



Bill and Robyn Reid's newly restored 1936 Avro Anson Mk1 photographed by Gavin Conroy



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Gentle Annie takes to the air

Our centrefold poster in this issue is of Bill and Robyn Reid's immaculately restored Avro Anson. Graeme Porter spoke with Bill recently and contributed this snapshot story of their outstanding achievement.

BILL and Robyn Reid didn't quite intend their Avro Anson restoration to occupy ten years of time but when the 1936 Avro Anson Mk1 ZK-RRA lifted off

Nelson's runway on July 18, all the effort and time was instantly worthwhile.

Bill's initial comments upon return from the maiden flight were, "Bloody awesome, amazing, what do you say? This triumph is the result of the collective efforts of a large number of friends, helpers and advisors. This first flight is their reward."

It should be noted that the mile wide smile didn't leave Bill's face for more than a week.

From David Phillips perspective, pilot in command on the day, he noted, "I was acutely aware of what was at stake. The aircraft is just as if it had rolled out of the factory. It's better than new. Handling is similar to a de Havilland Rapide - very docile and predictable." Bill notes that it is faster than expected. "I was expecting 105 knots but on that first flight with David we were indicating over 130 knots."

Since July the Anson has accumulated time in the air determining and ratifying performance matters and a shakedown of the on-board systems. Airframe wise there has been little to adjust and tweak. "The Armstrong Siddley Cheetah engines have responded well to some fine tuning and attention to the myriad of oil oozes common to the type. It's much tidier under the cowls now all the oil remains in the engines", commented Bill.

Initially the flight programme called for five hours of flight time. A further demand for ten hours to issue a type rating has seen Sean Perrett complete his time and David Phillips will be the next to be type rated. When the aircraft left Nelson for the first stages of its journey north to the Ardmore Mosquito weekend on September 29,

close to 12 hours had been flown. The trip north to Ardmore was leisurely by way of Woodbourne to show off to those from the area who contributed to the restoration

and then it was north to Ohakea where the Anson over-nighted for a couple of days - then finally on to Ardmore where Sean displayed the aircraft to an appreciative audience.

The project, acquired from

Wangaratta Airworld Museum, Victoria in 2002, underwent its reactivation at the Reid property outside Wakefield, near Nelson. Initially the project was conceived to take about three years but as those in the world of aircraft restoration well know, good things take time. With insufficient length on the Reid strip to fly the completed aircraft from, following some trial engine runs, the airframe was relocated to Nelson airport for final assembly and the maiden flight.

The RNZAF initially took delivery of 14 Avro Anson general reconnaissance trainers during the later part of 1942. They served their wartime career at New Plymouth where they were joined by a further nine aircraft during mid 1943. The second group of aircraft were used to expand the General Reconnaissance School into the School of Navigation and Reconnaissance following the service introduction of heavier types such as the Catalina, Dakota and Ventura. After the war the 19 surviving aircraft located to Wigram for service with the Air Navigation School until they were replaced by de Havilland Devons.

When the final RNZAF wartime Anson was withdrawn in 1952, New Zealand skies had to wait a further 60 years before another Mk1 in military colours graced the air - although two ex RNZAF aircraft were operated for a short time by Southern Scenic Air Services.

Forthcoming summer airshows around the country will provide bounteous opportunity to view this gentle anachronism from an earlier era when more haste, less speed was a key driver in determining the future development of airframes.



Newly restored Avro Anson during test flying near Nelson

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