The ‘Aviation Tales’ Newsletter: March 2026.

So far, the month of March has produced some of the most ‘diverse’ weather I have experienced here on the Kapiti Coast.

Let’s hope it is fine for the event below!

Not long now! Looking forward to welcoming all the flyers from the NZ Kite Flyers Association, Peter Lynn Kites and the Phoenix Kite Collective.

Be at Otaki Beach: 14th and 15th March.

Recent Aviation News.

Currently, my favourite future aviation success story in the making.

An artist’s rendition of the proposed Z4, BWB aircraft.

The ‘Blended Wing Body’ (BWB) aircraft are accelerating toward reality, with California-based start-up, JetZero securing a further $175 million in January 2026 to push its Z4 demonstrator toward a 2027 first flight.

Supported by the US Air Force and NASA, this design promises up to 50% lower fuel burn and presenting a big challenge to the Airbus-Boeing duopoly!

United Airlines have also recently announced an investment in the blended wing body (BWB) JetZero pioneer aircraft.

This company is creating an aircraft design that has the potential to deliver jet fuel efficiency and a greatly enhanced customer experience.

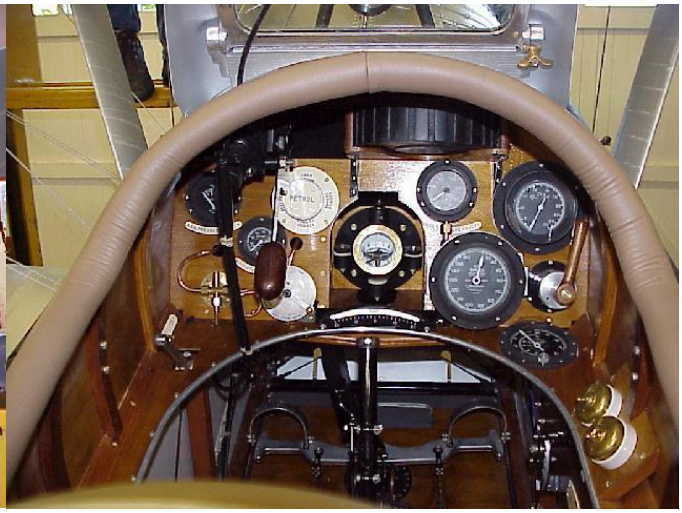
The investment includes a path to order up to 100 airplanes and an option for an additional 100. The conditional purchase agreement is based on JetZero achieving development milestones, including flight of a full-scale demonstrator during 2027, among other conditions, including that the aircraft meet United's safety, business and operating requirements.

JetZero’s innovative design reduces drag and produces lift across the entire wingspan, which could lead to as much as 50% reduction in fuel burn per passenger mile compared to a similar sized aircraft. The technology could potentially help United lower its carbon emissions while reducing the cost of operations.

Back in 2023, the U.S. Air Force announced a $235 million contract with JetZero to fast-track the development of JetZero’s full scale demonstrator. The JetZero Z4 airplane is designed to accommodate 250 passengers and fly on conventional jet fuel, with propulsion systems able to utilize sustainable aviation fuel blends.

Restoration News

A lengthy restoration of an original 1917 Royal Aircraft Factory SE5a (registration G-ECAE, serial C8996) has been undertaken by Tony Ditheridge's Hawker Restorations and subsequently Hawker Aeronautical Engineering (HAE) at Milden in Suffolk.



SE5A (C8996) has flown again since a last flight during July 1927 (Almost 100 years!)

Originally part of a 650-aircraft order placed with the Austin Motor Company at Longbridge, Birmingham in November 1917 for the Royal Flying Corps, it was delivered to the now

Royal Air Force and taken on charge in June 1918. Post-war it was part of the Imperial Gift scheme batch of 35 SE5as sent to Australia, where it became A2-25.

The airframe, including fuselage and wings, was later passed to the Munitions Supply Board for testing in August 1927, being struck off charge on 16 February 1929 before final disposal.

The SE5a passed through several changes of ownership before moving to Europe and then the UK, where it was allocated the period registration G-ECAE in 2010.

A lengthy restoration of the airframe structure was undertaken at Tony Ditheridge's Hawker Restorations and subsequently Hawker Aeronautical Engineering (HAE) at Milden in Suffolk.

In November 2020 the completion of the rebuild to flying condition was entrusted to Vintage Fabrics and C8996 relocated to its hangar at Audley End. Engineer Col Pope, assisted by woodwork specialist Richard Watson of HAE, carried out a comprehensive rebuild programme, including installation of flying control cables and an original Hispano-Suiza 200EX engine complete with related fuel, oil and pneumatic systems. Fabric-covering and painting were undertaken by Clive and Andrew Denney.

The 1917 Peugeot-built Hispano-Suiza 200EX powerplant was rebuilt to zero-time condition by Vintage Engine Technology and initial test runs were undertaken in the summer of 2024 by its chief engineer Paul Sharman. Reassembly and rigging of the aircraft was completed last autumn. It is expected that flight trials will be undertaken in the early part of 2025 and hopefully the 107-year-old fighter will be displayed in the UK later in the year. Col Pope

Original Royal Aircraft Factory SE5a C8996 (G-ECAE) flew again on August 27, 2025, in Essex, UK, marking its first flight in 98 years since July 15, 1927. The WWI fighter, which previously served in Australia, underwent a comprehensive restoration by Hawker Restorations and Vintage Fabrics. Pilot Stu Goldspink performed the flight following extensive, multi-year, and painstaking work.

Originally built by the Austin Motor Company in 1917, it was later sent to the Royal Australian Air Force.

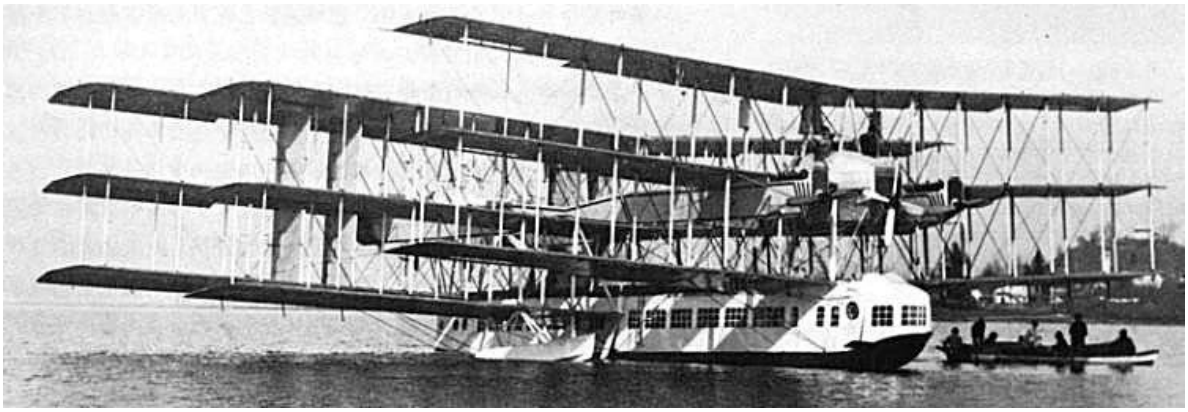
Restoration: The project involved using original components, including parts found in Germany and an unused 1918 propeller!

Engine: The aircraft is powered by an original Hispano-Suiza 200EX engine.

Location: The return to flight took place at Audley End in Essex, UK.

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

Introducing the Caproni Ca.60, complete with 9 wings and 8 engines that flew once and crashed on a second flight during 1921.



The Caproni multiplane flying boat.

The Caproni Ca.60 Transaereo, often referred to as the Noviplano (nine-wing) or Capronissimo, was the prototype of a large nine-wing flying boat intended to become a 100-passenger transatlantic airliner.

This complex aircraft featured eight engines and three sets of triple wings.

Only one example of this aircraft, designed by Italian aviation pioneer Gianni Caproni, was built by the Caproni company. The craft was tested on Lake Maggiore during 1921, and the brief maiden flight taking place on February 12.

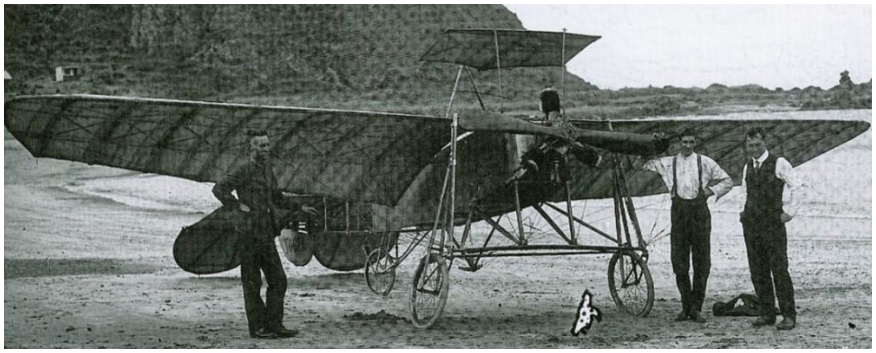
The second flight was during March 4 and shortly after take-off, the aircraft crashed on the water surface and broke up upon impact.

The Ca.60 was further damaged when the wreck was towed to shore and, despite Caproni's intention to rebuild the aircraft, the project was soon abandoned because of its excessive cost.

The few surviving parts are on display at the Gianni Caproni Museum of Aeronautics and at the Volandia aviation museum in Italy.

Only one of the eight Liberty L-12 engines of the Transeaereo survives and is shown here on display at the Caproni Museum.

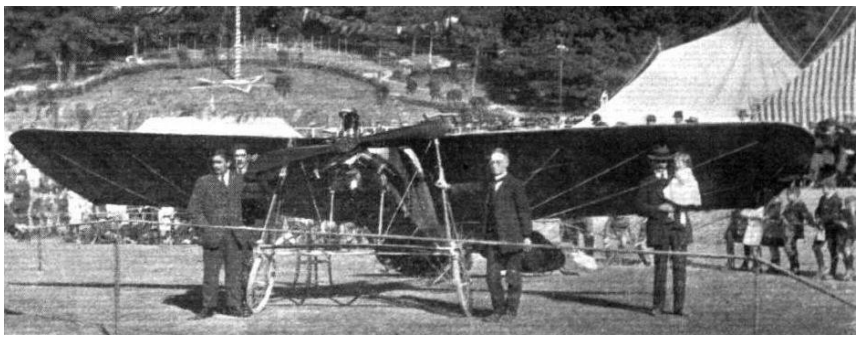
Snippets from the past.



During January 1911 attempts were made by Arthur Schaef and his team to fly his aircraft Lyall Bay.

A successful flight was made on 6 March 1911, witnessed by locals, including a representative of The Evening Post when a further flight was made.

To improve performance, a different propeller was installed.



Arthur Schaef's 35 h.p. Anzani monoplane at Newtown Park during 1914.

At one stage during 1914 the Schaef No 2 Vogel was placed on display at a carnival at Newtown Park on which occasion it was eventually placed in a tent, and it is assumed an admission fee was charged to the public to see the machine.

During the 16th of March 1914 it was again taken to Lyall Bay where three flights of about 91 m and a height of 6 m were achieved.

However, the aircraft was damaged on landing and repairs were commenced in a shed at Lyall Bay.

Less than two weeks later, whilst in this shed, both the aircraft and the shed, were lost in a fire.

This fire was caused by an accidental explosion while the plane was undergoing repairs.

An assistant left in charge, was heating a gluepot, and the flame ignited petrol that was leaking from the aircraft's carburetor.

The destruction of the Vogel 2 effectively ended Arthur Schaef's career as a practical aircraft constructor, and he did not build another aircraft!

Tailpiece.

Just couldn't resist this image.

All good though, it seems there is an internal ladder!!

- 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:

"Never quit. Never give up. Fly it to the end."

'Chuck Aaron'

The 'Aviation Tales' newsletter is produced monthly

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