's superstructure, no matter how small. It is from these that Mike has been manufacturing the parts that have rotted or rusted away during the years the plane has been lying out in the weather.

Mike is still keeping to his plan to start at the tail and work along the fuselage until he reaches the nose. He is now concentrating on the cabin as can be seen from the photo.



Rear wheel assemblies of Avro Ansons invariably rust badly when left in the open because of the way they are designed. We were lucky to be able to find one in very good condition and it is now fitted ready to go. It is hoped that work on the front wheel assemblies will start within the next few months. However, a major reconstruction of the two main spars under the cabin is needed before the wheel assemblies can be fitted to the plane. Any reader of this newsletter who is travelling through Nhill is welcome to contact me by email and I will endeavour to arrange an inspection of the Avro. john@westprint.com.au

Incorporation

Thanks to some quality work by our secretary, Joan Bennett, and one or two other members and some special contacts Joan has, the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre is now an incorporated body. It has taken some considerable time and work to set up our constitution to suit our needs but now it is done we congratulate those involved and thank them for their effort.

A message to our supporters

This newsletter is free. However, support for this important historical project is greatly appreciated. Please contact admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au

Support comes in many forms including phone numbers and email addresses, contact details of former WWII trainees, parts for the Avro Anson and general memorabilia, photos etc. as well as donations of cash and labour. Although it is our intention to recognise and acknowledge this assistance through the newsletter, specific details will not be published.

New email addresses are constantly being added to our list. If you do not wish to be part of our group then please contact admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au and make your request known.

Persons who wish to make comment about the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre or any other related issue should also contact admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au. Such comments may be published in future newsletters if considered appropriate.