



Places to Go: Hood Aerodrome at Masterton

Contributed by Ruth Presland

WITH THE ARRIVAL of the railway line from Wellington in 1881, Masterton prospered, becoming the region's largest market town. Nowadays it still boasts great markets and is the hub for the surrounding Wairarapa farming community. This region, covering the lower East Coast of the North Island may seem somewhat off the beaten track, but flying there is quite straightforward and worthwhile.

Hood Aerodrome was named after Captain George Hood, a Masterton born aviation pioneer who died attempting to fly the first Tasman Sea crossing in 1928. The airfield is steeped in history and is now home to a collection of very rare and still active aircraft (Albatross, Sopwith, Bristols and more) under the care of the locally based Old Stick and Rudder Co., Vintage Aviator Ltd. and Sport and Vintage Aviation Society. Masterton is also home to the Wings Over Wairarapa Airshow.

Arrivals

The airfield is situated just to the south east of Masterton township amongst very open and flat terrain with approaches to all runways being clear of any obstacles. The main runway 06/24 is sealed and has parallel grass runways. Northern runways 06 left and 24 right are only available for local operators. The airfield is unattended so position reporting and intentions on 119.1 are required. There is an AWIB service available on 132.8 and you should beware that there can be considerable activity by NORDO aircraft.

With the valley being bounded by high mountain ranges to the west, winds from this direction can be quite turbulent. The presence of such conditions are usually clearly defined with a laminar flow cap cloud on the top of the mountain range and a roll cloud (Rotor) running parallel around two miles out from the mountains. High winds at low altitudes are often a factor when these westerly conditions prevail and flying to the eastern side of the valley can be more comfortable.

Flying in from the north requires some map planning and awareness of when to follow the road and when to not. Just note that at Eketahuna, (if flying south) the



The Snap Roll Cafe at Hood Aerodrome serves delectable food from Thursday through Sunday.



Visit one of the world's largest flying collection of original and reproduction WWI aircraft at The Vintage Aviator. Open hangar & guided tours run from November to April, Saturdays & Sundays 10.00am and 4.00pm (also at other times for groups by appointment). The next afternoon Air Show is on November 13th. www.thevintageaviator.co.nz for more details.



Local CFI Doug Yarrell with Ruth Presland



Hood Aerodrome at Masterton

road and rail split. The road then moves into a restricted flying area (Mount Bruce Pukaha National Wildlife centre – which is well worth a visit, especially for the whole family). Turn to follow the railway line, (with caution towards the radio mast just SE of Eketahuna), until you get to the double bridges. From there you are a hop and skip away from the airfield.

From the South Island, a lovely scenic route is up the east coast, passing Kaikoura to Cape Campbell. In Strong norwest and westerly conditions, keep low to avoid the worst of the turbulence but do buckle up tight passing Ward, between Clarence river mouth and Cape Campbell. Turbulence is sharp but short lived as it funnels out

of the nearby Seddon area.

Approaching Cape Campbell, set a track for Lake Ferry. At this point you can also contact Wellington Control 122.3 (after listening to WN ATIS 126.9) if you wish to request radar monitoring across Cook Strait. Requesting a height helps obtain approval but this is not always granted due to flight congestion in and out of WN airport.

Travel across the open part of the Strait is usually calm in most wind conditions. If it is norwest to west then keep to the east once approaching the lower Wairarapa to stay out of the lee that flows off Turakirae head and then the Rimutaka's. The trick with the

Strait is to maintain situational awareness at all times, ensure good visibility and if in doubt then turn back! A coffee awaits you, instead of an unnecessarily stressful flight.

Fuel and Food

Once you arrive you may need fuel. Look for the BP pumps, supplying AvGas and Jet A1 near the aero club. Caution the long pipe that sticks up from the fuel bowser. It's not a smart idea to taxi your wing into it after a triumphant arrival.

If you are looking for a good coffee, visit the recently opened and aptly named 'Snap Roll Cafe' on the field (near the main gates) who are ready to offer delectable food to a hungry team. They are open from Thursday through Sunday. While you relax, read some aviation books or surf the web - or they can call you a taxi to visit local attractions. Take special note that pilots who bring in a plane load of hungry

passengers for lunch get a free lunch for themselves! Visit: www.snaprollcafe.co.nz.

Places to Stay / Things to Do

Accommodation ranges from the nearby Cophthorne Hotel & Resort Solway Park, phone 0800 765 929 to reasonably priced motels. There are also many nearby B&B's, or for something a little out of town, the Masterton region has a number of high quality home-stays. This is a great way to base yourselves somewhere for a day or three, to sample the region's wineries. There is an easy to follow self drive Winery Trail or you can take one of several interesting winery tours. With gourmet food and wine in mind, you have probably heard of nearby Martinborough (15 minutes flying from Masterton and with its own airstrip), a name synonymous with outstanding

vineyards. This whole region has so much on offer that there isn't room to write it all here so check out www.wairarapanz.com.

The best way to spend a day out exploring is to hook up with some 'in the know' locals. The Wairarapa Ruahine aeroclub is a good place to meet some fine characters. You will often find Doug Yarrell there, the local CFI. Having been out of instructing for a while, he was taken by a certain plane which got him back into flying when Wayne Allanson spent some time based at the field to help revive the club. Doug flew Wayne's Tecnam and decided that his flying days weren't over after all. Now the club has their own Tecnam Sierra with a strong following of students. Doug has a huge knowledge of the interesting history of aviation in the area. Contact Doug on (06) 377 7614. The club is a great

spot for browsing wall articles about tales of old, meeting new friends and having a good yarn – any time of the day.

Parachute jumps and training, as well as balloon flights are available most weekends. The field is also home to Ace Aviation, specialising in fixed wing PPL and CPL training and conducting type ratings in unique tail dragger aircraft including Tiger Moth, Chipmunk, Pipers and Cessna 180.

Remember that a well planned flight makes for a relaxing and memorable adventure. Enjoy your trip!



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