



THE FLYER

REGULAR NEWS SHEET FROM THE MUSEUM OF THE
MUSEUM OF AVIATION (KAPITI) INCORPORATED

October 2025

Issue No. 168



WELLINGTON HERITAGE FESTIVAL 18 OCT - 9 NOV 2025

Members of the Discover Kapiti Heritage Group, comprising museums and heritage sites in the Kapiti District, including the Kapiti Aviation Museum, are taking part in Wellington's Heritage Festival again this year. This event focuses on the Kapiti District over Labour Weekend and our Museum will have extended opening hours from 10am to 4pm on Saturday 25 October and Sunday 26 October. Please consider helping out with these open days to take some of the load off our usual minders.

The full list of Festival events and venues can be found at <https://wellingtonheritagefestival.co.nz>

Upcoming Meeting Programme

Every Tuesday	9.30 to 11.00am	Open forum at the Museum
Saturday 25 October 2025	10.00am to 4.00pm	Museum open, Heritage Festival
Sunday 26 October 2025	10.00am to 4.00pm	Museum open, Heritage Festival

MUSEUM HOURS: SUNDAYS 1pm to 4pm
PRIVATE AND GROUP VISITS BY ARRANGEMENT
PHONE: 021 037 1937
ADDRESS: 227 KAPITI ROAD, PARAPARAUMU 5032
POSTAL: C/- P O BOX 248, PARAPARAUMU 5254
WEBSITE: www.kapitiaviationmuseum.nz
EMAIL: kapitiaviation@gmail.com

A History of the New Zealand Calibration Flight (1947 – Present)

by Keith Mackersy

The Calibration flight of the Ministry of Transport's Civil Aviation Division (CAD), was first set up in May 1947 at Paraparaumu Aerodrome when the Civil Aviation branch of Air Dept took over the task of flight checking NZ's aviation navigation aids, a job done up until then by RNZAF personnel. The Calibration Flight (commonly referred to as "**Cal Flight**") had the task of precisely checking a wide range of beacons and navigation aids dotted throughout NZ and the islands of its immediate Pacific neighbours.

The first Chief Pilot of the group was Captain Arthur Hewitt, a former RNZAF Hudson bomber pilot who had flown many missions during the Pacific War and in peace-time was seconded to air navigation checking work for the Air Force in Lockheed Hudsons and Airspeed Oxfords.

He started his new job for the Civil Aviation Division using hired National Airways Corporation DC3's during weekend "off peaks", but after a year the demand for the service had increased so much that more pilots and aircrew were needed. By 1950, even though the pilots flew "flat stick" all weekend in hired DC3s, the growing navigation network was more than Cal Flight could handle, and as a result the Department bought its first DC3, registered ZK-AXS.



Photo:
Ed Coates Collection

The aircraft was the former flying battle base used by Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South-east Asian operations from 1943-46.

Bought from RAF Far East Command for \$8000, this first DC3 still contained Lord Mountbatten's special facilities, a cocktail cabinet, refrigerator, cookers and leather couches, when it was handed over and flown to New Zealand. Refitted and given NZ registration ZK-AXS, it was soon flying around the Pacific on calibration checks for New Zealand, Fiji and Norfolk Island. But the workload continued to build and another DC3 (ZK-AUJ), and more pilots, were added to Cal Flight over the next twelve months.



For 24 years, Cal Flight pilots flew these veteran DC3s on marathon ocean-hopping missions, logging hundreds of thousands of air miles on two aircraft that had cut their teeth during World War.

A new Chief Pilot, Captain Arthur Bayly, joined Captain Hewitt's team in 1953. Captain Bayly was another ex-RNZAF pilot, who had flown fighters in the Pacific during the War and spent five post-war years as an inspector of air traffic control for the Air Department

At first the Cal Flight pilots handled many extra jobs, such as aerial mapping, VIP flying, supply drops for Campbell Island meteorological staff, aerial photography, whale spotting for the Marine Department, search and rescue, and even a stint of regular feeder airline work in the Pacific under contract to Tasman Empire Airways Limited (TEAL).

But the pressure of navigation equipment checking gradually built up as more countries called for the service, and New Zealand's own network of navigation aids expanded. The Cal Flight was the only non-American organisation in the world entrusted with the task of maintaining a calibration service for United States navigation aids in the Pacific

Calibration flying later became too big for the old DC3s, and the flight's biggest milestone saw two new specially equipped Fokker F27 Friendships being bought at a cost of \$5 million in 1972, and flown to New Zealand by Captain Arthur Bayly and his Cal Flight boys.

This chalked up another first by being the first organisation to order F27's especially designed with a highly complex equipment layout, starting a fashion which aroused the interest of a number of other nations involved in air navigation surveillance.

The daily work roster for the Cal Flight pilots and crew living in and around their Paraparaumu aerodrome base near Wellington, was almost as varied as that of an international airline.



Eight times a year they headed their aircraft north into the Pacific to the coconut and coral islands of Fiji, New Caledonia, Tahiti, the Cook Islands and Samoa, to name a few, to carry out calibration and inspections of the beacons and navigation aids installed at airports in these countries.

On these tropical operations, they flew early morning missions to avoid as much as possible the bumpy conditions experienced once the air heated up. Even in an F27, it was not much fun trying to work complex electronic calibration gear, sextants and oscillograph pen recorders when the aircraft was being flung around the sky in turbulence!

The two F27s were found insufficient to cope with Pacific and local work and pilot training, and a third Friendship joined the fleet in 1972, bought from All Nippon Airways of Japan. It was refitted in Christchurch.



However, this F27 had a more varied life while in NZ and in addition to flight calibration and pilot training work, it was leased to NAC in 1974, to Air NZ in 1979 and to Mt Cook Airlines in 1981, and then returned to the CAD at the end of the lease in November 1981. However, at this stage it was decided that the F27 was no longer required and as a result it was sold in 1982 for use by the Pakistan Navy.

At the height of the Cal Flight operation, the Cal Flight team comprised 12 pilots, three navigators, three flight radio engineers, three flight maintenance engineers, two aircraft cleaners and two clerks, all based at the Cal Flight operations office (Ops Office) and workshops at Paraparaumu aerodrome.

In April 1988, a review of New Zealand's civil aviation safety network was carried out and resulted in the publication of the Swedavia-McGregor report. The report included recommendations for improving aviation safety and the regulatory framework, and it served as a foundational document for the Civil Aviation Act 1990 and the subsequent establishment of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). As a result of the changes recommended in the report, flight calibration and inspection services were eventually transferred to the Airways Corporation of New Zealand (ACNZ), which was a new State Owned Enterprise (SOE) established in 1987 as part of a broader devolution of air traffic and related services from the CAA to Airways Corporation.

The first two F27s that had been used for calibration and inspection work were sold in 1992 for use by the Pakistan Navy. The earlier DC3s ended their operations in 1970 and 1973. ZK-AXS, suffered a landing incident at Paraparaumu in 1970 and was written off, and ZK-AUJ was sold in 1973.

Airways Corporation of NZ, now known as Airways NZ, initially used leased commercial aircraft and portable equipment for the calibration and inspection work, but in 2017 they bought a Piper PA-42-1000 Cheyenne, registered ZK-FIS to carry out their calibration and inspection work in NZ and in the Pacific, and the aircraft remains in use today for this work.



Footnote: Two past members of our Museum, Ian Ferguson and John Ford, both flew for Cal Flight for many years, both ex-RNZAF, and shared a lot of their experiences and some of their memorabilia with us. We also “inherited” several of the onboard calibration workstations from the Friendships and have them in storage, some of which were set up as a display in our Museum many years ago.

THE BROWN ARCHIVE: SHORT 330 / 360 REGIONAL AIRLINER

The **Short 330** and **360** were commuter aircraft that were built by UK manufacturer Short Brothers during the late 1970's up until the early 1990's.

During the 1970's the world's commuter airline market began to evolve from the 20-seat class to larger and more comfortable cabins. Short Brothers of Northern Ireland had created the Skyvan in 1962 followed by the related, but larger 330 in 1974. The 330 is distinguishable from the 360 by its double fin tail unit whereas the 360 is identified by a large swept tail mounted on a revised, stretched and upgraded rear fuselage.

The Short 360 seated up to 39 passengers and was introduced into service in November 1982.

Much of the success of the Short 330/360's was that the aircraft fulfilled the needs of the growing US regional airlines. This scored the boxy, but very spacious Short 330 / 360, numerous customers at a time when many saw it as the closest thing ever to the mythical DC-3 replacement.

Interestingly, the 330 prototype was destroyed in Belfast by an IRA bomb during “the troubles.”

The 360, with its two Pratt and Whitney Canada PT6A turboprops engines, found a niche in regional airline use worldwide, being able to operate comfortably from 1,400m [4,500ft] runways, opening up hundreds of airfields that would otherwise be inaccessible to airliners.

Production of the 330 model reached 140 aircraft whilst production of the 360 ceased in 1991 after 165 deliveries.



These pictures were taken in Honolulu on a visit in November 2012 and depict the 330 version of “Corporate Air” with its double tail and the 360 version as used by local airline “Transair” to service the Hawaiian Islands. The picture of the 330 was taken from a landing helicopter after we had completed an hour's flight around the island.

Text gathered from “Wikipedia” “Australian Aviation” and “Transair” advertising brochure.

Local Planespotting. Stu Brown



Airbus AS 350 B2 ZK-HSV

Private owner

En route Wanaka, Christchurch, Hamilton



Tecnam P2002 Sierra ZK-DOY

Wairarapa Aero Club



Robin DR400/500

ZK-VAX

Private owner