



January 2026
Number 194

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Airtourer Association



Newsletter

Dedicated to the preservation and continued airworthiness of
Vista and AESL Airtourer and derivative series aircraft

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Articles for inclusion in the Newsletter should be submitted directly to the Editor at the contacts listed above. Contributions and or advertisements for the next issue need to be received by 21 February 2026. Advertisements are free for Association members.

Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Publishers, the Airtourer Association or the Airtourer Co-operative Ltd.

Cover: Stunning image of CT-4E (RTAF Type 16k) c/n 235 at the Kampaengsaen Air Force Base open day in December 2023. Photo: Napapol, Spinner Team (Thailand)



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From the Editor

by **Tony Self** (AESL Airtourer T6/24, VH-FVV)

The President usually owns this page of the Newsletter, but as she is overseas at present, I have unilaterally decided to take it over.

It is not my usual practice to include an Editorial, but seeing it's a New Year... why not?

When I *temporarily* stepped in to fill the Editor role, I took the opportunity to change the technology used to draft, edit, and publish the magazine, and to also do my best to apply a rigorous two-month publication cycle. Last year (2025, if I recall!) there were seven editions: the six bi-monthly plus a special 50 Years of CT-4 edition for Tamworth participants.

For anyone interested, this Newsletter is created as a Google Doc, and when the content is all checked and okayed by the Committee, it gets saved as a PDF. The PDF then gets imported into a program called Flowpaper, the video and other fancy things are added, and Flowpaper then magically generates and uploads the online interactive version.

That process is actually going really well, and it minimises a lot of the dreary work. However, the problem that I face every edition is finding content! I am very grateful to the members who have contributed stories and photos; these contributions have been superb.

But the pool of contributors is quite shallow. And this is where I need your help! Please consider putting pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, to let the membership know what you've done, intend doing, have heard about, are expert in, or can learn from. Don't think that you can't write well... you may surprise yourself, and/or I am very happy to tidy up and polish your words.

Likewise, if you have anything to buy, swap or sell, let me know! Event coming up? Let me know! You've done a big trip, or finished an endorsement? Let me know! Want to have your own regular column? Let me know! The address is editor@airtourer.asn.au.

Happy New Year to all!

And happy flying!



THE LATEST NEWS



Aeroplane 50th and 60th Birthdays

Airtourers

- VH-MRI (Susan Clark) - 14 Feb 1966
- VH-GUS (Des Heffernan) - 22 Feb 1966
- ZK-DLW (Reon Blake) - 29 Mar 1966

Airtrainers

- The first RAAF batch was completed at the end of 1975. The production line continued with the controversial “Swiss Aero Club” order; 14 completed aircraft were impounded and were stored in crates for the next five years! No more birthdays till July, when the RNZAF batch started.

Members Only Offer!



Punkin Head Air Sports are offering Airtourer Association members a 5% discount on all canopy, propeller and pitot/intake covers for Airtourers and CT-4s. Dianne has the patterns for all models, and can provide covers in different materials and weights. Phone Dianne on 0429 938 426 or visit



www.punkinheadair.com.au



Buy, Swap and Sell

Don't let your unneeded Airtourer and CT-4 bits and pieces collect dust! Put them up for sale here! Or do you need a particular part or instrument? Ask here! Why not try to swap for something you no longer need? Or is it time to re-home your aircraft, or are you looking to buy? *Buy, Swap and Sell* is your Airtourer and CT-4 marketplace! It's free to advertise... just send your ad to editor@airtourer.asn.au.

For Sale: Propeller

Propeller - original 115 McCauley fixed pitch propeller with 300 hours of life before requiring refurbishment. Contact Ray Abernethy, rayabernethy@gmail.com, 0409 411 940.



For Sale: Tyres and Seat

3 only 500x5 brand new old stock tyres suitable for Airtourers.

Seats are original in excellent condition - vinyl only requiring dusting off and cleaning due to storage.



Contact Ray Abernethy, rayabernethy@gmail.com, 0409 411 940.

Advertise here! Buy, Swap and Sell advertisements for Association members are free!



For Sale: Victa Airtourer VH-MRJ

Serial number 107. Made in Australia in 1965.

150 HP Lycoming Engine O-320 E1A installed 10/01/2020 @ 2405.5 AFTT (brand new engine, not an overhauled engine). Engine 178.1 TSN.

Constant speed propeller. Propeller 12.6 SMOH.

The numbers on the prop and engine are at the last M/R issue Dec 24.

Total time on airframe 2595.5 hours as of 19/08/2025.

Always hangared. Never used by flying school. Brand new paint done in September 2022.

History

150 HP Lycoming engine installed in 2004 when aircraft was registered VH-LVW.

Instruments and avionics

1 x 430 Garmin GPS, 1 x GTX 327 Garmin Transponder, 1 x PS Engineering audio panel, Fuel scan FS-450



Contact Sandra Cabot, 0416 170 946, doctorcabot@liverdoctor.com

For Sale: VH-RQH Airtourer 150 Fixed Pitch

The rebuild project is almost complete and will be sold with maintenance release. Reluctant sale due to health and hangarage challenges.

Contact Rod Swallow 0427 521 803



Victa Airtourer 115 VH-MVF

We are selling MVF! Aussie built 115, serial number 19. MVF was a demonstrator for Victa and was on static display at Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1963. Call or text Mark Barnett for details Ph: 0400 051 528



Share in TPY

A syndicate share of TPY is up for sale, \$6500. Near new Lycoming, recently overhauled, and new paint and tyres.

Located Gympie, Queensland. This share is only being sold due to not being flown regularly by the owner.

Contact Michael Smith via Facebook or [Plane Sales](#).



Calendar of Events

13-15 March 2026	Airshows Downunder Shellharbour	Interested in attending? Let the committee know!
28-29 March 2026	Warbirds Over Scone	Interested in attending? Let the committee know!
11 April 2026	Beverley Airshow, WA	www.beverleyairshow.com.au
May 2026	Airtourer Convention and AGM	Temora
26-28 June 2026	Brass Monkeys Formation Clinic	Toowoomba
October 2026	Merimbula, NSW	Dates TBA

Brass Monkeys - Toowoomba

Airtourer Association members with formation endorsements are invited to join the annual Brass Monkeys formation flying clinic at Toowoomba City Community Aerodrome in June 2026. This event is hosted by Aerotec, and has been running for a number of years. Although the Brass Monkeys are made up of Winjeels and CT-4s, there's room for one or two Airtourers. If Yarrawonga Formation Camp (each November) is too far away (in both meanings), contact Matt Hanley (matthandley308@gmail.com) and see if you might fit in! You'll need to pack your woollies! It's cold mid-winter in Toowoomba! (Thus the name of the group!)



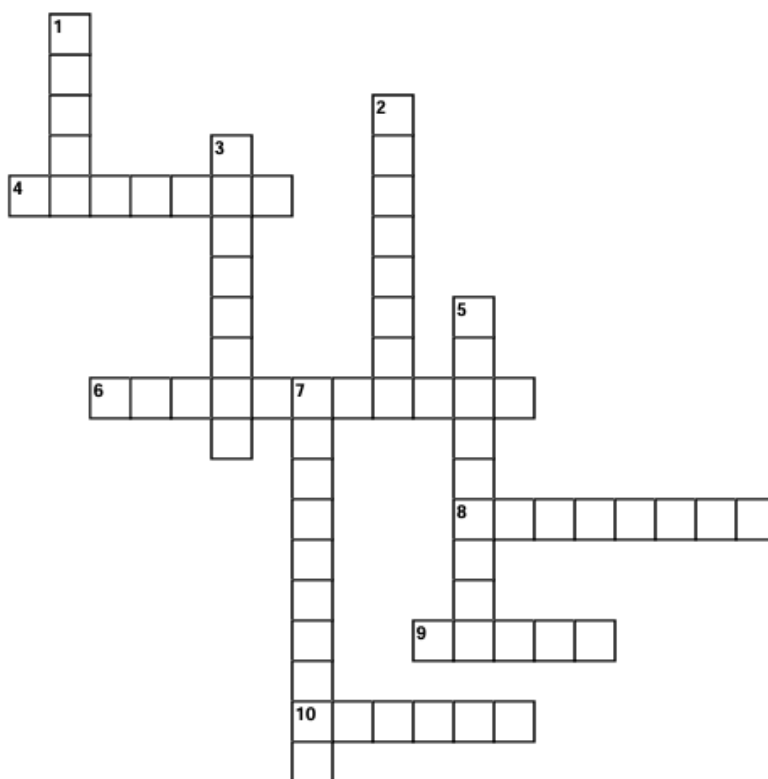
Airtourer Family Crossword Puzzle

Across

- [4]** President
- [6]** Victa 100 and CT-4A have this in common (although only one Rolls).
- [8]** Many of us fly things born here, eh bro. (Also a musical.)
- [9]** Something you fall off, and the name of an Airtourer legend
- [10]** Something VNE tells you not to

Down

- [1]** Foxtrot Mickey
- [2]** Something Airtourers roll because of
- [3]** Where we met in September
- [5]** Type of canopy
- [7]** Boring name of this publication



Solution on page 23. Use the Print button... easier to do on paper.

Audio

Nat Little, from ABC Radio, interviewed Terry Green, Tony Self and Chad Summers for an ABC New England radio report. Unfortunately, Chad's contributions ended up on the radio equivalent of the cutting room floor. And Tony had some stage fright and got the aircraft production numbers wrong. But Terry, who proved he's a natural at being an interview subject, saved the day to make it a great story! Listen for yourself!

<https://soundcloud.com/user-967162232/abc-new-england-radio-report/s-MaEEtd9kD4C>

You don't need to create an account... click the X on the top right of the sign-in panel.



Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon

The Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon Rule says that every actor in Hollywood can be connected to prolific actor Kevin Bacon through having worked together. It's easier to explain with an example: Michael Caton (*The Castle*) was in *Never Tell Me Never* with Joel Edgerton who was in *Black Mass* with Kevin Bacon. This gives a Bacon Number of 2.

There is a Web site that you can use to find the Bacon number.

<https://www.oracleofbacon.org/index.php>

In the November edition of the Newsletter, we asked for the Bacon Number of the **Transavia Airtruk**.

There are many connections. Perhaps the most obvious is that the Airtruk designer, Luigi Pellarini, also designed the Victa R2 low-wing four-seater, of which only the prototype was built. It is currently on display at HARS (in the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame), bearing the registration VH-MVR, which was later applied to the Aircruiser prototype.



Murray Joel found a more personal connection, which warrants its own little article (see page 11).

Here's the next Bacon challenge... **Lockheed Lodestar**. (Hint: VH-XUS in Wanaka.)



Airtruks, Neil McDonald and Me

by **Murray Joel** (NZAI CT-4A 042 VH-LAH)

I started my power flying training in 1977 with now-defunct Schofields Flying Club, (defunct, at least, at Schofields Airfield), under the tutelage of CFI Neil McDonald. When Schofields closed in 1995, operations moved to YSBK, and later expanded to YSTW (as Sydney Flight College) in 2024. We got to tour the SFC facilities in YSTW at the President's Fly-in in October. (*Further info of the early days of SFC, including their organisation of multiple airshows including the 1988 Bicentennial Airshow can be found here: <https://bit.ly/4pZNz71>*)

The Bacon Challenge from the November edition of the Newsletter was to find a connection with the Transavia Airtruk. So, where is the linkage to my flight training at SFC and the Airtourer family? My first (powered) instructor, Neil McDonald.

TOBER ✓	03	PARB	SVK	N. M DONALD	CIRCUITS
06BER ✓	16	PARB	SVK	N. M DONALD	CIRCUITS
08BER ✓	22	PARB	SVK	N. M DONALD	CIRCUIT - FIRST SOLD
		0078	SVK	M. JOEL	CIRCUIT

Neil McDonald, in addition to shepherding Bloggs like me around the Schofields circuit and training areas, was the test and ferry pilot for Transavia, and carried out several ultra-long distance Airtruk ferry flights, including displaying the aircraft at the Paris Airshow.

CT-4 – Me – Neil McDonald – Airtruk



*Neil McDonald showing off the Airtruk at the Paris Air Show.
Photo: Dept of Trade and Resources, August 1981*



Formation Camp 2025

by **Robin Hilliard** (Victa Airtourer 115, VH-RQL)

After jealousy guarding my diary and a run of late nights getting things up to date at work for a short absence, Friday turned out to be one of those nice cool high cloud base days in Sydney. I drove out to Bankstown Airport and ambled out past several sturdily constructed hangers to my highly exclusive patch of mud and gravel where for a not insubstantial consideration I am allowed to moor my green Airtourer 115, Romeo Quebec Lima, serial 84 and the middle-est sister of the 168 Australian Airtourers.

When asked by one of my friends in real estate why I don't have a hangar, I told him that I had bought a water-proof plane. That said, I did inherit a canopy cover from the previous owners which had seen better days. As most of those days were outside in Darwin the cover had recently developed a long split across the cockpit bow that I had patched in a slightly darker colour, resulting in a sort-of surprised Groucho Marx monobrow effect. Even more recently the exhausted fabric had split along the edge of the patch, so acknowledging defeat I had arranged with Punkin Head Airsports to have a new cover (Airtourer Discount!) and corresponding press studs fitted during my upcoming Yarrawonga visit.



RQL on arrival with a very tatty cover.

The studs were to be fitted by Jai, the Yarrawonga LAME. In our SMS exchange Jai wrote “Don't forget the Airtourer discount”. I assumed he was talking about the Punkin Head discount but to be sure I messaged Tony (who with Angela is Jai's neighbour at Yarrawonga and apparently co-belligerent in an ongoing prank war)



who responded with a hastily assembled -5% Airtourer discount voucher for Jai's business in PDF form, mentioning among other dubious conditions that a \$200 admin fee could be avoided by providing a cat photo.

Fuel, baggage, printed-out voucher and cat photo aboard, RQL pootled into the skies of Western Sydney from 29 right, nipped down towards the Southern Highlands to avoid the worst of the tiger country (my regularly achieved 50 or so knots of ground speed crossing west over the Blue Mountains has given me many nervous hours of tiger habitat contemplation) and over to Wagga Wagga.



Refuelled and refreshed I quickly SMSed my flight plan to Angela and launched out of Wagga Wagga ahead of the inbound QantasLink flight (which had to orbit to avoid a Jabiru doing circuits) and took the low road to Yarrowonga, listening to the Snowbirds dropping parachutes at Corrowa and eventually crossing the lake to join downwind for 01. Friday was the only day with a northerly, the rest of the visit the wind strongly favoured 19 with gusts and a slight right crosswind, conditions that the Airtourers, Aircruiser and Airtrainers handled with aplomb.

We Consider Crashing a Wedding

After securing the plane with the voucher and cat photo placed prominently on the dashboard for Jai's attention I lumped my bags over to the unattended airport terminal and checked my phone for messages - the response from my CEO asking what a ".pln" file is explaining the absence of a reception committee. After a quick call to Angela to confirm the address I relocated to their hangar at the airport and had a pleasant drink and catch up, before being driven to Club Mulwala with some other afternoon arrivals to check in. I walked over the bridge into Yarrowonga for a coffee and a leg stretch, then back to the club for a nap.



Tony picked us up to take us to dinner at Blacksmith's, a recommended Pizza restaurant, but on the way there he took a call from Angela who had already arrived at the restaurant with another group of formation campers to find a wedding reception in full progress, despite having booked a table in person weeks previously. We were treated to a one-sided conversation with a hapless server and a full radio-play's worth of wedding background sound effects, along with Tony's suggestions that we move next door to "Swingers" (we're assured it's a golf thing). The call continued until we arrived in the car park at Swingers to run into Angela on her phone leading a separate echelon of campers towards the cars, at which point we established that they were already at Swingers.



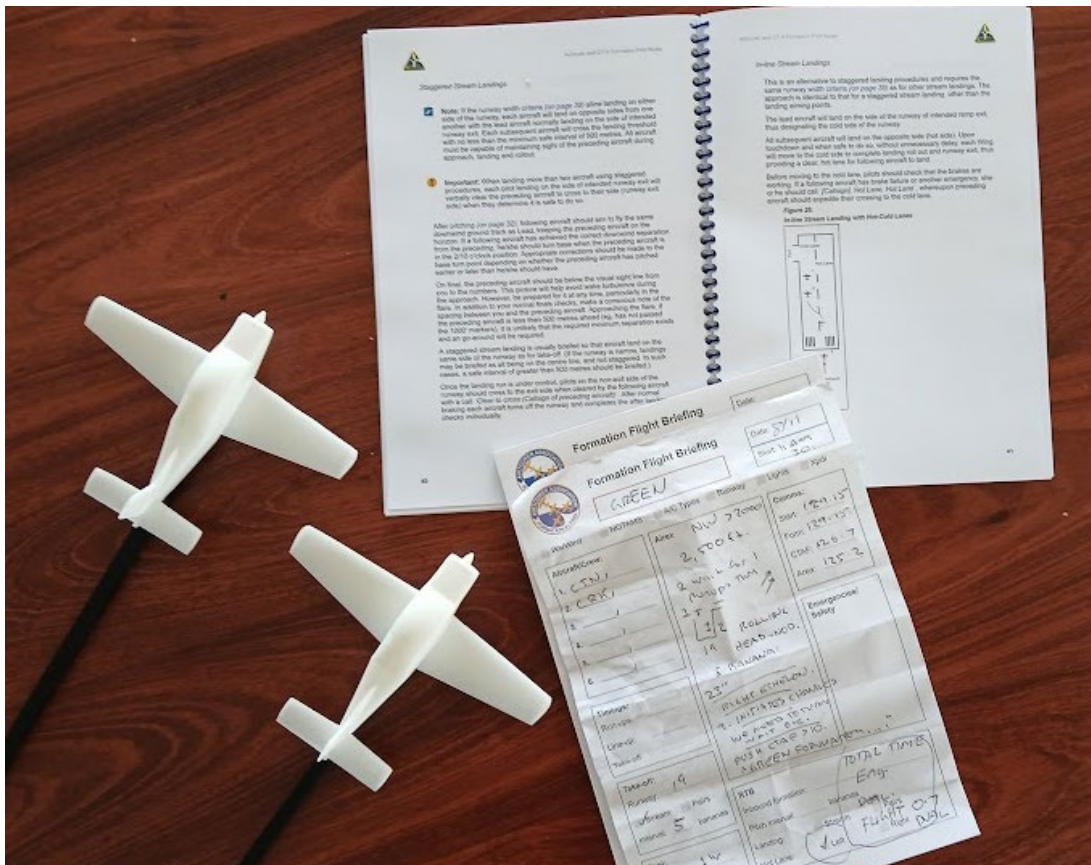
The now combined formation executed a stream arrival at the Swingers bar for dinner orders (decent pub fare) and a debrief. There were several new faces around the table and everyone was looking forward to the weekend. Sadly we were missing Marcus who was stuck in Tassie under some terrible weather conditions.



Three Bananas

This is my third formation camp. I don't have my endorsement yet and RQL is quite fuel limited two-up (particularly if one of two being upped is me) so my formation time has all been with Sheldon in Margo's neat CT-4A, Charlie Tango November. That said, the thing about formation is that the majority of it happens on the ground. Formation flying is 50% briefing, 20% flying and 30% de-briefing - and it's great, particularly when you're doing it with experienced pilots, or pilots who want to learn (inexperienced or indeed experienced pilots who don't want to learn are best avoided).

I'm very aware that there's always more I could do to improve my flying skills. Left to my own devices I can follow purple EFB tracks and develop lazy, rudder-apatetic feet with the rest of the private pilot population, but formation flying is a particularly social exercise. This adds a new level of focus to briefings that I don't find when it's just been me and an instructor. As a humble PPL holder who has never flown multi-crew or been in military aviation, my responsibility has been limited to other airways users who float past as little ADSB targets or sometimes a distant spec in the sky. Formation flying is more like choreography than a night at the dance club. The people sitting in a formation briefing with you are trusting you to stick to the plan, stay focussed and do your best. No-one wants to "trade paint" - a piece of formation terminology that is at the same time ominous and one of the more wildly optimistic outcomes I could imagine from a mid-air collision.



I spend a lot of my professional life in planning mode, and I am a natural over-thinker. Flying formation is the antithesis of that. It's extremely Zen and one of the most "in the moment" activities I've been a part of. Holding station on another aircraft is all-consuming. You have no idea where you've flown, and the sun is the only indication of your heading. There are reference points to line up on the lead aircraft (nose wheel and mainwheel, tail hook to far wingtip, wings level with tailplane) and you're constantly watching for trends and adjusting the controls to stay in position.

It took most of my first sortie of the weekend to get back into the groove. The best way to describe the process is that I get more opinionated and bull headed about where I want the plane to go. When I don't have a strong opinion, corrections come late and control inputs are large and jerky. When I've decided that I've had enough of that, control inputs come earlier, smoother and smaller - and my feet remember that the pedals actually do something. The main thing is to stay physically relaxed as your reactions come back up to speed.

Leading a formation is a different mindset. Like my ballroom dance instructor tells me, you have to think of yourself and your partner as a single unit. The whole formation is a single aircraft, and you're the only pilot with eyeballs free to navigate, look for other traffic or even check the relative positions of aircraft in your own formation before they change position.

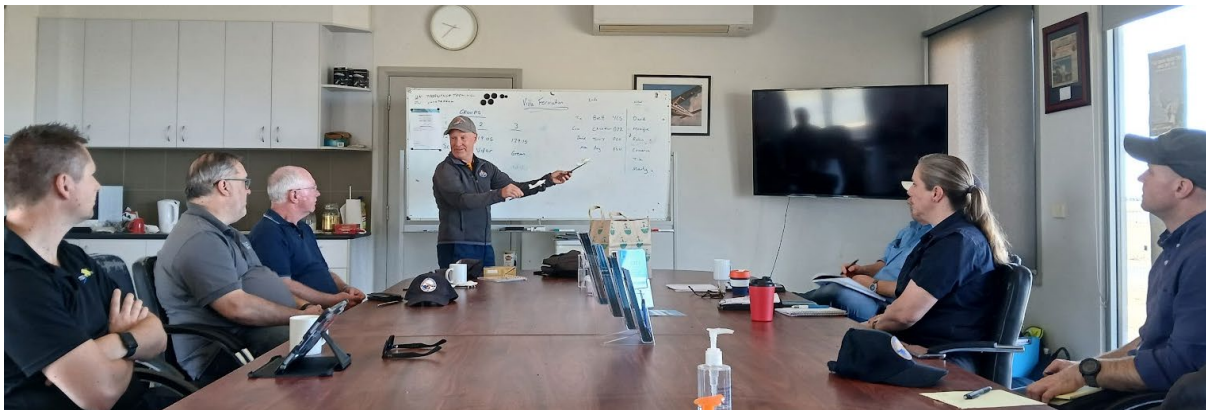


On top of all of this there is communications and proper phraseology for checking in, changing frequencies, joining, breaking, requesting and granting position changes, taking the lead, sharing runways and so on. Like all aviation communications it can be distracting and sometimes usurp aviating and navigating from their rightful place in our priorities. One of the best tongue-tied moments of the weekend was the formation leader who kindly (but unnecessarily) counted "one banana, two bananas, three bananas" on the CTAF frequency for the following aircraft to break onto downwind to some smiles on the ground. Apparently there is a schism in the formation community about the proper way to count bananas, "banana one, banana two, banana three" being the other option. I suspect it may be related to early childhood exposure to a certain American 1970s children's TV programme involving people in disturbing animal costumes driving ATVs recklessly, but I digress.



Debriefing is something that everyone seems to look forward to. The briefing is so planned out, and the flying so intense, that everyone is really interested in the experiences of the other people in the formation afterwards, particularly if anything unexpected happens.

For example, I was a passenger flying with one of the new formation endorsed attendees on Saturday afternoon. There were some irregularities with the radio check-ins on the ground but we continued, and in the air had continuing communication issues, to the point where we weren't sure if the other aircraft was still expecting us to be in formation. The pilot I flew with handled the situation calmly and showed good airmanship all the way through. This was a fascinating debrief (the other aircraft's behaviour made sense with the partial comms they received - we think there was some blanking of the bottom VHF antenna) and really drove home for all of us the reasoning behind radio check-ins on formation and CTAF frequencies while on the ground. It's much easier to remember and carry out the procedure if you've experienced first hand the situation it's designed to prevent.



I had two formation training sorties with Sheldon over the weekend - 0.7 hours on Saturday morning trying to run the briefing and then getting back into the groove as described above, and 1.4 hours on Sunday morning that I was really happy with. There were only two instructors this year (Murray and Sheldon) and with the number of unendorsed pilots it meant that each of us could only do one training sortie each day, but really that was plenty.

Saturday and Sunday dinners were at Club Mulwala, who were serving generously sized dinner plates for only \$10. There was some quite skilled swing, cha-cha and what Marty thought might be Texas Two Step exhibited by other patrons on Saturday night. Not to be outdone, Mon led a small three-ship of Airtourer Association representatives in an enthusiastic interpretation of "Nutbush City Limits" but the lighting was low (IMC) and we couldn't tell whether or not our dance-past had been appreciated by the club denizens.

There were many departures on Sunday afternoon by people who weren't staying for the remembrance day flypast on Tuesday - it's been easier in previous years when Remembrance Day fell closer to the weekend.



Aircruising

We didn't have enough formation endorsed pilots or instructors on Monday to do formation work, so we decided to fly over to Tocumwal for lunch and to visit the museum. RQL was getting the canopy cover fitted so Murray and I went in CT-4A/B Papa Go Hard, David and Gerry took their own aircraft while Mon and John took advantage of the short leg to take their kids up in the Aircruiser for the first time.

I have maybe ten hours on CT-4s at this point, and this was the first opportunity to just fly one cross country. Tocumwal is only 20 minutes or so to the north west and has many runways and gliders, and surprisingly much less wind than Yarrawonga. As we were pushing the aircraft back into its parking spot the Aircruiser arrived and we were treated to a brief vision of an alternative reality where the tarmacs of Australian airports were spotted with Aircruisers disgorging excited families on day trips here and there.

I haven't been to Tocumwal before. After a nice lunch in the cafe with local friends of Murray we toured the museum, which was well done. Tocumwal was for a few months the largest airport in the Southern Hemisphere - built in months, occupied fully for months, and then a long ramp down as it was occupied by various airforce units for the next decade. I skipped the theatre as I'm not a horror movie person and I was warned that there were scenes involving axes from its time as an aircraft scrapping facility. At the exit there was a memorial corridor for the stories of service people lost at Tocumwal, which we couldn't help thinking would have been a lot shorter if breathalysers and swimming lessons had been invented earlier.

I also went on a short walk to see Lee Gordon-Brown's hangar, where the irreplaceable jigs and tooling for the Airtourer are stored. I was glad to see that it looked well built and secure.

David and Gerry left for home from Tocumwal. Murray and I taxied out behind the Aircruiser, which had to abort early on the takeoff run due to a popped door. This was handled calmly, Mon explaining later that in the regular simulator training she does at AusSAR an opening door is one of the easier scenarios she needs to contend with.

We made an uneventful return trip to Yarrawonga. Murray had me do two circuits to complete my flight review requirements and demonstrated a military style landing to finish up the day's flying, which apart from being fun showed that the CT-4 can comfortably handle a tighter circuit.

After a rest at the hotel we returned to the airport for an evening on the deck at Angela and Tony's hangar, interrupted by a quick visit to check out RQL's lovely new cover, Tony taking the kids for joy rides in the Mini, a pizza pickup run, a call from the pizza shop claiming that they'd run out of bases and would we like chicken wings instead (Jai) and much random banter.





More Planes! At exactly 11:00:30!

The Yarrowonga Chronicle had announced the flypast in their most recent edition. Apparently there were going to be more planes than ever, and they were going to be overhead earlier than ever. The previous year we had only missed 11:01:00 by a few seconds, and the first year we had hit 11:11:00 pretty well (a point for discussion in the debrief). 11:00:30 would surely put us square in the middle of the last post? Time aside, we only had four endorsed pilots available.

The morning had broken cloud cover at 2000 feet, but the area forecasts showed a front and high winds closing in from the south and sweeping across NSW over the course of the day. Murray and I checked out and drove to the airport. Seeing that conditions were already deteriorating I decided to take the weather window - I've made the last two flypasts as an observer with Sheldon so my departure wouldn't affect the number of aircraft if it went ahead.

I moved RQL up to the bowser and worked through my preflight while the remaining campers waited for the other formation aircraft to arrive nearby. Seeing the weather rapidly closing from the south and clearer air to the north I told Angela I was going to track direct to Young to get clear of the front, gave her a check-in time, waved goodbye and made an uneventful departure.

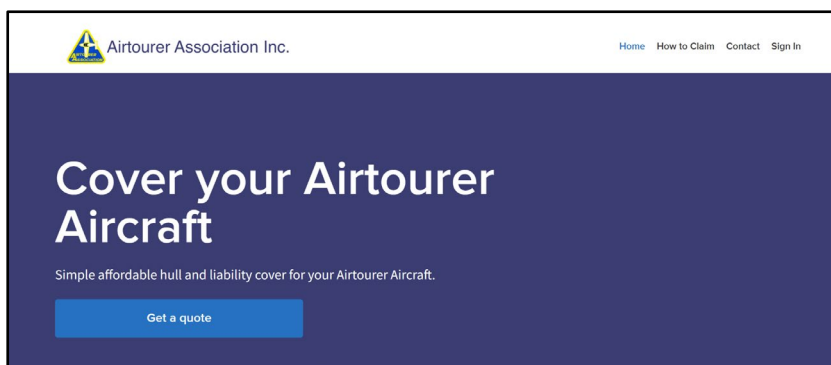


I raced north with a tailwind, the leading edges of the stratus not making it beyond Wagga. By the time I made it to Young it was a blue bumpy thermal day with a westerly crosswind. I let Angela know I'd made it (they'd been tracking my progress via ADSB), filed a proper flight plan and SARTIME and departed for Bankstown, climbing to 7,500 with some cloud street dolphin flying and crossing the tiger country at up to 139 knots ground speed, my record to date. I returned to blue skies at Bankstown. The gusty conditions made it up to Sydney later that day and had not gone by sunset, so I would have been stuck behind the front if I didn't leave when I did.

I checked to see if the formation had gone ahead. Apparently the worst of the front was at Yarrawonga at 11am, and Sheldon had to leave shortly after me for similar reasons. Conditions were lovely behind the front, but good airmanship prevailed and there was no flypast at the Wall of Remembrance in 2025 - although I think the Nutbush counts as formation work.

Aircraft Insurance for Members

Agile Insurance have put together a special package for Airtourer, Aircruiser and CT-4 Airtrainer owners. This arrangement is for current Airtourer Association members only. There is a good chance you can reduce your insurance costs with this offer, and there's absolutely no obligation. To get a quote, use your member details to log in to <https://airtourer.asn.au/> and then click the Agile link on the home page.



The screenshot shows the Airtourer Association Inc. website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Home, How to Claim, Contact, and Sign In. The main content area features a dark blue background with the text "Cover your Airtourer Aircraft" in large white font. Below this, it says "Simple affordable hull and liability cover for your Airtourer Aircraft." and a blue button labeled "Get a quote".



Formation Camp 2025 Gallery

by **Brett Vaughan** (often seen in PAC CT-4B VH-YCS)

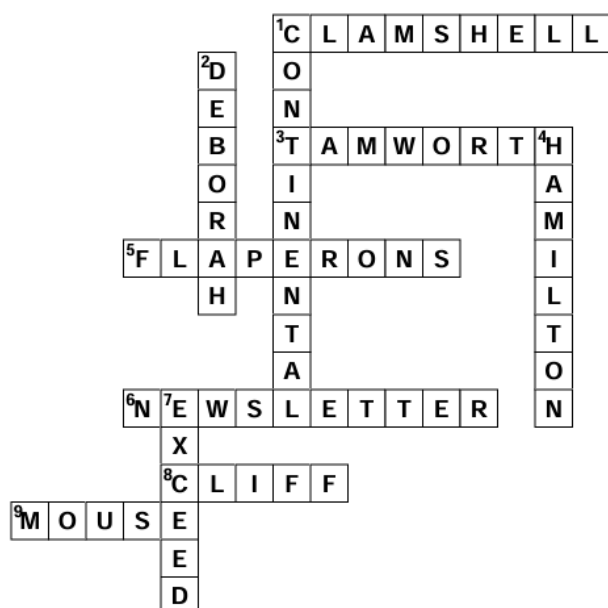




Video

<https://vimeo.com/527528870>

Puzzle Solution:



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First Timer Formation Camp Perspective

by **Tim Glabatz** (AESL T6 Airtourers VH-OVV and VH-XVV)

Tim is an Albury-based airline pilot and Airtourer nut. His first Airtourer was a 115 (MQL), but now has a Twin Comanche, a Pitts Special, and two project Airtourer T6s. The November event was his first serious foray into formation flying.

The recent Airtourer Formation Camp held at Yarrawonga was a highly successful and thoroughly enjoyable weekend, bringing together pilots of varying experience levels for structured formation flying, learning, and camaraderie.

A massive thank you must go to Ange and Tony for the excellent organisation and smooth running of the camp. From planning through to execution, the weekend flowed seamlessly. We were also extremely fortunate to have Murray Gerraty and Sheldon Jones as instructors. Their calm, professional approach and depth of formation experience ensured that every pilot, regardless of background could benefit from their mentoring.

Accommodation for the weekend was at Club Mulwala, which proved to be the perfect home away from home. Comfortable rooms, good facilities, and sweeping views of the lake made it easy for participants to relax and talk all things flying and Airtourer family.

I was fortunate to fly Paige Rolfe's Airtourer 115, VH-MRE. With six pilots new to formation flying, we were divided into three pairs, allowing for focused instruction and the ability to ride along with the endorsed crew when not on a training sortie. The weekend commenced with a mass briefing, which served as an excellent refresher for experienced pilots and a strong foundation for those new to formation. Safety, standardisation, and communication is a priority across the group.



My first flight of the camp was in VH-YCS, a CT-4B flown very nicely by Brett Vaughan. Joining us in formation were Chris and Cameron Kinnane in their immaculate Airtourer VH-DDZ. The sortie covered a range of formation exercises, including formation changes, and lead swaps. Despite some challenging thermal conditions, Brett and Chris demonstrated polished and disciplined formation skills.

As the afternoon arrived, it became my turn to jump in the 'hot seat'. A couple of sessions under Murray's watch helped develop critical formation skills, and a few good lessons in energy management with 35 hp less than my lead!



Tim and Murray climbing aboard Paige's MRE. Photo: Tony Self

Throughout the weekend, the instruction was clear and progressive, and a great team atmosphere to support each other along the way. Every sortie built logically on the last, allowing pilots to consolidate skills and grow in confidence. Debriefs were thorough and constructive, with Murray and Sheldon offering practical feedback that could be immediately applied on subsequent flights.

A highlight of the social side of the weekend was the BBQ lunch on Sunday, generously provided by Jai Wright of AvWright aircraft maintenance. Jai certainly proved that he can cook up a storm with some of Yarrowonga's finest snags on offer.

Overall, the formation camp was an outstanding success. It delivered high-quality training in a supportive environment where we could all engage as a team and take our flying to a new level. Thanks again to all those who contributed to the success of the weekend. It was a privilege to be involved, and I very much look forward to attending in 2026.



Safety in Aviation

by the late **Harry Smeulders** (RFACA Master Air Pilot 724)

This article was originally published in Airtourer Association Newsletter 69 in February 1994, and still holds true today.

Promoting Aviation Safety

The purpose of this article for the Newsletter is to assist in the promotion of safety in aviation. There are many items which were studied in the theory course and were explained and demonstrated by instructors during the flying or type conversion course, but which may have been forgotten or may have escaped your attention at the time. So, to start with: **engines**.

Engine Handling

I have conducted many BFRs during my time as a flight instructor since they became a requirement in 1982. During this time I became aware that many pilots flying both simple and sophisticated equipment understand little about the technical systems in their care. One of these is the CSU (or PCU), the constant-speed propeller unit, whether applied to a carburettor or fuel-injection system, normally aspirated or turbocharged. Consequently, many aircraft become airborne with engines not performing to specification, with pilots unaware that the available power is not what it should be.

In fixed-pitch propeller aircraft we judge power output by the RPM noted on the tachometer (not by the noise under the bonnet!). If the power produced during the initial part of the take-off is not satisfactory—say more than 200 RPM below red line for a normal prop—we should pull the throttle shut and abandon the take-off. Remember that RPM is power here!

The CSU is different. The blade angle (the angle between the mid-blade chord of the propeller and the spinner baseplate) is much smaller initially (about 15° versus 25°) and, by propeller governor action, increases as the angle of attack (the angle between the mid-blade chord of the propeller and the airflow over the blade) decreases with forward speed, thus maintaining propeller RPM at the maximum allowable (red line), where it should be.

If the RPM is higher than red line, the governor is not doing its job and should be fixed—but at least you can screw the RPM back to red line with the pitch control for the time being. If the RPM is below red line, we may have a crook governor, the pitch control may not be in fine, or the engine simply does not have the guts to reach red line with the propeller in fine pitch.



If power is below par it may still be sufficient to swing the propeller at maximum RPM, but the blade angle and the angle of attack remain smaller than they should be, and thrust is reduced.

“But the manifold pressure gauge should indicate the **power!**”—at least that is what you would think. After all, the throttle controls the boost.

Manifold Pressure

The manifold pressure (MP) gauge is no more than a barometer fitted to read the pressure inside the induction manifold, between the carburettor or fuel-injection throttle valve and the intake valves of the cylinders. If that part of the engine system is OK, the gauge should read QFE (aerodrome pressure) with the engine stopped.

At Caboolture, for example, this might be 29.97 in Hg at 1015 hPa. You land at Stanthorpe (3,000 ft), and for the same **QNH** the **MP** reading will now be about 27.22 in Hg at 918 hPa **QFE** on the altimeter (1 inHg \approx 33.86 hPa).

After start-up, 1,000 RPM may give us, say, 10 or 11 inches MP because the partly open throttle restricts the airflow. The pistons at that speed can suck in more air than the throttle allows, causing a low pressure in the manifold.

At full power we **should** get the same manifold pressure as before start-up, but because of flow resistance caused by the air filter, venturis, bends in the ducts, and inertia of the air, this will not quite occur. However, if the MP gauge shows more than a 2½-inch difference between full power and engine stopped, it could indicate a dirty air filter, a wrongly adjusted throttle valve, carburettor icing, or anything else that causes additional airflow restriction.

So, for the earlier-mentioned QFEs, at Caboolture we **should** get about 27.5 inHg MP, and at Stanthorpe about 24.8 in Hg MP for take-off. Clear?

Because the MP gauge gives you “power” readings for all conditions of flight, check that it reads correctly before you start up—compare altimeter QFE against MP on the gauge. If they are not the same, tap the gauge; it may be sticky but OK in flight. Otherwise, allow for the difference during climb or cruise, or have the gauge fixed (assuming the altimeter is serviceable).

If an engine that is sick for reasons other than induction problems just manages to make red-line RPM on take-off with the throttle fully open, the speed of the pistons will still draw the same manifold pressure as a healthy engine that has propeller overspeed arrested by an increase in blade angle through governor action.



Around the Grounds

What's happening on social media?

A good deal of information has been exchanged on the Association's social media pages.

In addition to his new canopy cover (see page 12), Robin Hilliard has been fitting new LED navigation lights to RQL.



People have continued to share their photos from the very memorable President's Fly-in to Tamworth. The CT-4 anniversary also prompted Kelvin Curnow to dig out even more 50 year old photos of CT-4s at Point Cook.

Doug Stott got us zooming in on Google Maps looking for a large faded Airtourer Association logo on top of the petrol station on the corner of Midland Hwy and Kelly Rd in Bannockburn, and shared some photos of a fly-in organised by the owner Bill Kelly in 1978.



We even had a wildlife photo from Marcus Skinner: an echidna at Sandfly aerodrome.

Gerry Pels shared photos of the well-attended End of Year get-together at Nagambie. Wayne Lee updated us on South Australian Aviation Museum's Victa refurbishment. Christopher Godden caught some nice piccies of TPY at Watts Bridge. Chris Peak dug up some superb photos, including one of Stan Tilley inverted over Hobart Airport. And of course there were lots of photos and anecdotes from the Formation Camp. If you haven't joined in a conversation yet, please do so! We'd love to hear from you!



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The Treasury

by **Angela Stevenson** (Airtourer T6/24, VH-FVV)

G'day again fellow Airtourer owners and enthusiasts and Airtourer-ists...

Hope everyone had a safe and wonderful Christmas and a cracker New Year. Happy to report that there's not much to report from Treasury.

Both the Tamworth event and the Formation Camp expenses and payments have now been finalised. End of year payment of Airtourer Co-operative liability has been sorted, and Hangar Keeper insurance (due 31 December) has been paid. On a bright note, the Hangar Keeper Insurance went down! Instead of \$1,155 per annum, this coming years' Agile Insurance bill was \$981.75.

I'm yet to undertake the end-of-financial-year reconciliations, but plan to have that in hand by the end of January. Nett Assets stand at around \$88,000, with the only significant liability being a director's insurance bill due in February.

Term Deposits

Another one of the term deposits (\$18,659.80) with Westpac has been renewed (with interest reinvested) - again at a competitive market rate of 3.97%.

All is well - and I hope you are too! Here's to 2026!

Happy Airtourer-ing everyone!

Angela Stevenson
VH-FVV



From the Archive



RNZAF handover ceremony for the AESL Airtourer T6/24 in 1970. The RNZAF operated four T6s before transitioning to the CT-4. Note the roundel without the Kiwi. Photo via Stephen Burrows.

This particular aeroplane is c/n A542, NZ1760. After retirement from the Air Force, 542 found its way to Australia as VH-AMX, now owned by Ray Ekinici at Camden.



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