



NHILL ANSON NEWSLETTER

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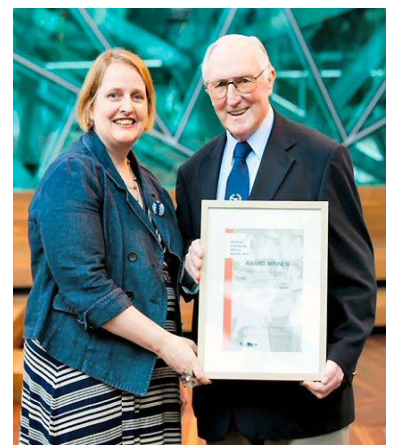
Highlights in this newsletter

- Recognition for Kevin O'Reilly's latest book
- Work Continues on Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre
- Stage One nears completion.
- Anson relocated to Aerodrome
- A new home for Nhill's Avro Anson
- Recollections of an Avro Anson in the backyard.

Flyers of Time Wins Award

Kevin O'Reilly's second book about aviation won an award in the Victorian Community History Awards 2013 — sponsored by the Public Records Office and the Royal Victorian Historical Society. There were six categories and 110 entries, and Kevin's book won the Local History Project Award. *Flyers of Time* is a collection of aviation records and memorabilia of pioneer aviation in country Victoria and the Riverina. The index lists almost 2,000 names, 500 place names and numerous rare photographs throughout 400 pages of text.

The awards were presented on Oct 21 to a capacity crowd at the Deakin Edge Theatre in Melbourne's Federation Square. The Minister for Arts attended, and the Guest Speaker was historian Geoffrey Blainey. Kevin is pictured below with Justine Heazlewood, CEO of the Public Records Office.



Flyers of Time is available through Kevin O'Reilly's website. <http://www.flyersoftime.com/>

Sherwell - Ahrens complete Stage One

Board members of the NAHC were pleased to receive the keys to the new building from Adam Shanahan, Ahrens representative, in November 2013. This signified the end of major construction (stage one). At the time of writing, we are awaiting the Certificate of Occupancy from the Hindmarsh Shire Council. As with any major construction there have been numerous problems along the way, but President Rob Lynch has consulted skilfully with Hindmarsh Shire Council officers responsible for administering regulations.



The Hand-over of keys took place at 11.30am Monday 18th November.



Although it has taken almost three months to satisfy the requirements for occupancy, the time delay has enabled us to paint the Hangar floor with heavy duty industrial paint as recommended by Sponsors Haymes Paints of Ballarat. Other organizations had advised the Board of the importance of painting the floor before anything was moved into the building. Painting hangar floors was a new experience for Board members but Haymes Paints representatives not only advised us, but worked along with us. As it turned out the main problem was getting reasonably cool weather. Fortunately, we managed to

choose two days of less than 35 degrees and we consider the result to be excellent.



Painting was completed during two mornings of the 13th and 14th of February 2014.

Avro Anson Relocated

The Avro Anson restoration finally outgrew the back portion of Mick Kingwill's engineering business so it became necessary to relocate. Prior to the relocation Mick spent many hours making and fitting the main spars so that the undercarriage could be fitted. This was another of those major tasks that most people would not even contemplate starting but Mick just seemed to complete, by himself, with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of exacting detail.



Even the problem of the plane being almost a metre wider than the workshop door didn't faze Mick – "we would just jiggle it around sideways". Three hours later four men had almost dismantled the shed, but the Avro was out intact, and no one had suffered a serious injury.





This is the first time in more than 60 years that an Avro Anson has been on the Nhill Aerodrome. Thanks to the Aero Club for space in the Bellman Hangar.

A NEW HOME FOR NHILL'S AVRO ANSON

February 22, 2014 was a great day for the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre. It was a great day for Nhill and it must have been a great day for the Avro Anson Restoration Project Manager, Mick Kingwill.

It is five years since the first public meeting agreed to form what is now the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Association Inc. The statement of purpose was:

- a) To highlight the significant role of aviation in the ongoing development of Nhill
- b) To research and record the history of the RAAF Air School in Nhill from 1941-1946 within the broader context of Nhill's aviation and aerodrome history
- c) To collect Air School artefacts to display in secure premises
- d) To acquire and restore an Avro Anson aeroplane, leaving it as a legacy to this and future generations.

During the last five years the role of aviation in Nhill has been significantly highlighted by running two Fly-Ins and numerous public consultation and information meetings which will continue into the future.

The publication of "In Just Five Years" by Kevin O'Reilly is an outstanding example of painstaking research which has added to the public knowledge of the history of the RAAF Base in Nhill.

People and organizations throughout Australia have been very generous in donating memorabilia for display in the just-completed new Hangar at the Nhill Aerodrome.

Possibly the greatest achievement to date is the partial restoration of an Avro Anson which is now housed in its new home on the Number three hangar site of the former Nhill WWII RAAF Base.

It is appropriate to say, "In Just Five Years Nhill has made a significant impact on the aims proposed at the first public meeting held at the Aerodrome on the 9th of November 2008."

On Sunday 22nd of February the Avro Anson was rolled into the new Hangar after being carefully towed into place by Mick who was in charge of the operation. The restoration has been the consuming passion of Mick Kingwill's life, particularly during the last five years. His achievement to date is astounding and the amount of hours he has accumulated working on this project will never be known. Direct working hours so far exceed 4,000 but the time spent researching by computer, reading books and in personal contact with other people and organizations and locating parts, can't be estimated. Thanks Mick.

Len Creek and Whimpey Reichelt have also made important contributions to the restoration of the Avro Anson. Like Mick, Len and Whimpey have skills hard to find in this rapidly moving technological era. Len has worked on the rear stabilizer and rudder which will be added to the aircraft soon. Whimpey has worked on the restoration of the engines, and the Avro is now positioned in the Hangar for the first engine to be fitted. This will be Mick's next major job.

There are many others from Australia and beyond who have helped in the restoration to this stage. Without their help the task would have been much more difficult and time costly. The NAHC Board is very appreciative of this assistance.



Mick, in orange jacket, Whimpey, Len and President Rob Lynch are all involved in maneuvering the Avro Anson into place.

Although Avro Ansons operated from the Nhill Aerodrome for a few years after the end of WWII, it is close to 70 years since one could be seen at Nhill.



The Official opening of the new hangar will be held on the 23rd of May 2014

Please keep this date free. More information will be on our website and Newsletter as it becomes available. Expressions of interest from people wishing to fly in would be appreciated. Contact: admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au or secretart@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au

“WHAT COLOUR AEROPLANE WOULD YOU LIKE KIDS?”

Introduction

The year was about 1947 at our home at 32 Glazebrook St. Ballarat East. (behind the Old Curiosity Shop, Queen St, Ballarat East). The time was during the evening meal when the family sat at the dinner table. My father asked the question “What colour aeroplane would you like kids?” Silver, yellow or camouflage? “Oh! well ah! camouflage please”. For a boy about 7 years of age and having some

knowledge of the recent WWII events, camouflage sounded the most exciting colour to choose of the three.

My father was Arthur George Colbourn, my mother Ursula and the kids were myself and my sisters Leonie and Jennifer. Dad was a teacher and taught at the Ballarat Grammar School. My grandmother owned and operated the Old Curiosity Shop and we lived in the small two bed-roomed house at the back. I used to help when visitors came to the Curiosity Shop, "sixpence for adults, threepence for children".

As time passed I can't remember any mention of an aeroplane as we gathered for meals and attended to the daily routine, the strange question seemed to have been forgotten. To be offered an aeroplane was too extreme to be true so it was easily put aside and dismissed.

My next recollection was again at the dinner table and my father began with an apology. "Sorry kids, I couldn't get you a camouflaged aeroplane". Oh! that aeroplane subject has surfaced again, maybe there was some truth in it after all. "I got you a yellow one" he advised. A yellow one! Fair dinkum! I was a bit puzzled by this announcement and wondered if it was true or just a father's joke.

By the time the details were announced and repeated at least twice, it became certain that it was true. I can recall Dad explaining something about the Air Force selling off Avro Anson's from the Ballarat aerodrome.

My next clear memory was the family visiting the RAAF base and seeing aeroplanes parked along each side of a runway. (I seem to recall that the runway was called the American strip) I guess there would have been 40-50 of them and mostly yellow.

The Ansons had been flown into Ballarat and then prepared for sale by removing certain items. I recall that the propellers, some instruments, radios and magnetos were removed. A sale condition was that the planes would never be flown again.

I seem to remember that the price paid was less than 20 pounds but I am not sure of that detail.

Getting it home!

How do you get an aeroplane from Learmonth Rd to East Ballarat? From one end of Ballarat to the other. I can't recall any of the preparations or permissions that were made to transport our acquisition home but I do remember the events of that day.

Dad organised a friend (Hugh Bryant from Ballarat and later from Ararat) who had a "Blitz" truck and arranged for some boarders from the Grammar School to help on the day. The wings were cut off beyond the engines and the tail lifted and fastened somehow to the tray of the truck. I can recall following the truck slowly towing the plane down Learmonth Rd, Howitt St, down Peel St hill, along Scotts Parade, over the Queen St rail bridge and along Queen St to Glazebrook St. I seem to recall that some electrical wires had to be lifted to clear the plane and that the task took up the full width of the roads. I can't actually remember going over Queen St rail bridge, but it would have been an interesting sight. I can also recall many spectators watching the unusual spectacle.

There was a large side yard at 32 Glazebrook St so the fence was removed and the Anson was somehow backed in so that its tail was near the back fence and its nose just overhung the front fence. It squeezed in between the garage and the chook shed.

It never flew again

The fun began as my friends and I imagined we were flying and dropping bombs from the plane. A hole in the top of the wing facilitated the loading of bricks (bombs) and a sheet of iron on the ground made the sound when the bomb doors were wound open. We could work the control stick for up and down and operate the rudder with our feet. I recall stepping over the wooden wing struts that went through the cabin and the tubular steel frame, perspex side windows, laminated glass windscreens, and a network of cables and pulleys that ran under the floor to the control surfaces. The external surfaces comprised some aluminium, magnesium, thin plywood and canvas.

As time passed by, bits and pieces were removed and the Anson became a skeleton. The engines were dismantled and I guess sold as scrap. The fuel tanks were popular with farmers for carrying water, the magnesium was added to the center of our Guy Fox night bonfire and chunks of plywood also fueled the fire. The burning magnesium lit up the whole paddock for a few minutes which was a unique feature of our bonfires over three or four years. Dad fitted the Anson's wheels to our "Carefree" caravan and used the air brakes with an air valve connected to the car brake pedal by a lever. The air supply came from a small cylinder that I had to keep pumped up from a foot operated tire pump located in the passenger side front seat of the car.

The materials from the Anson made all sorts of things. The steel tubing made tent poles. Dad made Mum a device to hold skeins of wool and rotated as the wool was wound into a ball. A piston was the base and adjustable arms made from half inch steel tubing held the wool. This saved me hours of having to hold the wool as it was being wound. Hills Hoists were popular at this time with a water pressure actuated model available. Dad used a cylinder from the landing gear, some cable pulleys and cable and made a water operated clothes line. A trailer was made using the spruce wing struts and the aluminium flaps. Some aluminium was melted and poured into a peach tin to become the material for some "V" belt pulleys. The "U" shaped wooden slats that were attached to the rear tubular fuselage to support the canvas skin were used to build kites. I particularly remember a three foot high box kite that graced the skies and the paper messages that it received via the control line.

To aid the dismantling process I was offered one halfpenny per dozen for brass screws and one penny per dozen for bolts with their nuts on. There were tins and tins of screws and bolts which lasted until I had the task to clean out the garage after Dad died. I threw most of them away during the clean up but kept a few bolts and nuts and some cable adjusters. I later gave these to the Anson restoration project in Ballarat.

Other Ansons

There were a number of Anson's rotting away around Ballarat. The cul-de-sac of Glazebrook St boasted two. At the end of Glazebrook St, there was a large paddock to the north-east stretching down to the creek. In the far corner rested another yellow Anson. The owner was a yachting enthusiast who bought the Anson for its control cables. I can't recall any details of its demise, names or addresses.

There was another in a paddock in the Redan area.

Somewhere around 1955-57, an Anson came to Ballarat and offered "Joy Flights". I made my way to the location which was just north of the Ballarat aerodrome, possibly next to its northern fence. I paid my money and took a flight. I can recall the noise of its engines and the sudden up and down motion as it passed through thermals.

I close

"Old Anson's never die they just wait for someone to restore them" The question "What colour aeroplane would you like kids" started a lifetime of experiences and memories and an affection for a piece of military hardware. The opportunity for this type of experience has gone and it is only by the efforts of museums to restore and display historical items that the new generations can get a glimpse of the past.

I hope that this account is of some interest to you and should you think it worthy, of interest, to your visitors as well.

Thanks to Denis Colbourn who sent this story in October 2013

Comments Welcome

The NAHC welcomes comment about the organisation and any of the articles that appear in the Nhill Anson Newsletter. A restructure of the mailing system and the archives will take place during the next few months as time permits and there are still more items of interest yet to be published. Write to John at admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au

Free Newsletter

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.

Membership of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Inc. is valid for a financial year commencing 1st July.

Your support for this community organisation is highly valued and assists the Management Committee to continue with the projects aimed at preserving the aviation heritage of Nhill and District.

Join now for only \$30.00.

Click on this link to use our secure Pay Pal account:

<http://nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au/members-1.htm>

OR BY Cheque payable to NAHC Inc. PO Box 42 Nhill Vic 3418.

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A message to our supporters

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