Fly About

Northam Aero Club (Inc.) May Newsletter Volume 57 Issue No.6



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Presidents Message

Welcome to October Fly About

We have changed our Fly About schedule to every two months. The Aero Club is run by volunteers. I would like to thank all those that do volunteer to run the club. That brings me to the busy bee we will be having before our Annual Christmas gathering. That date is still to come but it will be before the Christmas lunch to be held.

We have lost another very well-known member in Barry Bristow Stagg who, along with his wife Sylvia, would always volunteer for our ballooning events. My condolences to Mark Bristow-Stagg (Life Member) and all the Bristow-Stagg family. Barry and Sylvia would always attend all the Northam Aero Club functions and always loved to talk about the Hot Air Ballooning events in the past and present.

Our ever-reliable Club Captain, Dave McFarlane, has returned to run this month's competition. Dave thanks again and to Marg and the ladies that prepare a wonderful morning tea.
The pilots that fly in for the competition could not believe what they had prepared. I must also thank our expert Barbecue Chef in Bernie Hush. Bernie is doing wonders promoting the Aero Club on Facebook and Messenger. Browse on these sites to see our upcoming events.

If you are wanting Christmas presents, consider purchasing the Northam Aero Book for "The First 50 Years" written by a very well-known author and balloonist Ruth Wilson. To purchase contact any of of the Committee. Put the date in your calendar for our annual Christmas lunch to be held on 13th December 2026.

Happy Flying,
Errol

Club Captains Message

Due to the threat of low cloud, the planned cross country Navex was postponed to circuits again! We haven't had much luck with the weather the last couple of competitions.

So, this was the format;

- First Circuit Flapless approach, land on the 2nd stripe with touch and go
- Second Circuit Glide approach, land on the 3rd stripe with touch and go
- Third Circuit Depart off x wind, round Mt Dick. Join Base or overhead if congested, Powered approach, land on the 2nd stripe

Shaun visited us from Bindoon in his Zenith, great to meet you.

Results were as follows;

1st place	Ashley Smith	C172	PGL
2nd	Errol Croft	C172	JXI
3rd	Shaun	Zenith	8365
4th	Bernie Hush	Foxbat	8844
5th	David McFarlane	Cherokee	HKA

Radio calls were excellent, everyone's final turns were accurate.

Thanks to Marg, Sue, Ling, Heather for catering at the sundowner Saturday night also Marg, Ash for morning tea and all who made the barbecue lunch Sunday such a success.

Next Competition; 10th November. Briefing from 9am. Hopefully the weather will allow a Navex.

Cheers,
Dave

Christmas Luncheon



Cockpit Electrical Fire

Electrical Fires in the Cockpit: Managing the Unexpected

During a recent pre-flight inspection, an aircraft I was preparing to fly displayed a red warning flag on the electrically driven Attitude Indicator (AI). Afterwards the instrument was removed for inspection and examination revealed that an internal electronic component had previously failed and burnt out, generating enough heat to scorch the printed circuit board.

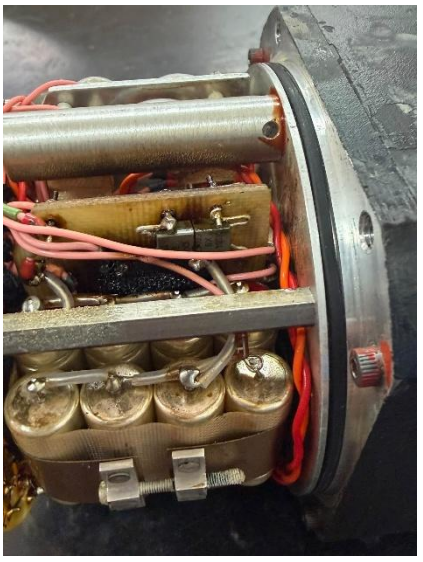
Fortunately, the fault had remained contained within the instrument itself. Nevertheless, it raised an important question:

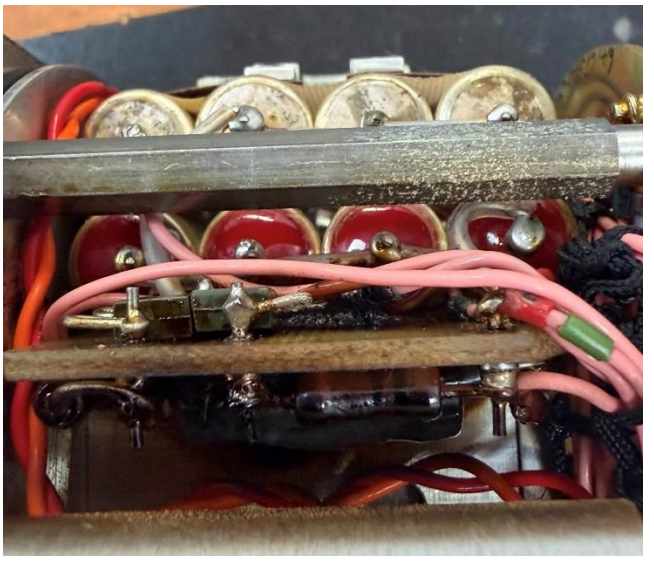
What would I have done if the failure had occurred in flight and been accompanied by smoke, the smell of burning insulation, or even a cockpit fire?

Pilots spend countless hours preparing for emergencies, yet when an emergency occurs it often arrives unexpectedly. Electrical fires are a classic example. One moment, the flight is progressing normally. The next, there may be an acrid smell, smoke, a flickering instrument, or a failed radio.

What begins as a seemingly minor electrical fault can rapidly escalate into a complex emergency involving smoke, loss of communications, increased cockpit workload, and the need for an immediate landing.

A pilot's ability to remain calm, understand the aircraft's electrical system, and follow established procedures can make the difference between a manageable incident and a serious accident. While electrical fires are relatively uncommon, they are among the emergencies that demand both rapid action and disciplined decision-making.





Cockpit Electrical Fire *(Cont'd)*

Why Electrical Fires Are Dangerous

Electrical fires present several unique hazards:

- ✈ Smoke can rapidly impair cockpit visibility.
- ✈ Toxic fumes can affect pilot performance and judgement.
- ✈ Electrical failures may disable radios, transponders, navigation equipment, and lighting.
- ✈ Fire can spread behind instrument panels where access is difficult.
- ✈ Loss of electrical power can create multiple secondary emergencies.

Unlike an engine failure, which is usually obvious, electrical problems often develop subtly. The first indication may be nothing more than an unusual smell, a flickering instrument, or a popping circuit breaker.

Understanding the Electrical System

Every pilot should maintain a practical understanding of their aircraft's electrical system. This does not require an engineer's level of knowledge, but pilots should know:

- ✈ The location of the master switch.
- ✈ Which equipment is powered by the battery and alternator.
- ✈ Which equipment is essential for continued flight.
- ✈ Circuit breaker locations.
- ✈ Emergency power arrangements, if fitted.
- ✈ How radios, transponders, and navigation equipment receive power.

Cockpit Electrical Fire *(Cont'd)*

When smoke appears in the cockpit, identifying potential sources becomes significantly easier if the pilot understands how each piece of equipment is powered. Although many training and recreational aircraft have relatively simple electrical systems, that knowledge can become critical during a high-stress event.

Immediate Actions During an Electrical Fire

Procedures vary between aircraft types, and pilots must always follow the approved procedures contained in their aircraft's Pilot's Operating Handbook (POH).

However, the general priorities remain consistent.

1. **Fly the Aircraft**

   Maintain aircraft control first.

   The temptation to immediately start pulling circuit breakers or switching off equipment can be strong, but aircraft control remains the highest priority.

2. **Identify the Problem**

   Look for indications such as:

   - Smoke
   - Burning smells
   - Sparking
   - Abnormal ammeter or voltmeter indications
   - Avionics failures

3. **Remove the Source**

   Removing electrical power may stop arcing and eliminate the source of ignition.

Cockpit Electrical Fire *(Cont'd)*

For example, the Cessna 172P emergency checklist specifies:

- Master Switch OFF
- Avionics Power Switch OFF
- All Other Switches OFF (except ignition switch)
- Vents/Cabin Air/Heat CLOSED
- Fire Extinguisher ACTIVATE (if available)

After discharging a fire extinguisher in a confined cabin, the cabin should be ventilated as soon as conditions permit.

If the fire appears to be extinguished and electrical power is required for the continuation of the flight, the checklist permits electrical systems to be restored one at a time, allowing sufficient time between each selection to confirm that the fault has not reoccurred.

4. Land as Soon as Practicable

Any indication of an electrical fire should be treated seriously. Even if the smoke or burning smell disappears after electrical power has been isolated, the possibility of re-ignition remains.

Once the immediate threat has been addressed and the aircraft is under control, pilots should plan to land at the nearest suitable aerodrome. Factors such as weather, terrain, aircraft performance, available facilities, and the nature of the emergency will influence the most appropriate destination.

Continuing to the planned destination may only be appropriate if it remains the nearest suitable option. In many cases, a diversion to a closer aerodrome will provide the safest outcome.

Electrical fires are emergencies measured in minutes rather than hours. Early recognition, decisive action, and a timely landing significantly reduce the risk of a manageable situation developing into a serious accident.

Cockpit Electrical Fire *(Cont'd)*

Fire Extinguisher Considerations

If a serviceable fire extinguisher is carried, as is the case in PGL, and the source of the fire can be safely reached, it may be effective in suppressing visible flames while preparations are made for an immediate landing.

Remember:

- ✈ Aircraft control remains the first priority.
- ✈ Isolate electrical power before using the extinguisher whenever possible.
- ✈ Use short, controlled bursts.
- ✈ Aim at the base of visible flames.
- ✈ Continue monitoring for re-ignition.

Pilots should be familiar with:

- ✈ The extinguisher's location.
- ✈ The extinguisher type.
- ✈ Its operating method.
- ✈ Required post-discharge ventilation procedures.

Be aware that extinguisher discharge may temporarily reduce visibility and create breathing discomfort within the cabin.

In single-pilot operations, it may be safer to isolate the electrical system and focus on an immediate landing rather than spend valuable time attempting to fight a fire in flight.

Cockpit Electrical Fire *(Cont'd)*

Consequences of Switching the Master Switch OFF

A pilot who switches off the electrical system to stop a fire must understand the resulting consequences, which may include:

- ✈ Loss of radio communications.
- ✈ Loss of transponder functionality.
- ✈ Loss of electrically powered flight instruments.
- ✈ Loss of flaps (where electrically operated).
- ✈ Loss of electrical trim (where fitted).
- ✈ Loss of cockpit and external lighting.

The exact effects will vary between aircraft types and equipment configurations, highlighting the importance of understanding your aircraft's electrical system before an emergency occurs.

Next month we will look at the considerations once the initial checks have been completed and the fire is hopefully under control.

Special thanks to Kevin Lathbury for proofreading my article.

Cheers,

Paul

Upcoming Events

EVENTS CALENDAR OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2026

OCTOBER 2026

Spring Skies, New Horizons



Date	Event	Time
Sun 25 Oct	SABC (Serpentine) Fly-In	9:00 AM
Fri 30 Oct	Wongan Hills Reynoldson Wildflowers Festival (Sundowner)	6:00 PM – 10:00 PM
Sat 31 Oct	Wongan Hills Reynoldson Wildflowers Festival	All Day



NOVEMBER 2026

Great People, Great Flying



Date	Event	Time
Sun 1 Nov	Wongan Hills Reynoldson Wildflowers Festival	All Day
Sat 7 Nov	NAC Sundowner	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Sun 8 Nov	NAC Breakfast followed by Flying Competition & Briefing	9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Sun 8 Nov	NAC Committee Meeting	1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Sat 21 Nov	Albany Fly-In	9:00 AM



DECEMBER 2026

Celebrate the Year in Good Company



Date	Event	Time
Sat 12 Dec	Understanding OzRunways EFB @ NAC	4:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Sat 12 Dec	NAC Sundowner	Following EFB Session
Sun 13 Dec	NAC Breakfast followed by Flying Competition & Briefing	9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Sun 13 Dec	Christmas Lunch @ NAC	11:00 AM – 1:00 PM



Aviation Humour







Bar

The Bar will be open every Saturday evening from 17:00 — 19:00

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NAC

NORTHAM AERO CLUB

Ph Errol 0428 880 149 or Kevin 0434 000 217

www.NorthamAeroClub.org.au

Next Committee Meeting

Sunday 10th November 2026 @ 13:00

Wanted - Aviation Memorabilia

- Books
- Artefacts
- Photographs
- Old Aircraft Parts
- Signs

If it's old and historic—I'm interested

Adam Price—0428 611 797

NAC Club Aircraft Bookings



Enquiries— Matt Bignell

0407 873 700

Classifieds

Club Polo Shirts with your name and Club logo	$35.00
Club Caps with logo	$25.00
Available at the bar or postage	$10.00
Stubbie Holders	$ 7.00
Available at the bar or postage	$ 8.00



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NAC Cessna 172 VH-PGL

Hire Fee Structure (effective from 16th April)

- ✈ Private Hire - $295 per hour *
- ✈ Dual Training - $465 per hour *
- ✈ TIF's - $235 per 1/2 hour *
- ✈ Briefing - as required
- ✈ Instructor (in owner's aircraft) - $180 per hour

* **Includes Applicable Fuel Surcharge Fee:** $15 per hour

Pre-paid Discounted Block Rates Available

- ✈ 5 hours less 5%
- ✈ 10 hours less 10%

Student pilots may use the discounted block rate for aircraft hire costs only. Instructor fees remain as fixed price.

For all further enquiries please contact:

NAC Treasurer - nactreasurer@bigpond.com **T: 0427 909 412**

Aircraft Bookings: **Matt Bignell - 0407 873 700**

Next Club Competition

9:00 am Sunday 10th November 2026

Club Captain for the day will provide the briefing


NORTHAM AERO CLUB