

An Interview with Robyn Reid

Owner, with husband Bill, of a beautifully restored Avro Anson Mk 1.



Bill and Robyn Reid's restored Avro Anson was a star attraction at the Classic Fighters Omaka Airshow.

THE STAR of the Classic Fighters airshow was not really a fighter at all, but a beautifully restored 1936 Avro Anson Mk1. Owners Bill and Robyn Reid and a crew of enthusiasts have spent ten years attending to every painstaking detail to create an aircraft that is better than new. The cockpit is completed by authentic gear, from wireless radio sets for sending and receiving morse code to period maps. Entering the aircraft is like stepping back in time. For this issue's Kiwi Flyer Interview, Jill McCaw spoke to Robyn Reid about the aircraft and the massive restoration project.

Robyn, thanks for speaking with us. We'll start with some personal stuff. What is Bill's background in aviation?

Bill was brought up around aircraft, particularly helicopters. He worked as duty boy at the Nelson Aero Club and for Peter Lacy sweeping hangar floors, then when he could afford it, got his fixed wing licence

and then helicopter licence. He worked for James Aviation and a few other companies before he got a job with his father's company Helicopters NZ. He worked all around New Zealand, then overseas including Hong Kong, England and New Guinea. In 1983 we started our own business, Nelson Helicopters which we sold in 2002. Since then he has been flying for a private owner and filling in for son Toby who owns Reid Helicopters Nelson Ltd.

What is your own background?

We started our business in 1983 and I got involved running the business while Bill flew. I got involved in the politics of the industry during the 1990s becoming president of the Helicopter Div of the AIA and working with CAA on different projects. I have sat on the CAA and Aviation Security Boards 2004 – 2007 and was inaugural chair of the Top of the South Aviation Sector Group.

The Anson is absolutely beautiful; perfect inside and out. What on earth made you embark on a project like this and did you know what was involved when you started?

When we sold the business we wanted to have a project to keep us busy. Bill had owned a Tiger Moth when we got together and he was keen to get another vintage aircraft.

We chose the Anson as it had a good history; however we definitely never dreamt that it would take ten years. Three to four years was our original thought. When we saw her sad and lonely at the Wangaratta Air World Museum she almost begged us to take her home. We fell in love with her then and she is now everything she promised to be.

Ten years. That's a long time.

Yes ten years from the time we bought her to the time she went in the air. There was a lot to do in terms of the physical work but there was also a lot to do in terms of research and obtaining drawings, publications and documents. We had to research why things were changed during the service time and what would be best to keep her authentic but safe.

Where did the aircraft come from? What is its history?

We purchased her from Wangaratta in Australia where the council was closing down their Air World museum and selling off the aircraft. Designated MH-120, she was manufactured at the Avro factory in Yeading, England in the fourth production of Anson MK1's in 1943. MH-120 was then shipped to Australia to the Royal Australian Air Force. She'd been in private ownership since the '50s. In the '60s all the wooden winged Ansons in Australia were grounded owing to glue failures. MH-120 was subsequently overhauled in 1963

incorporating Avro Mods 703 and 704 which was the series II all metal wing and tail plane, sourced from RAAF spares stock. It was deregistered in 1974, but re-registered ten years later as VH-BAF. It flew until the mid 1990s and ended up with 2652 hours.

The aircraft was purchased by us, RR Aviation Ltd of Nelson, in May 2002 and arrived in its new hangar in Wakefield, New Zealand in February 2003, having spent 6 months in a hangar at Nelson Airport when it first arrived in off the ship in Nelson in September of 2002.

What were Anson's original used for? You've kitted this one out as a bomber but people tell me this is unusual. Was this one originally a bomber or was that done in the restoration?

The original Ansons were produced to be bombers – the markings of MH120 are that of a coastal command aircraft.

The Avro 652 was originally produced as a small high-speed airliner for Imperial Airways in 1934. Two were built, and primarily flew the Croydon to Brindisi route. The same year, Avro was asked by the Air Ministry to produce a design for a coastal reconnaissance bomber aircraft. The Avro 652A, or Anson, was the result. The prototype flew on March 24, 1935, and the first production model on December 31, 1935. It was the RAF's first retractable monoplane and thus represented the height of aviation technology. Initially it was employed as a coastal reconnaissance bomber on anti submarine and convoy protection duties. By the start of the war in September 1939 Coastal Command had over 300 Ansons in front line service, being their most prolific type. They continued to serve in this role until 1941 when the Lockheed Hudson had largely taken over the land-based anti submarine and convoy protection role.

The Ansons carried out reconnaissance and air-sea rescue operations, arguably well past their use by date. They were then chosen as one of the standard trainers for the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Thousands more were made for multi-engine conversion, air gunner, bomb-aimer, wireless operator, and navigator training. Eventually the aircraft served in every Command of the RAF, plus the Air Transport Auxiliary, and went on to continued production post-war. The Avro factory in the 1950s was concurrently making Ansons and Vulcans – two very different bomber concepts just twenty years apart. Ansons operated post war in many countries in both civil and military roles, the last RAF example retiring in 1967.

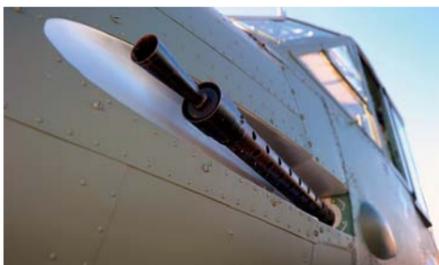
Why did you choose this aircraft to restore, and not a 'sexy' fighter instead?

We don't know – she chose us. The type has amazing history. And, with nearly 12,000 Ansons having been built there was no Mk 1 flying.

We've seen a report saying at least 100 people helped with the rebuild. Tell us about some of the stars of the job.

Well known restorer and engineer Ron Lee provided invaluable help by selling us another Anson, N1334 that he had been working on part-time for many years, that was kitted out with a lot of equipment and a original sloping glass windscreen

Our son Toby did an excellent job at restoring an Armstrong Whitworth AW.38 gun turret cobbled together from five examples sourced from the Air Force Museum in Wigram but fitting it proved difficult. The sheet metal work that forms the water draining bath that it sits in was a specialist job. Although the drawings for this had been sourced they were difficult to follow. Master metal shaper Grant Wahrlich came to the rescue and the turret now installed



LEFT: Flares, tucked in behind the pilot's seat, were fired from a gun when needed for communication with the control tower. CENTRE: .303 machine gun. RIGHT: Aubrey Coote (ex RAAF Flt Sgt) on the left, did his navigator training in this particular Anson. He had his log book to prove it and was delighted to have a chance to see her again. He reminisces with Bill Reid.

HELISPECS

helicopter maintenance limited

celebrating 30 years of maintaining working helicopters

HELISPRAY by HELISPECS

the originator of the carbon fibre boom concept

for Robinson R44

- Lightweight, 72kg with 4hp Honda
- Low mass oscillation absorbing carbon fibre booms
- All stainless / carbon fibre construction means zero corrosion
- Fast and simple installation and removal
- Single boom isolation option



for AS350 B2, B3, and Super C

- 1000 litre capacity with room for foaming
- Belly tank incorporating simple one person installation and removal
- Forward mounted carbon fibre booms
- Optional light weight carbon fibre tank
- Single boom isolation option
- Accurate, pressure operated contents gauge in pilot's console
- Dump doors open and close from pilot's controls for fire fighting and partial load dumps
- Designed by Operators for Operators
- Competitively priced
- Buy NZ made



R44 BAGGAGE PODS by HELISPECS

- 220 litres capacity per pod
- Light weight - each pod only weighs 14kg
- 250lb structural load per pod
- Vented for animal carriage
- Removable drain bung for cleaning
- Simple 30 second installation or removal
- Elegant design and excellent functionality



HELIPOWER by HELISPECS

Battery Installation for Bell 206, AS350, MD369C,D,E,F,530F,600N

- Maintenance free sealed lead acid batteries
- Light weight - 15lb saving over conventional lead acid battery
- 16 amp hours (typical NiCad is only 13 amp hours)
- Improved starting
- Initial installation \$1800+gst
- Replacement batteries \$700+gst

R44 GROUND HANDLING WHEELS

- Eliminates twisting loads
- Increased skid clearance
- Telescoping handle



Phone Roger at HELISPECS on 027 498 2812 to discuss all your helicopter requirements or email: heli.specs@hotmail.com



looks great, complete with its Scarff ring and Lewis gun. He was also the master for many other sheet metal fittings.

Electrical 'genius' Greg Wright, a former Qantas engineering manager from Brisbane completely rewired the aircraft. Because the Anson has so much exposed wiring in the cabin, it was critical to the finished product that this be done neatly and to the drawings. Greg has done an outstanding job, but considering that both his parents had worked on Ansons, maintaining them during the war, it is perhaps to be expected.

The late Cyril Whale was definitely a star

as he was responsible for all the electrics. He passed away last year but fortunately after he had seen the Anson fly. Dan Frew spent many weekends here working on the plumbing and welding. Bradley Parkes and Scott Tudor began with us as Gateway Students from Waimea College. Bradley is now a highly qualified engineer and Scott is half way through his apprenticeship.

We especially are grateful to Pete Lacy and Mike Cole, our two chief engineers who have overseen the project from the start, and Martin, Bill's brother who shifted back to Nelson in 2006 and has helped out since then. Two volunteers that deserve special mention are Dave Frost and John Reid who faithfully came out once a week since 2003 to work on the woodwork and general help.

Other stars include the boys at the RNZAF Museum in Wigram who helped in so many ways. Being able to source the original drawings from them was critical.

There really have been nearly 100 people involved over the ten years, some helping physically, some providing vital parts and some who gave us vital contacts so that we could source those rare parts. We appreciate so very much all of the people that gave so generously to the project.



The Radio Operator's post.



The cockpit would have looked like this when the aircraft was new.

You've gone to a lot of trouble fitting the aircraft out authentically. I particularly liked the period instruments, even if no wireless morse code is likely to be received by the Anson's wireless radio.

We wanted everything to be authentic so we went about gathering everything possible that would have been in the aircraft at the time it was built and operational. This included climbing through sheds all over England and Australia and re-making some items from drawings we have. Bill's brother Martin worked painstakingly on a lot of the detail inside the cabin.

What is the story with the retractable undercarriage?

We have fitted MH120 with a hydraulic undercarriage in the interests of safety. The original would have taken 140 turns to raise and lower, and would have been hard work.

Would you do it again?

No but we would not have missed the experience. I don't think we would take on such a large project again, but we do have three other Anson fuselages, a Hudson, a Bell 47 and a Sikorsky helicopter shell sitting in the shed. I think for now we will just enjoy flying the Anson.

Keeping Aircraft Clean with AGLaze

KEEPING aircraft clean, especially in a commercial or training environment can be chore, but is essential for airframe and paint longevity, corrosion protection, and the image the operation presents to paying customers. Even private owners who may well enjoy lavishing care on their pride and joy will often struggle to find the time to get all the grime off or do the job quite as well as they might wish to.

An option that is becoming more popular is to entrust this aspect of aircraft care to professional detailers using aviation specific cleaning and paint protection products. Put in the context of overall aircraft ownership expenses, such services can be quite cost effective by not only reducing long term maintenance outlays, but also in the upkeep of an as-new appearance to the aircraft which will enhance value when the time comes for sale or upgrading.

Aircraft Detailing NZ

Aircraft Detailing NZ are just such a company and are the exclusive New Zealand applicators for AGLaze aviation products which are used by numerous airlines, EMS, commercial and private aircraft operators around the world. Company owner Chris Auret explains that AGLaze Surface Sealant is much more than a traditional 'polish'; "As the AGLaze sealant cures, it bonds to the paint substrate creating an ultra-thin, uniform layer of protection. This smooth finish no longer provides a 'key' for dirt particles to stick to and is much more water repellent, as well as being proven in wind tunnels to offer less drag in the air even on new and unweathered paint finishes. The sealant also contains special compounds to prevent UV damage (and therefore fading) to the treated surface." Chris explains that the sealant which is neither a polish nor a wax, is completely safe on all plastics, rubber, chrome and stainless steel and does not leave behind any white marks or dust. He says "AGLaze also extends paint life and makes it much easier to clean and more resistant to a wide range of pollutants – once the glaze has been applied, insects, bird droppings, and other contaminants can simply be wiped off with a damp cloth."

One customer who is convinced of these claims is the Northern Emergency Services Trust (NEST), based at Whangarei. Dean Voelkerling, NEST Operations Manager, admits that the team there had some initial skepticism based on the product sounding a little too good to be true. He says it turns out that the claims were true and that "the improvement in ease of cleaning the aircraft after AGLaze was applied is outstanding." Dean says he had met Chris about six months prior when he was working on another aircraft at Whangarei and had also seen some of the North Shore Helicopters fleet looking great after Chris had worked on them - so NEST

followed suit. Chris and his team including AGLaze importer Tom Mueller spent a day on NEST's HeliMed 1 about four months ago. Dean says they scrubbed it inside and out, rejuvenated the paintwork and then applied AGLaze.

For the NEST team who had previously been using standard automotive cleaning products, the result was a great success. Dean

says that "In the past it was a real drama to get grime off the tail boom and tail rotor blades which were always black and sooty. The tail rotor in particular always looked dirty and marked – and it came up looking like brand new. Nothing sticks to AGLaze and it's so much easier to keep clean."

Since then, Chris and Tom have returned to NEST and repeated the process on HeliMed 2. NEST's third helicopter will soon be treated as well.



One of NEST's three Sikorsky S-76 helicopters looking particularly shiny after an application of AGLaze sealant by the Aircraft Detailing NZ team.



L to R: Tom Mueller polishes \$40,000 worth of perspex. Rotor blades looking like new again. Leather seat with centre panel cleaned.

The AGLaze Product Range

More than 20 additional AGLaze products are available, covering the full detailing spectrum from leather, vinyl and fabric cleaners, plexiglass restoration and cleaning, aluminium, chrome and stainless cleaner/polishes, through to a silver ion based, non-allergenic air purifier that eliminates smells and bacteria.

Tom and Chris also cleaned the interior of NEST's HeliMed 1 and 2 aircraft as well as polishing all of the Perspex. Dean was just as impressed with this as with the paintwork, saying that "all the colour came back to the leather which looked clean before but looks new now" and that "pretty much all the scratches are gone from the perspex and we haven't noticed any resulting distortion which can often be the case when screens are polished."

AGLaze DIY

If the thought of using AGLaze products appeals but you still want to apply it yourself then this is an option too. Do-it-yourself AGLaze kits are available, consisting of aviation shampoo, preparation products, sealant, application cloths and instructions. One application will typically last a minimum of 12 months on frequently used aircraft.

For more information

Chris Auret (who has a professional background as an aircraft engineer) and his team at ADNZ offer the full spectrum of exterior and interior aircraft care with AGLaze products in Auckland, North Shore, Ardmore, Hamilton and Napier. Aircraft Detailing NZ are also authorised CorrosionX applicators. Contact Chris on 021 262 2272 or visit www.adnz.co.nz More information on the range of AGLaze aviation products is available from Tom Mueller on 09 438 8800 or visit www.aglaze.co.nz

Blue Water Survival

TRAINING SPECIALISTS

Your ability to survive an emergency situation comes down to the type and effectiveness of the training you receive beforehand.

Blue Water Survival Ltd specialises in emergency crew and passenger training including:

- Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET)
 - Emergency Breathing Systems (EBS)
- Aircraft ditching drills for fixed wing operators
- Sea survival training for flight crews, and
- Environmental / Wilderness survival training



Key Features of our training delivery include:

- Realistic training programmes developed to meet user requirements.
 - Specifically trained, experienced and qualified survival staff.
 - Technologically advanced custom built egress simulator.

Neil Dodds (Pilot/Base Manager) Eastland Rescue Helicopter Service

"To say that I was nervous about attending another HUET course would be a massive understatement after having a not so good experience in a previous course. I now have to say that I have been introduced to the most professional underwater escape experience you could hope for. " The team at Bluewater Survival are at the top of the game". From the simulator to the crew to the briefing right down to the rescue dive staff! I went from not wanting to do this course to really enjoying it and keen to go through it again. I have done similar courses in other parts of our globe and these guys have taken it to a new level. Guys, don't change a thing. You have a winning formula. Bloody awesome and thanks. "

For more information or to enquire about our training programmes, contact us today:

Brad 027 2583 426 or Tim 027 4962 500. Email: brad@bluewatersurvival.co.nz
Blue Water Survival Ltd., PO Box 1739, Palmerston North. www.bluewatersurvival.co.nz