

# Nanaimo Flying Club First Fifty Years

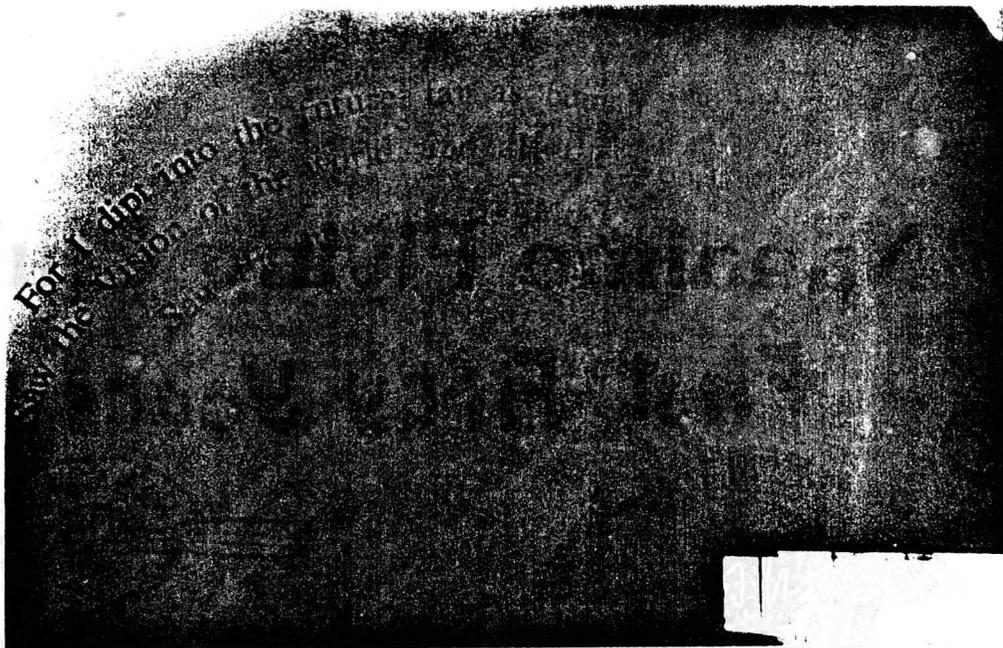


1946



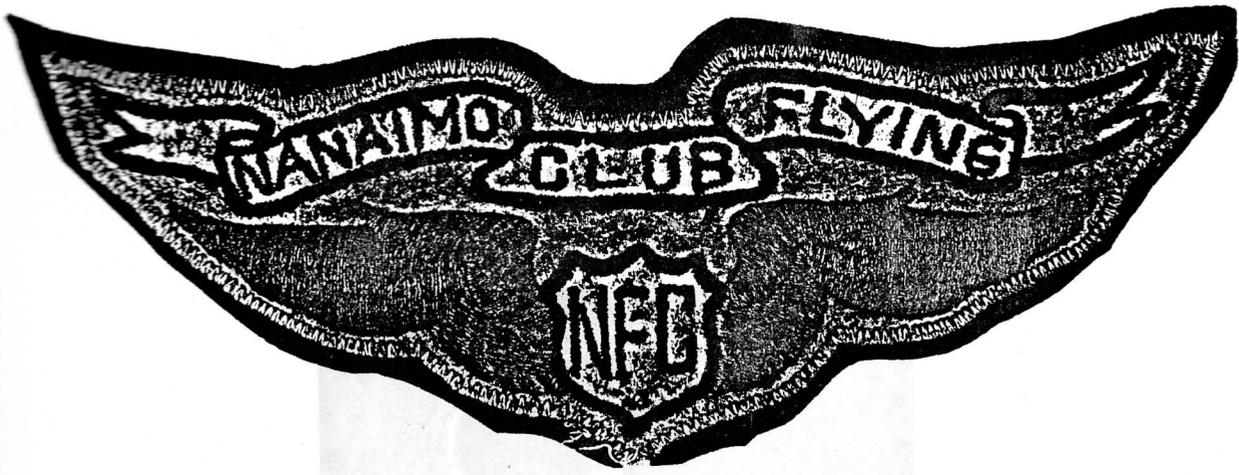
1996

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be:  
Saw the heavens fill with commerce,  
Argosies of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight,  
dropping sown with costly bales.



Far Left Corner of Picture reads:  
From "Locksley Hall"  
by Alfred Lord Tennyson - 1842  
60 years before the first flight.

(On the ceiling at a Air Terminal in New Zealand)



I would like to thank the following for their contributions of information, memorabilia, and pictures in regards to the Nanaimo Flying Club's History.

Mary Matthews; Audrey & Harry McCracken; Bob & Perk Stacey; Jerome Harrison; Dave Garbutt; Malaspina College Library Micro-Film Department, (Nanaimo Free Press); John Morris; Mary Race and others.

Without these sources much of the information amongst the following pages would not have materialized. Thanks for making it possible!

I apologize for all errors and omissions. They were not done intentionally.

Please accept this as my gift to the Nanaimo Flying Club on the 50th Anniversary.

IRMA ERHART

H.B. "BUS" MATTHEWS  
FOUNDER OF THE NANAIMO FLYING CLUB  
1945



## NANAIMO FLYING CLUB'S FIRST 50 YEARS

1946 - 1996

By Irma Erhart

The beginning of the Nanaimo Flying Club started in the head of H.B. "Bus" Matthews, an R.C.A.F. Flight Lieutenant of the 2nd World War. During the summer of 1945, shortly after his return to Nanaimo, he, his wife Mary, friend Bill Power and Bill's wife were inspecting the landing strip at Cassidy near Nanaimo when "Bus" came up with the idea. The paved runway had been built during the war by the military, ca. 1942 and was used to train glider pilots. Now it was abandoned. Why not use it to train civilians how to fly????

"Bus" took his idea to business friends. They liked it and supported "Bus". This would be the first civilian flying club on the island! A non-profit organization to promote flying. The best evidence of how "Bus" planned, and formed the club can be found in the articles that were published in the Nanaimo Free Press during 1945 and 1946. These clippings are on the following pages.

Once "Bus" had the interest of the general public, he sought approval from both, Nanaimo and Ladysmith councils that land was available at the Cassidy Airport for such a project. Next, was to secure members, elect officers, proceed with legalities of obtaining a federal charter, and purchasing aircraft.

Newspaper clippings reveal that the club was first referred to, as Nanaimo and Upper Island Flying Club; next, Nanaimo and District Flying Club, and finally, as the Nanaimo Flying Club. This was the name chosen and used on the application for Letters Patent. Membership fees were \$25.00 with annual dues, \$10.00 to join the newly formed club.

The first officers of the club were President, Frank Honey; Vice President, Dr. Larry Giovando; secretary, Bob Stacey. Directors were: H.B. "Bus" Matthews; Bill Powers; Norman Corfield and Jack Bateman and these are the names that appeared on the application for the Letters Patent. The Nanaimo Flying Club name was accepted in a letter dated 10 of December, 1945. Draft form of Letter Patent was drawn up 13 of January, 1946, entered in Register, 4 of February, 1946 and recorded in Ottawa 6 of February, 1946, by the Honourable James Joseph McCann, Acting Secretary of State of Canada. The Nanaimo Flying Club had it's Federal Charter!

Nothing much was left at the Cassidy Airport after the military had left. There was the original farm house and barns, a another house, a pump house, and a 3 seater toilet.

The club members moved one of the homes a little north of midway and closer to the tarmac. This would be the Club House. They renovated it, putting in electricity and bathroom facilities. They had a coffee bar in it and later sold coffee and doughnuts, etc., on weekends. This added a few pennies to the club's coffer. When Queen Charlotte Airlines was established and began flying out of Nanaimo, later in 1946, a portion was leased to them.

One or both Tiger Moths, originally were air force aircraft and had been at Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Norm Corfield financed their purchase and his loan was paid by the Club. The planes were in Vancouver before coming to Nanaimo. They cost \$1,500.00, had 920 horse power motors and used eight gallons of fuel per hour and one and a quarter quarts of oil. Sometimes the aircraft ran out of oil before fuel. The club members converted the old barn on the airport, and this is where they hangared the aircraft. Rates to fly the Tiger Moths were: \$8.00 solo; and \$12.00, dual. The club advertised Scenic Flights and many people experienced their first flight in an aircraft during 1946.

"Bus" held Nanaimo Flying Club membership card No. 1. His friend Bill Powers who "Bus" talked into taking flying lessons held card No. 2. Bill would be the first Nanaimo Flying Club pilot to fly with a disability. He had lost part of his leg. Bill lived at Ladysmith, BC and passed away 1995.

"Bus" instructed multi-engine for the club when ever that was required. Two known pilots that "Bus" instructed to fly twin engine were Jack Beban and Tom Garner. There were more, but names are not known at this time.

Although "Bus" had a business to run he spent a great deal of time out at the airport during 1946, and his wife Mary would be out every Sunday helping. That is when people would come out either to go up in a plane or just sit back and watch the goings on at the airport. It really hasn't changed that much during the past 50 years, people still enjoy watching aircraft fly and often weekends is when you'll find them at some airport enjoying take-offs and landings. According to newspaper clippings "Bus" took over the responsibilities of secretary too. June, 1946 clipping mentions "Bus" as secretary.

"Bus" and Mary left Nanaimo in 1947 but one and half years later they moved to Duncan, BC. Again he became involved with the club from 1952 to 1959. During this time he received a Honourary Life Membership. The certificate read: "HONOURY LIFE MEMBER NANAIMO FLYING CLUB HOWARD B. MATTHEWS June 15, 1955 Presented in recognition of his services to Nanaimo Flying Club at its inception and over the succeeding years as a member of the executive. It had the Nanaimo Flying Club seal on it and was signed by John W. Fraser, PRESIDENT; and J. L. Harrison, SECRETARY." He also received a small engraved plaque sometime during his involvement which read "H.B. Matthews Founder Nanaimo Flying Club." Below that was the date. It was attached to an airforce picture of "Bus" and had been hanging in the clubhouse Mary Matthews said. In 1959 "Bus" and Mary moved again. He flew until 1960 and he passed away in 1972.

AUG. 29 - 1945

# KEEN INTEREST IN FLYING CLUB LOCAL PROJECT

Forty Nanaimo persons keenly interested in formation of a local flying club attended a Tuesday evening meeting in City Council Chambers. Mayor Jameson of Ladysmith, also attended. "Bus" Matthews, flying veteran of the Second Great War, occupied the chair, and an active backer of the scheme was another "Bus" Matthews, flying veteran of the First Great War. Also in attendance were seven former pilots, all holding aviation "tickets," which showing would put any formative flying club over to a good take-off.

Discussions indicated that a general desire to create the nucleus of a local aviation organization as speedily as possible existed. A tentative roster of membership also showed that 37 local ex-R.C.A.F. personnel and local civilians wishing to sprout wings were keen to participate and willing to collaborate in the formative period of such a club. Reports following investigation revealed that suitable land area is now obtainable, and that such a flying club as that under proposal might expect considerable consideration from the authorities in the matter of machines and equipment supply.

A "fact-finding" committee was named, and when the desired further information has been assembled and verified, another public meeting will be called to further advance the cause.

AUGUST 24, 1945

# FLYING CLUB FOR NANAIMO PLANS AFOOT

The boys who sprouted wings in R.C.A.F. service are getting restless and too-earthbound. They want to fly again, and they also want to teach civilians suited for aviation how to fly also.

There are about forty ex-fliers and ex-Air Force men now in Nanaimo, among them being at least a half-dozen who hold pilot rating, and as many more fully qualified instructors in service. They have been getting their heads together, and have decided that the time is now ripe to form a Nanaimo Flying Club.

At 7:30 next Tuesday night, in City Council Chambers, these lads will hold their first meeting, inviting all interested persons from the Duncan and Ladysmith areas to join them also.

Heading the initial steps of organization are two "Bus" Matthews. One is a veteran flier of the First Great War, the second a flight lieutenant of the Second Great War. They are exerting every energy to get the interested folks together, and already have had intimation that at least fifty local persons interested in aviation will join the movement at the meeting next Tuesday.

Now is the right time to organize because of government encouragement. From time-to-time information has come from Ottawa indicating that every means of encouragement will be extended to such local Flying Clubs, even to the point of equipment for training. All civilians are invited to participate on Tuesday evening.

SEPT. 5, 1945

AREO EXPERTS WILL ADDRESS LOCAL CLUB

If City Council chambers are again available to the organizers of the Proposed Nanaimo & Upper Island Flying Club, a real organizational meeting will take place there on Friday evening at eight o'clock. To address the gathering will be Messers Terry Finny, Manager of B.C. Flying Clubs and Carter Guest, inspector of Department of Transport. Both are key men in Civilian aeronautics of the future in this area and they have a fund of knowledge which will be indispensable to those forming a club here.

Arrangements for this future meeting were made by "Bus" H. B. Matthews and Bill Powers who went to Vancouver for the purpose of securing all possible information. They also were assured that if the Nanaimo or Upper Island Club is formed there will be made available for immediate training purposes three planes, completely overhauled and from the best available stock of the War Assets Corporation.

It is designed, if possible to have the Nanaimo Club a truly upper Island organization embracing as far south as Duncan and all territories north to include the Albernie. Persons in those areas who are interested are urged to attend Friday nights meeting. Plans are to proceed so that formal application can be made for a charter to operate under the Royal Canadian Flying Clubs auspices. Directors are to be named. Instructors are available both locally and from application already made from pilots living elsewhere. Bus Matthews ask all ex-pilots interested to get in touch with him.

OCT 12, 1945

## FLYING CLUB HAS ORDERED TRAINER PLANE

Nanaimo and District Flying Club already has on order the first De Havilland Moth aircraft which it will use for ultimate training purposes and this machine can be delivered within 10 days of actual club operation. This was reported at another organizational meeting held last night. The club full present membership has been called to a meeting in City Council Chambers at 8 p.m. next Thursday. At that time a nominating committee will submit a slate of directors, and upon election of officers steps will proceed for a formal application for a club charter.

With securing of the first trainer plane flying will commence immediately. Arrangements for additional aircraft have been made already and these will be available as needed.

Special attention is called to the fact that the Flying Club is not only for R.C.A.F. personnel but for the general public, men and women between 15 and 75 years of age. A fully qualified air engineer's services have already been secured for club purposes.

Page 4 Nov. 6, 1945

## FLYING CLUB IS TAKING-OFF ON ACTIVE CAREER

Nanaimo and District Flying Club is now really rolling over the tarmac preparatory to a take-off which will guarantee an important local aviation future. Officers were elected at a meeting last night, two aircraft are now under order for local training purposes, an application has been sent away for a club charter, and on Wednesday club officials will inspect the Cassidy Airport with a view to definitely selecting a suitable hangar. Two club aircraft can be delivered here as soon as suitable housing is provided, and it is believed a structure is already built and available.

First officers of the new club are: President, Frank Honey; vice-president, Dr. Larry Giovando; secretary, Bob Stacey. These three, with H. B. "Bus" Matthews, Bill Powers, Norman Corfield and Jack Bateman form the first board of directors.

Enthusiastic reports were received from a membership committee which is driving ahead for a big starting roster. The club is not alone for ex-service people, but for civilians of both sexes. Several local girls and women are already enrolled.

## BOARD DEEMS FLYING CLUB A GOOD MOVE

In the opinion of the Nanaimo Board of Trade organization here the Nanaimo and District Flying Club is decidedly a good move which should be generally encouraged. Two Board members have attended initial meetings held by the Flying Club charterites in City Council chambers. Today at luncheon they reported on the activities, program and progress of the newly formed body expressing every opinion that it will meet with unqualified success if given the proper amount of public support.

It was apparent from discussions at Flying Club gatherings, they said, that by municipal collaboration between Nanaimo and Ladysmith the Cassidy Airport premises will be ultimately available for both training and commercial airways usage. Financing essential to securing three airplanes necessary for training purposes at nominal cost is proceeding and businessmen interested in the future of aviation here are to be given opportunity to co-operate, it was said.

OCT. 19, 1945

## FLYING CLUB IS SEEKING CHARTER

Nanaimo's Flying Club interests took a big forward jump at an organization meeting held Thursday night at the City Hall. A slate of directors was appointed, headed by Frank Honey. These directors will proceed forthwith with nomination of first officers and formalities connected with charter application. Mr. Lionel Beever Potts has consented to proceed with the legal aspects of charter application under dominion and provincial requirements.

It was announced that, weather permitting, a Tiger-Moth two-seater plane will come to Nanaimo on Sunday next, and "taxi" rides for the basic membership of the club will be provided.

The club's directorate personnel is as follows: Frank Honey, Dr. Larry Giovando, Norm. Courfield, Bill Power, Bob Stacey, Jack Bateman and "Bus" Matthews.

The drive for membership is meeting with success, stress being laid on the fact that not only ex-R.C.A.F. personnel, but civilians of both sexes desiring to qualify for aviation may become members of the local club.

## CITIES JOIN IN CASSIDY AIRPORT PLAN

The cities of Nanaimo and Ladysmith have officially joined hands in the project of securing the Cassidy Airport as a mutually operative field for civil aviation of the future. Mayor Muir with all the aldermen went to Ladysmith on Thursday night for a session with Mayor Jamieson and his council. A committee was formed comprising two aldermen from each city, with the mayors of both acting ex-officio, and this group will be charged with discovering exactly what is entailed in the joint-city enterprise.

The Nanaimo delegation took with them Mr. Stanley A. Sharp, president of Brisbane Aviation of Vancouver. His company is definitely interested in Vancouver Island aviation, and he was able to give the municipal gathering much valuable and practical information as to operation and airports.

The Nanaimo and District Flying Club which is proceeding rapidly in concrete formation, with nomination of a directorate and membership roll campaign in full blast, will be fully considered in plans which the civic officials make for the Cassidy Airport project.