

NEW ZEALAND

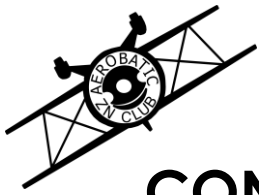
# AEROBATIC CLUB



**SEPTEMBER 2025**

**Newsletter**





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A graphic for the awarding ceremony at Mercer Airport. It features a central circular frame containing the text "North Island Akro Fest 2025" and "Mercer Airport awarding". Above the circle, a pilot is shown holding a trophy, flanked by two aerobatic aircraft. Below the circle, the text "The Langley Marshall Trophy" and "Saturday November 8<sup>th</sup> (Backup Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>)" is displayed. Logos for Mercer Airport and the Canterbury Aerobatics Club are also present.

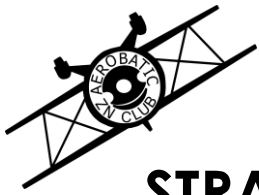
# SOUTH ISLAND AKRO FEST



**NOVEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup> - 22<sup>ND</sup> 2025**  
ASHBURTON AIRFIELD, MID CANTERBURY, NEW ZEALAND



More info to come, or  phone Grant 0210629929



# STRAPPED IN TIGHT

## FROM THE PRESIDENT - Morris Tull

Hi everyone and welcome to the spring flying season, dig the bird's nests out of your aircraft, pump the tires up and get flying. Perhaps do a refresher flight with one of the instructors and it is always a good time to read the flight manual again and check all your documents and checks are up to date.

We would love to see you at every competition this season, the more you attend, the better value you get out of your aircraft and associated costs. If you are not using your aircraft enough, consider allowing another pilot to fly it and contribute to the costs, it will be much appreciated.

I would also love to see you bring your kids, bring your dad and family or bring your friends to come watch our aerobatic events, encourage others to experience aerobatics at any level. It may be the inspiration they need to get started themselves or a good day out to chat. Consider getting together with other members for a meal or a drink as well as flying.

Have you ever considered joining or forming a syndicate to buy an aerobatic aircraft? This is the path I took that has led me to fly almost all the cool planes in New Zealand. Aircraft currently for sale or to syndicate are; Zlin 50L- David Cranna, Laser 230- Fred Zayas, Pitts S1S- Morris Tull. Get in touch if interested.

The North Island Akro Fest 8/9 November at Mercer and the South Island Akro Fest 20-22 November in Ashburton are locked in, check the details on the website and start practicing.

Reminder; We have moved the 2026

Nationals, one week later to 11-15 March 2026 to de-conflict with the International Shearing competition at Masterton, an especially big event next year. Note your calendars now and get your accommodation booked as there will still be lots of people around the area.



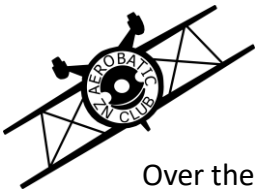
*Spitfire shaped wing of the Silent Twister*



*ZLIN listing on Trade me:*

<https://www.trademe.co.nz/a/motors/aircraft/aircraft/listing/4230638900>

In June, I was contacted by Andy McKee; who is living in the UK, to see if he could compete under the NZ flag, to which I gave him my full support and Liz King promptly organised him New Zealand credentials for the FAI. His entry has been accepted as a New Zealander and he will be flying a Silence Twister. All the best Andy – we wish you well.



Over the last years, I have been following the world championships in the hope one day I will be able to compete or that some of our members can compete on the world stage and I have been monitoring and advertising the dates on our calendars. We have incorporated a lot of the rules and aspects learned for these events to make our NZ competitions better and prepare our members for this style of competition.



*Pam Collings in Kiev 1976*

The Intermediate and Advanced World championships are very achievable to our membership and it would be awesome to see another Kiwi at the World Unlimited Aerobatic championships again, a feat not repeated since Pam Collings went to Kiev in 1976 with her Pitts Special that is now ZK-PUG. Four years later Pam competed at the 1980 World Aerobatic Championships, at Oshkosh in the United States and Allan Hogan also competed in a Pitts S1S at the 1978 World Aerobatic Championships in Ceske Budejovice, Czechoslovakia.

David Cranna, Steve Geard and Todd Montgomerie went to Mossel Bay in South Africa to compete as the “Aero Blacks” in the World Intermediate Aerobatic Championship in 2014.



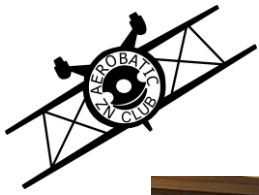
*The Aero Blacks; Todd Montgomerie, Steve Geard and David Cranna at the WIAC in Mossel Bay, South Africa 2014.*

Alistair Yoeman competed in Australia and South Africa and I believe there are more NZAC members that have competed overseas. Russell Bell competed in Australia when living there. Ryan Chapman, a Kiwi who moved to Canada and now competes in advanced in Canada and the USA Nationals. We have also had David Wilkinson; Des Barry and Brent Thompson compete in Australia for Flying NZ and there may be many more. We have had Mark Oostingh; a South African competitor at our nationals in 2020 and I hope we see more guests in the future.

With the reduction of competitors around the world, many championships and regional events are now advertising

as OPEN events and allow competitors from all over the world to attend regional or national champs, so these are events you can consider attending also.

Let us put the challenge out there to get a team to a world championship again soon.



David Wilkinson with the Australia verses NZ trophy

There have been a rash of midair collisions around the world with impact occurring near finals due to differing styles of circuits or curving approaches. Make sure you level the wings briefly on base leg to ensure there is no one in your blind spot on finals, make your radio calls but do not rely on them plus note that two pilots can transmit at the same time leading to missed information, be careful out there.

I am progressing towards my return to New Zealand from Dubai, my RV7, cat, furniture and wife are now safely installed in North Canterbury. I will be busy in retirement getting my remaining aircraft finished and flying plus I have inherited the job of maintaining 40 vintage cars, tractors and trucks. I am really looking forward to much more flying and activity with the club once back.

Going forward, our committee will continue our main purpose to encourage aerobatics at every opportunity by organizing aerobatic events and competitions, spreading the word and assisting with training. Please help where ever you can.

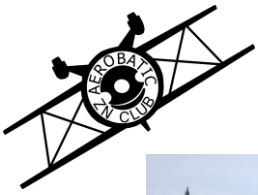
Stay in touch, fly safe, keep learning, and have fun.

## AEROBATICS AROUND THE TRAPS - CANTEBURY - Andy Love

We have been running South Island Akro Fest at Ashburton since 2020. Before that, we were at Omaka. This event has always been a grassroots comp. Where we actively encourage pilots in the entry classes. It has been great to play hosts to a number of north island-based members over the years, despite the extra travel to come to Ashburton.

This year, it is the 80th Anniversary of the Pitts Special. We had planned a big celebration at Yealands Classic Fighters earlier this year, which as we know, was sadly cancelled due to weather. We will make up for that at our competition in November where we will host members, enthusiasts and owners of this iconic type. Early commitment suggests a tremendous turn out across the board but also some new Pitts owners, previous owners and a couple of newly restored examples are going to be in attendance. A huge number of our club members can trace their journeys back to this mighty little biplane.





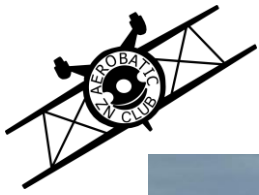
The Pitts first flew in homebuilt form in the US at the very end of WW2. Initially made famous by Caro Bayley and Betty Skelton at airshows around the US in the late 40s and early 50s, the Pitts was a

dramatic departure and advancement from the standard aerobatic aircraft of the day, the American Boeing Stearman and German Bucker Jungmeister. The type achieved FAA type certification as the two seat S-2A and single seat S-1S in 1969 and 1970 respectively. The US Aerobatic Team famously won the Worlds in 1972 with the S-1S across Men's, Women's and Team categories and thus ended the domination by the USSR and Czechoslovakia. It was a big statement at the time. To this day, the resources of the teams from France and Russia continue to set the standard in Europe and globally which have been extremely tough to compete with over the decades. From the late 80s, the Russians flew the Sukhoi Su 26 and 31 and French the derivatives of the CAP, these days they universally fly the German made Extra 330SC.

The type quickly appeared all over Western Europe and became the standard platform for National and World competition. The biggest benefit to this type, was that it was sold in plan form as well as the factory-built examples. The homebuilt Pitts Specials have shaped the competition aerobatic world ever since. Thousands of examples with all kinds of modifications and refinements still feature at events globally. There will be several homebuilt examples at Akro Fest later this year.



*Andy Love, Alan Hogan and Lincoln Jones*



As the cost of newer monoplanes has reached an astronomical level, interest in the Pitts has been revived in a huge way. Many being restored completely, or just firewall forward has become common as people see the benefit and bang for buck this type still provides. Pam Collings will be our guest speaker at the Saturday night prize giving dinner, at The Lakehouse. Pam is a founding member of the club, and my S-1S, was originally imported new by her in 1975. She went on to compete in it at the Worlds in Kiev, in 1976 and all across the US.

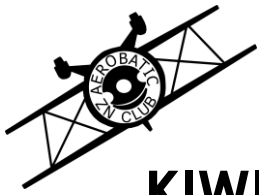
Alan and Joyce Hogan attended Akro Fest 2024 and will return again this year. Alan provided a fascinating look into the NZAC as it was founded in the mid 1980s as our guest speaker last year.



Also being celebrated this year, is the 40th Anniversary of our Club, another big milestone. In our short 40 years, there has been a tremendous amount of history created. I am proud to be a part of the organization. It sure has brought some fantastic people together. The most rewarding part, is seeing members achieve their goals and their reactions to those steps as they progress along on their own personal journey. Again, we intend to celebrate this at the competition later this year. If you are interested in being involved, please reach out. It is going to be another great competition. Here's to clear blue skies!

We extend the invitation to all members to this event; however you can travel, we would love to see you there.





# KIWI, ANDY MCKEE, TO COMPETE AT WORLD CHAMPS

New Zealander, Andy McKee, will compete at the World Intermediate Aerobatic Championships in Hungary 12-20 September 2025.

## Biography: Andy McKee

Age: 54. Born in Roxburgh, New Zealand.

Currently living in Biggleswade in the United Kingdom.

Day job, Aircraft Engineer at the Shuttleworth collection.

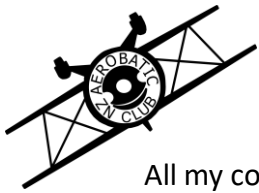
PPL since 2005. approaching 1,000 hrs powered and also have 230 hrs in gliders.

Aircraft: Silence Twister - self built over 5.5 years and 3,000 workshop hours. Several mods employed for better cooling, comfort and looks.

The Twister only has 107hp with a fixed pitch prop and a poor roll rate of - 90 degrees per second. Typically, I am competing against Extra 330's and One Designs, which are far more capable, so this makes me the underdog.

This is my first international competition so it's very much a learning experience for me.





All my competitors in Intermediate here have six cylinders and at least 3 times the power and at least 4 times the roll rate. I'm really up against it and will be happy if I've flown to my best abilities and am able to beat at least some of the Extras.

I've flown two practice flights so far and the box looks very small as I'm not used to a fully marked out box as at our nationals and regionals, we usually just have a centre marker and judging line marker only.

As for a most memorable flight or flights it has to be the trip I made in 2017 when I flew to Oshkosh in my Twister. Crossing the Nth Atlantic.

Many highlights from that but the one that stands out is being invited to take part in the air display as part of the homebuilt parade. I love aerobatics for the discipline it brings to flying. Flying competitively is the only way to get better.

5 seasons competed so far.

National Champion UK 2021 Sportsman.

National Champion UK 2024 Intermediate.

***The New Zealand Aerobatic Club wishes Andy all the best over the coming weeks at the World Championship in Hungary, and we look forward to hearing about his adventure.***



*Andy's Silent Twister – self built over 5.5 years.*



# THE AEROBATIC BOX - Grant Benns

Ever wondered what we consider when going through the process of creating an Aerobatic Box for use in NZ Aerobatic Club (NZAC) competition events? Having been involved with this for many years, with organising the NZ National Aerobatic Championships held at Masterton Airport and the North Island Akro Fest held at Mercer Airport, I will endeavour to describe this as follows.

For our events, the Aerobatic Box is a 1000m x 1000m square area (in plan form) within which a single aircraft flies for competition (or practice for a competition), to an absolute low level of 100' AGL (above ground level) for level flight or 300'AGL for aerobatic flight. Note that NZAC pilots are individually authorised by NZ Warbirds to fly to minimum heights depending on their experience, which can vary from 300'AGL to 1500'AGL for aerobatics.

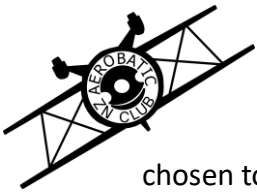


*Masterton's Aerobatic Box for the Nationals Competition to be held 11-15 March 2026*

When selecting a location for the Aerobatic Box, the underlying criteria is always safety and in particular the safety of non-participants below and in the near vicinity. In terms of CAA Rules, aerobatics on most occasions cannot be performed with 600 meters horizontally of a built-up area regardless of altitude performed or if the pilot is trained, rated and current in aerobatic flight or not. For NZAC sanctioned events, it is our requirement that a pilot has a current aerobatic rating, a minimum of a Class 2 medical (as currently prescribed by CAA) and, if flying acrobatically below 1500'AGL, they must also have an NZ Warbirds-issued Low Level Display Authorisation. Additionally, the NZAC Contest Director can decide to exclude a pilot who is not deemed to be safe to compete, for whatever reason.

As an Aerobatic Competition (or practice for one) is deemed an Aviation Event, the Contest Organiser must gain Event Approval (typically from NZ Warbirds), which under CAA rules allows for the horizontal distance from spectators or a built-up to be reduced to 220m. This reduction is in recognition of the additional skills that a competition pilot has acquired in order to be granted an LLDA and/or accepted for entry by the Contest Director.

As well as complying with the Aviation Event horizontal separation rule, we purposely position the Aerobatic Box at Masterton and Mercer so that no habitable dwellings of any nature are directly below the area, for both safety and noise nuisance reasons. Although mainly for ground observational purposes, the Aerobatic Box is immediately adjacent to the airport from which the event operates from, giving the pilots a large, unobstructed landing area to recover to following an airborne emergency or maintenance issue. The area is also



chosen to be flat, free of large obstacles, at a similar level to the airport and aligned to make orientation for the pilots easy.

Because of the close proximity of the Aerobatic Box to the adjacent airport, a common radio frequency is used, enabling all proximate radio-equipped pilots to be aware of any aerobatics taking place. Airport businesses/operators are also notified leading up to a competition event to further raise awareness.

As well as the measures put in place around pilot training, currency and acceptance, we believe the criteria used when selecting the location of the Aerobatic Box further mitigates risk in order to maximise the safety of the general public.

## LIFE'S SHORT – FLY AEROBATICS – Steve Geard

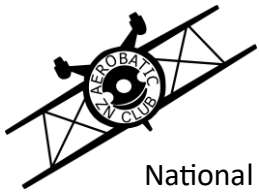
CIVA World Aerobatics Championships – South Africa- 2014



### South Africa; The Lawless Country

When talk emerged of the upcoming CIVA Intermediate World Aerobatic Championships, I was one of the first to raise my hand. After a very successful nationals in 2014, winning five trophies in Intermediate including the coveted dipstick, why not? A trip to South Africa to represent my country at the first ever Intermediate World Aerobatic Competition.

Along with a few of the others, Mike Slack, Grant Benns, David Cranna and a few others showed interest and in the end it was just David and I. We needed a third person to form a



National team and duly found Todd Montgomerie residing overseas who just happened to have a small lifestyle block in Johannesburg.

Off I went with my partner Margaret on the rather long flight to Cape Town. The others made their own ways to the event which was being held at Mossel Bay on the south coast 400km from Cape Town.



David only went there for the golf by the way.

We were met at Cape Town airport by Jacques, a rather suave South African airlines Pilot and the host for our stay, plus the owner of the YAK 55 I was to fly (the big wing version). After a tour around Cape Town, we went to Jacques's place for a braai and a few be vies where we meet his lovely wife and two wee daughters.

### The Lawlessness Begins:

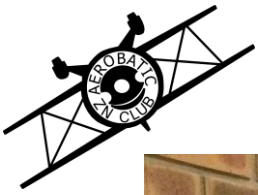
The evenings conversation ended up discussing the CIVA competition and how we were to get there. The South African team were having a week-long training camp at an airfield about 100km from the competition venue. They said it wasn't allowed as no visiting pilots were allowed to



practice before the event at Mossel bay and we weren't allowed to fly more than 15 miles from there in any case; Still, they were doing it anyway, "just don't tell anyone."

Jacques said I'm invited to the camp because I'm a Kiwi borrowing a South African plane, then he casually asks if I want to ferry the plane, to which I reply;

1. My license isn't validated yet and isn't legal in SA.
2. There's a 15 mile limit in any case
3. I've never been here before in my life.
4. And It's 400 km away.



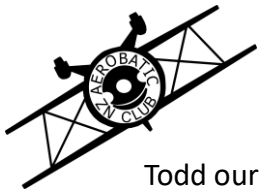
His reply; "I'll give you some maps, you'll be fine." I still wonder to this day if I was ever added to the Insurance policy. I decided taking the car was a much safer option. The next day at Morningstar field again he asks me if I want to take the plane up for a blast, honestly rules & regulations didn't apply.

Two days later we're ready to ship out and I ask Jacques what's the speed limits and how well policed are they? He said 110km/h is the official limit but travel at 140km/h you'll be fine. (He said that a lot!). If you get pulled over give them 200 Rand

cash (\$20 kiwi) and go back to 140. I said I'll just travel at 110, to which he replied, you'll get pulled over anyhow and it will still cost you 200, so you may as well do 140 and just pay the bribes (plural).

The training camp was a hoot. A great set of guys with many a good story told over dinner. I learnt a lot from the chats and around the camp that week. We usually fitted in two x 10 minute practices per day. By the end of the week, I had just over an hour of aerobatics in the plane. Discovering along the way just how much difference an extra 14 inches per side of wing root makes to how a plane flies ... 9G in the big wing is a piece of cake.





Todd our 3rd man arrived as he was a member of the SA Aerobatics Club and we decided to help critique each other. During my first flight, with Todd on the radio he was interrupted by some Russian woman telling me to “take more height.”

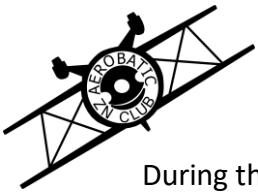
After landing and prepping the plane for Jacques I sat down with Todd to debrief. Then I get smacked on the back of the head by this Russian woman brandishing a clip board & giving me a dressing down about being too low. She asked to see my free sequence. She takes one look and throws it on the ground, “No good for YAK,” and off she walked.

I’d been practicing that free sequence for 4 months at great expense. We had no idea who she was, then the SA manager comes over, introduces himself to us and says what did Valentina say? I tell him she admonished me, and who the hell was she? He says you should listen to anything she tells you. She has 2000 hours on YAK55 and SU26 aircraft, was the Russian women’s champion and coached the Russian team to two world titles flying the 55’s.

10 mins later she returns with a sequence card and says “you fly this at CIVA competition next week”. Then tells me she will critique me the next few days at \$100 Euro per day. There’s no buts or maybes! So I say to her, OK I will try tomorrow, first I fly my sequence then I fly your sequence. The answer was a resounding “NO” and she took my sequence card off me. No choice. Got to love the Russian way! Next morning I found her sequence was easy to fly in the 55. I flew it at the comp and scored 76%, slightly higher than the known (73%) which I’d also been practicing solid for 4 months.

I have dissected the sequence she gave me and her training that week, and learned some very valuable insights to designing sequences and flying manoeuvres that suit your plane - especially from the judge’s eyes! For \$200 Euro per day, I can pass this on .... NOT!





During the training camp week we visited a few local attractions and found that lawlessness was widespread.

There was lots of chat such as, if you ran over a local, you should always reverse up to double check you had actually got them!

The competition was a very official affair comparatively. There was no MXS taking off while I was on short final, doing a half loop and flying back over me inverted as I was flaring to land that's for sure. Yes that happened. Now CIVA was very strict, David & I weren't sure why there were two beefy police guys with sub machine guns standing beside us while our licenses and credentials were checked. Bit extreme.

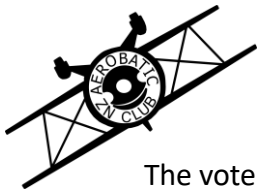


I met Alan Cassidy at breakfast and asked him to sign my copy of his book (Aerobatics Bible IMO). I said to him when he sees me fly it won't necessarily be what he wrote, but rather what I had read.



ALSO; I was fortunate enough at the arrival dinner the night before Comps to draw first straw for day one, first up out of 46 competitors, how wonderful. NOT.

We sat around all day the first day as we were rained out and sat around most of the next day as wind was over the limit. They had a drone up every hour testing the wind etc. A vote was cast as per the rules to start the comp with a 10% extension to the wind limit.



The vote needed unanimous agreement to be passed. All teams agreed except the Russians. Contrary to common belief they are sticklers for the rules, well, when it suits them! The CIVA committee decided to overrule the Russians and up went the safety pilot to fly the box to show the judges the corners and assess wind and cloud base plus fly the low lines etc. I was sitting ready to roll as soon as he confirmed all was within parameters. Up I went and flew round the perimeter of the box as I climbed up to supposedly 4,000ft.



Running into the bottom of the cloud at 2900ft (below limits) I'm looking down at the other 45 pilots, their supporters, organisers, judges, people from all over the world plus locals, ALL looking up waiting to see Steve start the event.

Well now there I am!

First pilot in the world to fly at a CIVA intermediate aerobatics competition in a plane I've flown just over an hour in, at an airfield I've had only 2 flights over, with a cloud base below limits and wind over limits. Anyone feeling the pressure right now???

I was well within my rights to land due low cloud base. So Steve being Steve ....

Quick inflight brief with oneself, top limit 2900ft lower limit 800ft, no weather break allowed as safety pilot said base was over 3500ft....

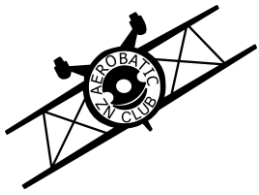
Yeah baby let's GO!

A score of 73% was not bad given the situation I was in. In the end I came 16th out of 46. Very happy given a lot of those pilots were Advanced and Unlimited guys. The rules simply stated you could compete at CIVA Intermediate provided you hadn't competed at a CIVA sanctioned Advanced or Unlimited event within the last 2 years.

## Conclusion

All in all, a wonderful experience if you get the chance take it with both hands you may only do it once in your life.

To quote myself, **"LIFE'S SHORT - FLY AEROBATICS."**



## 2025/2026 AVIATION EVENTS CALENDAR

2025	
September	10-14 National Air Races - Roswell 12-20 World Intermediate & Advanced Aerobatic Championship - Hungary 28 Wings & Wheels Day Omaka 28 – 3 Oct IAC Nationals
October	3-4 Flying NZ Alpine Region Competitions – Kaikoura 28-2 Nov Australian Aerobatic Club National & Freestyle Championship – Narromine NSW
November	1-2 Flying NZ Northern Region Competitions – Auckland Aero Club <b>8 North Island Akro Fest - Ardmore</b> 14-15 Flying NZ Central Region Competitions – Tokoroa Aero Club <b>20-22 South Island Akro Fest - Ashburton</b> 21-22 Flying NZ Cook Region Competitions – Whanganui Aero Club
December	5-6 Flying NZ Lakes Region Competitions – Otago Aero Club at Taieri
2026	
January	Tauranga Airshow
February	18-21 Flying NZ National Championships - Timaru 6-8 Sports Aircraft Association Fly In – Hood Aerodrome, Masterton
March	<b>11-15 New Zealand National Aerobatic Competition – Hood Aerodrome, Masterton</b>
April	Easter 2026 - Wings over Wanaka

## NEED TO KNOW MORE?

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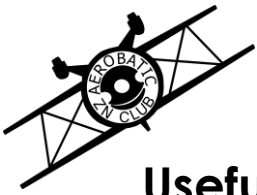
mike@squawk.nz

Secretary:

Andy Love

021 818816

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## Useful Websites:

New Zealand Aerobatic Club website: [www.aerobatics.nz](http://www.aerobatics.nz)

Facebook group: New Zealand Aerobatic Club

Federation Aviation International: [civanews.com](http://civanews.com) This has the Free Knowns manoeuvre catalogue essential for competition flight and international event news.

International Aerobatic Club: [www.iac.org](http://www.iac.org) There are lots of sequences and information for members of the IAC, it is an offshoot of the EAA.

Civil Aviation Authority: [www.caa.govt.nz](http://www.caa.govt.nz) includes vast amounts of information useful to pilots and aircraft owners.

The [www.BiplaneForum.com](http://www.BiplaneForum.com) where the experts hang out to share a lot of knowledge on all aspects of aerobatic aircraft and maintenance and tips. Search here first for your technical questions.

