



## **NHILL ANSON NEWSLETTER**

**Issue No. 9. 14-12-2010**

### **Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre was held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at the Soldiers' Lounge.

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

##### **2008 - 2010**

A public meeting was called by Rev. Don Kube, Rob Lynch and Mick Kingwill on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2008 to discuss their mutual concern that history of aviation in Nhill and the WW2 Air Base established by the RAAF from 1941-1946 might be lost, leaving this and future generations unaware of their heritage.

Thirty people in attendance resolved unanimously 'that this meeting recognizes the importance of the Aerodrome in the on-going history of Nhill and supports the creation of an aviation memorial with focus initially on the RAAF presence at Nhill from 1941-1946.' A Committee was formed comprising Rev Don Kube, Rob Lynch, Mick Kingwill, Joanne Ussing, John Deckert, Ken Schultz, Chris Weeks, Cr Joan Bennett, Len Creek, Nathan Wheeler, Max Carland and Merv Schneider.

Twelve months later, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009, the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre was an incorporated body with Don Kube firmly established as President. Joanne Ussing served as foundation Secretary/Treasurer until 9<sup>th</sup> July 2009 and Joan Bennett was then appointed to both positions. In November 2009 Joan Bennett resigned as Treasurer. Lesley Stephan was appointed to the Committee and accepted the Treasurer's position, and Joan Bennett continued as Secretary. Ken Schultz earlier resigned his committee position, and Trevor Borgelt was elected in November 2009.

In February 2010 the NAHC suffered a great loss with the death of the Reverend Don Kube, an inspirational and greatly respected President. Don was a true leader who moulded and consolidated the group, setting in place a solid foundation for the future. In March 2010, Vice President Rob Lynch was elected President and Len Creek Vice President.

#### **The Avro Anson Restoration Project:**

In Feb-March 2009 President Don Kube met Graham Drage of Lah (Warracknabeal district). Their casual meeting had huge ramifications for the NAHC. Some years before, Graham, a pilot and flying instructor had purchased the remains of an Avro Anson aeroplane to save it from further destruction. The plane wreckage remained safely stored in Graham's farm yard. Graham, upon learning about the NAHC from Don Kube and the plan to acquire and restore an Avro Anson, generously gifted the plane to the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Association. The plane wreckage was transported to Nhill on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and restoration work commenced. We were very pleased to nominate Graham Drage to the NAHC Management Committee.

Committee member Mick Kingwill manages the restoration project. Mick's skills are legendary and he has set the benchmark for craftsmanship. Mick's team of helpers - Len Creek, Rob Lynch, Whimpey Reichelt and Max Carland maintain a high standard of workmanship. Interest in the project is Australia wide, with Committee member Chris Weeks sourcing original detailed plans of the Avro Anson from England. Visitors from near and far are watching the Avro Anson project, which will eventually be completed to taxiing status. It is currently stored in 'Mick's Shed', but is outgrowing this location.

Avro Anson parts have been sourced from many places, including EBAY and aircraft auctions. The Mt Gambier Aerodrome gifted parts that had been stored since WW2. We were pleased to hear from Dale and Dianne Boxall of Watchupga West who donated parts that had originally come from our Avro Anson. Many generous donors have helped by giving parts, financial contributions, and expert advice and encouragement. I extend a heartfelt thanks to all including my fellow Committee members who have travelled many miles looking for parts and pieces of Avro Ansons at their own expense.

Restoring the Avro Anson and collecting aviation memorabilia has put us in touch with aviation enthusiasts across Australia. We have visited the South Australian Aviation Museum, the Lake Boga Catalina Museum and the Mt Gambier Aerodrome in particular. Two officials from the Queensland Air Museum came to Nhill to see the Avro Anson. Individual members of the NAHC have visited aviation museums across Australia and England during the past twelve months. We are on a continuous learning curve.

### **The NAHC Fly-in 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

When Don Kube suggested that we should organize a Fly-In within twelve months of our inauguration, and with about six hundred dollars (\$600) in the bank, we had grave misgivings about our ability to bring it off. However, every member caught Don's enthusiasm and made a huge effort to make the Fly-In a reality. At the end of the day on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009, we had approx. \$17,000 to deposit in our bank account and approximately two and a half thousand (2500) happy people of all ages who had joined in the excitement. Nhill Rotarians manned the entrance gates and collected \$12,500 for the NAHC. Cars were banked back along the Propodollah Road to the railway crossing.

Eighty-six planes flew in to Nhill for the event. Adding to the excitement, several WW2 planes attended including Winjeels, Mustang, Wirraway, Tiger Moth, Yak 9, and a Kittyhawk.

The Nhill Aero Club granted us full use of their facilities. Hindmarsh Shire Council fully supported the NAHC members, as did adjoining neighbours from John Millington's duck farm. Marcus Kube, Manager of the Cairns Airport, son of Don and Rae, was in charge of the Fly-in, with Brian Farmers the Master of Ceremonies. The RAAF cadets from Horsham assisted in the day's events, and the Emergency Services attended. It is impossible to mention people who helped by name because there were so many willing volunteers, but I want to give a special thanks to the wives of the Committee men who hosted the pilots and crew throughout the day and put on a dinner in the evening.

We will always remember the outstanding donations and sponsorships given to us by the business sector.

### **Launch of Kevin O'Reilly's book 'In Just Five Years. October 2010**

Former Nhill resident Kevin O'Reilly had a successful book launch during the Back-to-Nhill week of festivities. The NAHC assisted with this event. The book was very well received and approx. 450 copies were sold on the day. The book contains historical information about the RAAF Air Base at Nhill during WW2 and stories of former RAAF personnel and local people. Kevin has generously committed five dollars from the sale of every book to the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre.

### **Navex Fly-in 25-26<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

The NAHC Committee hosted the Navex fly-in at the end of March 2010. This group of flying enthusiasts stayed overnight in Nhill on their way home to the Yarrawonga Aerodrome. School children from Nhill Lutheran School and Nhill College visited the group at Nhill Aerodrome, were given a history session by

John Deckert, and also physically inspected the aircraft. Once again, the Nhill Aero Club granted us full use of their facilities.

### **Grant Applications:**

Wimmera Volunteers Grant: successful application. We received \$302, to offset insurance costs.

Hindmarsh Shire Council Events Grant: successful application. We received \$500 for Fly-in administration costs.

An application for funds to build a Hangar/Exhibition Centre at the Nhill Aerodrome is pending. We have the support of the Nhill community, the Hindmarsh Shire Council and the Federal Government, and are waiting on the State Government decision. I thank Community Development Director Anne Champness for guiding the application through its many stages. The Ahrens Family has generously assisted us with the project application. The NAHC has sent two delegations to meet with Mr Stefan and Mr Bob Ahrens of Sheoak Log in South Australia to discuss the project.

### **Milestones:**

- NAHC Anson Newsletter: The first edition written by John Deckert in April 2009 and subsequent editions emailed free to two hundred and thirty members and contacts Australia wide.
- NAHC Web Page: The Web Page was pioneered by John Deckert and posted on the Internet in June 2010. It is still under construction.
- NAHC Logo: Mick Kingwill came up with the concept. The design was professionally drawn by Brett Sherwell. Its centre piece is the Avro Anson aeroplane with the Avro Anson green and gold colours. Brett Sherwell prepared several applications of the design e.g. a letterhead and banner.
- NAHC Banner: This shows the Logo on a dark blue background and the words 'Highlighting Nhill's RAAF and Civil Aviation History'. First time displayed at the Nhill A&P Society 125<sup>th</sup> Show.

### **Planning for the future:**

At the time we commenced our exciting journey we had great enthusiasm and many ideas. Most members started off with knowledge of WW2 aircraft and history arising from a lifelong interest in the subject. The decision to initially focus attention on the WW2 Air Base years and the acquisition of an Avro Anson channelled our energies in those directions. However, we soon realized that the WW2 years were only one part of Nhill's unique aviation history which began in 1919.

With the generous assistance of Association member and former resident Jean Roberts, we commenced to formally plan towards 'Nhill's Aviation Century 1919-2019'. We were aware that the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre had captured the interest of the Nhill community, but we wanted more than that. We wanted the community to help shape our future and to participate in it in a meaningful way.

A very successful Community Consultation facilitated by Jean Roberts was held on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010 with more than eighty people in attendance. The event was co-sponsored by the Hindmarsh Shire Council with Mayor Michael Gawith, Councillors and Andrew Bainbridge the Director of Infrastructure in attendance, and guest speaker David Mark, the President of the Lake Boga Catalina Museum. The people affirmed the NAHC and gave positive directions for the future which have been incorporated into the Plans.

### **The Hindmarsh Shire Nhill Aerodrome Master Plan Advisory Committee:**

An important outcome of the Community Consultation was the formation by the Hindmarsh Shire of a committee to develop a Master Plan for the Nhill Aerodrome. The NAHC President Rob Lynch presides over this committee which also has other NAHC and community and business representatives. A draft Master Plan will shortly be presented to the Hindmarsh Shire Council.

### **Conclusion:**

Due to the generosity of local business firm Driscoll McIltrie and Dickinson, the NAHC has rooms with a shop front in Nelson Street, Nhill. Our monthly Committee meetings are held there, and we also have a window to display artefacts from the Second World War RAAF Air Base and other interesting items.

I thank the whole community for their support. Personally I feel privileged to be working with a great team who share my passion for the project.

I'm also privileged to belong to this wonderful Nhill community who have shown me that they value the aviation history by their encouragement and support.

### **Report: An Evening With Kevin O'Reilly.**

Once again Kevin entertained us with unusual information about aviation in Nhill and surrounding districts. His collection of photos range from the first plane to land at Nhill, to visits by various famous early aviators and even information about locally built aircraft. Nhill has had three official aerodromes and its first, now covered with houses, is believed to be the first registered aerodrome in country Victoria.

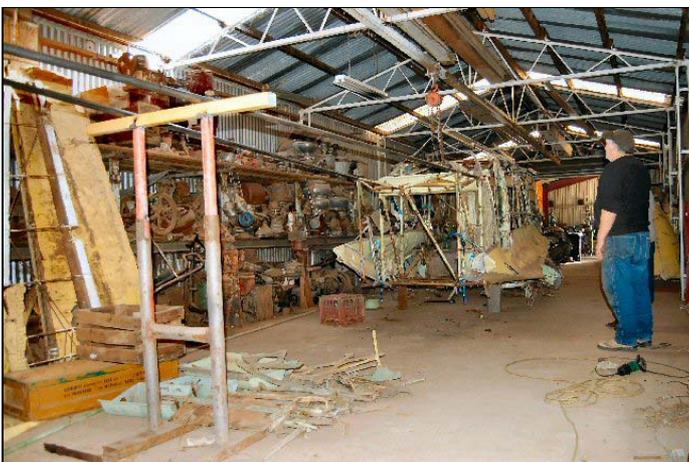
I was astounded at the vast number of aircraft that have been privately owned by private people in the Nhill district. Some are now very rare and although it seems a shame that the planes are not still flying it is wonderful to have photos and information. Kevin expects to eventually publish his research. Kevin is trying to find information on Graham Carey who came to Nhill in his Shorthorn Farman aeroplane and who was involved with Geo McKenzie at Rainbow. He is also researching a Wimmera AC Cherokee VH-RRF that crashed at Rainbow in 1974. Kevin welcomes any information about Wimmera aircraft prior to 1960. He is still very anxious to follow up on any reminiscences people may offer.

### **Avro Anson Restoration**

The latest from Mike Kingwill is that he has almost completed the fuselage from the tail to the rear of the cabin. As can be seen from the photographs, everything from the tail to the cabin has been re-built, not restored. The fuselage did not exist when the original aircraft arrived at Nhill. Plans and photographs have provided the detail but the engineering skill of Mike has determined the outcome. He was helped by another of our executive members, Max Carland, who has spent most of his life handling timber and building materials. Prior to the building trade, Max was a fighter pilot during WWII and has many stories to tell. His help and advice is very welcome.

The photo on the left shows the start of the fuselage rebuilding process. Mike is looking toward the first two long pipes to be put into position.

The photo on the right shows the tubular steel frame with wooden formers making the circular framework onto which thin wooden runners are screwed to complete the skeleton of the fuselage. The next stage for this section will be the attachment and doping of the fabric. The tail plane is yet to be completed and will be attached to the very rear of the fuselage.



## **Web Site**

Another page of the Avro Anson Restoration Project has been added to the website.

[www.nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au](http://www.nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au)

The website still needs plenty of work. However, some help from an ex-Nhill professional in this field has given the site a completely new look. Keep watching. It is hoped that more information will appear soon.

## **Membership of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre.**

This newsletter is free to anyone interested in the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre and any of its projects. However, this newsletter is also the only way the committee has of easily sending reminders to those who wish to support our cause by being a member.

Memberships run for a financial year and are \$30 per person. Payment can be made by cheque, money order or internet transfer. Confirmation of payment will only be made if an email address is included with payment or if a notice of payment is made by email to the treasurer:

[treasurer@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au](mailto:treasurer@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au)

## **A message to our supporters**

Do you have a friend who would appreciate receiving this free newsletter? Just click on FORWARD and type in as many email addresses as you like then click SEND.

This newsletter is free. However, support for this important historical project is greatly appreciated and 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](mailto: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](mailto:admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au). Such comments may be published in future newsletters if considered appropriate.