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# Places to Go - Mandeville

Contributed by Ruth Presland

MANDEVILLE, which is just a few miles west of Gore is one of the fields that most people have heard about - but if you have not been there, then plan to make the trip on your Summer touring holiday. Mandeville is a large green field 980m long by 60m wide. NZVL frequency is unattended 119.10 and vectors run 09/27. The field hosts the yearly 'Weekend 8' fly-in weekend, (so called as it is the 8th weekend of the year) and in 2012 this is the 18th and 19th of February. It is a great family weekend out, with many private aircraft flying in. You will find enthusiasts of all sorts and if camping under the wing is not your thing (I've done it and it is fun) then other options are the Riversdale Hotel, ten minutes up the road, ph 03 202 5841 and the Heartland Hotel Croydon about ten minutes down the road, ph 03 208 9029. Car pooling is a good way to go down here with locals happy to help out.

Weekend 8 always features great camaraderie and ground displays. These range from craft stalls, steam engines to classic cars and lots to do for both little and big kids. The Croydon Aircraft Company has its doors open so you can see the beautiful restoration products in full progress. There are flights available in different vintage aircraft during Weekend 8 and Tiger Moth rides are available all year round. Flights are \$95 for 10 minutes and \$160 for 20 minutes. Tiger Moth type-ratings are available. Why not tick this off your list for 2012? Speaking from first hand experience, it is an exciting feeling to be flying a Tiger around an area so rich with vintage aircraft history and restoration of such a variety of birds.

Croydon Aircraft Company was started in 1987 by Colin and Maeva Smith, and specialises in the manufacture and restoration of de Havilland and vintage aircraft. They also offer a complete fabric covering and painting service including repair of older planes and parts of planes. The company has a world renowned reputation for the manufacture of de Havilland fuel/oil tanks, cowlings and other fittings. See www.croydonaircraft.com for more information.

Mandeville is also home to the Croydon Aviation Heritage Trust which was a dream now turned to a reality for hard working couple, Colin and Maeva. If you are wondering why do all this down in Southland then a little history lesson may enlighten you. Mandeville has always been



Mandeville village and airfield viewed from the north.



A warm welcome awaits you at The Moth restaurant.



Tick your Tiger rating off this Year at NZVL.



Croydon Aircraft Company is world renowned for restoration and repair of rare aircraft.

a host to biplanes, going right back to the early barnstorming days after World War I. A local identity, John Crombie, learnt to fly in England during the war and he was guiding on Mount Cook when he met Rudolph Wigley. When the then Timaru-based New Zealand Aero Transport Company (which become the present day Mount Cook Group) took to the skies, the Crombie property at Mandeville became a popular stopping point for pilots of the Avro 504K's that toured Otago and Southland from 1921 onwards.

The old pre-World War II airfield and hangar, which housed two of John Crombie's aeroplanes, still stands and is in use today. Gore had prohibition in those days but Mandeville did not so this may have had something to do with the airfield being established adjacent to the old Railway Hotel, now a licensed restaurant called The Moth. The Moth is a great place for people flying in for anything from a coffee to a lovely meal or if you are parking up for the night. It's also a great place to catch up with flying mates over a cool drink. Summer opening hours are 7 days from 10-4pm and from Wednesday to Sunday they are open at nights as well.

Colin planted the Mandeville field out in an old fashioned grass mix which was used in the war for its anti-slip properties. Their determination and hard work to bring their vision alive means a variety of fascinating attractions can be viewed at Mandeville. The Heritage trust museum contains many flying examples of vintage aircraft and is a great facility for events and weddings. The Steam train outside the museum was retrieved from the Oreti River. (This river travels initially through wind-parched high tussock land, then down into flattish farm land. Wide gravel beaches, intriguing deep water holes and good picnic spots make it popular with anglers). The train itself dates back to 1878, and the trains were dumped into the Oreti River to halt erosion. Entry into the Museum is only \$5 and children are free. It is open daily from 9.30 to 4pm.

I have been to NZVL many times and to Weekend 8 most years. Each time I come away feeling humble and revived by the genuine hospitality of the locals and the great times I have there. I highly recommend a night (or two) to experience everything the field and surrounds have to offer. You will come away with new friends, feeling refreshed and planning for your next trip back.

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