



The 'Aviation Tales' Newsletter: February 2026.

The month of February has been:

A real mixed bag of national and international 'events' many of which just make me cringe!

One of my 'sharp eyed' friends has reported that a relatively local aviation operator ("Pelorus Air") may just have an answer to our recent bout of inclement weather!

It seems that this aircraft has been noted operating from Paraparaumu Airport several times recently!



Thanks Stu.

Recent Aviation News.

Heart Aerospace ES-30.

The Swedish designed hybrid electric passenger aircraft.



Heart Aerospace have shifted focus to the US, closing its Swedish HQ for a Los Angeles base to accelerate development of the 30-seat hybrid-electric ES-30 aircraft.

The goal is to have a first flight during 2026.

Key Developments:

The new focus will be on the ES-30:

The company is concentrating on its 30-seat ES-30 hybrid-electric regional aircraft, which offers electric-only range (200km) and extended hybrid range (400km).

Infrastructure Partnerships:

Collaborating with airports like Wellington Airport (NZ) and partners like Sounds Air to develop the necessary charging infrastructure for electric aviation.

The ES-30 is engineered for versatility on short-to-medium regional routes with 30 passenger seating in a three-abreast configuration, including a galley and lavatory.

Range Capabilities:

All-Electric 200 km (108 nm) with 30 passengers.

Hybrid (Standard) 400 km (215 nm) with 30 passengers.

Hybrid (Extended): Up to 800 km (430 nm) with a reduced load of 25 passengers.

The aircraft is expected to have a cruise speed of approximately 200 knots at altitudes between FL100 and FL150.

Heart Aerospace aims for type certification and entry into commercial service by 2028.

The Wellington connection.

Wellington Airport is proud to have joined a new Industry Advisory Board for Heart Aerospace, helping the Swedish company develop its first electric aircraft, the ES-30.

“We’re proud to be fellow pioneers in decarbonising aviation and to help guide the ES-30 into active service,” says Wellington Airport chief executive Matt Clarke.

“As Sounds Air’s hub airport we’ve been working closely with their team and Heart Aerospace for several years now and it is fantastic to see the project going to the next level.

“Electric air travel is part of the future and it’s coming much sooner than many people realise. With Air New Zealand also joining the partnership we’re expecting to see e-flights operating our high frequency sectors across New Zealand’s Cook Strait this decade.

“It’s vital we help the aviation sector transition to lower emissions while also maintaining and growing the connections between people and businesses, which is crucial for a small island nation like New Zealand.”

“Short haul electric flights are the first step in solving this challenge. Wellington Airport’s central location means we are perfectly placed as a hub for these flights, with two thirds of our scheduled domestic flights on routes within the range of the ES-30 aircraft.”

“We aim to electrify regional air travel, but we cannot do this alone,” says Anders Forslund, founder and CEO of Heart Aerospace.

“Decarbonizing air travel requires a collective effort. With our partnerships we can impact the entire aviation ecosystem from creating more efficient airplanes to more accessible airlines and airports.”

“Sounds Air’s focus is to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 by becoming New Zealand’s regional electric airline of choice, but we can’t achieve this alone,” says Sounds Air Chairman Rhyan Wardman.

“We have been working closely with Heart Aerospace and Wellington Airport for some time. Heart Aerospace’s Advisory Board accelerates this work to establish the necessary infrastructure needed to support an electric fleet and get this up and running for Kiwis.”

As part of this transition work Wellington Airport is also leading a technical group with other New Zealand airports and airlines investigating the charging requirements to support electric flights



A recent ‘electric’ arrival at Wellington Airport

Restoration News

Before we get too far into 2026, let's see how the restoration of Hawker Siddeley Kestrel XS694, is progressing!

As of November 2025, the 'Kestrel' fuselage is now in its final position in the new workshop area. As you can imagine, there is still a long way to go!



“Next step: building a stand for the ‘Kestrel’ so we can get it off the trailer and start working on the fuselage properly, including installing the landing gear.

Exciting times ahead!”

With thanks to Aaron Simmons.



The ‘raw’ material!

Strange but true aircraft that graced our skies in years gone by.



The Antonov AN-225 Mriya (Dream).



Sadly, this graceful aircraft became a victim of the war after its destruction during the 2022 Battle of Antonov Airport in Ukraine!

Hang on a minute!

As of January 2026, plans to build a second Antonov An-225 "Mriya" using existing parts remain official but are largely on hold until the end of hostilities in Ukraine.

While Ukrainian officials and the Antonov Company have confirmed their intention to complete an existing second airframe as a symbol of national resilience, the project faces significant financial and logistical hurdles.

“With so many doubts, it seems like the resurrection of the An-225 rests as a memory.”

Snippets from the past.

Recent research has produced an interesting tale from the 1950s era concerning an early attempt to produce a 'useable' jet fighter for the Russian Airforce!

Enter the Yakovlev Yak-23.



Bucharest Aviation Museum.

This 'snippet, however, involves a Yak-23 of the Romanian Air Force, similar to this surviving example!

It seems that during August 1953 a Romanian pilot in a Yak-23 defected to Yugoslavia.

At this time, the Yugoslavian authorities were approached, and negotiations began with a representative of the CIA, to facilitate the 'borrowing' of this early Soviet Era jet fighter!

So, the aircraft had its national markings removed and was carefully dismantled, crated and forwarded to the USA in the hold of a Douglas C-124 aircraft of the 62nd Transport Wing.

A team of 'experts' accompanied this 'cargo' to facilitate the Yaks return to flight status on arrival in an airbase in Ohio. An interesting find was that this aircraft was powered by a Russian made equivalent of the Rolls Royce Derwent jet engine! Perhaps a 'snippet' for a future newsletter.



On completion of all the 'investigations' some six months later, the Yak was again dismantled, crated and returned to Yugoslavia.

Eventually, this well-travelled Yak-23 was returned to the Romanians who never guessed just how far their aircraft had travelled!

Tailpiece



Now, that is a ‘Big Tail’

- Do you have any interesting aviation topics you would like to have mentioned in a future newsletter edition?
- Do any of the articles you have read in this newsletter edition require further explanation?

This month’s motivational statement:

“Sometimes you have to go up really high to see how small you are!”

‘Felix Baumgartner’

The ‘Aviation Tales’ newsletter is produced monthly

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