

Fly About

NORTHAM AERO CLUB (INC.) NEWSLETTER

Vol. 57 Issue No.2



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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

WELCOME TO MARCH FLY ABOUT

Sorry for being late with this month's Fly About report but as you know the Northam Aero Club is run by very dedicated volunteers and some months are busier than others. This month has been a very busy one.

The CASA forum put together by Bernie Hush on the 8th March was very well attended by many members and was hugely informative. A huge thanks to Bernie who, I believe is once again travelling overseas, is this for recuperation Bernie? Thanks also to David from CASA who presented the forum. The lunch was prepared and supplied by all of our Committee members and we thank you all .

The monthly flying competition was held on the same day before CASA presentation and we enjoyed a good lunch before our Committee Meeting took over. It was great to catch up with members and aviation enthusiasts during the day and thank you to all who attended.

Time flies and we have arrived at that time of year when we call for Committee Nominations. Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 13th June 2026 at 7pm and we require nominations in before 5.00pm on Friday 15th May 2026 where they will be displayed on Notice Board at the Club Rooms in Withers Street. We will have Nomination Forms available in Fly About magazine and also at Club House.

Please consider being part of this prestigious club.

Enjoy your flying,

Errol

CLUB CAPTAINS REPORT

CAPTAIN'S REPORT FOR MARCH 2026

Due to the CASA Safety briefing starting at 11am, once again the Navex planned was too long to fit the time available!

So, the plan was now again circuits!

First circuit a Powered approach, touch down on the second runway stripe.

Second circuit a Flapless approach, touch down on the second runway stripe

Third circuit a Glide approach from abeam the second runway stripe, touch down on the second runway stripe.

The scoring was compliments of the Esperance Aero Club, in meters plus or minus from the centre on the second runway stripe.

→	1 st place	Bernie Hush	+15 points
→	2 nd place	Ashley Smith	-31 points
→	3 rd place	Sir Errol Croft	-124 points

Thanks to all who ran the kitchen for morning coffee scones muffins cake etc then also putting on the lunch after the CASA briefing.

Dave



Next Competition is Sunday the 12th April 2026 @ 09:00

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NAC - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given to the Members
Annual General Meeting @ NORTHAM AERO CLUB

SATURDAY 08TH JUNE 2026 @ 7.00PM

At the NAC Club Rooms

AGENDA ITEMS

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

The names of the candidates proposed as Officers of the Club with the names of their proposers and seconders shall be in the hands of the Secretary 21 days before the date of the Annual Meeting (15th May 2026). The names shall be posted in the Club for 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.

**NOMINATION FORMS ARE ON PAGE 16
OF THIS MAGAZINE.**

Please bring a small plate of food for all to share
at the conclusion of the meeting.

THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES - PART 2

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

Extracts provided by Robyn Stewart

NORTHAM AIR SERVICES

There was an Aircraft maintenance business at the Northern municipal airfield. After several owners, the last one was one day on the verge of bankruptcy, the owner having no idea how to deal with the country folk,....a breed apart! If it had gone bankrupt and the business had disappeared, both the Club and the local Aircraft owners, (including Claude) would have lost the opportunity to have their maintenance done locally. Claude and some friends decided to buy the business, renaming it, NORTHAM AIR SERVICES — NAS then came into being. It took them almost 2 years for the clientele to return. It then became a thriving business with three licensed mechanics several apprentices and three women in the office handling the accounting and, above all, the administrative paperwork that goes with everything related to Aviation. The unique feature of this company is the 'North run' or 'Northern Tour', when a pilot and an engineer (often the same person, as engineers almost always become pilots) travelling from station to station, servicing ranchers' aircraft on-site, saving them the trip to Northam. Claude bought a Cessna 182 for this work. Everything is organised: flight plans were displayed on a large wall map, each with a pin for each client and pearl cotton thread connecting them. The 'North Run takes a week to service six or seven aircraft. This vast territory, a NAS preserve, is larger than France! The Cessna 182 is also used by Claude's regular co-pilots, accompanying him when he attempts helicopter records, both as a possible support and as controllers accredited by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), which certifies the records.

Bigger. Faster

Claude had a lot of fun with the Jodel. I forgot to mention that he built a runway on his farm, just across the garden, over 1000 m long, so more than enough, and that he and Robert had built a hanger to house the Jodel. When Claude came back at night, Robert and I (Marie-Claude) had the LIGHTS to

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

mark the runway. Claude participated in many rallies. With his copilot, Michael Cahill, they made an unbeatable team and won all the time. Back when Qantas was the main sponsor, they won a free trip to New Zealand and another to Singapore. The Jodel only flew at 180 km an hour and Claude dreamed of more speed. He bought a Beechcraft Bonanza with a gull-tail, that is to say, a 'V' tail. It had a cruising speed of 300 km an hour. Claude added wing tip fuel tanks and made several flights to New Zealand. He flew to Lord Howe and Norfolk Island's too. He even went to Numea several times, where he had many amateur radio friends. But the lure of speed was still there, and he wanted to go even faster and further. He sold the bonanza and bought a twin engine piper Aerostar. This aircraft was and still is the fastest twin engine piston plane ever built. To be made to go any faster, the Aerostar would become heavier with the need for a turbo prop or a jet! The Aerostar normally cruises at over 450 km an hour. With this fast Aircraft, Claude couldn't resist setting numerous speed records over and beyond Australia. Some, according to him, will never be beaten, like the one between Hawaii and California at an average speed of 360 km an hour, while saving fuel, or even better, another at 515 km an hour. Claude made the crossing to New Zealand many times while his Belgium friends, Jacqueline and Pol, were there. He was also invited on a Flying Safari in Cambodia as far as the famous Angkor Wat. Robyn Stewart was lucky enough to join him on this trip.

Claude's next challenge was to land at the old Kai Tak Airport in Hong Kong, before the airport was closed, and before Hong Kong was handed over to China. Claude asked Denis Beresford to accompany him on this flight. Kai Tak, the old Hong Kong Airport, was one of the most difficult in the world. It faces the mountain. You have to approach it, and at a certain distance, it is necessary to make a sharp turn, otherwise, you'd hit the mountain. The result, Claude, with Denis, landed!

There were so many delays in Manila and the Philippines, in finding fuel for the Aerostar, that the flight had to be made at night, zigzagging through thunderstorms. Claude hoped to obtain a permit to continue to Beijing, but it was impossible. It must be said that communist countries, such as Russia and China, do not accept private planes. What are they afraid of? It is the most advanced countries such as the USA, Canada, and Australia, that most readily allow flights by foreign pilots.

The Round-The-World Trip

One of the reasons for this flight to Hong Kong was it was the kind of dress rehearsal for a more ambitious project: an around the world trip. During this flight, Claude noted all the factors effecting long flights: fuel on board, consumption, altitude, engine settings, etc. Upon his return, he offered his usual copilot Denis Beresford, the opportunity to accompany him around the world, at no cost to him. However, Denis declined the invitation. So it was that Claude circumnavigated the globe solo. We were all there for the departure on June 15, 1996, in Northam: Bob and myself Marie-Claude, and all Claude's friends. Since Claude couldn't live alone in grass Valley, he moved in with Bob and I in Williams, where he was very comfortable. Claude was to stay there permanently after his return.

I, Marie-Claude, followed him closely and Claude called from every stop. He was held up in Hawaii by headwinds and had to wait nine days for more favourable winds. He visited all the museums, including the Bishop museum in Honolulu. There he had the satisfaction of discovering that the linguist, Edward Tregear, had also considered an ancient language he called "Proto Māori", which could have been the origin of all Polynesian dialects— an idea Claude had long cherished. Finally, the bad weather stopped, and without telling me, Claude set off across the Pacific, departing in total darkness, before four in the morning. He called me from Santa Barbara, California. It was a relief for everyone. This leg, the longest of the entire round-the-world trip, had worried us all.

But having been well prepared it was without problems. The rest of the flight was less worrying. Claude's Belgium friend, Jacqueline, joined him in

Scotland. They took many flights in Europe, including a visit to the Futuroscope in Poitiers.

At the end of this day in Europe, when Claude invited Jacqueline to accompany him for a few days to Egypt, she refused, saying that it took at least two weeks to see anything in Egypt. Claude decided to take the extra time and with Jacqueline they visited the pyramids and took the classic Nile cruise. They both became ill, probably from the food, and missed the visit to the Valley Of The Kings.

After travelling via India and Malaysia, Claude finally returned to Northam on August 22, 1996. His many friends from the Northam Aero Club, and others, were waiting for him for a glorious homecoming with flowers and champagne. he went home to see his family the very next day.

The Earthrouters

After his round-the-world trip, Claude could have stopped there, but he wanted to know who else had also circumnavigated the globe solo. He already knew some pilots who had done it before him, like the New Zealand Cliff Tait. Claude and his friend Robyn Stewart owned a plane similar to the one used by Tait, a Victor Air Tourer, a single engine aircraft made in Australia, which they used for aerobatics. Claude also knew Ron Taylor, having met him in Melbourne, and others, but only by name. In New Zealand, Tate had told him about Judith Chisholm, an English woman flying solo in assessment 210. She had passed away, but Tate remembered her life partner, Julian Nott, a hot air balloon pilot who had come to see her in New Zealand.

Northam, being the Mecca of hot air ballooning in Western Australia, made it quite easy, thanks to Balloonist friends, to find him... In New York, at the headquarters of the prestigious Explorers Club. Claude was later invited to join this club, sponsored by none other than Elgen Long (around the world, 1971, and author, with his wife Marie, of the latest book on the disappearance of Amelia Earhart and advisor on the recent Earhart film) and the Australian Dick Smith, both Earthrouters themselves. Julian Nott arranged for Claude to visit Judith's mother in Malaucene near Tarascon. Claude bought a

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

round-the-world plane ticket and set off in search of these pilots. He met Gaby Kennard, living in Colorado, the only Australian woman to have flown around the world solo, Don Taylor (the first amateur-built airplane) living in Arizona, and others all over the world. When Ron Bower in Texas asked him why he was looking for these pilots, Claude confessed that he wanted to write a book about the solo pilots. Ron convinced him not to write a book, but to create a website, which Claude did. Finally, in Austria, he met Hans Gutmann who had completed his round-the-world Flight a few days before his own and on an almost identical route. They didn't know each other and would never have met without this idea of Claude's. They decided to try to bring together all those pilots, not just those flying solo but also those with crews. Where and when? The choice fell on Oshkosh, the world's largest airshow, on the shores of Lake Michigan in the United States. When? It would take at least two years to organise everything, so it would be in year 2000. The name of the group was created by Hans: the Earthrounders'. The name was meant to stick and is now known worldwide. Tragically, our friend Hans was killed in a plane crash between Austria and Spain in very bad weather in the Northern Italian Alps. This first meeting was a complete success with more than 60 pilots from all corners of the world. At the end, Hans invited everyone to Vienna in 2001 for the Centenary of the Austrian Aero Club. For the next meeting, Claude invited the Earthrounders to Perth for 2003. Another success: among the visitors five crew stopped in Perth one on their around the world trips. The others had arrived on commercial airlines. Since then, there has been a meeting somewhere in the world approximately every two or three years. A list of meetings: Vienna (Austria, 2001), Perth (Western Australia, 2003), Mexico City (Mexico City, 2005), Cape Town (South Africa, 2008), Brasilia, (Brazil, 2010), Florida (USA, 2012), Saint Petersburg (Russia, 2014), Mount Hagen (Papua New Guinea, 2016), and Zhengzhou (Henan, China, 2018). The Earthrounders group was invited by the organisers of the largest airshow in China. Claude gave the opening speech at the airshow, seated between the Mayor of Shengzhou (population 7 million) and the Director General of Civil Aviation, in English, which was translated into Chinese, phrase by phrase.

Robyn and Denis were invited by Claude on this trip and to the Air Show, by Claude, as his special guests. This last meeting increased the groups visibility. The next meeting will, in principle, take place in Switzerland in September. The website that Claude created is very popular and is the meeting point and source of communication between these pilots:

<http://www.earthrounders.com/> .

The site is on Wikipedia and Google, which gives it even greater global recognition.

The creation of this group, Earthrounders, by Claude was of enormous importance to him, and a significant part of his life is practically devoted to it. It allowed him to meet pilots from all over the world, interesting people. Even multimillionaires with their personal jets, who have also circumnavigated the globe, humbly ask Claude to register them on his website. He now has an international audience of pilots seeking information on how to circumnavigate the globe, what steps to take, which countries to avoid, which locations lack suitable Fuel, and so on. Being registered on the website has become a sought-after global standard. But one must meet the conditions that Claude has established. Although he wants the group to remain informal, the Earthrounders continue to address him as President or Chairman.

Helicopters

The entire aerial adventure could have ended there but Claude still had more to explore: he learned to fly a helicopter and enjoyed them so much that he bought one, a small two-seater Robinson R22. Claude visited me, Marie-Claude, and her husband Bob Beugge regularly.

Bob and Marie-Claude built him a pad to land right in front of the house with a coloured windsock. It was much faster for Claude to fly than go by road, which takes almost 3 hours compared to only 50 minutes by air. Claude also claimed it's less dangerous than by road! Later he traded the helicopter for its bigger brother the four seater Robinson R44, which is more spacious and a little faster. Bob and I liked hearing the sound of the rotors from afar when

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

Claude arrived at their farm, and knowing that he'd landed. Northam is known for being the hot air ballooning hub of Western Australia, and Claude enjoyed participating in their activities. There were Japanese people setting long-distance flight records, something impossible in Japan compared to the vastness of Australia. Claude followed them in his Aerostar and directed the ground crews by radio, who then had to find them and bring them back to civilization.

There was also the American, Steve Fossett. The latter, despite all the help provided by the Aero Club, never showed the slightest thanks, while the Japanese never knew how to show their gratitude. I, Mari-Claude, had a magnificent Japanese doll under glass in my living room. Fossett was killed in a plane accident in the Rocky Mountains a few years later.

Claude also participated in the National Balloon Championships in Northam, primarily managing the website. Finally, in 2016, Claude was closely involved in the preparations for Fedor Konyukhov's round-the-world balloon flight. Konukov, who also departed from Northam Airport, broke Fossett's round-the-world record by two days, completing the journey in eleven days. Claude lent Konukov's team, and Cameron the British Balloon manufacturer and his technicians, one of his hangars, and helped them by pointing to local sources for anything they needed. Fedor, his son Oskar, and the family were friendly ; Fedor would even make Claude a cup of tea as soon as he arrived at the Northam Airport. They were all simpler and more grateful than Fossett was for all the help provided.

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

NEXT CLUB COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday 12th April 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



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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 T: 0427 909 412

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

NEXT CLUB COMPETITION

9:00 am Sunday 12th April 2026

Club Captain for the day will provide the briefing

NAC -AGM Nomination Form

*Nomination is hereby made for the
position of:*

**President *Vice President *Secretary
*Treasurer *3 x Committee Persons (2 years)*

Nominee _____

Signature _____

Position _____

Proposer _____

Secunder _____

***To be in the hands of the Secretary
by Saturday 15th May 2025***

(PO Box 247 Northam WA 6401)

