



## **NHILL ANSON NEWSLETTER**

**Issue No 27. 03-06-2014**

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### **Highlights in this newsletter**

- Grand Opening 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014
- Opening of the Nhill Aerodrome Renewal Project
- Open letter of thanks to the community

### **An Amazing Day – The official opening of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre**

**This message of congratulations from the Hindmarsh Shire CEO says it all.**

To: Members of the NAHC Board.

“Wow, what an incredible day! The opening of our cabins in Jeparit was a great start to the day, but nothing compared to the sight of all those people in our new Ahrens Hangar. There must have been close to 500 people going by how many seats were out and the number that must have been standing.

I know Andrew Broad (Federal Member for Mallee), Hon. Hugh Delahunty (State Member for Lowan) and Emma Kealy (National Party candidate for Lowan) were incredibly impressed by the community support and the achievements of the NAHC board of management.

I was really proud of the whole community yesterday and their generous recognition of how hard the NAHC board of management have worked to get us to yesterday's historic opening.

Thank you for your comments about Council's team. I greatly appreciate the feedback. To be quite frank, I was in awe of them yesterday! They continue to amaze me with their ability to work as a team and with good grace under pressure. The way they responded yesterday to the extra numbers was brilliant and how they got lunch served to approximately 500 people in such a short time without fuss was amazing. Likewise, I also felt great pride when Bob Ahrens spoke about how easy Hindmarsh Shire Council was to deal with compared to other Councils. It is truly a privilege to be CEO.

Whilst I am grateful for the recognition Council received yesterday, we have this incredible new asset only due to the extraordinary vision and commitment of the NAHC team. I will not forget Wimpy's explanation earlier in the week of how much work went into the fabrication of one piece of the engine that was smaller than a match box.....multiply that out across the whole plane and one understands how many hours of work have gone before us. One gentleman spoke to me yesterday who is part of a group restoring a plane (didn't catch where) and said they have been working on theirs for 20 years and are nowhere near as advanced.

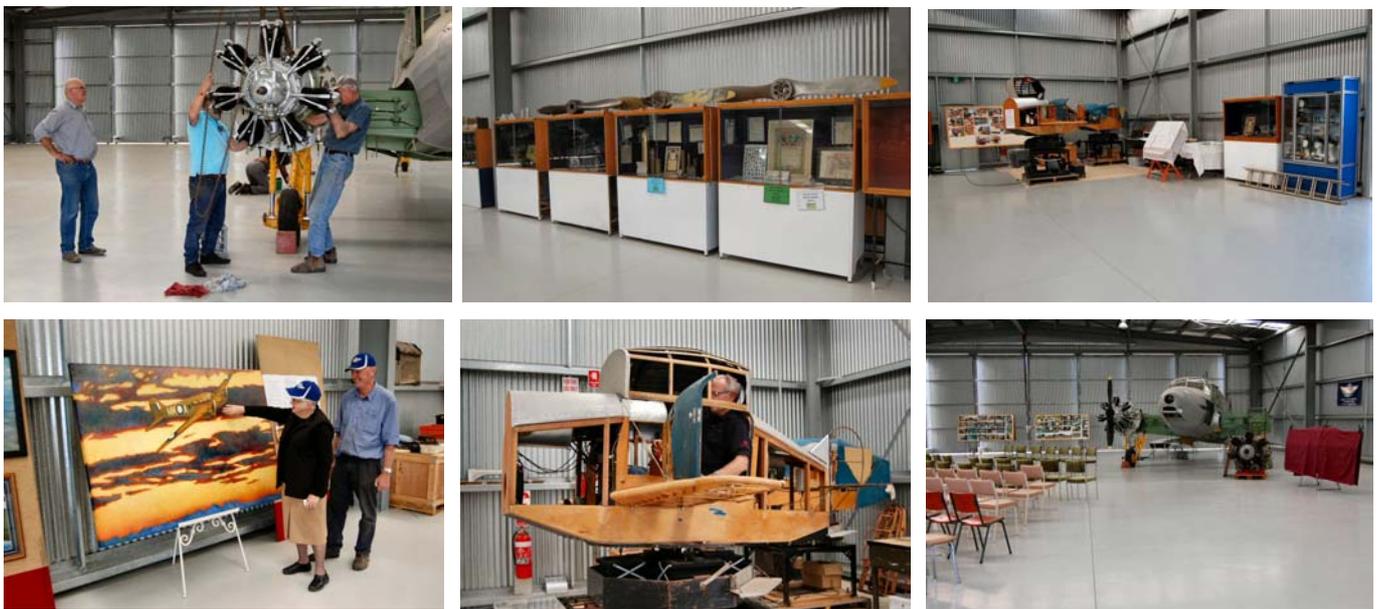
I spoke to people from all over Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales which shows the interest out there in Aviation and the pulling power this museum will have.

Small communities thrive when individuals and groups are as committed as the NAHC team and the result is this incredible new asset that will not only support our tourism industry, but also preserve a significant piece of the Shire's history for many generations.

Congratulations to all on the NAHC board of management for this mighty achievement.

Regards  
Tony Doyle  
Chief Executive Officer  
Hindmarsh Shire

## Hectic preparation prior to opening



## Opening Day. Friday, May, 23, 2014

It was a dismal dawn with 14mm of rain overnight which threatened to continue all day. However, as the day progressed the weather cleared and by 10 o'clock a few people started to turn up. We heard that six aircraft could not fly out from the Mallee due to wet airstrips and poor weather conditions en route so we scratched about 20 people from our attendance list. Two hundred and fifty people had accepted invitations, and we expected many more to attend this historic event. The new Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre hangar represents the largest investment on the Nhill Aerodrome since WWII. At the end of WWII four Bellman hangars were removed, leaving only one on site and that has been continuously occupied by the Wimmera, and later the Nhill Aero Club.

At 10.45 it was obvious that we had more than two hundred (200) people already in the hangar and still more arriving. By 11am, scheduled starting time, there were at least two hundred (200) more people queued up outside waiting to get past our sign-in register. It was definitely standing room only at this point as we had only provided seating for two hundred and forty people (240). Two local farmers with an eye for numbers independently estimated the crowd at 750. The day had already exceeded all expectations. We mightn't have provided enough seats, but we did have seven hundred and fifty (750) square metres of floor space for people to stand on.

Forty-nine (49) students and their teachers from the local Lutheran School had arrived quietly. This was the total Lutheran School population; this was most impressive.

A little later than planned, but the Official Party was at last ready to begin the formalities. Hindmarsh Shire CEO Tony Doyle introduced Mayor Rob Gersch who set the scene with some background information about the aerodrome and aviation history of Nhill. He also commented on the dedication of the NAHC Board and the involvement and support of the community.

Local State Member of Parliament for the Lowan Electorate the Hon. Hugh Delahunty officially opened the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre by unveiling a plaque. Hugh had given early support to the project and had followed its progress with interest. He congratulated the committee for taking up the initiative on behalf of the community and for achieving their goals. Hugh highlighted the tourism potential of the project in terms of gains for the community.

Mr. Bob Ahrens, senior member of the Ahrens Family spoke on their behalf. An unpretentious man, Bob is, amongst other things, a keen observer of humanity. After five years of nurturing the NAHC members and helping them to realize their dream, Bob knew us very well. Right from the start, he had shared our passion for the project, and had worked with us to complete the building. Bob enthralled the crowd with his recognition of people who had taken part in the journey, including the Nhill Lions who first sowed the seed for this project. Bob presented the NAHC President Rob Lynch with a \$50,000 cheque, keeping faith with his original commitment.

Bob's son Stefan, Managing Director of the family firm was offered the chance to speak and surprised everyone by presenting Rob Lynch with an additional \$20,000 in appreciation of the support the Ahrens factory in Nhill (formerly Sherwells) has received from the farming community through fifty years.

NAHC President Rob Lynch thanked all involved, especially Hugh Delahunty for the funding through Regional Development Victoria, and the Ahrens Family for their support of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre project. Rob announced that for this reason the NAHC had named the Hangar the AHRENS HANGAR. Ahrens had drawn the plans, and manufactured and erected the Hangar at cost. He requested Mayor Rob Gersch to unveil the AHRENS HANGAR sign.

By this time Shire staff had purchased another trailer load of food and all present had the opportunity to have a light lunch while they viewed the display, the new building and the surrounds.



*Two sections of the crowd at the opening of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre. Estimates placed the number at 750 people.*





1. Hugh Delahunty MP opening the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre. 2. Mayor Gersch introductory remarks. 3. Naming the building. 4. Ahrens family. 5. Bob Ahrens responding.

## New Bitumen on airstrip and apron

The Hindmarsh Shire recently received a State Government grant to re-surface the Nhill airstrip and taxiway leading to the both the Bellman Hangar and the Ahrens Hangar. This work was completed during the last few days before the opening of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre and officially opened on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, 2014 by Minister for the Aviation Industry, the Hon. Gordon Rich-Phillips.

Introductory remarks by Mayor Gersch included information about the aerodrome and the history of aviation in Nhill. He also mentioned that it was the first time in 70 years that some areas of bitumen had been re-surfaced.

The Honorable Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC explained how the Nhill Aerodrome Renewal Project was completed at a cost of \$214,000 funded by a partnership of State and Local Government. Andrew Kube responded on behalf of the Nhill Aerodrome Master Plan Committee and John Hensley responded on behalf of the Nhill Aero Club.





*Nhill Aerodrome Renewal Project*

## **A Letter of Thanks**

To the Editor – Dear Sir/Madam

For political reasons a Friday was chosen for the opening of the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Hangar at Nhill Aerodrome; a working day in the midst of the cropping season. We wondered how this might affect attendance numbers.

A week later we are still marvelling at the number of people (possibly seven hundred and fifty?) who came from SA, NSW, QLD and across Victoria to share the occasion with us, especially the Wimmera people who came in astonishing numbers. We sincerely thank every one of you.

Since 2008 when the late Don Kube with Rob Lynch and Mick Kingwill inspired the Nhill and District community to form the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Association, we have worked closely with the community through consultation and forward planning.

Our involvement with the Hindmarsh Shire Council on this project has been a positively good experience, a demonstration of Local Government at its best. Regional Development Victoria provided the major funding, the Shire contributed funds, and the Ahrens Family enabled the project to get off the ground with an upfront cash donation and an offer to build the Hangar at cost.

People have been extraordinarily generous to us: sharing their stories, giving parts and pieces of WWII Avro Ansons and other memorabilia, passing on knowledge and generally helping in all aspects of our responsibilities. Thank you.

On behalf of President Rob Lynch and my fellow Board of Management members I thank those who attended the NAHC Ahrens Hangar Official Opening. You made this a day to remember.

Sincerely

Joan Bennett, Secretary NAHC

## **Parts Request**

The NAHC is searching for the following:

A Stromberg NA-S2 updraft carburettor to suit a Continental A-40-5 engine. This engine was most commonly used on early Piper J3 Cubs.

(The later model Stromberg NA-S3 A1 should also suit (and is more common) but is not the original part.) I would be happy to consider either model carburettor.

Please reply to [admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au](mailto:admin@nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au) or phone Brian on 0429 898 768.

## 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](mailto: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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Is this the first newsletter you have received?**

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.

## **A message to our supporters**

Do you have a friend who would appreciate receiving this free newsletter? Just copy the newsletter PDF link in your email and send it to as many people as desired. This newsletter is free. However, support for this important historical project is greatly appreciated.