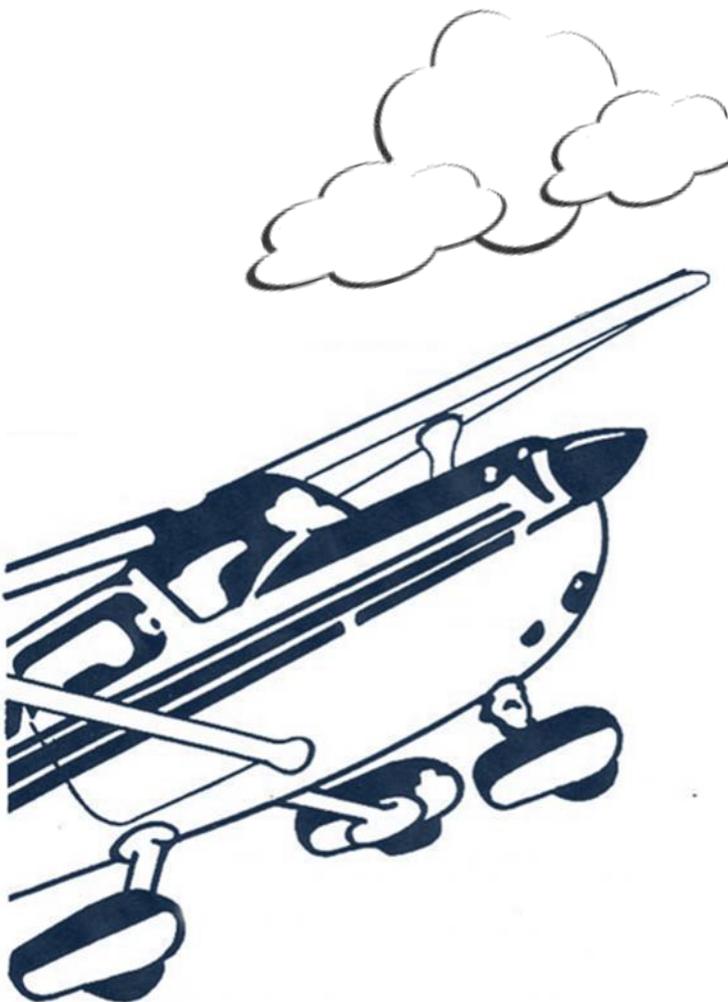


# *Fly About*

**NORTHAM AERO CLUB (INC.) NEWSLETTER**

**Vol. 57 Issue No.1**



## **In This Issue:**

- A Message from the President
- Club Captains Report
- Those Magnificent Men in their flying Machines (Part 1)
- Next Club Comp
- Classifieds
- Club Contact List

# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

## *WELCOME TO FEBRUARY FLY ABOUT*

Welcome all to 2026.

I trust everyone enjoyed their Christmas and New Year celebrations.

We held our first Club Flying Competition for 2026 with another cross competition. Thanks Dave.

Anyone can fly in the competition and if you are not current with your licence if you let us know we will organise an instructor to fly with you. Just let us know by email or Facebook.

Bernie has also advised that CASA would like to do a safety presentation day at the Northam Aero Club. We have set aside a selection of dates for you all to consider: Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026 or Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026. We will finalise with CASA as soon as we are advised by Members which date you would all prefer. The day will also include a barbeque dinner.

I would like to congratulate our youngest student pilot in Lukas Walker and, once again, advise any young pilot that the Northam Aero Club has a scholarship fund set aside that can be applied for to assist in their training. I have been informed that Ray Callen is very close to return to instructing which is great to hear.

It was also with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Beth Smith. For those who attend the Sunday competitions, Beth was a regular attendee. Our condolences go out to Preston, Ashley and the Smith family.

Until next month, enjoy your flying,

**Errol**

# CLUB CAPTAINS REPORT

## *CAPTAIN'S REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2026*

After the Club's normal holiday over January we had the first competition for the year.

Due to the extreme heat forecast we planned a very short NAVEX of 9 minutes, consisting of using runway 14 and departing off downwind to Irishtown. A turn was made to Northam Army base strip with a timed rate 1 turn and recording altitude entered and completed, relying on our pilot's self recording! Then return to Northam with a midfield cross wind entry, and landing with a simulated brake failure. These legs were so short iPads were not required

We had 4 pilots participate and the forecast heat did not eventuate. All were surprised by the lack of turbulence.

Thanks Marg, Ash and Kate for spoiling us with morning tea!!

Two competitions in a row the participants were lucky the Captain is grounded due to a bung shoulder!

→	1 <sup>st</sup> place	Ashley Smith	80 points
→	2 <sup>nd</sup> place	Bob Emery	78 points
→	3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Sir Errol Croft	77 points

Once again everyone nailed the radio calls. So it boiled down to closest to two minutes for the rate 1 orbit and least height gained or lost.

**Dave**

Someone's idea of art on the Oodnadatta



**Next Competition is Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

## ***THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES***

Author: Marie-Claude Beugge (Claude Meunier's sister)

Extracts provided by Robyn Stewart

### **In Australia**

In Australia, there was so much to do that all activities, whether leisure-related (aviation, sea fishing, sailing, water skiing, etc.) had to take a back seat, or anything that didn't contribute to improving the farm were put on hold for awhile. But one day, while Claude was ploughing in the Finistere region, at the north West corner of "Aurora Park Farm", quite close to the Mullewa municipal airfield, he saw a plane circling. He concluded that someone must be learning to fly. Unable to resist, he unhitched his ploughs and, with his large tractor, headed down the road towards the airfield. A woman was getting out of the plane with an instructor. It was Wendy Mann, the wife of an agricultural equipment dealer in Mullewa, of whom we were customers. "Wendy, what are you doing here?" " I'm learning to fly. A customer gave us this plane in exchange for a tractor". The instructor introduced himself: "Why don't you learn to fly too?"

Claude; "I not only have a pilots licence but also a French Instructors licence."

Instructor; "Why not get an Australian licence?" It was then agreed that the following Tuesday, Claude would bring his Log Book and Licences. As it turned out, he would only need to pass the mandatory medical examination and a test on local legislation, as well as a navigation exercise, to obtain an Australian licence. This was easily done. Claude wasted no time in getting an Australian licence.... But he had no aeroplane.

### **The Jodel**

In 1979, Western Australia celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of its capital, Perth, by the United Kingdom. To promote the festivities, the government produced a brochure listing all the years activities. Claude discovered an advertisement for an airshow at the Private Serpentine airfield, 40 kms south of Perth. This airshow was organised by a group of amateur aircraft builders. Claude rushed down there and was surprised to find more than a dozen Jodel Aircraft, similar to those he used to teach Flying in when in Tahiti and Raiatea.

When he asked where to get them, he was told he would have to build one himself. After some explanation, he understood that the plans by the French designer Jean Delemontez, with his father-in-law Edouard Joly (hence the name Jo-Del), had been translated into English and approved by the Australian Civil Aviation Authority for construction by amateurs. There were several models, of which Claude chose one he knew well, the DR1050, known in Australia as the four-seater Sky King. Back home, he ordered the set of plans and when they arrived he decided he was going to build his own plane. First, a heated argument with Robert, Claude's father. Robert had worked on high-performance fighter jets and couldn't fathom how anyone could still build planes out of wood and fabric.

Claude persevered and finally obtained, if not a 'permission' to build it, at least an 'approval'. He ordered spruce wood from British Columbia, Canada; Birch plywood from Finland; an American Lycoming engine; and a host of parts from all over. Construction began in 1980. Claude started with the Rudder, which had to be submitted to the Civil Aviation engineers to verify that the builder was capable of constructing an entire aircraft. This was done. Claude worked on it in his spare time, which was limited given the amount of work to be done on the farm. Little by Little, Robert became interested in the construction and soon took over everything involving wood. He was an expert in woodworking, but, although very skilled at working with metal as well, he didn't want to hear anything about metal parts, fuel lines, electrical and radio wiring, and so on. These parts remained Claudes domain. Little by little, the plane took shape, but one day, when the Kardoulu farm was sold, it was necessary to move all the equipment Claude was keeping for his new farm in Grass Valley, including the already built parts of the plane.

On an Australian farm, there are two main activities, and the workers share them: working with the sheep and farming. In our case, myself, Marie-Claude, and Robert often with Claude's help, took care of the sheep, while Claude, in the main, handled all the machinery. Claude and myself, Marie-Claude, also had to focus on the crops. Of course, everyone helped the other group as often as needed. But they were clearly defined specialities. One of our neighbours said: Some get their hands dirty with sheep droppings, and others with grease. When Claude moved to his new farm, Darlington, in Grass Valley, and

having little affinity for sheep, he decided not to keep any at all. There was always grain left for animals to graze on in the fields after the harvest. Without sheep, this grain left behind by the reapers would be wasted, but there was always some neighbour short of feed for their sheep who paid to graze them on other people's stubble. This was highly valued and well paid per head per week. Claude had no such problem. He therefore decided to get rid of all the internal barriers and partitions in his Shearing Shed to transform it into a large workshop where he could assemble the entire aircraft. The first task was to mount the wing ribs onto the long spa and cover the wing.

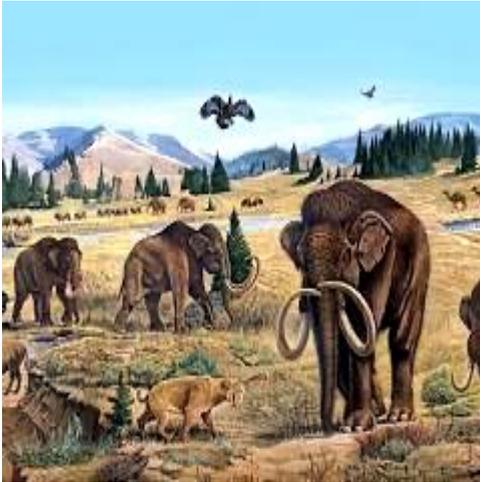
I, Maree-Claude, and Claude were put to work sewing the fabric strips together with double stitching. I did this on my old two thread sewing machine from the St-Etienne factory. The fabric is glued to the ribs and must be stretched. In the old days, when 'aircraft fabric' was made of linen, the tension was achieved using a special primer. Now days, polyester fabric is stretched with heat. An iron is used at increasing temperatures until the correct tension is obtained, that is, so that a coin bounces as if on a drumhead.

At this point, with a very long needle, longer than the thickness of the wing, a very strong thread is wound around the rib. Then a ribbon covers the knots. Next, three coats of aluminium paint must be applied to block the ultraviolet rays that would destroy the fabric, followed by a thin coat of colour. Afterwards, Claude will have a car decorator apply Brown, Orange, and Yellow ribbons, his favourite colours. He will do the same when, later, he has his future Aerostar repainted, but that's another story.

Finally, on February 5, 1985, everything was finished, and after a final official inspection, Claude was authorised to make the first test flight in the presence of the Civil Aviation engineer. The flight was completely uneventful, and therefore very successful, followed by the opening of a bottle of Champagne. The construction had taken five years. Then, there was a so-called 'Flight Test' in Mangalore, Victoria, 120 km north of Melbourne, with Catherine, a friend from Berry, as 'observer'. The Aircraft was admired by the other builders. On the return trip, they passed through Halls Creek in the far north of Western Australia, to see the famous Wolfe Creek meteorite

## THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES (CONT'D)

crater, 100 km south. The site is astonishing: a crater 875m in diameter and 60m deep, believed to have been formed by a meteorite of 50,000 tons, taking place more than 300,000 years ago, during the Pleistocene.



The Late Pleistocene Epoch, also called the Tarantian Age, spans roughly 129,000 to 11,700 years ago, marking the latter part of the last Ice Age, characterized by major glacial cycles and the flourishing and extinction of megafauna, like woolly mammoths and sabre-toothed cats. It saw the spread of modern humans across continents and significant climate shifts from glacial cold to warmer interglacial periods, ending with the Younger Dryas and the dawn of the Holocene.

### **Northam Flying Club**

The local Flying club quickly discovered that Claude was a pilot and that he was building his own plane. He was therefore recruited by the president, Susan Ward. He quickly rose through the ranks and became a committee member, then president. In fact, at this time, he was the longest serving president, completing more than 11 years. He then received the title of Honorary Life Member. He also created the Club's website. Claude was also recruited by the Gliding Club that existed at the airfield. Very quickly, he was the only one with the required qualifications to tow gliders from either a Cessna 180 or a Piper Super Cub. This towing amused him for awhile but later became a chore that occupied all his Sundays.

**To be continued...**

# BAR

The Bar will be open every Saturday evening from 17:00 — 19:00

## LEARN TO FLY

Recreational Aviation Capital of the West



Ph Errol 0428 880 149 or Kevin 0434 000 217  
[www.NorthamAeroClub.org.au](http://www.NorthamAeroClub.org.au)

## NEXT CLUB COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026 @ 13:00

### Wanted - Aviation Memorabilia

- Books
- Artefacts
- Photographs
- Old Aircraft Parts
- Signs

If it's old and historic—I'm interested

Adam Price—0428 611 797

### NAC Club Aircraft Bookings



Enquiries— Matt Bignell

0407 873 700

# CLASSIFIEDS

## Northam Aero Club Merchandise

*Club Polo Shirts with name and club logo—\$35.00*

*Club Caps with logo—\$25.00*

*available at the bar or Postage—\$10.00 per order*

*Stubbie Holders—\$7.00*

*available at the bar or*

*Postage —\$8.00*



**Western  
Airmotive  
Pty Ltd**

30 Eagle Drive Jandakot  
Western Australia 6164  
Ph: +61 8 9332 7655  
E: [airspares@westernair.com.au](mailto:airspares@westernair.com.au)  
[www.pilotshopwa.com.au](http://www.pilotshopwa.com.au)

**FOR ALL OF YOUR FABRIC COVERING NEEDS**

**POLY  
FIBER**  
Aircraft Coatings

**Randolph**  
Aircraft Products

**CECONITE**



**"For all your aircraft parts  
and pilots' supplies"**

# NAC CLUB CONTACT LIST



## **PRESIDENT**

Errol Croft

E: [dowref@bigpond.net.au](mailto:dowref@bigpond.net.au)

T: 0428 880 149

## **AIRCRAFT BOOKINGS OFFICER**

Matt Bignell

E: [big.matty@hotmail.com](mailto:big.matty@hotmail.com)

T: 0407 873 700

## **SECRETARY**

Susan Clements

E: [in-fo@northamaeroclub.com](mailto:in-fo@northamaeroclub.com)

T: 0488 441 274

## **TREASURER**

Paul Blain

E: [nactreasurer@bigpond.com](mailto:nactreasurer@bigpond.com)

T: 0427 909 412

## **CLUB CAPTAIN**

Vacant

## **MEMBERSHIP OFFICER**

Heather Deegan

E: [heatther1957@gmail.com](mailto:heatther1957@gmail.com)

T: 0428 738 808

## **AIRCRAFT**

Dave Beech

E: [daveb3314@gmail.com](mailto:daveb3314@gmail.com)

T: 0438 016 903

## **HOUSE & GROUNDS**

Trevor Sangston

E: [trevorsangston@inet.net.au](mailto:trevorsangston@inet.net.au)

T: 0417 183 160

## **FLIGHT TRAINING**

Kevin Lathbury

E: [Kevinlathbury@gmail.com](mailto:Kevinlathbury@gmail.com)

T: 0434 000 217

## **FLIGHT TRAINING**

Ray Challen

E: [ray@challen.com.au](mailto:ray@challen.com.au)

T: 0408 321 262

## **EDITOR FLY ABOUT**

Paul Blain

E: [paul.blain@bigpond.com](mailto:paul.blain@bigpond.com)

T: 0427 909 412

# NAC Cessna 172 — VH-PGL

## Hire Fee Structure (effective from 1st March)

- Private Hire - \$280 per hour
- Dual Training - \$450 per hour
- TIF's - \$225 per 1/2 hour
- Briefing - as required
- Instructor (in owner's aircraft) - \$180 per hour

## Pre-paid Discounted Block Rates Available

- 5 hours less 5%
- 10 hours less 10%

*Student pilots may use the discounted block rate for aircraft hire costs only. Instructor fees remain as fixed price.*

For all further enquiries please contact:

NAC Treasurer - [nactreasurer@bigpond.com](mailto:nactreasurer@bigpond.com) T: 0427 909 412

Aircraft Bookings: **Matt Bignell** - 0407 873 700

## NEXT CLUB COMPETITION

**9:00 am Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

Club Captain for the day will provide the briefing

