SPECIAL EDITION

October 2025
Special Edition Newsletter

50 Years of CT-4

in Australia

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

IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION

Editor	Tony Self c/- Airtourer Association P.O. 778, Tewantin, QLD 4565 Australia	Mobile: Email:	See Membership List editor@airtourer.asn.au

Articles for inclusion in the Newsletter should be submitted directly to the Editor at the contacts listed above. Contributions and advertisements for the next issue need to be received by 19 October 2025. Ads are free for Association members.

Cover: Brand new CT-4A Airtrainer, freshly rolled off the Hamilton production line on 6 January 1975. This aircraft (027) was the first delivered to the RAAF. Photo: Bob Kerr

50 Years of CT-4 in Australia

by Deb Evans (Airtourer Association President, Victa 115 VH-IOF)

On 15 January 1975, the first CT-4A Airtrainer was delivered to the RAAF, after having been ferried across the Tasman by NZ Aerospace Chief Pilot Cliff Tait. While initially disparaged as the "Plastic Parrot", the humble Airtrainer defied all critics and proved itself to be one of the world's best military basic trainers.

They say of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules that the only aircraft that can replace a C-130 is another C-130. The same could just about be said of the CT-4. The RAAF attempted to retire the Airtrainer and replace it with the PC-9 back in 1993. But the PC-9 is not a good *basic* trainer, so the CT-4 came back to serve as the ADF basic trainer (at Tamworth) for another 23 years! In fact, some of the retired RAAF CT-4s were bought back from their civilian owners to be impressed back into service!

In 2019 the CT-4 was retired again, replaced by the PC-21, and guess what? There's plenty of talk of the gap in training being filled by… you know what's coming next… the CT-4!

The Airtourer Association was formed a couple of years after the CT-4 entered RAAF service, and the link between the best civilian two-seat trainer and the best military two-seat trainer in the world was strong. The RAAF would often drop a few CT-4s into the President's Fly-in, and Airtourer and Airtrainer pilots would share rides. The Airtourer community have always embraced the CT-4 as part of the family, and this year the Association is making a big push to build closer connections with the CT-4 community.

Of course, we will continue to enjoy the friendly rivalry (the coolest aeroplane lets you stick your elbows out the window when taxiing!), while also enjoying the beautiful flying characteristics and the aerobatic handling of Australia and New Zealand's collaborative gem.

Happy 50th Anniversary of CT-4 operations in Australia, and here's looking forward to the next 50 years (subject to spar life).

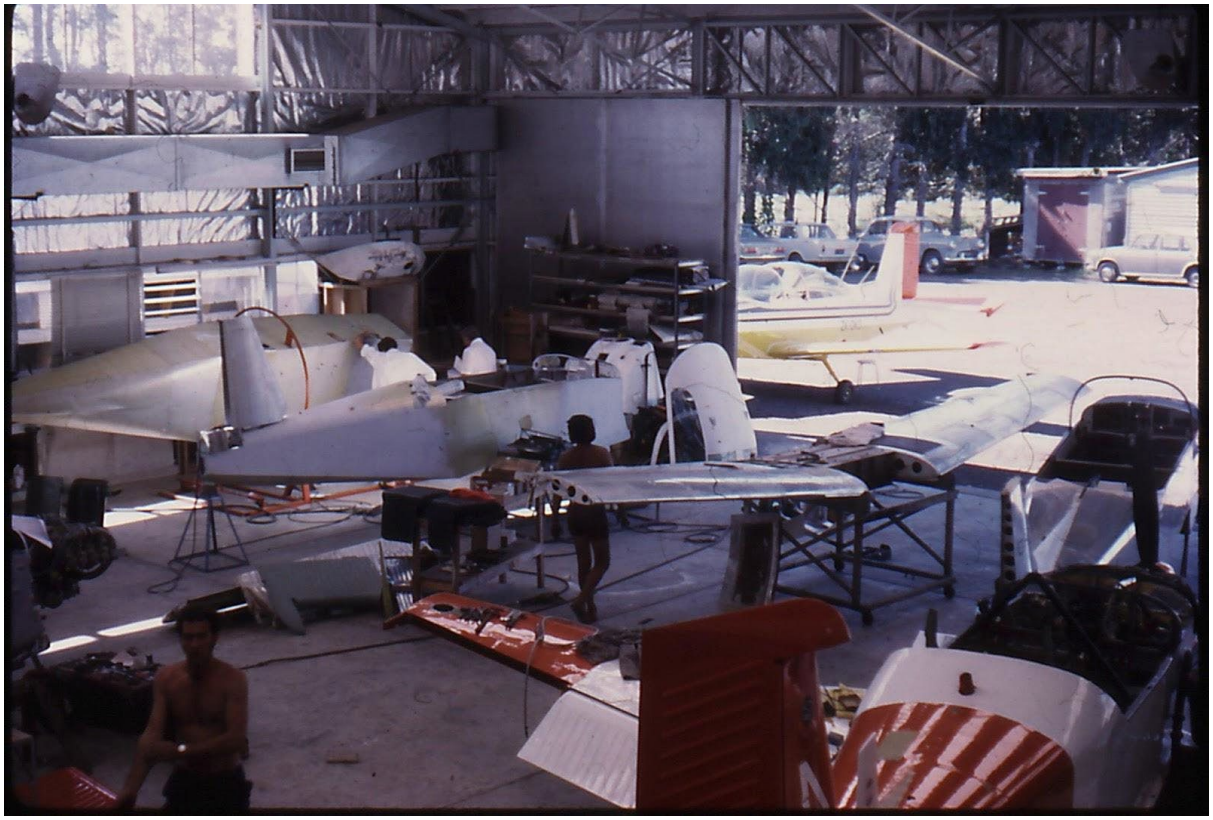
Deb

CT/4 Number 2

by Tony Self (Airtourer Association Historian)

The CT/4 Airtrainer prototype first flew on 23 February 1972, and is still flying in New Zealand under its original registration ZK-DGY. (It is currently owned by the "CT4 Syndicate" at Ardmore.) The Airtrainer was developed from the Victa Aircruiser as a proposal for the Royal Australian Air Force Winjeel trainer replacement. The RAAF had looked at the AESL Airtourer T6, but while this "militarised" Airtourer was rejected, the RAAF were more open to a military trainer development of the four-seat Aircruiser. Some interest had also been developed in Thailand, whose Civil Aviation Training College had taken delivery of four Airtourer T6s.

DGY was built alongside the last of the Airtourers at AESL at Hamilton in New Zealand. A second CT-4 was also being built, intended to be the company demonstrator. Like the prototype, "002" was effectively built by hand, because a production line hadn't been set up as there were no orders in hand at the stage. The second Airtrainer was completed in October 1972, by which time the prototype had completed a full range of testing.



CT/4 Airtrainer prototype under modification in AESL factory alongside Airtourer T3A conversions. Note the completed Indonesian T6/24 parked out front. Photo: David Garfield

The first order for 24 Airtrainers came from the Royal Thai Air Force in 1973, followed by the expected RAAF order for 37 Airtrainers. There may have been some clever diplomacy to win the Thai contract: as negotiations were underway, it had been decided to gift "002" to the King of Thailand for use by the Royal Thai Police Force. The RTAF order amounted to NZD3,400,000, and the RAAF order NZD3,248,000.

The size of the two orders created its own monster: AESL didn't have the capital to commence production. The answer was a restructure of the New Zealand aviation industry, with AESL and Air Parts merging, and the Government taking 50% equity.

The legendary Cliff Tait, by then AESL's Chief Pilot, was tasked with ferrying "002", under the registration ZK-DIM, to Bangkok. The aircraft had been built with single controls, and a different canopy latching mechanism. Both the prototype and 002 had a different canopy to the production aircraft, though the prototype, being the flying test bed for the production line, had the new canopy installed before 003 rolled out of the factory in late 1973. But the old canopy with two latches remained on 002.

The second CT/4 prototype in Singapore en-route to Thailand, with Cliff Tait at the controls. In the hangar in the background is one of six Airtourer T6/24 trainers delivered to Singapore Air Defence Command. Photo: Peter Butt, Mary Evans Picture Library

Cliff Tait arrived with 002, ZK-DIM, on 7 December 1972, after almost 50 hours of flying time. Presumably there was a handover ceremony at Don Mueang airport, but no photos seem to have surfaced of that ceremony. The aircraft was given the RTP serial number 2009. In fact, the aircraft doesn't seem to have been photographed

again until 1983, when it was snapped with faded paint parked on the apron at Don Mueang.

CT/4 002 in 1983 (12 March) at Don Mueang airport. Photo: Dave Ruddlesden

In 2004, it was discovered dismantled at the "Tango" Takhli storage facility, which is used to hold aircraft for the Royal Thai Air Classics Association 'Tango Squadron', and it was there until around January 2007. It seems it was then sold off, probably along with a number of other unwanted Tango aircraft, to a military surplus store called "US Camping" in Jomtien.

CT/4 002 in a sad state at Tango Squadron. Photo: Steve Ozel

It seems to have been put back together there, and was displayed first in fake US Army colours. Around 2009, it was probably moved about 50 km away to a property in Rayong, where it was displayed in fake US Navy colours.

The Prototype Canopy

CT/4 002 still has the prototype two-latch canopy. (The first prototype, ZK-DGY, originally had this canopy too, shown above in an early photo, but it was replaced with the now familiar central latch). Note the single-control configuration of 002.

In January 2017, 002 was repainted and returned to US Camping in Jometien, this time in red and white fake US Navy colours. It was advertised for sale in 2020 for THB550,000. In late November 2021, it was purchased by the RTAF for their Kamphaeng Saen Aviation School (Saenmuangburi) education park. It was repainted in a striking blue "Seanmuangburi" scheme, and put on display outside the visitor building at Saenmuangburi.

The weird and wonderful colour schemes of 002 Photos: via Steve Ozel

Photo: New Zealand Aerospace

Slash or Dash?

OK, is it CT/4 or CT-4?

THE AIRTRAINER CT-4
An aircraft designed and built to meet the most stringent Air Force Specifications

An early New Zealand Aerospace brochure used both "CT-4" and "CT/4"!

The Airtrainer CT/4. An aircraft without rival in its class.

CT/4
CT/4A
CT/4B
CT/4E

The Type Certificate uses the slash. The Australian Government started by using no slashes or dashes, but the RAAF started with the dash.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1975 No. 411/75

FIRST CT4A AIRTRAINER HANDED OVER

(Statement by the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Lance Barnard, M.P.)

DEFENCE INSTRUCTION (AIR FORCE)
AAP 7212.005-1
Manual Supersedes DI(AF)AAP 7212.005-1 Dated 1JUN77)
FLIGHT MANUAL
AIRTRAINER CT-4

NZAero are currently using "CT4". Our conclusion? It doesn't matter!

CT4/AIRTRAINER

The Bankstown Auction

Photo: Bob Livingstone, May 1993

Photos: Ken Hodge

It started with the Fletcher…

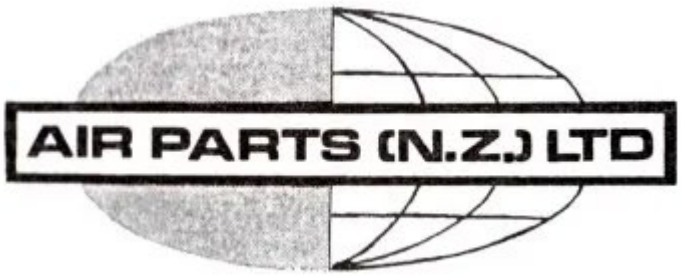
by Tony Self (AESL Airtourer T6/24, VH-FVV)

The Hamilton-based company that manufactured the CT-4 Airtrainers, and before that, five different models of Airtourer, has been known by different names as a result of takeovers, restructures, mergers, and financial crises.

It started with the modestly-named little company Aero Engine Services Ltd. Actually, no it didn't. It started with a number of companies associated with the Fletcher agricultural aircraft. The Californian-based Fletcher Aviation (itself a small company), working with legendary designer John Thorp, created an aerial cropdressing aircraft specifically to meet a New Zealand requirement for a replacement for war-surplus Tiger Moths. Manufacture of the resultant T-15 design, as the Fletcher FU-24, started in 1954. The project was funded by New Zealand's Cable-Price Corporation. The plan was for the first 11 aircraft to be built by Fletcher, with the subsequent aircraft supplied from Fletcher in kit form and then assembled locally. This arrangement proved successful, and 105 FU-24s were built over the next 10 years. The aircraft were initially assembled by Cable-Price and James Aviation, and later by other companies including TEAL (now Air New Zealand) and Wanganui Aero Work.

In 1957, a number of companies associated with the Fletcher, notably James Aviation, Thames Aerial Topdressing, and Robertson's Air Services, formed Air Parts (NZ) Ltd. The new company not only assembled the FU-24s, but also provided aftermarket sales and service. A few years earlier, another company had been formed to provide engine services for the Fletcher programme; that company was Aero Engine Services Ltd (AESL). (The first Fletchers were powered by a Continental O-470.)

Cable-Price became Air Parts (NZ) Ltd in 1962. In 1964, Air Parts purchased the FU-24 manufacturing rights from Fletcher.



A big influence in the FU-24, Air Parts and AESL story was James Aviation, which had been founded by a pioneer of aerial agriculture, Ossie James. After using

converted Tiger Moths as cropdusters, then Beavers, James even tried scaling up to a DC-3. But the FU-24 was seen to be the ideal platform.

The very first FU-24 being unloaded at Hamilton after delivery from the US. Photo: Andy Higgins via Lynnette James via Dave Homewood.

By 1965, Hamilton aerodrome was buzzing. The Fletcher jigs and production equipment had been moved to a new Air Parts factory building, and AESL were busy with engine work in another hangar.

Photo: NZAero

In 1966, an opportunity cropped up. Victa in Australia were going to close down Airtourer production. Full of confidence, AESL saw the chance to restart production in Hamilton, and bought the rights, the production equipment, and unfinished airframes. The first AESL Airtourer left the Hamilton factory in September 1967.

At the same time as the Airtourers were coming out of the AESL factory, Air Parts were completing a turboprop development of the FU-24, and production of Lycoming IO-720 variants were underway. Around 120 FU-24s had been delivered, and by 1973, that number had grown to 175.

AESL had bigger plans, and had bought the rights to - and the prototype of - the four-seat Victa Aircruiser. Work had begun on a military trainer development of the Aircruiser: the Airtrainer. The first prototype CT-4 Airtrainer flew in March 1972, and in 1973, two significant orders came in, one from the RAAF and another from the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). While this seemed like a huge win for AESL, it actually presented a huge problem. AESL didn't have enough capital to fund the production.

Support from the New Zealand Government was secured for a plan to create a larger, stronger, aircraft manufacturing company, to be called New Zealand Aerospace Industries (NZAI). This company would merge Air Parts and AESL, with the NZ Government (through Air New Zealand and National Airways Corporation) taking a 50% stake. The government investment allowed Airtrainer production to be ramped up while continuing the FU-24 production and development.

NZAI Ltd was often branded as just "Aerospace", and sometimes abbreviated in NZAIL.

By 1978, close to 100 Airtrainers had been built, but not all was well at NZAI. While the Fletcher production line was ticking along slowly, and the turboprop Cresco derivative orders were starting to trickle in, the orders for CT-4s had dried up completely. The RAAF and RTAF orders had been followed by a mysterious order from Switzerland, and then another for the RNZAF, but there was not much on the horizon.

With revenue dropping off sharply, another company restructure was in the offing, and NZAI became Pacific Aerospace Corporation (PAC) in 1982. The maintenance arm of James Aviation was soon after absorbed into PAC. Apart from converting the built but undelivered Swiss order (which it turns out was destined for sanctioned Rhodesia) to fulfil a top-up order by the RAAF, the CT-4 production line was quiet for a decade.

PAC sought out component manufacture work for overseas aircraft companies to add to its overhaul contracts with the RNZAF. On the other side of the Tasman, the Australian aviation industry was also in decline. The once mighty CAC was sold to Hawker de Havilland in 1985. GAF was corporatised as Aerospace Technologies of Australia (ASTA) in 1987 after Nomad production ceased.

ASTA had a lot of "offset" work for Boeing and Airbus, and acquired a 75% stake in PAC in November 1989.

A couple of years later, BAe/Ansett Flying Training School (BAFTS) won the contract to conduct basic flight training for the Australian Defence Force, following the RAAF's retirement of its CT-4A fleet. BAFTS chose to use a civil version of the Airtrainer, the CT-4B, as its trainer. The CT-4 production line was restarted at PAC, and the first of 12 aircraft ordered came off the line in 1991. The RTAF also ordered six more aircraft to supplement its fleet of CT-4As. Deliveries were completed by the end of 1992, and PAC were in the doldrums again.

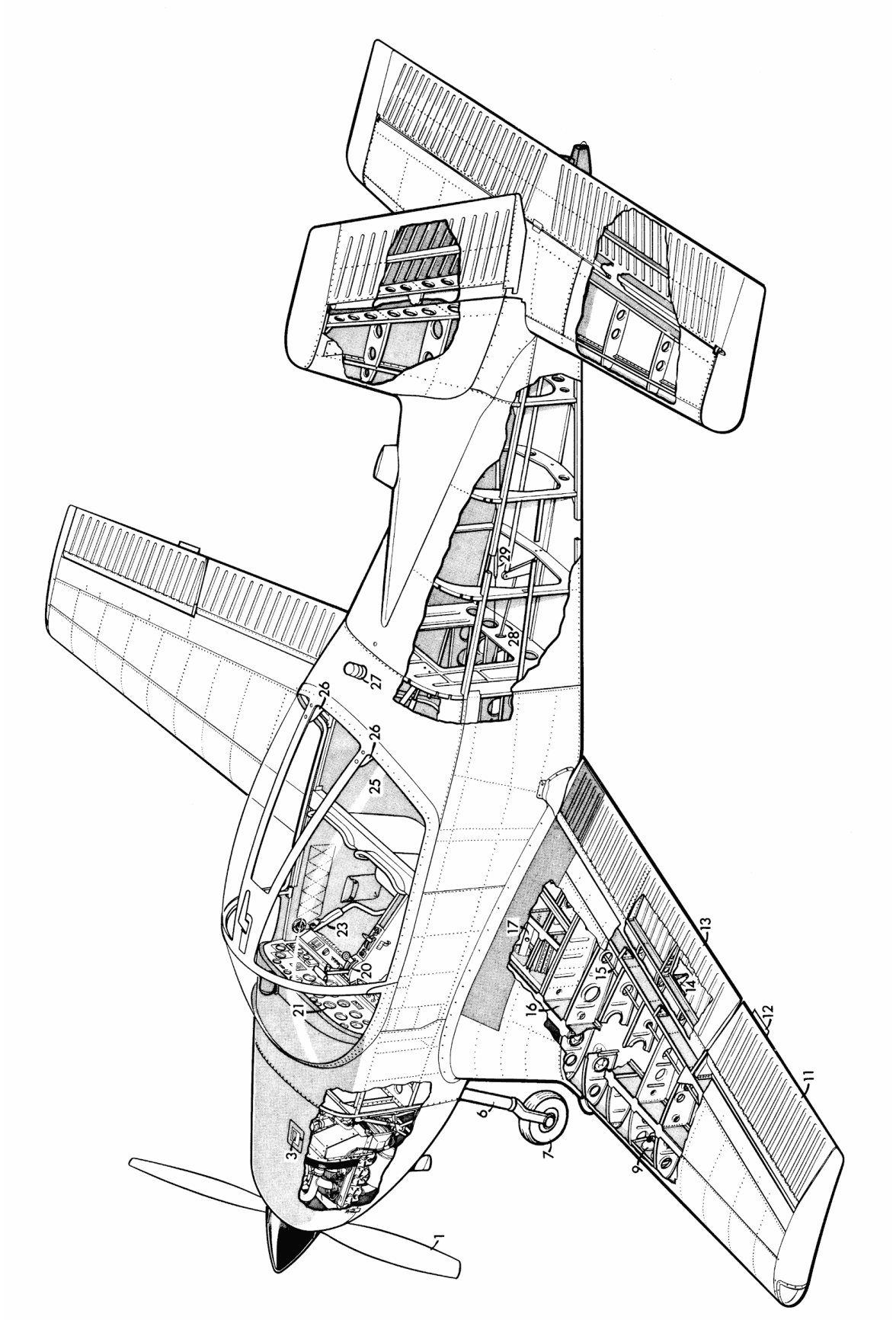
Majority owner ASTA was itself about to be gobbled up by Rockwell and then Boeing, who had already acquired Hawker de Havilland. In the upheaval, PAC was sold back into New Zealand hands in 1995, with Aeromotive Group of Hamilton the new owners.

Under Aeromotive, PAC reinvigorated the Cresco sales, and design work on an upgraded version of the CT-4, the E model, started. With a 300 hp Lycoming up front, the CT-4E represented a significant performance improvement over the 210 hp A and B, and the RNZAF were first to place an order in 1998. This order was followed by yet another order from the RTAF. When the final PAC CT-4E was delivered in 2005, the CT-4 production total had reached 154. Meanwhile, the Cresco had evolved further into the PAC 750XL, and around 450 Fletcher/Cresco/750XLs had been delivered since 1954.

In November 2006, PAC was sold to a consortium with the similar name Pacific Aerospace Limited. With the focus on PAC 750 production, the new owners looked for new markets. A few attempts at updating the CT-4 to meet new military training requirements were made, and in December 2008 one more CT-4E was produced as a company demonstrator. In 2015, a Chinese company entered the picture, buying 50% of Pacific Aerospace Ltd. Sales into the Chinese market looked promising. But these sales never arrived.

In February 2021, PAL became insolvent with debts of at least NZD43 million. In April, the liquidators sold the company to NZSkydive Ltd, which rebranded itself as NZAero.

Cutaway



Baby Photos

Brand new prototype CT-4 c/n 001, in 1972
Photo: © The Peter Butt Aviation Collection / Mary Evans Picture Library

One of the first batch of CT-4As (c/n 11) for the Royal Thai Air Force, delivered in 1974. This aircraft became F16-9/17 with the RTAF.
Photo: © The Peter Butt Aviation Collection / Mary Evans Picture Library

Yet to be painted, RNZAF CT-4B NZ1930, c/n 078, which first flew in May 1976. Photo: Bob Kerr

Rebirthed from RNZAF CT/4B NZ1944 for Ansett/BAe is c/n 092, repainted in its new civilian colours on 8 October 1998. Ferried as ZK-JJS, this CT-4B became ZH-YCN. Photo: Bob Kerr

The ADF BFTS logo is already in place on this brand new CT-4B in October 1991. As the letter on the fin suggests, this aircraft became VH-YCF. This particular aircraft is now with the RAAF at Wagga Wagga, used as a training aid.
Photo: Bob Kerr

Flashback - CT/4 Unveiling

CT/4 Prototype 001 being unveiled at Hamilton. Photo via Stephen Burrows

Building a Flight College

It wasn't originally planned for military training… it was going to be an airline pilot training centre. The joint venture between British Aerospace and Ansett Airlines was to be modelled on the BAe training academy at Prestwick, Scotland. The UK college couldn't cope with the demand and potential airline customers - particularly rapidly expanding Asian airlines - were being turned away. At the time, there was a worldwide shortage of airline pilots.

With its own need for pilots, Ansett joined with BAe in a joint venture for an Australian-based college. Almost 40 towns bid to be the venue for the BAe-Ansett Flight College. Tamworth was the successful city, and work began on building the Tamworth Flight College for the "Australian Air Academy". (Ansett's subsidiary East West Airlines was based in Tamworth.)

It was a huge venture from the start. The facilities were to cost around $84 million, and included 230 residential units (with plans for another 230) for students including dining, recreational, and relaxation facilities. (Including a swimming pool!)

Photo: via HHH

Educational / training facilities include lecture theatres, radio/navigation training room and flight simulation facilities.

HHH architects developed the plans, and work started in 1988.

The plan was for airlines to recruit cadets, then contract the Flight College to provide *ab initio* training right through to being ready for a first officer position with a commercial airline.

The UK College used three types of aircraft: Swiss FFA AS.202 Bravos, Piper Warriors, and Piper Senecas. (Scotland's weather resulted in a move to sunny Spain in 1999.) The aircraft colour schemes should look familiar!

The Tamworth College was to have a fleet of about 50 trainer aircraft, and around 200 students grouped into intakes of 16. Each course would take around 14 months.

The well-laid plans of mice and men oft' go awry…


The BAAFC logo in the garden bed is just visible, with CT4s on the apron.

CAP-10B YAN and YAO were part of the BAe BFTS fleet, as were Seneca YSA and YSC

Photos: HHH Architects, Paul Daw

By 1989, the Tamworth College had won an ADF contract to provide basic flight training for military pilots, and had chosen the CT-4B as its workhorse. In 2005, two Mudry CAP-10 aerobatic aircraft and two Piper Senecas were added to the Tamworth fleet.

In 1996, Ansett - by then in financial trouble - sold its stake in the College to British Aerospace, and in 1999, the operation moved from British Aerospace to BAe Systems.

By 2009, BAe Systems was screening 275 candidates a year through a two-week, 15-hour syllabus on the CT-4B and the CAP-10. Those selected moved forward to the BFT course, which trained up to 152 students a year in a 25-week, 64-hour syllabus on the CT-4B. Eight courses per year were run, with each starting five weeks apart. Army pilots completed another 38 hours on an intermediate course, and then moved to Oakey for rotary wing training. RAAF and RAN pilots continued from Tamworth to Pearce 2FTS for advanced training on the PC-9.

The College was re-organised from time to time. Civil instructors provided pilot training for some time, but then the ADF Basic Flying Training School with military instructors was added to the mix. The Republic of Singapore Air Force also trained pilots at the college, and Royal Brunei Defence Force QFIs were also trained at Tamworth. It all came to an end in 2019 when the PC-21 was introduced, and BAe Systems was unsuccessful in its bid for the new ADF training contract.

VH-YCR at RAAF Amberley in 2018. Photo: Robert Frola

Airtourers for CT-4 Owners

If you're an Airtourer pilot or owner, this article is not aimed at you. You've probably heard it all before, and more. This story is pitched at CT-4 people who might only know snippets of the Airtourer story.

Henry Millicer was a genius, and the bunch of engineers and enthusiasts of which he was a part was a hive of ingenuity and passion. The Airtourer story is connected to other great Australian stories; to the Richardson family, to the iconic Victa mower, to Government Aircraft Factories, to the Jindivik, to the Sport Aircraft Association of Australia, to Holden, to Ansett, the Latrobe Valley Aero Club, and more. The Airtourer story is also tied to great overseas stories: to the Percival Provost, to Glosair, and to the remarkable story of aircraft manufacture in New Zealand.

Henry Millicer's early biography reads a bit like a Biggles novel. Born in Poland during World War I, he was the archetypal aeroplane nut. He built model planes, had his first flight at age 9, built his own glider at 14, and earned his first pilot qualification at the age of 17. He studied mechanical engineering, and joined the PZL company as a junior designer. He was selected in the 1940 Olympic Games Gliding Team. He joined the Polish Air Force reserves in 1935, and won the Air Force Cross during the early stages of the German invasion.

Henry was interned in Romania when he was stranded there with a group of Polish pilots taking delivery of Hawker Hurricanes and Fairey Battles from England when Poland fell. He escaped from Romania and found his way to France and joined the French Air Force. When, in turn, France fell, he evacuated to England; there, he joined a Polish bomber squadron of the RAF, and won the Polish Military Medal. After being wounded, he worked as a Polish/French/English interpreter before winning a scholarship to complete a Masters in Aeronautical Engineering in 1943. By 1945, he was working at the Airspeed factory in the UK. His mother had been killed in the bombing of Warsaw, his father badly injured, his brother killed by the Gestapo, his house burnt to the ground, and his brother-in-law "disappeared" by the Soviets.

In 1947 he moved to Percival (started, by coincidence, by the Australian Edgar Pervial), and is credited with the design of the Percival Provost (right).

In 1950, he moved to Australia to work as a senior aerodynamicist at Government Aircraft Factories. (It is sometimes said that he designed the Jindivik; he didn't, the Jindivik prototype was already complete by then.) In 1953, Henry and two GAF colleagues, Gordon Bennett and

James Tutty, entered a Commonwealth competition to design a new aero club trainer, and their Air Tourer design won against 103 others.

Construction of a wooden prototype was begun in 1956 by the Air Tourer design team and a group of enthusiasts formed the Air Tourer Group within the newly formed Ultra Light Aircraft Association (ULAA). The president of the Group was Peter Carr. A lot of the work was done after hours in the Perfectus Airscrew factory in Newport. The prototype, VH-FMM (Foxtrot Mickey Mouse), first flew at Moorabbin in 1959. Factory production of a metal version of the Air Tourer was proposed by East West Airlines at Tamworth.

Foxtrot Mickey Mouse is now part of the Museum of Victoria collection.

In 1960, while weather-bound at Mangalore airport with Foxtrot Mickey Mouse, Henry met another stranded pilot named Garry Richardson. Garry was the son of Mervyn Victor Richardson, founder and chair of the famous Victa company in Sydney. This conversation led to an agreement that Victa would manufacture the metal Airtourer in Milperra; the first metal Victa Airtourer flew in 1961. Henry resigned from GAF and moved to Sydney with Victa.

The first customer was Latrobe Valley Aero Club, a strong proponent of the Air Tourer design, and a hotbed of ULAA activity. To reduce costs, innovative approaches were taken to use a disparate sources of components: nose suspension from a Ford Anglia, ashtray from an Ansett Pioneer bus, brake handles from an FE Holden, start pull handle from a Victa mower, PBR automotive brake cylinders, war-surplus venturis from Avro Ansons, a trim lever reworked from a mower height adjuster, etc.

The design itself was ingenious. The Airtourer had flaperons: interconnected ailerons and flaps. It had a central control stick, was aerobatic, and had a lifting canopy (a significant portion of lift is derived from the aerofoil-shaped canopy). And strong as a brick outhouse… originally promoted as +9/-4.5G! Many safety features were integral to the design, including a rubber bag fuel cell in a honeycomb sandwich under-pan stressed to 30G.

The original 100 hp Victa (powered by a Rolls Royce Continental O-200) was soon supplemented by the 115 hp model (Lycoming O-235). Orders from Australian flying schools and private buyers started coming in, and with the first exports to New Zealand on the books, Cessna and Piper started taking an interest. In fact, both these companies ordered a Victa for evaluation.

From 1962 to early 1965, production had reached 100. Airtourer sales in Australia surpassed Cessna, Piper and Beechcraft combined! The four-seat development, the Victa Aircruiser 210, was underway, and things were looking rosy. Too rosy! The US companies moved to shut down their competitor by flooding the Australian market with below-cost 150s and Warriors. Victa appealed to the Commonwealth Government for protection, but when that wasn't forthcoming, the hard-nosed board at Victa decided to shut down their Aviation Division. The last Victa left the Milperra factory in 1966. 168 Airtourer 100 and 115 models had been completed.

And that's where Aero Engine Services (NZ) Ltd continued the story. AESL bought the manufacturing rights from Victa, along with the tooling and incomplete airframes, and production recommenced in Hamilton in 1967. The UK company Glosair, which had assembled Victa-built Airtourers for European delivery, starting marketing the AESL kits as the GlosAirtourer. Latrobe Valley Aero Club became the southern Australia agent, and also assembled AESL-built Airtourers in Traralgon.

AESL didn't continue with the 100 hp variant, but later in production introduced the 150 hp Lycoming engine into the line-up with a choice of fixed pitch and constant speed propellers. A good number of Victa 100s were rebuilt (usually after accidents) with the Rolls Royce O-240 engine of 130 hp. The T-series nomenclature was introduced to distinguish the models:

- T1 - (Victa) 100 hp fixed pitch
- T2 - 115 hp fixed pitch
- T3 - 130 hp fixed pitch
- T4 - 150 hp fixed pitch
- T5 - 150 hp constant speed
- T6 - 150 hp constant speed, 24V, "militarised"

The ultimate production variant was the T6/24, which was important to the CT-4 story. AESL had never sold to a military, and needed some credibility in this space if they were to sell the CT-4 as a military trainer. The New Zealand Government funded the production of around 24 T6/24s, which were then supplied to the RNZAF, but also to nascent Air Forces and security services in Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and Bangladesh (under the Colombo Plan).

In 1971, Airtourer production wound down so that AESL could concentrate on the CT-4 Airtrainer. As a final curiosity, while the first two CT-4s were built by AESL before it became NZAI, the last Airtourer (of the 80 produced in New Zealand), was made by NZAI.

In 1978, after the first production run of CT-4s had ended, the Airtourer Co-operative was formed in Australia to purchase the Airtourer production jigs, drawings and spare parts from New Zealand Aerospace, along with the Type Certificates and Airtourer production rights. The Co-op still holds the Airtourer rights.

Henry Millicer and some of his "children" at the Airtourer Association Convention, Griffith, 1978 Photo: Airtourer Association

Maintaining the Fleet

by Gregor Ferguson (ADM, 1 September 2009)

The BAe operation at Tamworth was more than just instructors and students. Here's how Australian Defence Magazine documented the BAe Systems flight training in 2009.

The company's experience with the Basic Flying Training (BFT) contract at Tamworth illustrates the savings available to Defence, as well as the challenges contractors face in satisfying a demanding customer, according to John Quaife, a former Air Commander Australia and now the company's General Manager, Aviation Solutions.

At Tamworth the company carries out Flight Grading for the ADF and Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF), BFT for the ADF and Qualified Flying Instructor (QFI) training for the Royal Brunei Defence Force - indeed, it is the only private sector organisation in the world to train military QFIs, Quaife told ADM.

The ADF is responsible for recruitment and selection of pilots; these are assessed by the ADF Pilot Selection Agency (PSA), also located at Tamworth, and BAE Systems puts 275 candidates a year through a two-week, 15-hour syllabus on the CT-4B piston trainer and the Mudry CAP10 aerobatic trainer.

After this a Joint Selection Board recommends suitable individuals for either single-Service training or for all Services.

A recommendation for Air Force meaning he or she is a potential RAAF fast jet pilot.

The BFT course trains up to 152 students a year in a 25-week, 64-hour syllabus on the CT-4B.

The company runs eight courses a year, starting at five-week intervals.

Army pilots do a further 38 hours on the Army Intermediate Pilot Course (AIPC), focussing on navigation and instrument flying, to prepare for the operational environment.

From Tamworth Army BFT graduates go to Oakey for rotary wing training and then operational conversion.

Currently, RAAF and RAN pilots go to 2 Flying Training School at Pearce for Advanced Flying Training (AFTS) to "wings" standard.

Tamworth History

BAE Systems Australia Flight Training at Tamworth took over the flight screening and basic flying training duties of the former 1 FTS at Point Cook in 1998 under a Commercial Support Program (CSP) contract.

Its fleet consists of 27 CT-4Bs, three CAP10s and two Piper PA-34 Senecas, all owned by the company.

The workforce at Tamworth is 65 company staff, including 22 QFIs, 39 AF staff, including 23 QFIs and the PSA has seven staff.

The BAE staff fly some 5,000 instructional hours each year in the BFT role and about 3,750 dual hours a year on flight screening.

The mix of company and ADF QFIs fluctuates mildly, but generally BAE Systems QFIs carry out all of the flight screening duties except for the final assessment sorties, while the majority of BFTS instructors are ADF personnel.

All QFIs undergo CFS testing and standardisation courses and are also required to meet CASA licensing requirements - the company takes responsibility for QFI conversion and CASA accreditation.

All civilian instructors have extensive experience with most being ex-military.

The Tamworth aircraft fleet flies 16,000 hours a year, including 2,000 at East Sale supporting QFI training at the RAAF's Central Flying School (CFS).

The aircraft are maintained to civil airworthiness standards by 19 engineers, who also undertake 18 engine overhauls, 13 major airframe servicings and two CT-4B main spar replacements a year.

This is all done in-house to guarantee quality and schedule performance.

The entire operation is subject to regular Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and RSAF take part in audits, and participates in Directorate General of Technical Airworthiness (DGTA) CT-4 airworthiness boards.

By comparison, Quaife says, to deliver the same number of flying hours and BFT throughput each year, 1 FTS required 37 aircraft and 100 maintainers.

The company is required to have 14 CT-4Bs available each day and routinely achieves 19.

Full article at ADM site:
https://bit.ly/ADM1SEP09

Airtourer vs Aircruiser vs Airtrainer

Specification	Airtourer 100	Airtourer 115	Airtourer T6	Aircruiser	CT-4A Airtrainer	CT-4E Airtrainer
Engine	100hp Cont O-200-A	115hp Lyc O-235-C	150hp Lyc O-320-E	210hp Cont IO-360-D	210hp Cont IO-360-D	300hp Lyc AEIO-540-L
Propeller	2-blade fixed pitch	2-blade fixed pitch	2-blade constant-speed	2-blade constant-speed	2-blade constant-speed	3-blade constant-speed
Fuel Capacity	132 lt	132 lt	132 lt	209 lt	204-351 lt	204-351 lt
Wing Span	7.92 m (26ft 0in)	7.92 m (26ft 0in)	7.92 m (26ft 0in)	7.92 m (26ft 0in)	7.92 m (26ft 0in)	7.92 m (26ft 0in)
Length	6.32 m (20ft 9in)	6.55 m (21ft 6in)	6.70 m (22ft 0in)	7.06 m (23ft 2in)	7.06 m (23ft 2in)	7.16 m (23ft 6in)
Max T-O Weight	748 kg (1650 lb)	748 kg (1650 lb)	860 kg (1890 lb)	1200 kg (2640 lb)	1038 kg (2400 lb)	1179 kg (2600 lb)
Empty Weight	481 kg (1060 lb)	490 kg (1080 lb)	590 kg (1300 lb)	694 kg (1530 lb)	676 kg (1490 lb)	807 kg (1780 lb)
Max Cruise	111 kt	114 kt	130 kt	148 kt	140 kt	152 kt
Range Cruise	95 kt	100 kt	116 kt		120 kt	
Max Climb	670 ft/min	900 ft/min	1150 ft/min	1250 ft/min	1345 ft/min	1830 ft/min
Service Ceiling	13,000 ft	14,000 ft	15,000 ft	17,500 ft	17,900 ft	18,200 ft
Max Range	780 nm	616 nm	581 nm	870 nm	678 nm	520 nm

Impromptu Fly-in... 2014

On 10th June 2014, a paddock south of Gunnedah placed host to an impromptu fly-in. It all started when Tamworth CT-4B VH-YCR called Mayday with rudder issues, but managed to put down safely in a field.

A witness then saw a Savage Cub land nearby to check that everyone was OK. The Mayday triggered a more formal rescue party, and a Westpac Rescue BK117 helicopter joined the fly-in. Fire engines and ambulances joined the party, and perhaps even a news JetRanger helicopter. The CT-4 student and instructor were given a ride back to Tamworth in the rescue helicopter.

Photo: Namoi Valley Independent courtesy Fiona Ferguson

Because the aircraft was being operated by the ADF at the time, Defence conducted an investigation and temporarily grounded the Tamworth fleet. They were back in service a fortnight later.

Commemorative Artwork Explanatory Note

Full registrants for the Airtourer Association's 2025 President's Fly-in to Tamworth received, in their souvenir pack, a magnificent artwork print commemorating 50 years of CT-4 operation in Australia. The artwork features detailed profile illustrations of 18 aircraft important in the story of the CT-4 Airtrainer.

Here are some further explanations of the features of the artwork.

- The title colours are the exact colours of the Fly-in logo, with the dark green from the original RAAF scheme and the orange from the "Fanta can" scheme.
- The logos at the bottom reflect the ownership of the Airtourer family of aircraft.
- The shaded background in the first column provides some distinction between the three "non-CT-4" aircraft. The CT-4 story started with FMM. The RAAF evaluated EQG in 1970 for the Winjeel replacement requirement. The Victa Aircruiser is obviously the direct forebear of the CT-4 Airtrainer. These three aircraft are depicted in their delivery colour schemes, and the year shows when they first flew.
- The other two aircraft in the first column are the first CT-4 prototype, and a production CT-4A from the first customer, the Royal Thai Air Force.
- The first two aircraft in the second column show the first and last RAAF CT-4As in the schemes in which they were first started (27) and ended (77). The year in this case shows the year of introduction and retirement of the RAAF CT-4As.
- The next two aircraft show the CT-4Bs delivered to RNZAF and RTAF. The RNZAF aircraft were "military B" models, while the RTAF aircraft were "civil B" models. Important to note is that the RNZAF CT-4Bs were delivered when the company was NZAI. By the time "civil B" production started, the company was PAC.
- The aircraft in the third column depict three schemes used in the BAe Ansett/BAe Systems/BFTS era from 1993 to 2019.
- The fourth aircraft in the third column is the prototype CT-4C turboprop variant with the Allison engine.
- The fourth column shows the CT-4E and F variants in the colours of their main operators. The dates show delivery dates of that production run.
- SYFC is Singapore Youth Flying Club. Most of the RNZAF and both of the SYFC E models are now in Australia, so the connection with "CT-4s in Australia" is there. VH-CTZ is the only CT-4 built for a civilian customer. The final aircraft shows VH-XFR when it was a CT-4F Akala, before it was turned back into a CT-4E.

The artwork was created by Graeme Molineux, the artist and technical illustrator behind Grubby Fingers Aircraft Illustration. Graeme has decades of industry experience, and has a fascination for all things aviation, and a special affection for the Airtourer family of aircraft. Google "Grubby Fingers" to see more of his work.

I got one!
Buying a CT-4A in 1993

by the late Hector Blemings (reprinted from Newsletter 67, August 1993)

Yes I'm feeling a bit smug, also a little poorer. CT4 Number 73 (now VH-YVV) is mine. It was an exciting auction that Pickles staged at Bankstown with 2,000 aviation enthusiasts in attendance, including a well-represented group of Airtourer members. We aimed to sit together and some of us managed to do so. By the commencement of the auction I had decided that I was very happy with (my Airtourer) FVV and ruled out getting carried away with the idea of owning one of these historic aircraft. I endeavoured to do my homework and reduced the range that I was interested in to six, mostly from the Rhodesian batch. These I arrived at with the help of Alan L Webber and his book on the CT4 Airtrainer plus a lot of helpful advice. Then I had Doug Stott doing a lot of research and John O'Halloran all the way from Hong Kong [via fax], Stuart Hilsberg giving me the· benefit of his inside knowledge. It was great the way everyone was so supportive.

Gordon Robinson sitting alongside, digging me in the ribs, saying 'Go for it, Put up your hand!' and when No 73 came up I did just that, and it was mine! I really did keep my cool while bidding, I surprised myself, but after, I don't think my feet touched the ground.

Thanks to all for your support, especially Wendy, for without her blessing I would never have used the house alteration funds.

Alan Wood ferried 73 to Hoxton Park, then several weeks later we had a very enjoyable trip together through some marginal weather to Latrobe Valley. The follow up was that I attended the RAAF Disposal Auction of CT-4 spares, with nothing particular in mind, and met Stuart Krichauff. He mentioned that the props are going cheaply; I offered $250 for a first life, in an aluminium case worth more than that. I returned home contented; a very exciting couple of weeks!

From the Archive

THE AGE

Monday 28 June 1982 250 Spencer St., Melbourne 60 0421 (Classified 60 0611) 28 Pages Intl. 2 Pages World Cup Soccer Feature 128th Year 25c

US policy 'steady' after Haig

Mr Haig: became a liability

PAGE 7: Shultz fits into team; scapegoat needed, says Moscow; Chinese dismay; 'Al, may I see you a moment?'.
PAGE 11: Editorial; America loses a moderating voice.

From PETER COLE-ADAMS

WASHINGTON, 27 June. — As a worried world weighed the implications of Alexander Haig's sudden resignation as US Secretary of State, Reagan Administration officials stressed yesterday that there would be no departure from established policies.

President Reagan yesterday held a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with George Shultz, the economist and businessman he has chosen to succeed Mr Haig.

Mr Shultz, who had flown in from London, told reporters later he believed he could work "simpatico" with the Reagan team.

This will not be much consolation to the Israelis, who regarded Mr Haig as their staunchest ally in the Administration, or to some West European leaders, who had relied on him to moderate Mr Reagan's Cold War instincts.

Mr Shultz, president of the giant international Bechtel engineering and construction group, had wide experience of government in three Cabinet posts under President Nixon, but has no direct claim to foreign policy expertise.

The fear in Israel is that his contacts with the Arab world on behalf of Bechtel — which has major contracts in Saudi Arabia — will lead him to try to "tilt" US policy away from Israel. The Defence Secretary, Mr Weinberger, whom they regard as pro-Arab, is also a former Bechtel executive.

They also remember that last September Mr Shultz indicated that he differed with the Reagan Administration on Middle East policy.

Such fears may prove to be misplaced, partly because Mr Reagan remains a strong supporter of Israel and partly because Mr Shultz, unlike the prickly Mr Haig, proved himself a loyal team player under Mr Nixon, earning a reputation for competence and integrity.

West Europeans are less worried about the choice of Mr Shultz, who is known and well liked there, than their suspicion that Mr Haig's departure is a sign that the Reagan Administration is about to adopt a much tougher attitude towards them in its determination to bring the Soviet Union to its economic knees.

Mr Haig is known to have strongly opposed President Reagan's decision to impose rigid sanctions against any European company that tries to sell American technology for the construction of the proposed pipeline from Soviet Siberia to Western Europe.

Inevitably, however, the question absorbing Washington attention is just why Mr Haig chose to quit.

Reports last night, 24 hours after the event, suggest that the Secretary of State became the victim of his own impetuosity.

Angered over what he regarded as encroachments on his foreign policy "turf" by White House officials, he offered his resignation to Mr Reagan last Thursday — little knowing that a small group of senior White House advisers had discussed replacing him with Mr Shultz a few days earlier.

Continued: PAGE 7

No fears of change, says Fraser

CANBERRA. — The Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, said he did not fear any change in American foreign policy with the resignation of Mr Haig. Mr Fraser said he was sure that President Reagan had been getting advice from a variety of people and that this would continue.

But the Labor spokesman on foreign affairs, Mr Bowen, said there was cause for concern. "He was one of the more moderate voices in the senior echelons of American foreign policy formulation," Mr Bowen said.

He said it would be even more important in future that Australia adopt a more independent and principled position on foreign policy.

Picture: PETER MAYOH

The RAAF's last CT-4 trainer flies over Point Phillip Bay towards Point Cook air force base at the weekend, after a 19-hour flight from New Zealand. The plane, piloted by New Zealander Mr Cliff Tait, of Hamilton, was the last CT-4 built by New Zealand Aerospace before the company closed because of lack of orders.

For Mr Tait, 53, the flight was his last solo across the Tasman. He has delivered 44 of the 32 trainers bought by Australia since deliveries began in 1975. "My wife and friends have advised me to give it up," he said yesterday, although he will continue to ferry aircraft within New Zealand. He has also delivered planes to England, Egypt and Iraq.

Mr Tait took off for his 110th trans-Tasman flight on Friday and spent the night at Norfolk Island before continuing to the mainland via Lord Howe Island on Saturday. "I've had seven complete engine failures and innumerable engine stoppages on delivery runs — but I've been lucky," Mr Tait said.

The CT-4s, used to train air force and army pilots at Point Cook, are due to be replaced by Australian-built turbo-prop trainers at the end of the decade. Mr Tait will take a commercial flight home.

Airtourer Association Inc
P.O. 778, Tewantin, QLD 4565
Australia