

# FLIGHT

# path



## numbers keep climbing!

As the holiday travel peak approaches, passenger numbers will increase again, following what has been a pretty consistent trend through 2005.

While the September peak associated with the Wearable Art awards was absent in 2005, steady growth has meant overall numbers are up anyway.

With this constant growth pattern in mind Airport staff are gearing up for an even busier Christmas/New Year period than previous years.

Airport Manager Kaye McNabb says the team are as prepared as possible.

“We take on extra staff to help cope with the demands over the busy periods. Then like the rest of the travellers we hope that all the flight go smoothly with no weather or other delays so everyone gets where they want to be at this special time of the year,” Kaye says.

# Rich history exciting future!

It was a love of flying and an interest in aircraft that got them started almost 75 years ago and it's what keeps them going today.

The Nelson Aero Club is one of the oldest in the country and has a proud tradition of sharing the joy of flying, from the very early days of the industry up to the present day.

Since it was formed in 1932 the Nelson Aero Club has been involved in pilot training from their base at Saxton Field. It wasn't until 1938 that the Club set up in its current location at Nelson Airport. This was just shortly after the introduction of the first commercial flights to Nelson and public interest in flying was on the increase. The Aero Club then bought its first plane in the same year, a Piper Cub, christened Brig Arrow.

This was the first of many different types of aircraft the Club has owned throughout its long history. Tiger moths, Cessnas, Austers, Dehavilland Dragonflies, Cherokee's, Piper Apaches and many others have all graced their hangar at some stage.

These days the Club's Chief Flying Instructor Marc Brogan says they own just one aircraft and lease the rest.

"This enables us to keep up to date

with the advances in aircraft technology like our latest acquisitions, the two Tecnams," Marc says.

These two new aircraft are due to be delivered early in 2006 and will be a great boon for the club.

Marc says the focus of the Club is very much the same now as it was when it was formed all those years ago.

"I think some people assume it's a bit of an exclusive club but we really welcome anyone with an interest in flying or aircraft to come along and check out what we get up to."

Marc says that while the focus of the Club is still on teaching others how to fly, people can also just become social members and come along and enjoy the facilities. The Club has a bar that is undergoing a major revamp and development by the contractors who have been engaged to run it.

"We are keen to improve that side of the Club," Marc says.

For those wanting to get behind the controls the Club offers full training for either a private pilots licence or commercial pilots licence.

Around 50 hours of training is required for a private pilots license while commercial training takes 200 hours. As well as Marc the Club has

four other part time instructors. Their experience ranges from newly qualified as an instructor through to fighter and Boeing pilots. This enables the club to offer everything from basic training through to advanced single or twin engine air craft flying.

Marc says there are very few restrictions on who can give flying a try. There is a basic medical and he has had people as young as 7 and right up to 84 up on trial flights.

"But you do need to be over 16 to fly solo, 17 to get your private license and 18 to get your commercial license but there's no upper age limit at all," Marc says.

So if you've ever wanted to give flying a try or just learn more about aircraft, (like how they stay up in the air!) the team at the Nelson Aero Club would love to catch up with you. The Club rooms on Trent Drive is open every day of the year except Christmas Day anywhere from 8 in the morning till late. You can phone them if you prefer on 547 9643.

Nelson Aero Club will be holding an Open Day in the New Year so look out for more details on that. It will be the perfect opportunity to go along and learn more about the Club.





**Kaye  
McNabb**

## From the General Manager

Here we are in the midst of the very busy and special Christmas season again already. It seems like no time has passed since our tree came down last year and now we are putting it up again. I am sure many of you feel the same way.

The Christmas season is a very busy one for the airport, as businesses based here visit their customers elsewhere, and visitors elsewhere visit their customers here in Nelson. Of course there are also the wonderful moments of greeting as families come home and the excitement as those living away from home head back to their families for the big day. Families are so very special and those of us with children or grandchildren, parents or grandparents near to us are very privileged indeed.

Being able to help the family of Group Captain Leonard Trent VC DFC on the path to ensuring his story is known and he is appropriately honoured in his home town has been a special privilege for me recently. It is great to hear about him and to be able to give real meaning to the name of our airport entrance drive. I am sure you will feel the same after reading his story in this issue.

This is the time when we reflect with gratitude on all of the people who play a vital part in making the airport tick. From the airline operators, engineers, ground handlers, rescue fire officers, grounds maintenance team, public transport operators, cleaners, office and counter staff, security, air traffic controllers and the various airport community committees, to the directors consultants and advisors, thank you all and we hope you have a very happy and safe Christmas and a healthy and prosperous year in 2006.

# Historic Painting on Display

Everything old is new again according to the song and the same could be said for this impressive painting on display in the Nelson Airport Terminal.

It is a painting that is new but has been 200 years in the making. The artwork recently displayed on the wall at Nelson Airport was painted by artist Gary Gibson to tie in with the Bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar. It depicts the battle at the precise moment that Nelson split the French and Spanish fleets.

The painting is based on a water colour sketch by Nicholas Pocock, who never went on to complete his masterpiece of the scene.

Gary Gibson has painted in keeping with the style of the time to create a truly impressive painting.



## Airport Users Group Meeting

All members of the Users Group are invited to attend the next meeting on Tuesday 20 December at 4.30pm at the Nelson Aero Club.

# Remembering a Home Grown Hero

Most of you have probably driven along Trent Drive many times, but how many of you know why that particular street name was chosen? It is in memory of a truly unsung hero - Group Captain Leonard Trent V.C., D.F.C. (Victoria Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross).

Len Trent was a Takaka lad who dreamed of flying and eventually wrote his name in the pages of wartime aviation history.

Len trained as a pilot at Wigram Air Base before World War 2. He was among a number of local chaps seconded to the RAF when war loomed. In 1938 he left for England as a fully trained pilot, and was soon flying a large number of missions over enemy territory that weren't without drama.

But it was in 1943 that Len Trent flew his most memorable mission. He led the 487 NZ Squadron on a raid to bomb the Amsterdam power station, but things went wrong when communication problems with the Polish air force led to failure of diversion tactics that were meant to allow the Kiwis to sneak in under radar. German Fighters shot down every single plane in the squadron.

It was for his outstanding bravery on this mission that Group Captain Leonard Trent was awarded the Victoria Cross. He is one of only 20 New Zealanders to ever receive this honour. He'd survived being shot down but was captured and held as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 111, Sagan near Berlin. After being captured he took an active part in the "Great Escape" - a feat made more famous by the 1963 movie of the same name. According to his brother Austin Trent, who now lives back in Nelson, Len was lucky not to be among the 50 officers shot by the Gestapo.

Austin says, "He poked his head out of the tunnel and looked straight into a gun barrel. He and the rest of the men behind him all turned and headed back. That was what saved their lives.

"He was a pretty quiet, unassuming sort of chap but really when you look back it he did some pretty amazing stuff for a lad from Takaka."

Len remained with the RAF to complete 30 years of military flying. During the Cold War years of the 1950s he flew Jet V Bombers on coastal patrols.

His air force career continued to flourish. In 1962 he was posted to Washington DC as one of Queen Elizabeth's chief military aids. He also worked as Princess Margaret's personal pilot.

In 1968 Len retired from the military and moved with his wife Ursula to Australia where he managed a commercial airline. He finally retired back home in New Zealand, but it was only a few years later that he was struck down by

cancer. It was one dogfight he couldn't win. He died on 19 May 1986, aged 73 and was given a funeral with full military honours.

Austin Trent keeps a set of replicas of the list of medals awarded to his brother during an illustrious career. The originals were donated to the Wigram Air Base Museum.

## New Memorial Planned

Nelson Airport Manager Kaye McNabb has taken up the challenge to form a committee to organise a more fitting memorial to this genuine hero. The current plaque rests in the middle of the roundabout on Trent Drive.

The Committee is looking at plans to construct an etched marble plaque to be placed on a more easily accessible site, that contains more detailed information about Len Trent

Because he was a Nelson College Old Boy the aim is to have the memorial in place to tie in with their 150-year celebrations in March 2006.

