



NHILL ANSON NEWSLETTER

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Highlights in this newsletter

- Air Show Launch
- Projects for 2015
- Visitors to Nhill
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- Anson Restoration

Nhill Air Show

The Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Board was excited to welcome more than 100 people to the Nhill Aerodrome for the launch of the 75th Anniversary Air Show to be held on Saturday 10 October 2015. The air show will celebrate an event that impacted upon the people of Nhill more than any other event the town has known. In late 1940 work started on an RAAF training base at the Nhill Aerodrome. It operated for five years and the impact of more than 10,000 men and women who passed through Nhill during those five years had a lasting effect on the town and its people.

The Air Show was officially launched by Andrew Broad Federal MP for Mallee who was supported by his colleague Gordon Rich-Phillips State MP responsible for aviation. Mr Broad said that the air show was a wonderful way for the Nhill Community to join with the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre in promoting the history of aviation in Nhill.

NAHC Board member Merv Schneider was guest speaker. He reminisced about his school days as a prefect at Nhill College when he jumped the school-yard fence and ran to the aerodrome to see the first aircraft flying into the new Nhill RAAF Base. It was a chance of a lifetime and an action that Merv would have done again if the opportunity arose, despite the possible ramifications from the principal. Merv is still excited by the appearance of antique and military aircraft at the Nhill Aerodrome. 89 years old following the official proceedings the pilots of the Winjeel and CT4 fired up their engines and performed aerobatics and fly-passes for the enjoyment of the watching crowd.

Members of the NAHC Air Show sub-committee are busy organising a detailed flying program for the event and are also planning activities for families and aviation enthusiasts. Joy flights and a 'public aircraft viewing' time are being arranged. Andrew Kube, convenor of the Nhill Air Show says that, "the

excitement is building. At every planning meeting our small group of organisers become more enthusiastic about creating the best air show ever. Everyone is encouraged to come to the aerodrome on Saturday 10 October 2015 for the 75th Anniversary Nhill Air Show.

For further information refer to the Nhill Air Show face book page or contact nhillairshow@gmail.com or Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre Secretary



The CT4 is in the foreground and the Winjeel behind. Andrew Broad officially launches the Air Show countdown in the Ahrens Hangar. The NAHC thanks Lynton Brown for the use of these two excellent photographs.

NHILL AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE ASSOCIATION INC.

2015 PROJECTS INCLUDE:

Avro Anson project – The restoration of Avro Anson W2364 continues. Remarkable progress has been made but much remains to be done. One Cheetah 9 engine is now in going order, while the second is nearing completion. This work is for skilled craftsmen. The Avro Anson will eventually be restored to taxiing status.

Living History project – Personal accounts of local people involved in the Second World War and the RAAF in particular also members of the Nhill community are recorded on video recalling the time when the Air School at Nhill was operating. The videos are for sale.

Ahrens Hangar – With the generous support of the Ahrens family of Sheoak Log in South Australia, the Hindmarsh Shire Council and the Nhill community the Ahrens Hangar was opened in May 2014. It now houses the Avro Anson under restoration and other memorabilia. It is open each weekend and on public holidays from 10 am until 4 pm. The Ahrens Hangar is the main showpiece of our Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre.

Link Trainers – A small group of enthusiasts is restoring two WWII Link Trainers in the Ahrens Hangar. One of the Link Trainers is now in limited operation.

Flight Office – Federal government funding and voluntary assistance from the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre members and friends, has gone a long way towards restoring this WWII building. It is part of our NAHCentre, and is awaiting further development.

Heritage Walk – The 1400 metre walk gives visitors a glimpse of the scale of the former WWII Air School. The signed Heritage Walk indicates remnants of the actual buildings. NAHC members have constructed the Heritage Walk with the assistance of a Hindmarsh Shire community grant.

Aeradio Station– NAHC members intend to restore this facility for public exhibition because of its importance as an Aviation Radio Communication and Guidance system in use between 1938 and the mid-1960s. This Civil Aviation building predates WWII. After its closure the building became the Nhill Apex Club clubrooms for 25 years. The building is reputed to be one of the last remaining intact Aeradio buildings in the country with traces of the towers and power house still visible. The building that housed the Lorenz beacon transmitter is still intact.

Contact President Rob Lynch for more information or offer of help with any of the above projects.

Little Desert Rodders Rockers and Collectors Inc

On a very pleasant evening in mid-January the NAHC was pleased to be visited by the Little Desert Rodders Rockers and Collectors Club. About 50 people attended the evening presided over by Chairman Peter Hutchinson who conducted the general meeting of the club in an orderly and efficient fashion. Following the meeting club members were addressed by NAHC President, Rob Lynch who welcomed the club members and gave a brief history of the Nhill RAAF Base. Neil Thomas, convenor of the Link Trainer restoration group, gave a brief overview of his career in the aviation industry and of his interest in the Link Trainer restoration. Neil then showed how the Link Trainer “flew” and how the process of flight training operated.



Club members were an interested group who asked many questions and showed enthusiasm for a continuing association with the NAHC.

Vivid Memories of Nhill

Mrs Virginia Eason of Natimuk visited the Ahrens Hangar recently with her daughter and son-in-law, Sally and Howard Bertram of Horsham.

Mrs Eason was born in 1924 and lived in Horsham with her parents Bob and Nellie Charles, licensees of the Locarno Hotel from 1924 to 1950. In 1933 when Charles Kingsford Smith visited Horsham, barnstorming across Australia, he stayed in the Locarno Hotel and the Charles family was offered a flight in the Southern Cross.



Virginia was about twelve years old at the time and was reluctant to go but her father said “It will never be said I raised a squib”, so Virginia now vividly remembers flying with the legendary Charles Kingsford Smith in the Southern Cross.



Whilst working in the State Bank at Horsham Virginia and other bank employees were asked to sell War Bonds at Nhill. They spent most of the day working under the wing of the Lancaster bomber known as G for George which was at the Nhill Aerodrome on 13th March 1945.

Her brother, Bob Charles (Junior), spent time at the Nhill RAAF Base before being sent to Tamworth to help train pilots.

Thanks to Sally Bertram for this information. Sally is pictured with her mother Virginia Eason, Mick Kingwill and Howard Bertram. Joan Bennett photo and story.



The History of Bellman Hangars in Australia

The Nhill Bellman hangar is one of five built in 1941. At the end of the war the Air Ministry moved three of the hangars. A deputation of local people met with the Air Ministry in 1946 resulting in the present hangar being retained for the use of the Nhill Aero Club. The other remaining hangar containing three Avro Anson aircraft was destroyed by fire in 1948.

History

The Bellman hangar was designed in 1936 by N S Bellman and was 175 ft long, 95 ft wide (87 ft 9in clear width) and 25 ft (clear height). It was constructed in 14 bays at 12 ft 6in centres based on a unit system of rolled steel sections; both walls and roof used the same standard units joined at the junction of wall and roof by a standard corner unit.

The time taken for 12 men to erect the hangar, including levelling the ground, laying door tracks, erecting the steelwork, and fitting doors, was 500 man-hours (slightly more than a 40 hour week). Two light jib derricks using timber poles were required to erect the fabricated vertical and side members. The roof trusses were assembled on the ground before being lifted into position.

During the period 1938-40 some 400 Bellman hangars were built in the UK, some 230 others were manufactured in Australia (95 still exist) and probably more were produced under licence in other Commonwealth countries. Bellmans proved to be invaluable in the early part of the war and met an increasing demand not only to supplement permanent hangars, but also to provide the total hangar requirements for many temporary Armament Training, Elementary Flying Training, and Air Navigation Schools.



Five Bellman Hangars on the Nhill RAAF Base during WWII.



Nhill's one surviving Bellman hangar is in good condition as is the service building now occupied by the Nhill Aero Club.

Bellman Hangars in Australia. *(Information adapted from Wikipedia)*

Bellmans were also produced in Australia from 1939–1945. They were designed as easily transportable, temporary hangars which could be erected using unskilled labour. They were used on war-time airfields constructed across Australia, particularly training airfields.

Post war many were removed from the temporary wartime airfields as they closed or downsized for civilian use, and were relocated to expand or consolidate the permanent RAAF bases, or establish new civilian airfields.

In Victoria and South Australia the following examples survive:

- Four imported UK Bellmans at Point Cook are the only UK examples surviving in Australia. A further ten Australian built examples exist on the Northern Tarmac at Point Cook housing the RAAF Museum. These Bellmans at Point Cook are on the National Heritage List.
- Seven exist at Laverton. Thirteen exist at Moorabbin Airport, having been moved from elsewhere when the civilian airfield was created post war.
- Twelve exist at RAAF Base East Sale now the Central Flying School.

- Five exist at Ballarat Airport, the former No. 1 Wireless Air Gunnery School.
- Three were at Fishermen's Bend (Victoria) at the site of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation factory. (These have since been relocated to Tyabb Airport.)
- Two Bellmans exist at Essendon Airport, possibly relating to either DAP aircraft manufacturing or the EFTS operating on the site during WW2.
- One Bellman exists at Mildura Airport, the former No.2 Operational Training Unit
- One exists at Benalla Airport, the former 11 Elementary Flying Training School.
- One exists at Nhill Aerodrome, the former No.2 Air Navigator School.
- One exists at West Sale Airport.
- About six were at Tottenham the former RAAF stores - but may have been removed by now.
- Three at Parafield Airport, Adelaide, the former No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School 1940-1944. Two have been re-clad, but one which houses the Classic Jets Fighter Museum is in original condition
- One at Mount Gambier Aerodrome, the former No. 2 Air Observers School 1941-1946. It has been re-clad.
- One at Port Pirie Airport, the former No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School 1941-1943. It is in original condition

Others existing in other parts of Australia include:

- One remains at former RAAF Station Evans Head in Northern NSW. During World War 2 there were 17 Bellman Hangars at Evans Head, the largest wartime air training facility in the Southern Hemisphere, home to the RAAF No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School and RAAF No. 1 Air Observers School (No. 1 BAGS and No. 1 AOS). In 109 separate RAAF Courses at Evans Head during WW2 5,500 personnel trained there. From this 1,100 lost their lives mainly in England serving for Bomber Command in sorties over France and Germany. This represented a 23% attrition rate compared to the Australian national average during the conflict of 7%. Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome has been listed on the New South Wales Heritage Register which includes the last remaining Bellman Hangar #156. This hangar has been rebuilt to house a former Royal Australian Air Force F-111 fighter jet (A8-146) and an RAAF WW2 Tiger Moth trainer (A17-284.
- RAAF Base Wagga (Forest Hill) central NSW, has some 14 surviving Bellman Hangars.
- One survives at Maryborough Airport, Queensland.
- Two at RAAF Base Townsville Qld, re-clad
- One at RAAF Base Fairbairn, Canberra Airport ACT
- Three at Macrossan Stores Depot near Charters Towers (Queensland)
- One at Jezzine Barracks, Townsville Qld
- Two in the General Aviation area at Cairns Airport Qld, one which houses the North Queensland Aero Club in near-original condition, another housing Skytrans, more altered
- Four at HMAS Albatross (air station) NSW believed erected when used by the RAAF in 1944
- One at the Army Aviation Centre, Oakey (Queensland)
- One owned by the Darling Downs Aero Club at Toowoomba (Queensland)
- One owned by Chrisair Maintenance in Mackay Queensland
- One occupied on Temora Airport, NSW, by the Temora Aero Club
- One was dismantled and transported from Parkes, NSW and set up at Vung Tau Air Base by No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron (5ACS) during the Vietnam War and may still exist.

Avro Anson Restoration

Project officer Mick Kingwill has been working tirelessly finishing off numerous small jobs most of us would overlook. It has taken much searching to find a second engine mounting frame for the Nhill Avro Anson. As with many other parts, rust and fatigue over time has made many of the bits and pieces we have available to us completely useless for mounting a fully operational engine. Mick was pleased to find a good frame for purchase and after sand-blasting and painting it was found to be as good as new.

The bomb doors, mounting frames, chains, wires and operational linkages are now in place and looking good. During the last few days Mick has been reconditioning and fitting the parts for the firewall behind the engine. Hopefully the next newsletter will contain more information on the installation of the second fully reconditioned engine.



Newsbriefs

Hudson aircraft. It has long been known that Hudson Bombers operated from the Nhill RAAF Base but accurate information did not seem to be available. However, The NAHC was pleased to recently receive advice from Bill Holswich whose father, Group Captain Lyle C Holswich, spent almost three months starting in January 1942, converting to Hudson aircraft at Nhill RAAF base.

In official papers from the Chief of Air Staff it was claimed that "No adequate facilities exist in Australia to give operational training to pilots and air-crew for the Home Defence squadrons or advanced training to staff pilots for Empire Air Training schools." Dated 28-10-41. It was approved by the minister in a minute dated 4-11-41 that "I approve for buildings and services, armament ranges, etc, at No 2 A.N.S., Nhill, at an estimated cost of £4,263, for the purposes of a temporary O.T.U."

It has been shown from the pilot's log book of Group Captain Holswich that there were at least 18 different Hudson aircraft flown by him during his conversion course at Nhill. The NAHC thanks Bill Holswich for that information.

Link Trainer. Information has also been received from Robin Shaw whose father spent time training at Nhill. While reading through the section relating to Nhill, Mick Kingwill noticed a log book entry for time in a Link Trainer. We had always assumed that there was a Link Trainer at Nhill but we now can accurately say that Link Trainer No A13-15 was at Nhill on June 9 1943. The NAHC would love to know where it is now. Thanks to Robin Shaw for that information.

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.

<http://nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au/members1.html>

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.**

Members also have free entry to the Heritage Centre.

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/members1.html>

OR PAY BY CHEQUE

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

Is this the first newsletter you have received?

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A message to our supporters

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