

Notice is given that an ordinary meeting of the Community Grants Subcommittee will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 2 June 2020**
Time: **9.30am**
Via Zoom Video Conferencing

Community Grants Subcommittee

AGENDA

MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson	Cr A Turley	
Members	Cr S Bryant	Cr T Walker
	Cr C Butler	Cr D Wensley

(Quorum 2 members)

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AGENDA

1 OPENING, WELCOME

2 APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Recommendation

That apologies be accepted.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

That the minutes of the Community Grants Subcommittee meeting held on Tuesday, 19 November 2019, be confirmed as a true and correct record of the meeting.

5 PRESENTATIONS

Nil

6 REPORTS

6.1 Special Grants Fund Project Report..... 5

7 CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

Nil

6 REPORTS

6.1 SPECIAL GRANTS FUND PROJECT REPORT

Decision Required

Report To:	Community Grants Subcommittee
Meeting Date:	2 June 2020
Report Author:	Lani Evans, Community Partnerships Officer
Report Number:	RCSGS20-06-1

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the Tasman District Council Special Grants Fund is to encourage and support new significant events or projects within the Tasman District that benefit both residents and visitors.
- 1.2 Council agreed that, in the years where Council achieves a general rate surplus from more growth experienced in the District than anticipated, a contestable Special Grants Fund of up to \$50,000 per annum will be made available for allocation in subsequent years.
- 1.3 There is \$40,000 of the \$50,000 remaining for allocation in the 2019/2020 financial year. This financial year \$10,000 was allocated on the 19 November 2019 meeting to the K2M Multisport Event.
- 1.4 Council promoted the funds being available and invited applications from the community. Applications can be submitted at any time during the year for consideration.
- 1.5 Council has received an application from the First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee. The request is for \$15,000 to commemorate the 100th anniversary for the first flight to Nelson. The Committee is hosting a series of events that will publically celebrate the significant contribution of aviation to the Nelson/Tasman region. The series of events will commemorate the first flight to Nelson which will occur on 11 November 2021. The events will generate a lot of interest and enjoyment from all sectors of the community, and not only those interested in history. Visitors will also be attracted to participant in these events.
- 1.6 Staff recommend that the Subcommittee allocates \$15,000 to the First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee.

2 Draft Resolution

That the Community Grants Subcommittee:

1. receives the Special Grants Fund Project Report RCSGS20-06-1; and
2. approves the allocation of \$15,000 to the First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee to commemorate the 100th anniversary for the first flight to Nelson; and

3. notes that the funding will need to be carried forward by Council until it is required by the First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee for the event which will be held in November 2021.

3 Purpose of the Report

- 3.1 This report provides the Subcommittee with a summary of the Special Grants Fund's purpose and presents the application from the First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee for consideration.

4 Background and Discussion

- 4.1 The Special Grants Fund was adopted on 2 June 2016.
- 4.2 The purpose of the fund is to encourage and support new significant events or projects within the Tasman District that provide benefits to both residents and visitors.
- 4.3 Priority will be given to projects that:
- (a) align with Council's Community Outcomes;
 - (b) raise the national/international profile of the Tasman District;
 - (c) deliver an economic return to the Tasman District;
 - (d) professionally develop the local event/project management sector;
 - (e) utilise facilities that Council has invested in, and/or build on the unique natural environment of the Tasman District;
 - (f) address an identified community need;
 - (g) deliver an improved environmental outcome for the District; and
 - (h) seek support to become established or significantly grow their organisation or project, with the aim of continuing without ongoing financial support from Council.
- 4.4 All funding applications for the Special Grants Fund will be assessed against the priorities above and the following criteria:
- (a) applications must be for a clearly detailed specific event or project (including location and date);
 - (b) applications will only be accepted for fund amounts of \$10,000 or over;
 - (c) Council will not fully fund any event or project, and applicants must identify their other sources of funding;
 - (d) applications must include current financial accounts, and also state contingency financial plans in the event Council, and/or other funders, cannot fund to the level requested;
 - (e) the project or event must not have received any other funding support from the Council in the current financial year;
 - (f) applications must identify specific and measureable outcomes for the Tasman District;

- (g) applications must demonstrate the contribution the event or project will make to Council's Community Outcomes;
 - (h) only initiatives within Tasman District and/or directly benefitting the Tasman District will be funded. Services delivered regionally will have funding eligibility relative to the direct benefit derived by Tasman District residents; and
 - (i) any activities that are primarily the responsibility of central government, such as education and health, will not be considered.
- 4.5 The funds are available from the years that Council achieves a general rate surplus from extra growth experienced in the District than anticipated. Council may choose in the future to amend the policy relating to this funding, however, any change will not impact on this application.
- 4.6 Council achieved surpluses in 2017/2018. As the surplus is not known until the year after it was generated, the funding skips a year before it can be allocated i.e. the 2017/2018 year surplus is spent in the 2019/2020 year.
- 4.7 Council promoted the funds being available and invited applications from the community.
- 4.8 Applications generally go to the Community Grants Subcommittee for consideration.

5 First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee – 100th Anniversary of the First Flight to Nelson

- 5.1 The First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee submitted an application on 15 May 2020.
- 5.2 The First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee have created a series of public events to commemorate the first flight to Nelson which will occur on 11 November 2021. This marks the 100th anniversary for the first aircraft to fly to the Nelson Tasman region.
- 5.3 The series of public events include:
- 5.3.1 Displaying an identical aircraft (Avro 504K ZK-ACU) that flew to Nelson on 11 November 1921. The aircraft will complete reenactment flights over Nelson/Tasman at a low altitude for the public to enjoy. The aircraft is also planned to be displayed inside the Nelson Airport Terminal for the public to view after this event.
 - 5.3.2 Conducting local joy-ride flights of the DH89 Dominie ZK-AKY aircraft for the public to enjoy. This aircraft is the same aircraft that pioneered the first scheduled air service from Nelson in December 1935 by Cook Strait Airways Ltd (on the Nelson-Blenheim-Wellington routes). It was also the first aircraft type to use the (then) new Nelson Airport from December 1938 and the first aircraft type to pioneer the Nelson-Christchurch route post-war.
 - 5.3.3 Unveiling an interpretive panel at Greenmeadows Park, Stoke, that provides information to the public that the first flight to Nelson landed at Greenmeadows Park.
 - 5.3.4 Unveiling a bronze plaque at Spring Grove close to where the first flight to Nelson was intended to land the first time (the aircraft did not intend to land at Greenmeadows Park, it was forced to due to the lack of fuel). The plaque is anticipated to be located along Tasman's Great Taste Trail for the public to enjoy.
 - 5.3.5 Unveiling a bronze plaque at Nelson Airport to commemorate 100 years of aviation history in Nelson/Tasman.

5.3.6 A lecture at the Nelson Historical Society meeting and talks during the Nelson Heritage week during November 2021.

5.3.7 Encouraging art and drama events in Nelson Tasman. In particular Justin Eade's play "Avro to Naumai" which is based on the story of this historic flight. Local schools will also be encouraged to study this historic story.

5.4 The application is requesting \$15,000 towards the cost of bringing the identical aircraft (Avro 504K ZK-ACU) to Nelson Tasman.

Benefits:

5.5 Hosting a series of events that will publically celebrate the significant contribution of aviation to the Nelson/Tasman region.

5.6 The series of events will commemorate the first flight to Nelson which will occur on 11 November 2021. This marks the 100th anniversary of the first aircraft to fly to the Nelson/Tasman region.

5.7 The events will generate a lot of interest and enjoyment from all sectors of the community, and not only those interested in history. Visitors will also be attracted to participant in these events.

5.8 The Spring Grove plaque will be located along Tasman's Great Taste Trail which will provide an additional point of interest for passing cyclists.

5.9 The local community will experience a sense of pride by commemorating a historic event that took place 100 years ago in the Nelson/Tasman region.

5.10 Local community members, in particular schools will have the opportunity to learn about the significant impact this event has had on the region. They will also have the opportunity to take part and contribute in this historical event.

Discussion:

5.11 The first flight to Nelson is a unique series of events that is only applicable to hold on 11 November 2021 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first flight to Nelson.

5.12 Due to Covid-19, there is a current lack of funding security. The First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee is actively seeking further funding and is confident it will be able to secure 100% of the funding. The Committee however, have come up with a contingency plan if they are unable to obtain all the funding required to deliver these events. If the Committee is not able to secure all the funding required then it will not freight the DH89 Dominie ZK-AKY aircraft to Nelson and put all the funding towards the freight of the Avro 504K ZK-ACU. They will continue to install the history plaques as they are everlasting.

5.13 For this event to occur, the Committee needs to start securing funding early to ensure it has enough time to gather enough funds to make the series of events happen. As these events are not until 2021, it is anticipated that if this application is approved then Council will either carry over the funds until 2021 or allocate the funds to the Committee in this financial year.

5.14 Aviation is a vital part of the Nelson/Tasman region, and the Nelson Airport continues to be the busiest provincial airport in New Zealand.

5.15 The purpose of the Special Grants Fund is to encourage and support new significant events or projects.

5.16 With the recent Covid19 pandemic the community is needing opportunities to connect more than ever before. As this event is primarily for residents, it will encourage the local community to come together, share a common purpose and celebrate this momentous occasion. This event is a wonderful occasion for all community members to take part in. It is also anticipated that these historic events will attract people interested in aviation to visit the region.

Recommendation:

5.17 The series of events meets the Special Grant Fund criteria and staff recommend that the Subcommittee supports the project with an allocation of \$15,000.

6 Options

6.1 The Subcommittee can decide to decline or approve the applicant’s request for funding. The Subcommittee’s decisions need to be based on the application meeting the criteria and priorities of the fund. If the Subcommittee approves the applicant’s request, it can allocate all or part of the amount requested, noting that the Special Grants Fund allocations are for \$10,000 or more, and that there is \$40,000 remaining in the fund for this financial year.

6.2 Staff recommend that the Subcommittee allocates \$15,000 towards the project.

7 Climate Change Impact Assessment

Climate Change Consideration	Assessment	Explanation of Assessment
Is this activity associated with one of the goals in Council’s Climate Action Plan?	No	
Will this decision affect the ability of Tasman District to proactively respond to the impacts of climate change?	This decision will have no impact on the ability of the Council or District to proactively respond to the impacts of climate change	Slightly higher emissions will occur as a result of these series of events as two aircrafts will be flying in addition to the normal flights that happen throughout the District on a day to day basis. The additional flights are not likely to have a significant impact on the climate.

8 Strategy and Risks

8.1 The main potential risk to Council from allocating the funding is that some groups or individuals may question the appropriateness of the investment. The Subcommittee can mitigate the risks by clearly explaining the reasons for the decisions to the applicant and through careful consideration of the application to ensure it meets the fund’s criteria.

- 8.2 An additional risk is that the event organisers will apply in future years for Special Grant funding. This risk will be mitigated by staff advising the group that if they are successful with this application, it is a one-off grant.
- 8.3 Another risk is that some people may consider \$15,000 is a lot to spend on a series of events at a time when people are feeling the impacts of Covid19. However, over the coming few years, events which encourage social contact and celebration will benefit Tasman's community wellbeing and are likely to be well received by most people in the community.

9 Policy / Legal Requirements / Plan

- 9.1 The administration and allocation of the Special Grant Fund is guided by the Tasman District Council's Special Grants Policy. The Subcommittee needs to consider the priorities and criteria in the Policy when making its decisions on these applications.

10 Consideration of Financial or Budgetary Implications

- 10.1 The \$15,000 that is being requested from this application is available within the remaining \$40,000 in this financial year.

11 Significance and Engagement

- 11.1 This matter is of relatively low significance as the Special Grants Fund is to offer funding support for projects that benefit local residents directly. The funding decisions are based on the criteria and policies outlined in the Special Grants Policy. Therefore, consultation is not required prior to the Subcommittee making the decisions sought in this report.

Issue	Level of Significance	Explanation of Assessment
Is there a high level of public interest, or is decision likely to be controversial?	Low to moderate	The Special Grants Fund is to offer funding support for projects that benefit local residents directly. The funding decisions are based on the criteria and policies outlined in the Special Grants Policy. The allocation of the funding for this event may be slightly more controversial with some members of the public as a result of the impacts of the COVID-19 event.
Is there a significant impact arising from duration of the effects from the decision?	No	
Does the decision relate to a strategic asset? (refer Significance and Engagement Policy for list of strategic assets)	No	
Does the decision create a substantial change in the level of service provided by Council?	No	
Does the proposal, activity or decision substantially affect debt, rates or Council finances in any one year or more of the LTP?	Low	The Special Grants Fund is only available from years that the Council achieves a general rate surplus due to additional growth over what is expected.
Does the decision involve the sale of a substantial proportion or controlling interest in a CCO or CCTO?	No	
Does the proposal or decision involve entry into a private sector partnership or contract to carry out the deliver on any Council group of activities?	Low	The Special Grants Fund is a grant to assist community groups with carrying out specific projects. The applicant will be allocated funds for a specific purpose and required to report on the outcomes achieved and account for the use of the funds. This proposal does not relate to a “group of Council activities”.
Does the proposal or decision involve Council exiting from or entering into a group of activities?	No	

12 Conclusion

Item 6.1

- 12.1 Council agreed that in the years where Council achieves a general rate surplus, due to additional growth over what is expected, a contestable Special Grants Fund of \$50,000 per annum will be made available.
- 12.2 Council achieved a general rates surplus in the 2017/2018 financial year so has allocated \$50,000 to the Special Grants Fund for 2019/2020.
- 12.3 The First Flight to Nelson Organising Committee's application for funding to commemorate the 100th anniversary for the first flight to Nelson meets the criterial of the Special Grant Fund, and staff recommend it receives \$15,000 from the fund comprising of \$40,000 from the current financial year.

13 Next Steps / Timeline

- 13.1 We will advise the applicant of the Subcommittee's decisions on its submitted application.

14 Attachments

1. [↓](#) First Flight to Nelson application

13

SUBMISSION TO TASMAN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S SPECIAL GRANTS FUND

PURPOSE:

- Requesting support for financial assistance to mark the 100th anniversary of the first aircraft to visit Nelson on 11 November 1921
- To publicly celebrate the significant contribution of aviation to the Nelson Tasman region.

An important and significant centenary relating to the Nelson Tasman region will occur on Thursday 11 November 2021. That important date will mark the 100th anniversary of the first aircraft to fly to the Nelson Tasman region (from Wellington) and will be an appropriate and opportune time to celebrate the significant contribution of aviation to the Nelson Tasman region.

A small core group of volunteers comprising Dr Richard Waugh and Graeme McConnell; both aviation historians and co-authors of *"The Story of Nelson Aviation"* (2013) and Richard Kempthorne, former Mayor of Tasman District, have been planning, since mid-2019, to celebrate this important and significant event. An initial proposal presentation relating to this anniversary was made to the Mayors and Chief Executives of both Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council and representatives of Nelson Airport Ltd and Port Nelson Ltd during August and December 2019. All were enthusiastic and supportive of the project.

The following information and explanation supports and outlines our proposals on how to celebrate and mark this occasion in a meaningful way –

Event Background Notes:

- The first flight to Nelson was on Friday 11 November 1921, from Wellington.
- The pilot was Captain P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler with mechanic/assistant Edward 'Ted' Ranish and passenger Tom Newman (sponsor of the flight).
- The Aircraft was Avro 504K E9429 operated by the New Zealand Aero Transport Co Ltd (NZAT), Timaru.
- It was the longest over-water flight at that time, and the 7th aerial crossing of Cook Strait.

- See “The Story of Nelson Aviation” pages 12, 19 and 22-31 for detailed account of the flight and subsequent Nelson regional joyriding.
- Aviation is today absolutely vital to the whole Nelson Tasman region, perhaps more so than almost any other area in New Zealand. Nelson Airport has continued as the busiest provincial airport in New Zealand.
- The new Nelson Airport Terminal opened on 19 October 2019. While Covid-19 has majorly disrupted both international and domestic air travel we believe this will not alter the importance of the airport and air travel for our region. We believe it is important to celebrate this anniversary. In November 2021 our community will be recovering from the major disruption resulting from our response to Covid-19 and we believe this anniversary will come at a very appropriate time.
- A range of publicly accessible celebratory events is planned to mark the 100th anniversary of aviation coming to the Nelson Tasman region.

Project Description:

A sequence of events and ceremonies will take place to celebrate the first flight to Nelson Tasman, these include:

1) Bring Avro 504K ZK-ACU from Masterton

Obtain sponsorship to bring **Avro 504K ZK-ACU** from Masterton. This aircraft is identical to the pioneering aircraft that flew to Nelson on 11 November 1921. It is one of only a very small number of airworthy Avro 504K's in the world. It has an open cockpit and is not suitable for anyone other than the pilot during the re-enactment flights. These special re-enactment flights are dependent on good weather and will be flown over Nelson and Tasman at a low altitude for the public to enjoy. It is planned to freight the Avro to Nelson and be reassembled for the special flights over the city and region on the 100th anniversary day, Thursday 11 November 2021, weather permitting.

The aircraft, owned by The Vintage Aviator Ltd, Masterton to be transported in a container and assembled and looked after by The Vintage Aviator Ltd staff at Nelson Airport.

After the commemorative flights it is proposed to have the Avro on extended display (behind appropriate safety barriers) in the Nelson Airport Terminal.

2) Bring DH89 Dominie ZK-AKY from Mandeville (Gore)

Obtain sponsorship to bring **DH89 Dominie ZK-AKY** from Mandeville (Gore). This is the same type of aircraft which pioneered the first scheduled air services from Nelson in December 1935 by Cook Strait Airways Ltd (on the Nelson-Blenheim-Wellington routes), also the first type to use the (then) new Nelson Airport from December 1938 and the first type to pioneer

the Nelson-Christchurch route post-war. We propose the aircraft will be available for special local flights for dignitaries and other invited guests and could also be available for public joy-ride flights (on a 'user-pays' basis) as it is licensed for such work. **Note:** The DH89 Dominie is doubly useful as the Avro 504K cannot take passengers but the Dominie is commercially licensed for up to 7 passengers so useful and interesting local flights can be made for officials, guests and other 'user-pays' passengers.

3) **Interpretive Panel and Photo at Stoke Community Centre at Greenmeadows Park, Stoke**

On Thursday 11 November 2021 early afternoon (1pm) at the Stoke Community Centre, unveil a large interpretive panel featuring an enlarged photograph (with explanatory engraved sign) showing the first landing at Greenmeadows Park, Stoke (see pages 12-13 of "*The Story of Nelson Aviation*"). The public are invited to this event.

4) **Unveil Bronze Plaque at Spring Grove**

On Thursday 11 November 2021 at 2.30pm at Spring Grove, the eventual destination of the historic 1921 flight, unveil a bronze plaque. The plaque is anticipated to be located on the Great Taste Trail, and near the flight's landing place. Local school children and public invited to this event. Newman's restored historic 1924 Cadillac bus (based at Founders Park) should be present.

5) **Unveil Bronze Plaque at Nelson Airport**

On Thursday 11 November 2021 at 5pm in the Nelson Airport Terminal unveil a bronze plaque to commemorate 100 years of aviation history in the Nelson Tasman region.

6) **Feature Articles with Local Media and Dramatisation**

Arrange feature articles in *Nelson Mail*, and the regions weekly newspapers, also the NCC and TDC publications. Organise a lecture at Nelson Historical Society (Inc) meeting and a talk during the Nelson Heritage Week for 2021. There could be a re-run of Justin Eade's dramatic play "*Avro to Naumai*", based on the story of this historic flight, during the week of the celebrations. Remaining copies of "*The Story of Nelson Aviation*" (2013) available for sale.

7) **Art and Drama Events**

Encourage art and drama events in the Nelson Tasman region (creative drama "*Avro to Naumai*" to be offered again). Local schools to be encouraged to study this historic story and do something creative, especially nearby Brightwater School (Principal Gerald Baldwin office@brightwater.school.nz Ph. 03 542 3666). Note: Spring Grove School closed in 1974.

8) **Invite Family Members of original Personalities**

Trace and invite some family members of Captain P K ‘Shorty’ Fowler, Tom Newman and ‘Ted’ Ranish. We know of a surviving daughter of Captain Fowler who lives in Upper Hutt, aged in her mid-80s but quite active. Two – three family members would be offered flights to Nelson and two nights’ accommodation and local ground transport assistance.

Budget and funding for anniversary event:

I. Sponsorship from Nelson Airport Ltd, Nelson City Council, Tasman District Council, Air New Zealand, Port Nelson Ltd and TIL (the transport business that now incorporates the Newman Group and Transport (Nelson) Ltd.

II. We have had initial discussions with Nelson Airport Ltd, Port Nelson Ltd and TIL for financial support. However realistically Covid-19 will impact sponsorship so this is a work in progress. We would like the two Councils to consider contributing \$15,000 each. We are aware of the extreme challenge Councils are facing at this time. Apart from finance, Councils support for this project would be very much appreciated and helpful.

Estimate Project Expenses

Expenses	Estimate Budget
Avro 504K operational costs	\$50,000
Dominie charter	\$16,000
Historic Stoke photo, frame and interpretive panel at Stoke Community Centre	\$4,000
Spring Grove plaque and base/mount	\$6,000
Nelson Airport Terminal plaque	\$4,000
Travel for family members of pioneer aviators - invitations, travel and accommodation	\$3,000
Volunteer incidental expenses	\$2,000
TOTAL	\$85,000

Projected Income

Income	Estimate Budget
Tasman District Council	\$15,000
Nelson City Council	\$15,000
Air New Zealand flights (in-kind)	?
Port Nelson contribution (Freighting Avro504 from Masterton, return)	\$4,000
TIL	\$5,000
Nelson Airport Ltd	?
Rata Foundation	TBC
Lotteries	TBC
TOTAL	\$39,000

III. Air New Zealand to supply Richard Waugh with six complementary flights (Auckland – Nelson and return) for voluntary organising work.

IV. Contact and liaise with Nelson Airport Ltd, Port Nelson Ltd, the two Councils and Air New Zealand

Benefit to Nelson Tasman region:

Benefit to the community, an aviation event that is likely to generate a lot of interest and enjoyment at a time when people will need every bit of enjoyment they can get.

The location for the proposed Spring Grove Plaque is adjacent to the Tasman Great Taste Trail and will therefore provide an additional point of interest for passing cyclists.

Benefits for sponsors be seen to support and suitably pay tribute to the aviation pioneers, to have a range of publicly accessible events such as the three unveiling events (at Stoke, Spring Grove and Nelson Airport), the Avro on display (both flying and static), the DH89 Dominie flights and also articles, lectures and other creative events marking the occasion (including drama and art).

Organisation for anniversary event:

Much of the work to be done voluntarily by Dr Richard Waugh, Graeme McConnell and Richard Kempthorne assisted by others as required. Dr Waugh and Graeme McConnell have had extensive experience with similar events and research work for the authoritative “*The Story of Nelson Aviation*” book, published in 2013. Dr Waugh has organised numerous aviation historical events including the Cook Strait Airways 60th celebrations in Nelson in 1995, the SPANZ DC-3 visits in 2000, the NAC 60th anniversary events in 2007 and other events. Graeme McConnell has designed and helped install more than 20 aviation historical plaques around New Zealand including a number in the Nelson region, four of those at Nelson Airport.

Organising Committee:

It will be necessary to formalise an ad-hoc committee to oversee the events including; Richard Waugh, Graeme McConnell and Richard Kempthorne, also a representative from each of the supporting sponsorship organisations and any other groups involved.

Formal Request for Support

We have had initial discussions with Nelson Airport Ltd, Port Nelson Ltd and TIL for financial support. We have had indications of positive support from Port Nelson Ltd and TIL but we will need to confirm this. Realistically Covid-19 will impact sponsorship so this is a work in progress.

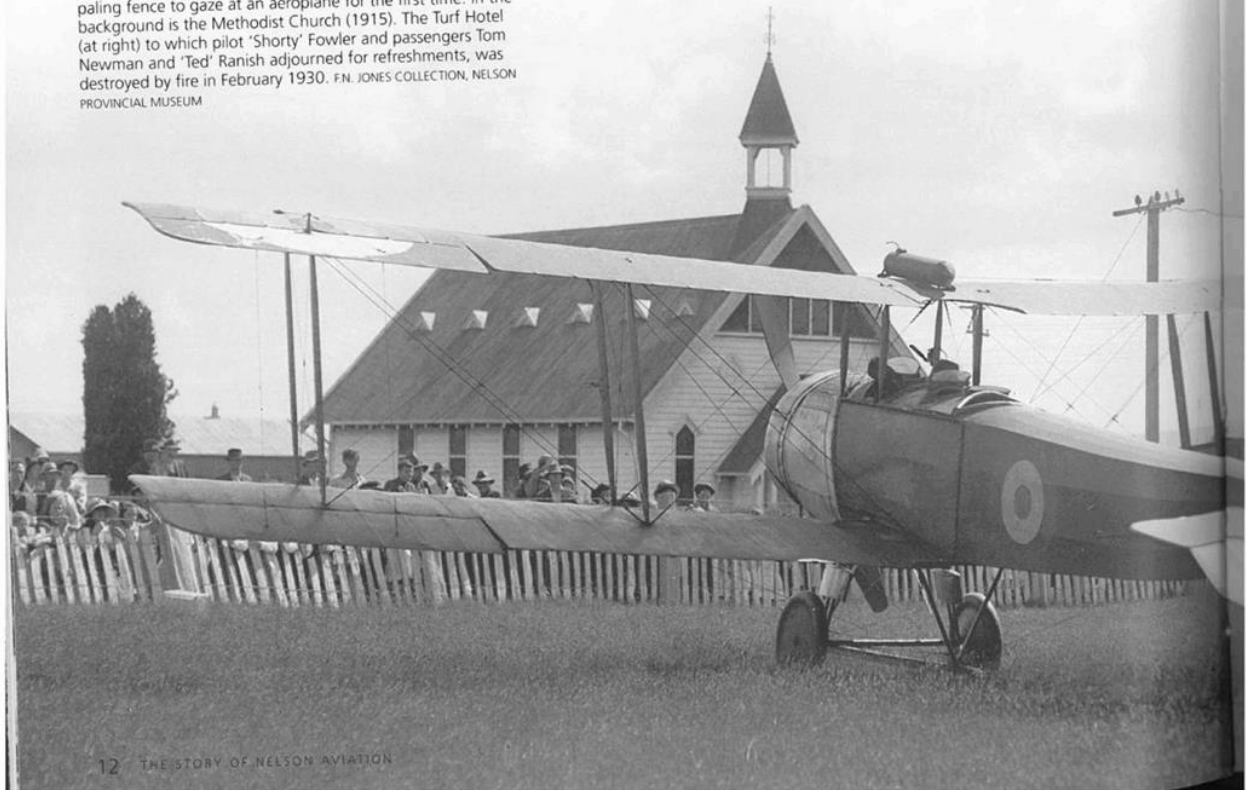
We would like the two Councils to consider contributing \$15,000 each. We are aware of the extreme challenge Councils are facing at this time.

Apart from finance, Councils support for this project would be very much appreciated and helpful.



At Spring Grove on the late afternoon of 11 November 1921, at a paddock on William Arnold's farm, not far from Tom Newman's farm, the Avro 504K is prepared for an overnight stay. Standing on the lower wing Ted Ranish covers the cockpits after having secured the outer wing tie-downs. VIA JENNIFER LUCAS

BELOW: Soon after the first aircraft landing in the Nelson region, during the early afternoon of 11 November 1921, Avro 504K E9429 is being lifted by the tail ready for repositioning for take-off to continue its historic journey. The site is at the corner of James Marsden's front paddock near Main Road Stoke and Songer Street. Keen onlookers are gathered behind the paling fence to gaze at an aeroplane for the first time. In the background is the Methodist Church (1915). The Turf Hotel (at right) to which pilot 'Shorty' Fowler and passengers Tom Newman and 'Ted' Ranish adjourned for refreshments, was destroyed by fire in February 1930. F.N. JONES COLLECTION, NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM



CHAPTER ONE

Aerial Awakenings

"I would not cross the strait today in it [the Avro] for a gold clock or a thousand pounds."

Pilot 'Shorty' Fowler's comment, 36 years later, when he unveiled the plaque at Stoke in 1957 marking the site of the first landing of an aeroplane in Nelson.

THE STORY OF AVIATION in the Nelson region goes back as far as the late 19th century when an entrepreneurial young lady and a hot-air balloon attracted significant public attention with some daring aerial activities. During the first decade of the 20th century further innovative aeronautical ideas were promoted locally but it was not until 1921 that an aircraft appeared in Nelson skies for the first time, later than in many other parts of New Zealand. Those early pioneering balloon flight attempts awakened a local interest in aviation and things aeronautical.

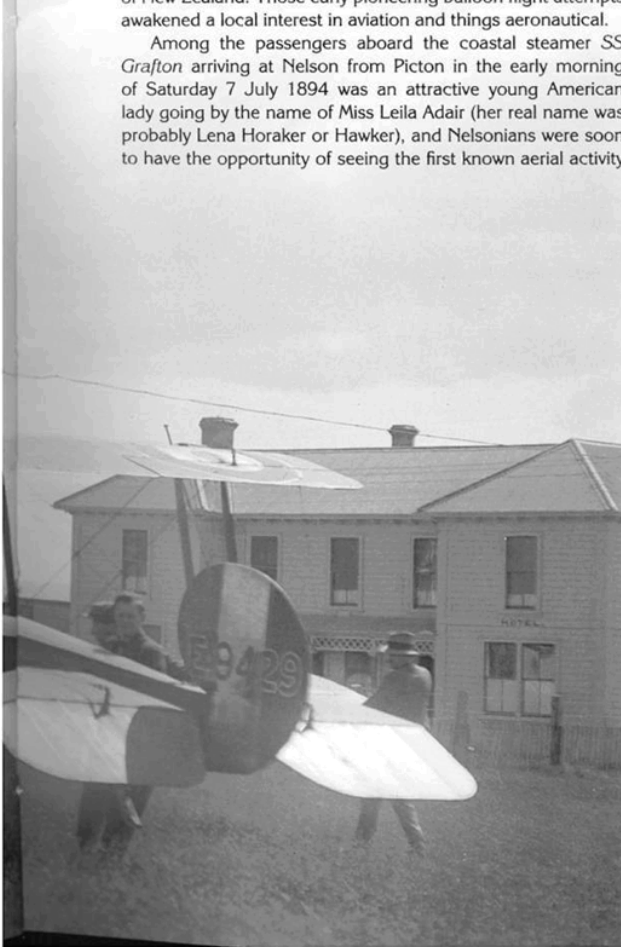
Among the passengers aboard the coastal steamer *SS Grafton* arriving at Nelson from Picton in the early morning of Saturday 7 July 1894 was an attractive young American lady going by the name of Miss Leila Adair (her real name was probably Lena Horaker or Hawker), and Nelsonians were soon to have the opportunity of seeing the first known aerial activity

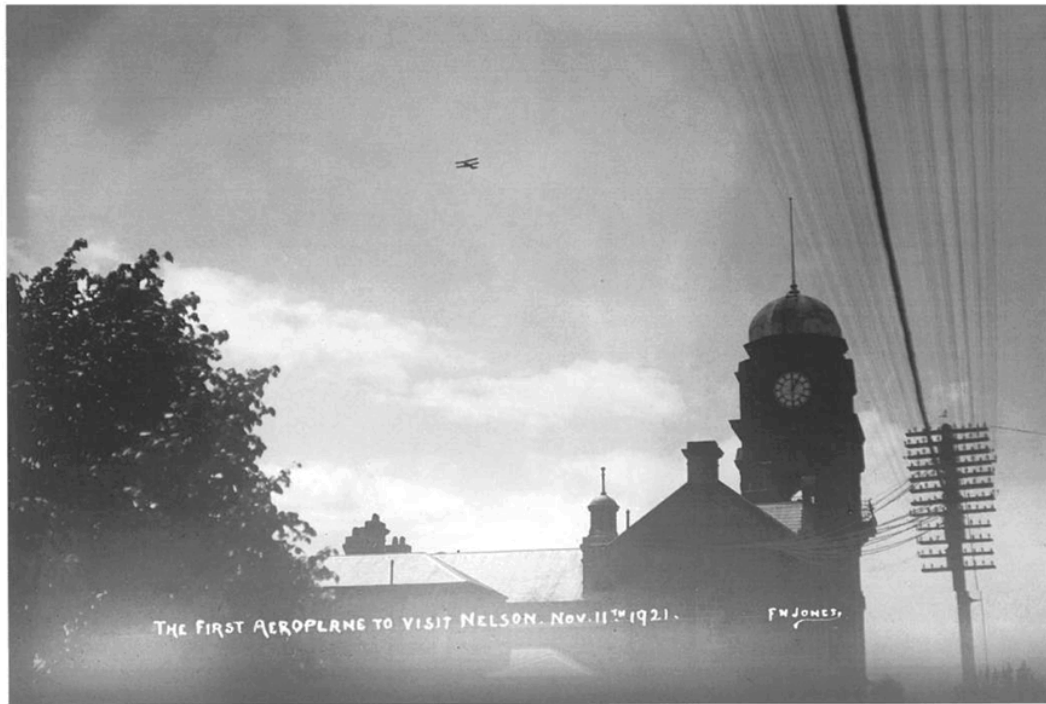
in the area. This woman, in her early 20s, was reported as 'A Lady Aeronaut' and was accompanied by her manager and brother, Arthur B. Adair. They had arrived at Auckland from Sydney aboard the *Alameda* on 26 January 1894, following a ballooning tour of Australia, and since then had toured their way south through 12 North Island towns and cities with Nelson being their second port of call in the South Island.

Billed as 'The Aerial Queen', Miss Adair's act was one of danger and daring. Her intention was to ascend skywards by means of a 'New Mammoth Balloon' while seated on a trapeze bar hanging beneath. Then, when sufficient altitude had been gained she would jump from the trapeze and descend by parachute. The large hot-air balloon, the third used during her New Zealand tour, was made in Wellington, (the previous two having been destroyed by fire while being inflated). It was made of 2400 yards of single-width calico sewn into a globe measuring 160 feet in circumference and 84 feet high from the trapeze bar to the top of the balloon.

Their travels around the North Island, and at Blenheim a few days earlier, had not been very successful with no truly independent parachute descents having been made – would their time in Nelson prove to be more successful? Nelsonians didn't have long to wait for an answer, with the first local 'act' advertised for the afternoon of Saturday 14 July at Trafalgar Park. In typical sunny mid-winter weather a large crowd gathered at the park in Lower Trafalgar Street and also on nearby hills to witness the spectacle.

Unfortunately the performance turned into 'a terrible fiasco', with the balloon being prematurely released before Adair was seated on the trapeze. The liberated balloon rose to about 500 feet, overturned, and trailing a cloud of dirty smoke collapsed back to the ground close to the Maitai River on the east side of Trafalgar Street.¹ A planned ascent on the Monday, again from Trafalgar Park, with no charge for admission in order 'to keep faith with the people', was cancelled because of rain.² In a letter published in *The Colonist* later in the week her manager brother explained the failed attempt by saying that "... The cutaway block which connects the parachute with the balloon is patented for the parachute profession, and the spring is so constructed that a pressure of between 23 and 25 pounds will disconnect the balloon. In the excitement of the moment of ascension someone who was holding the balloon down, probably without noticing it, pressed his foot on the spring and released the parachute, consequently the balloon soared away by itself ..." To quell rumours circulating around the city that





The first aircraft in Nelson skies, at 1pm on Friday 11 November 1921, flies over Nelson City with the Chief Post Office clock tower prominent. Pilot 'Shorty' Fowler with petrol running low soon makes a decision to land at Stoke. F.N. JONES COLLECTION, ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

was given permission by the Nelson City Council to give a display in Trafalgar Park with a 'Batoplane', another model of his own design. Unfortunately, on 10 June his residence on the corner of Motueka Street was totally destroyed by fire, including all his records, so it is unlikely that the display took place.

In February 1911 the *Nelson Evening Mail* carried an extensive editorial entitled 'AERONAUTICS – Its Rapid Extension', outlining the state of aviation in the world at that time and commenting on the stability of airships versus aircraft. The editorial ended with the comment that; "It will be thus plainly be seen that until the fundamental questions of stability are understood flying machines cannot be regarded as established scientific machines."²⁵ These aviation related articles in the general press helped raise local awareness of developments both internationally and in New Zealand.

Nelson resident Joseph Taylor drew further attention to aviation matters with his active and public interest in aeronautical invention and design when he took out provisional patent rights (No. 30085) on 24 August 1911 for "Improvements in and relating to Aeronautical Machines". His aeronautical design, which he had been working on and refining over many years, was generally referred to as "Taylor's Combination Airship". It was an aerial machine combining the principles of the dirigible airship, the aeroplane, the hydroplane, the motor car, the gyroscope and the helicopter.²⁶

Taylor, who trained as a mining engineer was also an Anglican Lay Preacher. He was born on 3 May 1858 near Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, England and emigrated to New Zealand in 1894 with his young family. They settled in Golden Bay where he became involved in the local church and helped with the opening up and management of the Puponga coal mine, north of Collingwood. Taylor was a very intelligent and articulate man who over his long life studied a wide range of topics – from theology to geology, mystics to mathematics and philosophy to poetry. From an early age he had held strong religious views which often put him off-side with members of the

congregations he preached to, both before and after coming to New Zealand. Earlier he had converted from Methodism to Unitarianism. In late 1904 he was convicted and jailed for two years on a charge of fraudulent book-keeping involving £15. The charge had been brought against him by disenchanted shareholders in the Puponga coal mine. This ended his involvement in Golden Bay and from then on he lived in Nelson where he became well known for his wide-ranging views and knowledge.²⁷

Over the coming years Taylor made a number of visits to Wellington to meet with Government officials, endeavouring to promote and draw attention to his 'Universal Combination Airship' invention. In early July 1911, on his first visit, he met the Minister of Works.²⁸ During the following month he was again in Wellington to explain his plans and designs to the Defence Department and to visit Captain G. Gaunt of H.M.S. *Challenger*, also a naval engineer, to discuss his ideas.²⁹ Taylor and his invention came to public attention again in mid-1912 when a brief description and ten point summary appeared in the local newspaper, not long before the completed patent was granted on 7 August 1912.³⁰

In Wellington on 23 March 1913 Taylor met the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon. William F. Massey, to explain his ideas in detail before requesting 'monetary aid to make experimental constructions beyond the reach of private individuals, and under proper safeguards for the public'. Taylor admitted to Massey that a complete model had not yet been made, only models of parts of the machine. Massey said that the subject of aviation had not been lost sight of by the Government or the Defence authorities and agreed to refer the plans to those authorities. He suggested that Taylor meet with Heaton Rhodes, the Acting Minister of Defence and also General Alexander Godley, Commandant of the New Zealand Defence Forces.³¹ In May, Taylor followed up on his meeting with the Prime Minister by sending a statement to the Minister of Public Works, the Hon. W. Fraser, offering the Government a conditional half-share

in the new Union Airways Ltd.³⁷ Another and local example of shipping interests having a connection and an involvement in aviation came in the early 1930s with Nelson's Anchor Shipping & Foundry Co. Ltd having an investment in Nelson-based Cook Strait Airways Ltd.

Public interest in flying was further stirred in February 1914 when J.W.H. 'Will' Scotland, a young aviator, flew from Invercargill to Gore on 20 February, a distance of 38 miles. This was followed on 6 March with a longer flight from Timaru to Christchurch, with an unscheduled stop at Orari, a distance of 98 miles. Such flights were clear demonstrations of the advance of aircraft design and reliability, and encouraged people to think about the possibilities that aviation could bring to countries like New Zealand with a small population spread out over rugged and difficult terrain.

The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 meant that as part of the British Empire New Zealand was inextricably involved in the conflict. On 4 August the New Zealand Garrison Artillery and Territorial forces were mobilised, and over the following four years many hundreds of young men from the Nelson region volunteered for war service in the army or navy and sailed away for 'the big adventure' in distant lands. The great majority of these men served in the army – at Gallipoli, in the Middle East and in Western Europe. Only a relatively small number of local men served as pilots, observers, mechanics and ground support staff in the newly formed Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS), and with the merger of the two on 1 April 1918, the Royal Air Force (RAF).

A total of 225 men had graduated as pilots in New Zealand by the time of the Armistice in November 1918 at either the Christchurch based Canterbury (NZ) Aviation Co. Ltd (CAC) at Sockburn (later renamed Wigram) or at the Walsh brothers New Zealand Flying School (NZFS) at Kohimarama in Auckland. Most of these newly-trained pilots served overseas, but CAC-trained J.C. 'Bert' Mercer, who was later to have close associations with commercial aviation in the Nelson region, was retained in New Zealand to be an instructor at the flying school.

Understandably, during World War I there were strong anti-German feelings coupled with a somewhat irrational fear and suspicion of anything to do with Germany. This attitude was fuelled by sometimes exaggerated news reports and rumours of what was happening half a world away on the Western Front, reinforced by the ever increasing casualty lists of young men who would never come home. New Zealand and Nelson were not immune to these fears, especially when it became known that the armed German merchant raider S.M.S. *Wolf*, disguised as a freighter, was roaming the South Pacific seas and sinking merchant ships. In late June 1917, after it had captured and sunk the S S *Wairuna* near Raoul Island, the *Wolf* headed south towards the Tasman Sea. On board it carried a small two-seater Friedrichshafen FF-33e seaplane, named *Wolfchen*, used for locating allied shipping targets. The armed raider continued southward and between 25 and 28 June 1917, and before heading west across the Tasman Sea towards Australia, laid 25 mines off North Cape and 35 mines off Cape Farewell. It was one of these mines that sank the S S *Wimmera* twelve months later, causing considerable loss of life.³⁸

In 1981 a story was published relating the early memories of Maggie Dwyer, then an elderly resident of Golden Bay.³⁹ As a child she lived in the Waikoropupu Valley, near Takaka and recalled;

"... one other event that's always stuck in my mind was the seaplane that crash landed on our terrace at the 'Bubu', one night during the First World War. ... I was only a little wee kid of about five, but I remember something roaring all night and lights flashing out in the manuka and all the dogs barking.

... Dad said it was a German seaplane, and I don't know how many men there were out there in the plane but Dad wanted to go out with his pea-rifle (0.22" calibre) and shoot them all. ... I was terrified of Germans for years after. ... I've never forgotten it. ... They were roaring away all night trying to get the seaplane going again and the dogs kept barking all the time ... and us kids were all under the bed. Then just before daylight they got off. We went past the place where it'd landed ... later in the morning. Us kids were terrified to go up onto the terrace; we thought the Germans might still be there. But we did see the manuka all flattened down. It was like that for months after. ... But then nobody ever believed us about the seaplane. If Dad ever mentioned a seaplane had landed on our terrace, people just laughed. When that chap McGregor, landed a plane at Rototai years later ... Dad said 'This isn't the first plane that's landed at Takaka.' Everyone laughed. So Dad called us over and said, 'Have you heard this noise before?' We all knew we'd heard it before, over on the terrace, but no one else believed that."

During World War I global aviation developments accelerated greatly with aircraft and engine designs advancing rapidly. When hostilities finally ended in November 1918 a large number of reliable RAF aircraft became surplus and available for disposal. In 1919, under what was known as 'The Imperial Gift Scheme', the British Government offered hundreds of surplus World War I aircraft to the various countries of the British Empire. New Zealand was offered 100 of them. Perhaps somewhat daunted by the prospect of what to do with this number of aircraft, and having as yet to form an aviation policy, civil or military, our Government delayed acceptance of this offer but eventually took up a total of 33 aircraft, made up of Avro, Bristol and de Havilland bi-plane types. This collection of aircraft arrived during 1920, with 19 being Avro 504Ks, thus making the type the most significant and most often seen throughout the country over the following decade. The three privately owned flying companies, NZFS at Auckland, CAC at Christchurch and the New Zealand Aero Transport Co. Ltd (NZAT) at Timaru were 'loaned' a number of the Avro aircraft and some of the other types with the aim being to promote commercial aviation throughout the country.

Over the years there have been high hopes that Nelson, with its equable climate and favourable weather, would become a base from which to operate seaplanes and aeroplanes. One of the first to express such a view was Engineer Lieutenant C.J. Drewitt, RNR, on a visit to Nelson in early June 1919. It was reported that he had "... already mentioned the matter to Sir James Allen, and the Defence Minister informed the Mayor, Mr W.W. Snodgrass that it was the intention of Lieutenant-Colonel A. V. Bettington, visiting RAF advisor to the New Zealand Government on aviation matters, to visit Nelson as soon as

AVRO 504K E9429

E9429 was one of 19 Imperial Gift Avro 504Ks that arrived in New Zealand later in 1920 and one of six 'loaned' by the Government to the Timaru based NZAT. The constructor number is not positively known, but was most likely GW4573. Its flying life in New Zealand was relatively short. Seven weeks after its pioneering Nelson flight E9429 crashed at Hawera on 5 January 1922 while being flown by Captain J.C. 'Bert' Mercer. The aircraft was written off and the useable remains became spare parts.



The Avro 504K E9429 at its second Stoke landing site, where it stopped to pick up Tom Newman and Ted Ranish before the pioneering flight continued to Spring Grove. The stopover was only for a short time but long enough for more photographs to be taken. Tom Newman (in long dark overcoat) is at centre with Ted Ranish (mechanic) and 'Shorty' Fowler (pilot) immediately to his left. FN. JONES COLLECTION, NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM

possible in connection with this matter."⁴⁰ Most likely this visit did not happen and Nelson remained outside the mainstream of New Zealand aviation development.

In late January 1920 Nelson had a visit from Captain Richard Russell, DFC, Croix de Guerre, an experienced and well known World War I aviator, in connection with a move to establish an aerial service between Nelson and Wellington. It was reported that Captain Russell's thoughts now turn "... to the utilisation of his qualifications as an aviator in a peaceful direction. He is much impressed with the suitability of Nelson as a base for an aerial service. Others are of the same opinion, and it is proposed to form a company for the purpose of maintaining such a service, for mails and passengers, between Nelson and Wellington. The terminus on this side would be at Tahunanui and at the Wellington end could be made at one or other of different available places. The distance of something over a hundred miles between the two cities would ordinarily be covered in well under two hours, and Captain Russell has no fears of the regularity of the proposed service being interrupted by adverse weather conditions. The projected company would also arrange to take passengers on short flights from Tahunanui, as is done from aviation centres in other countries."⁴¹ Unfortunately there is no mention of any Nelson names that may have been involved and the proposal was not heard of again. On 11 November 1920, Russell and two passengers died in the crash of an Avro 504K at New Plymouth, at that time the worst aviation accident in the country.⁴²

Well over a year before an aeroplane come anywhere near the Nelson region there is some possible indication of local individuals realising how the benefits of aviation could be applied in a practical way. It was reported in early April 1920 that the newly formed Moutere Hills Railway League, presided over by pioneer apple orchardist Arthur McKee, had "... taken the important steps of authorising a flying survey to ascertain the best possible route for the railway ..." The report ended by saying that "... the members of the executive themselves

have already volunteered, from their own pockets, the amount required for the flying survey."⁴³

New Zealand history was made on 25 August 1920 when an aircraft flew across Cook Strait for the first time. On this historic flight Captain Euan Dickson was flying CAC Avro 504K D6243, accompanied by C.H. Hewlett (CAC deputy chairman) and J.E. Moore (mechanic).

"Climbing to 6000 feet, the Avro 504K hugged the Marlborough coastline until the aircraft passed near Rununder Point. The pilot, Euan Dickson, then turned the aircraft away from the shoreline and pointed the lumbering biplane out across the stretch of water towards the North Island. The date was 25 August 1920, and history was about to be made with the first aerial crossing of Cook Strait. Communications between the two main islands were to be changed forever. The 'ditch' at the narrowest point is only about 23km across. An air link across the strait had long been dreamed of, but Dickson's effort led the way, with increasing numbers of flights throughout the 1920s."⁴⁴

The arrival in Wellington of an aeroplane from the South Island stirred great public and media interest. Three days later Dickson flew the Avro back across the strait on its return trip south, the second aerial crossing of Cook Strait. Communications between the two main islands of New Zealand were now changed forever, although there were only a few more immediate flights.

Nelson may have had its first aerial visitor earlier than it did if the plans of Lyell Tatton had worked out. In early 1921 it was reported that this ex-Nelson College student and World War I trained pilot was planning to be the first to fly to Nelson and hoped to land on the main field at Nelson College, but nothing came of his plans.⁴⁵

The third flight across Cook Strait was not made until over a year later, on 12 September 1921, when Douglas W. Gray accompanied by passenger Horace J. Wilson and mechanic James E. Cruse, crossed the strait in the CAC Avro 504K

P. K. 'SHORTY' FOWLER

Philip Kenning Fowler was born at Cheltenham, near Feilding, on 10 June 1895. After primary school at Cheltenham and Manakau he attended Levin District High School, (now Horowhenua College), and in 1910 started work as an apprentice motor mechanic in Feilding.

In January 1916, after his discharge from the New Zealand Territorial Army, Fowler paid his own passage to England on the *Remuera* and was accepted for service in the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) as a flight sub-lieutenant. His first flight was on 29 May 1916 in a BE.2c at the Royal Naval Air Station, Eastbourne, Sussex, and soon after, on 26 June, he flew his first solo in a Maurice Farman S.7 Longhorn, after 5 hours and 58 minutes of instruction and flying experience. His Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate (No. 3285) was granted from 26 July 1916.

From late December 1916 until the end of January 1918 'Shorty' served with No.2 Wing, RNAS in the Aegean theatre of the Eastern Mediterranean not far from the Dardanelles, initially flying Bristol Scouts and later Sopwith Pups. On 19 December 1917 he gained a mention in despatches "For service in action with enemy submarines". From February 1918 he had an extended 6-month period of leave, during which time he applied for and was granted leave specifically to spend some time back in New Zealand. On his return to the United Kingdom he was based at Yarmouth, on North Sea patrol duties until the end of World War I. During his service in the RNAS, he was promoted to flight lieutenant and appointed as a flight commander and in the Royal Air Force (RAF), from 1 April 1918 until 14 May 1920, held the equivalent rank of captain.

A year after his return to New Zealand in May 1920 Fowler applied for a pilot's licence and his application records that he had flown the following aircraft; Grahame-White Boxkite, Maurice Farman, Bleriot, BE.2c, Avro 504K, Curtiss, Bristol Scout and Bristol Fighter and the following Sopwith types – 1½ Strutter, Pup, Camel and Snipe. Later in 1920 he got a flying job with the New Zealand Aero Transport Co. Ltd (NZAT), based at Timaru. During October 1921, 'Shorty', together with his old friend and co-employee Maurice Buckley, were the first pilots to be charged and later convicted, under the new Aviation Act, for 'trick flying over Timaru; also with flying at so low an altitude that danger to the public was caused'. They were both fined £1.

On 24 October 1921, in exchange for the chance to do some aerial advertising, Herbert Fleming, of Creamoata breakfast cereal fame, sponsored what was to have been a flight from Invercargill to Auckland in one day. On board the de Havilland DH9, were Fleming and Rodolph Wigley, both directors of NZAT, and mechanic Bill Harrington. 'Shorty' was the pilot, but because of unfavourable weather conditions they only got as far as Timaru. This epic flight was completed the following day in another DH9 D3139, flown by Bert Mercer.

On 11 November 1921, 'Shorty', piloting NZAT Avro 504K E9429, together with Ted Ranish, (mechanic and assistant), and with Tom Newman as passenger, made history by becoming the first people to arrive in Nelson by air, when they flew from Lyall Bay, Wellington in about 2¼ hours, and made the first landing at Stoke. This was the seventh recorded aerial crossing of Cook Strait. Early in 1922, Fowler gained a flying position with the Auckland-based New Zealand Flying School (NZFS), at Kohimarama, and flew extensively in the Gisborne-Hawke's Bay region and in the Wellington area.

Following the Government's decision to hold refresher courses for former World War I pilots, 'Shorty' was one of the first to complete the February 1923 flying course at the NZFS. On 17 February, he again made history when, with Lyell Tatton as reserve pilot and mechanic, he arrived in Nelson from Eastbourne, Wellington in NZFS Avro 504L H2989,

landing near the wharves at Port Nelson, the first seaplane to cross Cook Strait.

In June 1923 Fowler was appointed as a captain and founding member of the New Zealand Air Force (NZAF), a territorial unit, and soon after left the NZFS to return to the motor trade, spending the next 10 years in Napier as a car salesman. In 1928 he married Frances 'Bobbie' Taylor. Between 1 September 1930 and 30 March 1932, with the rank of squadron leader, he served as the first CO of No.4 (Army Co-operation) Squadron, NZAF, Dunedin, though, like all NZAF units, the squadron did not have an aeroplane of its own. Although 'Shorty' still flew from time to time, and attended the NZAF refresher flying courses, it is thought that he gave up active flying during 1932. About this time he joined the Hawke's Bay and East Coast Aero Club as a foundation member.

Following the disastrous Hawke's Bay earthquake on 3 February 1931 he moved back to Palmerston North and formed a partnership motor garage business with Bob Porter, but by October 1935, when General Motors (N.Z.) Ltd appointed his garage, Fowler Motors Ltd, as their Manawatu agents, Fowler was the sole owner.

He was elected to the committee of the Middle Districts Aero Club in November 1937 and soon after presented the Fowler Cup, awarded annually for the best first-year pilot. He was elected club president in 1938, and later that same year retired from the Territorial Air Force (TAF), the renamed NZAF.

In September 1940, during the early stages of World War II, Fowler again volunteered for military service and after a short spell at Wigram, Christchurch was posted to Ohakea as Chief Ground Instructor with the rank of flight lieutenant and honorary squadron leader. In November 1941 he was promoted to squadron leader and in March 1942 was posted to Harewood, Christchurch to command the Recruit Training School.

The Air Training Corps (ATC) was formed in early 1941 to train young men for future service in the RNZAF, and from July 1942 Fowler commanded the Auckland Wing. In April 1944 he was appointed as Commandant of the ATC with the rank of wing commander, an appointment he held until early March 1945, when, at his own request, he relinquished his commission.

When civil flying recommenced in 1946 he was elected first post-war president of the Middle Districts Aero Club and continued his aviation interests for many years, later becoming club patron. He was also patron of the local Brevet Club and a long-standing RSA member.

Following his return to the motor trade business in 1945, Fowler continued to run a very successful garage and well-known dealership until his retirement in 1968.

In October 1957, as a special guest of the Nelson Aero Club, he unveiled a commemorative plaque near the site of his first landing at Stoke on 11 November 1921.

Fowler, who remarried in 1942 to Kathleen Galpin, was the father of three daughters, Averil (Johanson), Philippa (Novak) and Janet (King).

Philip Kenning Fowler died at Palmerston North on 12 August 1970, aged 75 years. (GMC)



Wing Commander P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler, later in 1944, when he was Commandant of the Air Training Corps. PHILIPPA NOVAK



Captain P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler standing by the tail of the Avro 504K after a day's joyriding from Tahunanui Beach, November 1921. VIA JENNIFER LUCAS



At William Arnold's farm at Spring Grove, mid-afternoon on 11 November 1921, a group photograph is taken. From left: Ted Ranish (mechanic), P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler (pilot), Alexander Thomson (Mrs Newman's father), Christina Newman and Tom Newman. Tom Newman had planned for the pioneering flight to land on his *Naumai* farm but Fowler decided a larger paddock was preferable on Arnold's nearby property. Note the two spring-type aircraft tie-downs on the ground in front of Fowler. FN. JONES COLLECTION, ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY

H1968. The next and fourth flight was only three days later, by an Avro 504K of the Timaru-based NZAT flown by Captain J.C. 'Bert' Mercer.

The fifth flight across Cook Strait occurred on 25 October 1921 during the course of the first long-distance flight in New Zealand, when Mercer piloted the NZAT de Havilland DH9 D3139 from Timaru through to Auckland in one day with passengers Rodolph Wigley and Herbert Fleming and mechanic William J. Harrington. During the return flight south on 1 November Cook Strait was crossed by air for the sixth time.⁴⁶

Just ten days later the first flight to Nelson happened to be the seventh flight across Cook Strait and understandably created local headlines. Brothers Harry and Tom Newman, long-time prominent road transport operators in the Nelson region and the top of the South Island, pioneered horse-drawn coaches throughout the Nelson region starting in July 1879. They bought their first petrol driven vehicles in 1911, pioneering the use of motorcars on their long and arduous passenger routes, north-eastwards to Blenheim and south and west to Murchison and onto Westport. With the popularity of motorised transport overtaking the outdated horse-drawn coaches, Tom Newman drove the last old-fashioned coach journey, from Murchison to Glenhope, in 1918. Three years later when the first flight to Nelson took place the Newman name was again involved in this new form of transport. With the knowledge of Dickson's recent first aerial crossing of Cook Strait, 62-year-old Thomas 'Tom' Newman, the well-respected and experienced co-founder and director of Newman Bros Ltd, was soon determined to be the first passenger to arrive in Nelson by air.

The first two attempts by Tom Newman to fly home to his Brightwater farm *Naumai* were unsuccessful. In early November 1921 he learned that Mr H. N. (Nelson) Hawker of the CAC had flown from Sockburn to Blenheim and was giving passenger flights,⁴⁷ so he made arrangements for the charter flight home. On the first attempt, departing at 10.15am on 5 November, Avro 504K D6243 took off from Marlborough's Fairhall Aerodrome but was forced back to its starting point due to deteriorating weather on the Blenheim side of Tophouse.⁴⁸ A second attempt was made late morning the next day. This time there was a second passenger, Henry McCartney, proprietor of the Club Hotel, Blenheim, but after again striking bad weather, this time a few miles on the Waimea side of Tophouse, Hawker abandoned the trip and turned back towards Blenheim.

When they were not far from their destination and over the town at about 800 feet the engine failed and the pilot was forced to make an emergency landing in a much smaller paddock than he would have liked, at the end of Dillon Street. The Avro's undercarriage collapsed as the biplane landed heavily, the aircraft slewed round smashing the propeller, badly damaging the wings and struts and twisting the fuselage. Remarkably, apart from Newman receiving a badly bruised arm, none of those on board were injured.⁴⁹ The aircraft took some weeks to repair, and on 30 December another company pilot, Harry C. Grout, set off from Blenheim to return the Avro to Sockburn. However, the engine failed near Motunau and in attempting an emergency landing, the Avro stalled and crashed. Unfortunately Grout later died in hospital of his injuries; the aircraft was not rebuilt – a sad end to an historic aircraft, the first to fly across Cook Strait.⁵⁰



Excited locals of all ages gather around the recently arrived aeroplane at Spring Grove.
F.N. JONES COLLECTION, NELSON PROVINCIAL MUSEUM



Undaunted by this latest mishap, Newman became even more resolute about 'flying home' and contacted 26 year-old Captain P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler, an experienced pilot with the NZAT of Timaru. Fowler was engaged at the time on a northern excursion conducting joyriding flights from the Lyall Bay football grounds in Wellington (not far from the present Wellington International Airport at Rongotai). A fee of £100 was agreed upon for the charter flight, so Newman crossed Cook Strait by ferry steamer and on 10 November the following short announcement in the *Nelson Evening Mail*, indicated that Friday 11 November 1921 was to be the 'big' day; "The N.Z. Aero Transport Coy wires that provided skies are clear we are flying Mr Tom Newman from Lyall Bay to Brightwater tomorrow starting about seven a.m."⁵¹

Fowler's aircraft was one of the gift Avro 504K biplanes, with the RAF serial E9429, and was delivered to NZAT at Timaru during November 1920. The Avro had been converted, with the addition of a third cockpit to take two passengers which made for more lucrative joyriding returns and, for the longer flights which were still pioneering and challenging, it enabled a mechanic to accompany the pilot as well as a paying passenger.

Fowler worked out a plan with Newman to have a suitable paddock marked out on his farm *Naumai*, the intended destination, on the southern side of Brightwater. Later Fowler recalled, "On this particular morning it wasn't very good weather, a bit overcast when Mr Newman arrived at the landing ground. I didn't like the look of the weather for a start, so we postponed the flight until about 10 o'clock. Then it broke a little and we were away."⁵²

In addition to Tom Newman, Edward 'Ted' E.C. Ranish, Fowler's mechanic and assistant was also aboard the Avro, which carried 100 copies of that morning's *The Dominion* newspaper. It slowly gained height to an altitude of about 2000 feet to cross Cook Strait under the cloud, the actual crossing only taking about 15 minutes. None of those on board had parachutes or any other emergency equipment, although Fowler later commented that his flying coat, lined

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Two days later on 13 November 1921 the second aeroplane arrives in Nelson after a flight from Blenheim. The large de Havilland DH9 H5627 of Canterbury (NZ) Aviation Co. Ltd, flown by Mr H.N. Hawker, is taxiing in at Saxton's paddock, Stoke. Bystanders are ready for the next joyride flight.
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with Kapok, would have helped keep him afloat for some hours!⁵³ Over the Marlborough Sounds there were few glimpses of land, so Fowler steered the Avro around the northern side of the Sounds toward D'Urville Island. Fowler said, "The navigation aids were crude, all I had was a compass and cross level, that's about all, and a school atlas. Before I got to French Pass I was unsure where we were and said to Mr Newman, 'Any idea where we are?', the reply was, 'I'm damned if I know!'. However, we eventually saw the pass, then soon after, flying down the bay, we picked up Nelson in the distance and I was greatly relieved."⁵⁴

With its 100hp Gnome rotary engine the Avro only operated at one full-on speed and used a lot of oil. Fowler commented, "The range of the aircraft was about two hours and a quarter. She used about nine gallons of petrol an hour and two gallons of oil. She ran on pure castor oil and it was very heavy on oil. It went through the engine once and then out into the air. It seeped through cowls and got over everything."⁵⁵ With having to fly relatively low and a longer route, the Avro consumed more fuel than expected. As the aircraft got closer to Nelson, Fowler recalled the dramatic event, "I was very anxious at this time because fuel was running low. Circling over the Post Office the



The de Havilland DH9 attracted significant attention and Hawker was keen for local people to feel confident about a flight. The aircraft retains its Royal Air Force markings and the fuselage canopy is open ready for the next passengers. Note the prominent radiator below the Armstrong Siddeley Puma engine of 265hp. VIA DAVID MILLER

motor stopped and I was out of petrol, but the Avro carried a four-gallon tank on the top wing, which was fed to the motor by gravity and kept the engine just running at low revs, but it would run and keep you in the air. Those mudflats behind the Boulder Bank looked very inviting to land on, and I headed for them but Mr Newman, terribly perturbed, said, 'Don't go down there for goodness sake. It's all mud.' So we pushed on and I landed right in front of the hotel at Stoke, side to wind, and got away with it – with about a gallon left in my gravity tank."⁵⁶

The Avro had touched down unexpectedly on Marsden's *Ise* farm property at Stoke at 1.08pm, on today's Greenmeadows Park.⁵⁷ There was no-one present to officially witness the unexpected landing, but it didn't take long before a large crowd gathered around the aircraft and the three men, who were recuperating after the noisy two and a quarter hour flight from Wellington. Fowler spoke of the occasion, "I've never had such a reception in all my life. There was just a stream of people and for most of them it was the first time they had ever seen an aircraft." The Mayor of Richmond, William E. Wilkes hurried to the scene and was the first to congratulate the pilot and passengers on being the first to arrive in the Nelson district by air. Soon after their arrival, the elderly owner of the property, James W. Marsden, who was much more from the horse and cart era, sent his gardener, 'Dan' Cresswell, with a stern message to those concerned, to; "Get that 'thing' off my land!"⁵⁸ And so they did, after replenishing the Avro's petrol supply from Walter Heath's nearby garage and blacksmith shop, just across the main road in Stoke. Fowler took off on his own, because of the restricted paddock size, and landed again a few minutes later in a larger paddock on Saxton's farm, a couple of miles or so further on and it was here that Newman and Ranish climbed aboard again and soon the Avro was away on the final leg of its historic journey.

As they neared Brightwater, Fowler could see a small fire burning to help as a guiding signal and to give an indication of wind direction. Flying overhead, he observed that the Newman farm paddock chosen for the landing was too small and he would have to land elsewhere. A larger paddock on William Arnold's nearby property, immediately to the east of the Spring Grove Railway Station was selected and the Avro came to a bumpy stop and was soon surrounded by a large crowd of adults and children who had been informed by telephone that the aircraft was on its way.⁵⁹ In 1957, at the time of the unveiling of the commemorative plaque at Stoke 36 years later, Fowler stated, "I would not cross the strait today in it [the Avro] for a



In the days following the Avro's arrival, 'Shorty' Fowler does joyriding from Tahunanui Beach. During his extended stay in the Nelson area Fowler did many joyriding flights often from beaches like this and racecourses. VIA NOEL WOOLF

gold clock or a thousand pounds.”

Reg Kingsford, professional photographer and owner of *The Bromia Studio* and an ex-wartime bomber pilot, was quick off the mark and the next day, Saturday the 12th, had a selection of 'Mr T. Newman's Historical Flight Recorded In Photographs By *The Bromia*', available for sale to the public. Well-known Nelson bookseller, Alf Robinson had anticipated the commercial possibilities of the historic flight and had arranged for 'Shorty' Fowler to bring with him to Nelson 100 copies of *The Dominion*. Robinson stamped them with a special cachet which read, 'Aeroplane Edition, Nelson, 2 p.m., Nov. 11.' and sold them for three shillings and sixpence each, as a souvenir of

the special occasion. It was the first time that *The Dominion* had been sold in Nelson on the same day that it was printed.⁶⁰ Alf Robinson's shop also acted as agent where bookings could be made for 10 minute flights in the Avro from Richmond Park, the fares being from £2/2/- for adults and £1/1/- for children under 15 years. Under the by-line, 'Aeroplane Visit', an advertisement by Newman Bros advised the public that they would run cars from the Crown Garage, Hardy Street, to the Richmond Show Grounds on Sunday.⁶¹

The names of the aerial 'joyriders' who went flying with 'Shorty' Fowler during the first weekend of flying in Nelson were published; C. Newport, M. Roughton, L. Atkinson, R. Lusty,

TOM NEWMAN & SIR JACK NEWMAN

Thomas 'Tom' Newman (1859-1944) was a pioneer transport founder and early aviation promoter, and first passenger to fly to Nelson. He was one of 11 children of William and Eliza Newman, who had both arrived in Nelson as children onboard the *Bolton* in 1842. Tom and his brothers grew up on the family farm *Naumai* at Brightwater, were schooled locally, and developed an interest and skills with horses.

After time as a driver of a timber wagon he returned to the family farm after his father drowned in Marlborough. He and his brother Harry succeeded in securing a mail service from the recently completed railhead at Foxhill to Hampden (Murchison) and they introduced their own four-spring coach, built in Nelson, on the service on 1 July 1879. Cobb coaches followed and from 1 January 1891 the Newmans operated a full service between Nelson and Blenheim. The company purchased a motorcar in 1911 and service cars were progressively introduced until they took over from coaches in 1918.

Tom married Christina Thomson on 14 March 1900 at Fern Flat, near Murchison, and they had seven children. After his brother Harry's death in 1919, he bought up all the company shares and introduced his youthful son Jack into the family business. As an entrepreneurial transport pioneer Tom became interested in aviation and was determined to be the first passenger to fly into Nelson. On his third attempt with Captain P.K. 'Shorty' Fowler he succeeded on 11 November 1921. Soon after, Tom and his wife were the first passengers to land at Motueka and later, in March 1930 he was the first passenger to land at Murchison. His aviation interest passed to Jack who with his father's encouragement became involved in the management and investment side of early New Zealand airlines. Tom Newman died at Richmond in March 1944.

Sir Jack Newman (1902-1996) was the eldest son of Thomas and Christina Newman and was born at Brightwater. Schooling was at Spring Grove School and Nelson College. Entering the family motor business in 1922 Jack worked in various positions before being appointed a Newman's director in 1927 and managing director in 1930.

In the early 1930s Jack travelled to the United States to purchase second hand Cadillac cars to upgrade the Newman Bros fleet. The Cadillacs were modified to seat 10-12 passengers and were reliable workhorses for many years until replaced by International buses. After expansion into the North Island, Jack became chairman of directors of the newly formed company Transport (Nelson) Ltd, which in post-war years grew into a large transport conglomerate dominant in the upper South Island.

Having been taken for a flight by 'Shorty' Fowler in November 1921 Jack developed a keen interest in aviation. An inaugural member of the Nelson Aero Club, Jack was influential in helping provide financial support for two pioneering aviation companies, Dominion Airlines and Cook Strait Airways. He later served as a director of Cook Strait Airways and was a frequent traveller on the new inter-island air service.

He was awarded a CBE in 1963 for his business and extensive community involvement and in 1977 he was knighted for services to the travel industry, commerce and the community. Although Sir Jack retired from the Transport Nelson Group in 1980 (the Newmans Group from 1986) he continued as honorary founder president. In 1984 he witnessed Newmans Air inaugurate services to major tourist centres (but not Nelson), and in 1986 the airline became a constituent part of the newly established Ansett New Zealand. Sir Jack was also instrumental in the beginnings of Nelson's Founders Heritage Park. Married to Myrtle Olive Alexandra Thomas in 1926, they had four daughters. Sir Jack Newman died at Nelson in September 1996 after a lifetime involvement in the transport and travel industry and in community service. (RW)



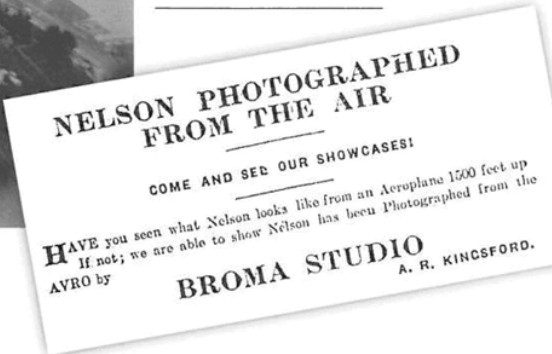
Sir Jack Newman at a Nelson aviation event in 1989. VIA GRAEME MCCONNELL



Tom Newman (right) with M.C. 'Mac' McGregor at the time of the first aircraft landing at Murchison on 23 March 1930. A.R. KINGSFORD COLLECTION



In an early aerial view over Nelson, taken on one of 'Shorty' Fowlers' joyriding flights, Victoria Heights are at left and Queens Road sweeps around to the right. The Nelson harbour wharves are in the background with the Boulder Bank in the distance.
VIA TED BIDDLE



H. Kemp, W. Beach, S. Sutton, C.B. Webby, T.J.P. Stone, A. Lemmer, R. Harden, R.W. Smith, J. Smith, D.H. Johnston, L.T. Stratford, A. Falconbridge, W. Chapman, H. Glover, Miss D. Sadler, R., S. & A. Newman, T. Barton, B. Andrews, P. E. Kearns, G.N. Fawcett, F. Currin, W. Andrews, J. Newman, Miss G. Colt, K.W. Savage, B.F. Huffam, R. Huffam, M. Palmer, Chas. Haggitt, J. Ruff, G. Soper, W.J. Moffatt, A.D. Shallcrass, R.S. Palmer, J.E. Allan, Dorothy Allan, E.H. Thomson, C. Hollis, A. Adams, F.R. Barker, C.R. Stroud, J. Barton, B. Tomlinson, M. Dunn, L.A. Siggelkow, T. Webby, H. Ross, N. Sutton, G.H. Washbourn, G. Sturgeon, G.H. Stewart and Mrs Stewart.⁶²

Two days later, on Sunday 13 November 1921, Nelson welcomed its second aerial visitor when Mr H. Nelson Hawker, on his third attempt to fly to Nelson, brought CAC de Havilland DH9 H5627 from Blenheim with passengers Messrs H. McArtney and J.W. Perano, and landed in Saxton's paddock, Stoke at 1.35pm after a 40 minute flight and were welcomed by Nelson's Mayor, William Lock. The aircraft had been flown from Sockburn, earlier in the morning by Captain Euan Dickson, taking 1 hour and 28 minutes for that part of the journey. The two aviation companies competed strongly for joyriding passengers, with both firms taking front-page advertisements in the local newspaper, the Avro flying from Richmond Park and the DH9 flying from Saxton's paddock.⁶³

This competition was undoubtedly a factor when it was decided, without prior approval, to unload a NZAT consignment of 20 cases of aviation spirit, two drums of oil and a leather bag from the Anchor Shipping & Foundry Co coastal ship *Nikau* on Sunday the 13th. This action contravened Nelson Harbour Board (NHB) by-laws prohibiting such work on a Sunday. A follow-up letter to the shipping company threatened a fine of £20 for the by-law breach but an apology for this action was accepted instead.⁶⁴ Competition eased for a few days when the DH9 was grounded while waiting for Captain Maurice Buckley to arrive from Christchurch and take over from Hawker who had

become ill, but flights in the larger aircraft could still be booked through their agents, Vining's Garage and M.F.C. Motors Ltd, at rates from one to four Guineas (£1/1/- to £4/4).⁶⁵

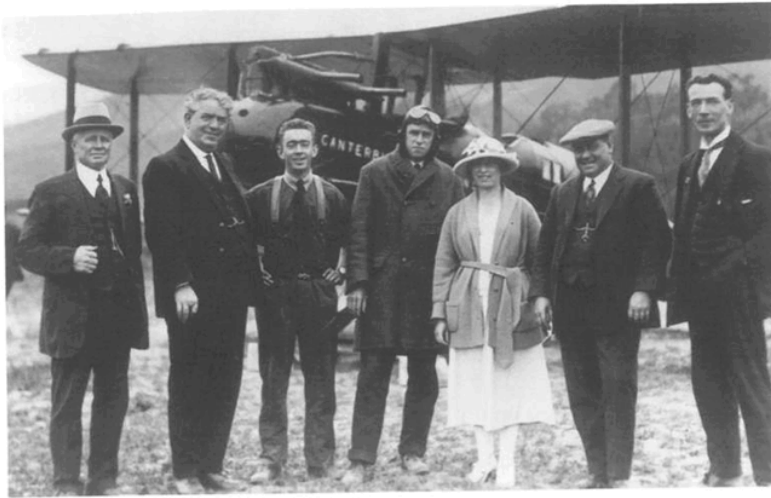
A few days after their flight, 'Shorty' Fowler and Tom Newman were honoured at a special dinner held at the Commercial Hotel and it is interesting to note that Fowler, in reply to the complimentary speeches given and in thanking the people of Nelson for their hospitality and congratulations, thought that it was a journey more suited to a seaplane than a landplane, and in 1923 this is how he would arrive for his second visit – by seaplane.⁶⁶

With the Nelson A. & P. show only a week away, concern was raised about the presence of aeroplanes and the safety of stock. Both aviation companies agreed to no flying over Richmond Park during show days and this was the reason for flying operations transferring to the Tahunanui Sands area.⁶⁷

The first flight from Nelson to Wellington was planned for the 17th in the DH9, but Hawker and his passengers, William Lock, H.J. Harris and Joe Ruff, were held-up by weather, so their trip started next morning at 10am. Unfortunately the aircraft, which was also carrying the first airmail to leave Nelson, struck a south-easterly gale as they neared Cook Strait and after an hour and twenty minutes was forced to land at Blenheim

Hawker's de Havilland DH9 after landing on Tahunanui Beach in November 1921, described as "aeroplaning at Tahuna" by the photographer. Prospective customers and other interested Nelsonians gather before another flight. The Nelson City Council gave permission to Hawker and Fowler to use the beach on alternate days for their joyriding work. F.N. JONES COLLECTION, NATIONAL LIBRARY





Shortly before the first commercial flight from Nelson to Wellington, pilot and passengers gather for a photograph on 18 November 1921. From left: Mr W. Lock (Mayor of Nelson), Mr H. J. Harris, Mr W. Harrington (Mechanic), Mr H. N. Hawker (pilot), Mrs Hawker, Mr J. Ruff and Mr J. Cruise (Manager of Canterbury (NZ) Aviation Co Ltd). Messer's Lock, Harris and Ruff are on a business trip to the capital city. Leaving Stoke at 10.06am, by the time they were over Havelock they were at an altitude of 7200ft. Poor weather led to the flight diverting to Blenheim, and the de Havilland returned to Nelson the next day, arriving at 10.49am after a 45 minute flight.

F.N. JONES, NATIONAL LIBRARY

because of the extreme conditions. The continuing gale force winds in the strait forced the intrepid travellers to abandon their attempt to fly to the capital and they flew back to Nelson the next day. It was reported that both Mayor Lock and Joe Ruff thoroughly enjoyed the experience, though the former did not like the 'sensation' when the plane dropped a few thousand feet in a few seconds. Joe Ruff said enthusiastically that he would 'go again tomorrow'.⁶⁸

Amid the celebration of these pioneer flights to Nelson a



89-year-old Mrs Sarah Haycock of Richmond about to climb into the Avro for a local joyride flight with 'Shorty' Fowler on 18 November 1921. Ted Ranish assists the oldest Nelson passenger to experience flight.
VIA JENNIFER LUCAS

near fatal accident was averted on another Cook Strait aerial crossing. Avro 504K E3142 of the NZAT, flown by Bill Parke, crashed at Red Rocks on Wellington's south coast on 20 November, just nine days after Fowler's historic flight. Parke's crossing had been made from Blenheim but about half way across the aircraft ran into a northerly gale and soon after it developed engine trouble. Fortunately Parke was able to extend the glide and had almost made it to Happy Valley Beach at Red Rocks when a gust of wind blew him back into the sea. The Avro was wrecked by waves but Parke got ashore safely.

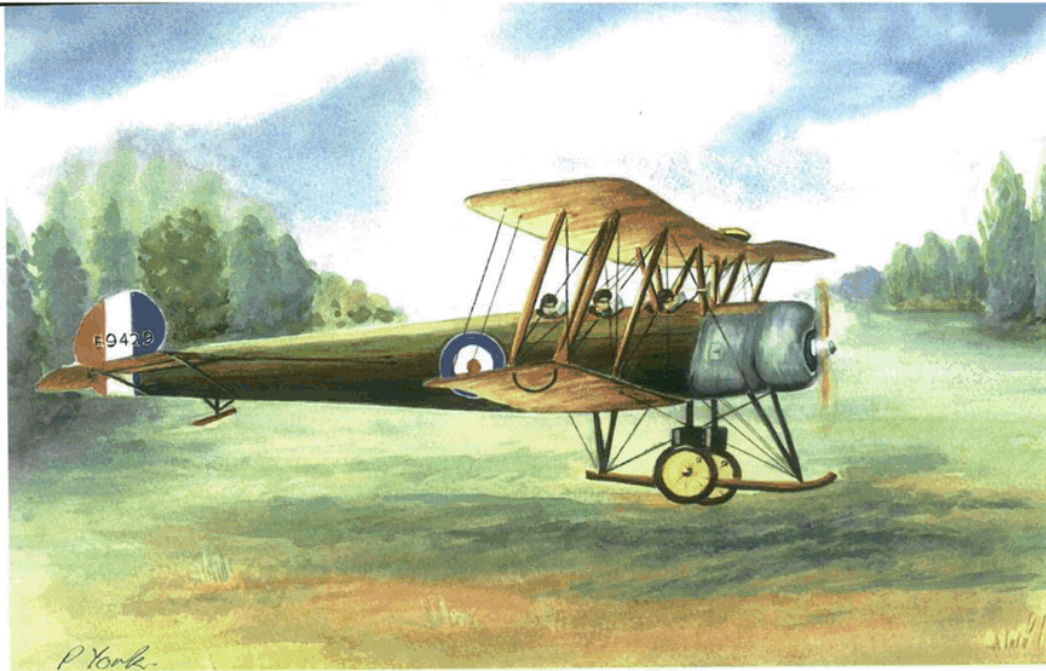
Fowler and the Avro stayed on in Nelson offering local joyride flights, firstly from Richmond Park

and a few days later from Tahunanui Beach. Newman Bros continued to be involved and organised their service cars to transport passengers out from Nelson. One of those who went flying for the first time was Mrs Sarah Haycock of Ashfield, Richmond. In her 90th year and one of the district's oldest residents, she thoroughly enjoyed her flight over Nelson.⁶⁹

Motueka, the next town to be visited by air, saw the arrival of both the Avro and the DH9 on 21 November. Fowler arrived first, in Avro 504K E9429 with passengers Tom Newman and his wife. The Avro landed on Livesey's Farm, situated on the north side of Old Wharf Road and to the east of High Street. Soon after, Hawker, with passengers Miss Lucas, George Newman and Mr F. Mockett arrived on a return flight from Nelson in DH9 H5627.⁷⁰ Fowler later recalled, "Nelson was one of the best passenger places I ever flew in New Zealand. We used to take as much as one hundred and twenty pounds in an afternoon, at a pound a time flying for the children. Once you got somebody in the air to break the ice the rest followed 'like sheep through a race' in those days."⁷¹

By now it seems as though most of the flying was being done from the Tahunanui Beach area and on the evening of 22 November the Nelson City Council held a special meeting to consider applications from both aviation companies to operate from Tahunanui. Captain Tom Wilkes, Secretary to the New Zealand Air Board, who had arrived in Nelson the previous day on business connected with his department, was invited to attend the meeting and advised that the Tahunanui landing area could only be licensed to one company. Consequently it was decided to allow the NZAT and the CAC to use the area on alternate days, until the applications had been fairly dealt with.⁷² At a meeting on the 25th the Council received a letter from NZAT pointing out the unfairness of having to share the landing ground, as it was the first to use the area, with the Council's permission, and had spent money grading it on the understanding that the company had the use of the area for a reasonable time. The company also stated it was prepared to erect a hangar and start a service between Nelson and Wellington. Captain Euan Dickson, manager of CAC, who had arrived in Nelson that day also attended the meeting and placed the claims of his company before the council, stating that his company was prepared to run a service from Nelson and erect a hangar, if that step was found to be justified.⁷³

Within a week, on 27 November, another CAC aircraft, Avro 504K H1970, flown by Captain Maurice Buckley had arrived



An evocative water colour painting of the first aeroplane landing at Motueka. 'Shorty' Fowler flies Avro 504K E9429 from Nelson on 21 November 1921 with passengers Tom and Christina Newman, landing at Livesey's farm, about a mile south of the Post Office. PAM YORK

in Nelson. This aircraft, with Mr F. Mockett as passenger, was the first to fly to Golden Bay, on the 28th, when it flew direct to Takaka, landing on the old racecourse before returning via Motueka. On 1 December Buckley again flew from Nelson to Takaka, but this time landed near the Motueka Bridge on the way to pick-up two passengers, sisters Mary and Kathleen Goodwin of Riwaka.⁷⁴

Many would have thought this flurry of aeroplane activity in Nelson during the last two months of 1921 was a sign of things to come – and so it was, but not until the early 1930s – still ten years away!

An advertisement by *The Bromo Studio* stated, "NELSON PHOTOGRAPHED FROM THE AIR – Have you seen what Nelson looks like from an Aeroplane 1500 feet up", and in another report the studio's owner, Reg Kingsford, explained the procedure when taking photographs from the Avro piloted by 'Shorty' Fowler.⁷⁵ The popular Captain 'Shorty' Fowler was farewelled from Nelson during the evening of 2 December at a function at the Commercial Hotel where he was presented with various gifts before leaving to sit an aviation examination. It was reported that S.V. 'Snowy' Mallard would be the replacement pilot.⁷⁶

On 14 December 1921 Maurice Buckley, with mechanic Bill Harrington, set off from Nelson for the first flight to the West Coast. The Avro 504K H1970 left early, at 4.30am, from the Tahunanui Sands for Westport and made good progress over the rugged terrain. After they circled Westport, attracting much attention, they approached the nearby pre-arranged landing site on the abattoir paddock on Bullock Island. However, the 110hp Le Rhone rotary engine cut out due to fuel starvation on final approach and the Avro crash-landed just short of their intended touchdown point. Fortunately Buckley and Harrington suffered only lacerations and bruising but just 10 minutes or so after they left the scene for medical attention a careless spectator dropped a match and the damaged aircraft was completely burnt out.⁷⁷ The experiences of both Parke, on 20 November, and Buckley and Harrington well illustrates the inherent risks of early pioneering flights – in both cases they were fortunate to

survive the forced landings.

After five weeks of successful and lucrative time offering joyrides around the region Avro 504K E9429, the aircraft that brought Tom Newman home to Brightwater on 11 November, returned to Wellington on 18 December, via Blenheim. 'Snowy' Mallard, who had taken over from 'Shorty' Fowler, piloted the aircraft and was accompanied by Alan Salter, mechanic.⁷⁸

The first non-stop flight between Nelson and Christchurch was made by Buckley, accompanied by mechanic Harrington, in DH9 H5627 on 24 January 1922. The direct flight, lasting two hours, left Nelson at 11.00am.⁷⁹

The next important flight to Nelson was on Saturday 17 February 1923, when the first floatplane to cross Cook Strait flew from Wellington to Nelson. Piloted by 'Shorty' Fowler, now employed by the NZFS, the Auckland-based Avro 504L H2989 had been operating from Eastbourne, on Wellington Harbour, giving joyride flights to people attending the suburb's carnival. The plan was for it to fly to Nelson and then go on to the West Coast to carry out further joyriding business.

The Avro left Rona Bay at 6.45am and headed for Cape Terawhiti in fine, clear weather but with a head wind. The floatplane had Nelsonian Lyell Tatton aboard. From the lighthouse at the Cape it climbed gradually as it headed for The Brothers, then passed over French Pass at 3000 feet and on along the east coast of Tasman Bay towards Nelson Harbour. It landed on Nelson Haven near the wharves just after 8.40am, after a flight time from Wellington of one hour and 58 minutes. Fowler's previous Nelson flying experience and his knowledge of the harbour, together with Tatton's local knowledge, proved helpful in planning the flight. The floatplane carried copies of that morning's *The Dominion* and they were on sale in Nelson just after 9am on the day of issue. *The Dominion* on the following Monday reported, "Thus was demonstrated the possibility of a journey across the Strait and back again before lunch, a probable daily affair 'ere many years have elapsed."⁸⁰

The Avro, the first floatplane to cross Cook Strait, also flew one of New Zealand's first advertising flights with the words 'GOLD CROWN GASOLINE' prominently sign-written in large