



Mercury Bay Flyer

January 2026

Editor: Wally Pendray
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Flying Activity:



December 16th saw the team of Alan Coubray and John Vanderwee assembling the new pump shed for the runway watering system to be supplied with the water from town supply. This will be very necessary as already the runway grass has dried out significantly with the hot and windy conditions we have been experiencing this December.

Club Captain John Vanderwee was also very lucky to get fine conditions to engage his enthusiastic pilot competitors in the Bombing and Spot Landing competitions on Whitianga runway 22, held

Saturday afternoon 6 December. Everyone tried very enthusiastically to be the ultimate winner and here are the results.

Winner bombing Rob Llewelyn - centre of the cross!!!!
Winner spot landing Evan Wheeler & Richard Hood

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MBAC had their Christmas party in the hangar and went off very well with the weather on the day providing fine warm conditions.

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Another sortie flown by our Whiti Flyers was the BBQ lunch at Te Kuiti. Fine conditions prevailed so 7 of our aircraft arrived for lunch and a good chin wag with the Te Kuiti members

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Coro Club Café & Venue



Samantha and her team have been improving their menu all the time as can be seen from the pictures here.

Fly ins and local residents are keen to sample the delightful foods and venue.



**Hours 8am - 3pm 7 days
until 18 January 2026**

hello@coro.club or 021 08002970 to speak to the team

Notices from committee:

MBAC Committee 2025/26

President	Keith Skilling	021 333 767
Vice President	Evan Wheeler	021 924 807
Secretary	Mike Norton	021 667 866
Treasurer	Bruce Turner	021 388 343
Club Captain	John Vanderwee	021 185 2409
Ordinary Executive Members – Alan Coubray, Graeme Spurdle, Steve Chilcott.		



Hangar gutter washing and moss spraying has been started in December but weather interrupted so now looking for volunteers in January.

New electricity supply to hangars and water pump shed have been installed



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The club has a Toyota corolla available for visiting pilots who would like to get around Whitianga

The car is parked outside the tractor shed at the moment but will be located eventually in the tractor building.

Pilots can contact Graeme on [0272737142](tel:0272737142) to gain access to the car via a lockbox holding the keys.

Cost will be \$5 per use for local driving only.



Presidents Report

On behalf of the MBAC committee I hope that you had a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as we look forward to a great 2026.

December was a very busy month at the club with competitions, the Christmas party and lots of work being carried out around the airfield. We get a lot of very favourable comments about the airfield facilities and conditions and I remind you all that this is entirely due to our volunteer club members who put in a lot of time and effort to make the airfield what it is today.

The competitions were a great success with various different bombing and landing techniques tried, with limited success, and some well deserved disqualifications. Great fun was had by all and a special thanks to all the wives, partners and children who kept track of it all at the targets.

Santa made a surprise visit to the Christmas party with a large bag of secret presents and there was a wonderful table of food provided by everyone. A special thanks our chef Peter Walton and Santa.

You may notice earthworks and a new shed adjacent to hangar block E. This is the start of our new irrigation system that will be completed in early January. When completed, this will maintain our runway during the dry summer periods, that are hopefully arriving soon. On that note, we are still getting members and visitors back tracking on the runway against specific instructions on our airfield charts not to do so. This is not helping the condition of the grass and very frustrating for the volunteers that try to maintain it. We have heard all sorts of excuses why pilots ignore these instructions, but none of them stack up. I consider it vandalism and have considered home detention or a short jail term for miscreants but so far I have no support from the committee! Please read the charts and use the taxiways!

The hangar gutter cleaning is becoming a huge task. A whole day was spent on the scissor lift by John, Evan Peter and Sam and only one side of block E was completed. Throughout the day they were given ample advice and encouragement from various club members but please remember that this is the hangar owners' responsibility and some blocks are starting to look decidedly shabby.

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The new security fence and cameras are working well and already there has been a noticeable reduction in 'visitors'. If you have any issues with the gate or for that matter with the airfield, please contact a committee member, we value your input.

The peninsular and Whitianga are very busy places over the holiday period, just take a look at the snapshot of a period on the 28th of December below, and in particular the Whitianga circuit. Can you imagine the VHF clutter? We had a couple of close calls on that day, so I can't emphasize enough the importance of good radio and circuit discipline every time we fly. It's not difficult, it just requires thought and common sense....be careful out there and enjoy the summer.

Cheers Keith

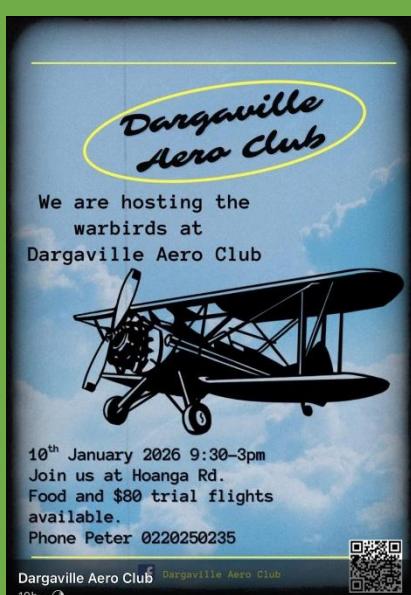


New Members

New member Justin Senior has joined the MBAC this month so please welcome him into our world when next you see them on the airfield having fun.

Flying Events

This is a good list of the must do's this flying season



Thames Wings and Wheels

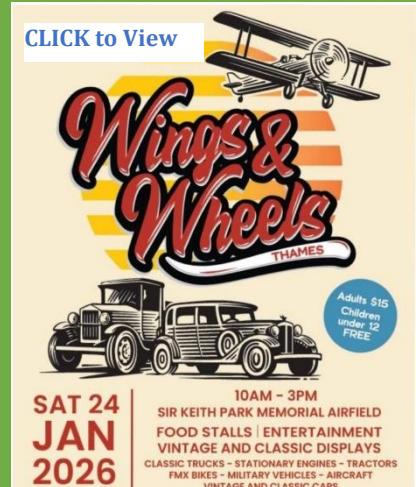
Saturday 24 January 2026

Planning is well under way for this exciting event, at the Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield. 10.00 am – 3.00 pm. It will be a great family day out for everyone.

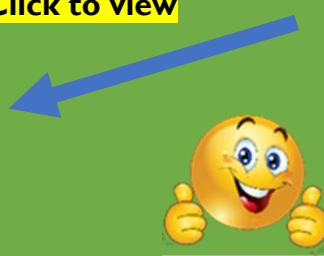
Keep an eye out for further information.

SEE
YOU
THERE!

[CLICK to View](#)



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Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc.
Newsletter – December 2025 – #20

SKPMA Inc. – Officers:

President:	Geoff Parker	021 833 044	geoff.parker@skpa.co.nz
Treasurer:	Stuart Read	0274 770 104	stuart.read@xtra.co.nz
Secretary:	Warren Sly	021 772 851	warren.sly@xtra.co.nz
Committee:	Adrian Catoos	021 785 607	adrian.catoos@xtra.co.nz
	Gary Bratt	0274 498 115	gary.bratt@xtra.co.nz
	Gill McChesney	0274 825 454	gill.mchesney@xtra.co.nz

HEADLINES:

- Sir Keith Park Memorial Inaugurated with aplomb;
- Excellent TVNZ 1 and newspaper coverage of the event;
- \$16,000 still required to meet outstanding financial obligations;
- Plan to publish two Children's Books featuring Sir Keith Park;
- Joanne's new photo book covering the development of the statue available;
- Battle of Britain 2026 - thoughts;
- Annual General Meeting feedback.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN AND INAUGURATION 2025:

The Battle of Britain Commemorations and the inauguration of the Memorial to Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park went off very well on Sunday 18th September, despite a bitterly cold westerly wind.

Through the efforts of William Earl (a member of SKPMA Inc.), we managed to get excellent coverage on TV1 News that same evening. This was followed by equally great coverage in The Mercury Bay Informer and Valley Profile newspapers.

SKPMA Inc Newsletter 20 (2025). Printed 3 December 2025

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<http://www.flyingnz.co.nz/>

Healthy Bastards Omaka Airfield 7 February 26



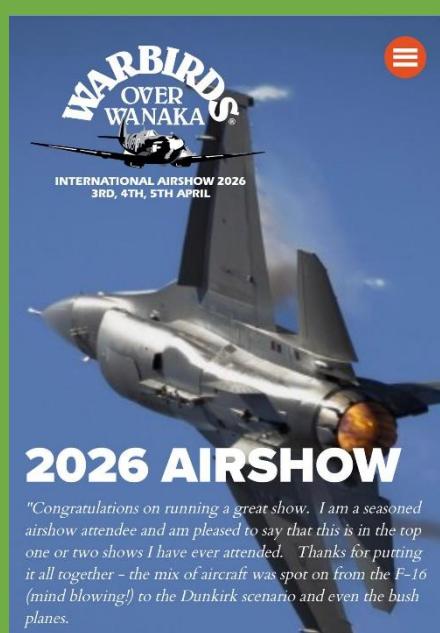
**ART Deco Napier THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY 2026 -
SUNDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2026**



[CLICK to View](#)



Warbirds over Wanaka 3,4,5 April 2026



Sir Tim was the driving force behind the event for 20 years after the first airshow "Warbirds On Parade" was held in 1988. His pure joy and enthusiasm for the event ensured there were plenty of others to help him put together what rapidly became the Southern Lakes biggest and best-known event.

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Mercury Bay Model Club



EXCEPTIONAL AERO-MODELLING!



Andrew White's Burgess Dunne BDI-B Float Aeroplane

Superb model of the BDI-B with 1169mm wingspan. All up weight is 250g. Build information here:

<https://www.rcgroups.com/forums/showt...>

Filmed by Dom for the 'Essential RC' YouTube channel at the BMFA 2025 Scale Indoor Nationals hosted using the Panasonic HC-X2 4K camcorder.

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[Whitianga Aerodrome](#) [CLICK to View](#)

Let's get out there in our flying machines while the long days are here!

Next Executive Meeting - Friday 16 January 2026 at 1000hrs

Please Support Our Sponsors:



Whitianga Waterways – www.whitiangawaterways.co.nz

Avsure Insurance – www.aig.co.nz or bill.beard@aig.co.nz

Hart & Associates Ltd – Chartered Accounts – www.hartal.co.nz



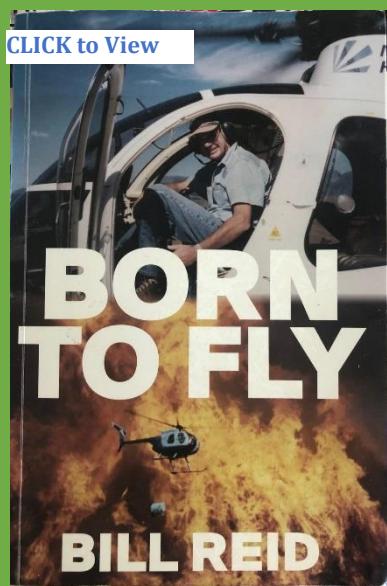
Happy Summer Season

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*Stop Press *

New Headgear and shirts now available from Bruce Turner 021 388 343

(Sizes available T Shirts \$35- 2XL, XL, L, M Caps \$20



Here is a book for aviators to read about the interesting formative years of helicopter aviation when things didn't always go to plan the way we expect them too these days.

'Little Johnny, do you have a story to share?'

'Yes. My daddy told me this story about my Aunty Barbara. Aunty Barbara was a flight engineer on a plane in the War and her plane got hit. She had to bail out over enemy territory in South East Asia and all she had was a bottle of whisky, a machine gun and a machete. She drank the whiskey on the way down so it wouldn't break and then she landed right in the middle of 100 enemy troops. She killed seventy of them with the machine gun until she ran out of bullets. Then she killed twenty more with the machete until the blade broke. And then she killed the last ten with her bare hands.'

'Good heavens,' said the horrified teacher, 'what kind of moral did your daddy tell you from that horrible story?'

'Stay away from Aunty Barbara when she's pissed!!!'

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A great article about Ron Connell from the Informer Summer edition 25/26

I couldn't miss his ten-gallon hat

By Pauline Stewart

Ron Connell, until very recently was a fixture customer at The Fig Cafe and would sit outside in his wheelchair in all weathers with his wife Judy, drinking coffee and wearing a ten-gallon white Texas hat. That is where I met him. Actually, I could not miss Ron. His appearance and friendly nature drew many conversations and friendships.

His hat is symbolic of his big sales in a business life and a story of love at first sight...

Ron Connell working life started early – in his very first job was with horses in Johnsonville, Wellington. He learned to shear the horses and hire them out.

His big adventures began at 14 – hangar hopping the aircraft hanger looking at aircraft. Helicopters were just appearing in New Zealand, and he was fascinated by them.

"I really wanted to fly and kept asking about how I could learn to be a pilot. No one ever said 'no' to teach you to fly.' Finally, one guy said, 'Read the bloody book. That's how you learn to fly.'

"So I read the book again and again.



The deer. It was hellishly dangerous. Flying the helicopter became one of my passions and it was good as it. I just started flying the helicopters because I had read that book.

"It wasn't very long before I earned enough to own one of the helicopters. The government in New Zealand did not have all the regulations, in fact, there really wasn't any then. I started South-West helicopters, operating to service the deer industry out of Hokitika. Looking back, it was the best time of my life. Every day was high adventure.

"The most nerve-wracking moment when flying the helicopters was – 'had to judge exactly where the deer were?' The deer sometimes live in your hands. You knew you had to yell very loudly and just at the right moment. I learned to shoot from the helicopter while I was the pilot. You really didn't think too much about how dangerous it was, yet understand you remained alert with every muscle tensile.

"Some of my mates died doing these things. We were young and invincible. No one is ever that, but you think you are. We all took huge risks with our lives and with business.

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LIFESTYLE

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"When that season was over and the need was no longer there for deer culling and hunting or deer farming, I started my own business of buying and selling helicopters and aircraft and began travelling many places in the world.

"Sometimes you had to do things you didn't want to do. It was a dangerous time when I found myself selling guns in Africa. I didn't realise the implications and quickly exited. It had been part of a deal with buying a helicopter and a plane. It was the early seventies.

"However, most of my business was in the United States, buying planes or helicopters for sale in New Zealand. I would stay at the Hilton in Oklahoma City. This was the operations centre of United Airlines and they managed all the contracts and registrations of the airplanes.

"One day I was booking in at the front desk of the Hilton and I saw this very pretty girl on the front desk doing registrations. I didn't have the courage to talk to her the first year. But I knew she was the girl for me. On my second visit the next year, she was still there. I asked, 'Would you like to have dinner with me?' Her reply was prompt. 'I

don't date guests.' I waited another year.

"The third year worked. That was thirty-six years ago. I had met Judy Anne – the love of my life."

Ron touches his hat with a fondness. "This hat, I bought it thirty-six years ago, the day I met Judy."

By the late seventies Ron was selling quite a few helicopters and twin-engine aircraft to New Zealand. "I was the first person to have a 0500 helicopter in and I bought a second one to sell. In those early days, I flew just about everything that could fly. I learned all the correct approach and departure procedures for all the different airports and for each aircraft and each helicopter. Reading the manuals carefully became second nature."

Ron gave many pilots their start. From the late sixties he did this, doing much more than telling them to read the book. He taught them and would help them achieve their hours and attain their licences.

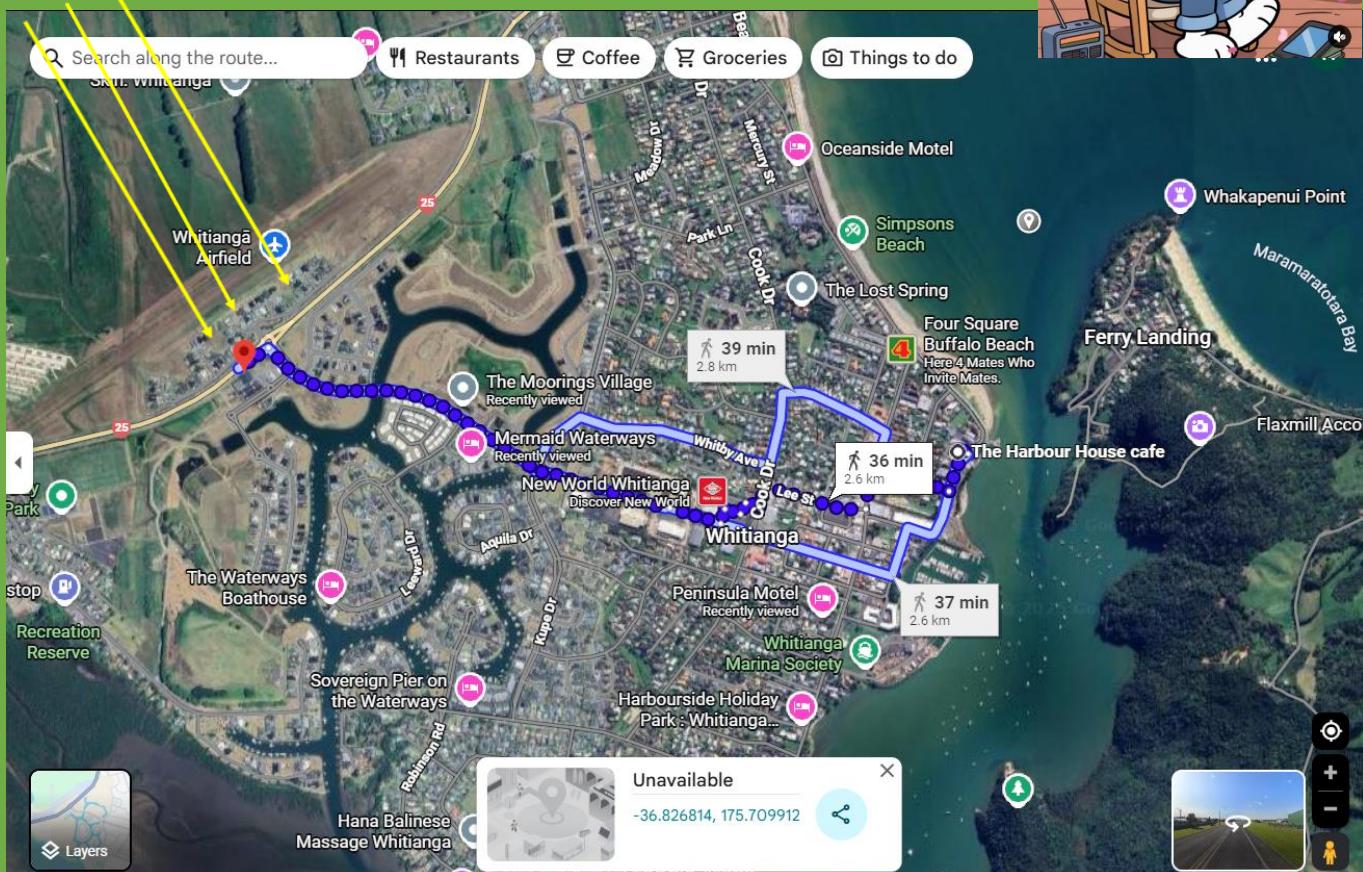
In some ways Ron is one of the controversial pioneer figures of New Zealand aviation. If he had an idea, he believed, 'It can be done!' Ron accomplished a great deal as a pioneer and leader in the helicopter industry, and he was a phenomenal teacher.



These days Ron is happy to spend a quieter life in Whitianga with Judy as his constant companion. He enjoys the company and conversation of people, his country music and wearing that ten-gallon hat.

Ron grins: "Whitianga is a very wonderful little town. New Zealand, of all the places I have been, is the best place to be."

If you would like to walk into Whitianga town and take in the sights. 2.8 kms and about 38 minutes – Aircraft Parking is available here on the Airpark aprons: local taxi 07 866 4777 or 021 155 55 58 ... if walking isn't your mode of transport



If you were born in the 50s, raised in the 60s, and made it to 2025... you've lived in eight different decades, two centuries, two different millenniums—and you aren't even 80 yet.

