Inside the Wire
Ohakea Proud, our People, our Stories
13 November 2026

German NATCON Training



Collaborating with international partners is one of the great advantages of operating the P-8A Poseidon. Recently, 5 Sqn personnel teamed up with the German Navy (Deutsche Marine) for Search and Rescue training, sharing knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned from our own journey with the aircraft. Training with crews who fly the same platform helps build strong professional relationships and a mutual understanding of how we operate. For No. 5 Squadron, these opportunities are a valuable way to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen the interoperability that underpins future multinational operations.

As the Deutsche Marine continues to introduce the P-8A into service, the RNZAF is proud to support their capability development. By sharing our experience and providing training, we are helping build connections that will benefit both organisations for years to come.

Article Credit – WGCDR Mark Chadwick.



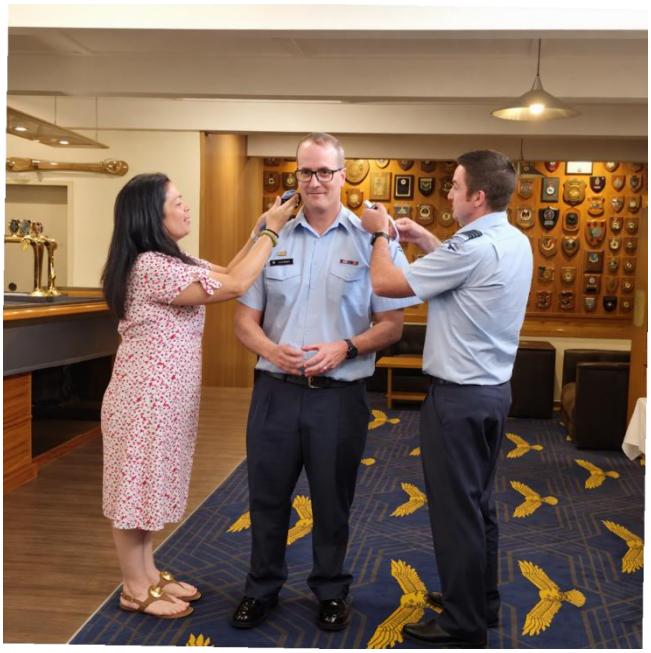


CAM Promotion - WGCDR Luke Elliot

Surrounded by family, friends, colleagues, and fellow engineers, Luke Elliott was promoted to Wing Commander on 09 Nov 2026.

Luke will formally take up the position of Continuing Airworthiness Manager Ohakea (CAM OH) in Jan 2027. Congratulations to Luke on this well-deserved achievement and significant career milestone.

Article Credit – SQNLDR Jonny Young.



5 SQN 26/1 OCC Graduation – 10 Nov

On 16 Feb 2026, four pilots commenced the 26/1 P-8A Operational Conversion Course (OCC) at No. 5 Squadron. Several weeks later, they were joined by ten Air Warfare Officers and Air Warfare Specialists. Since the arrival of the P-8A Poseidon in late 2022, this has been the third OCC delivered entirely by RNZAF instructors.



The 26/1 OCC marked several significant milestones. It was the first course to make full use of No. 5 Squadron's newly installed Flight Synthetic Training Devices, was the largest conversion course conducted in many years, and included four Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) personnel currently serving on a three-year exchange with the RNZAF. Throughout the ground, simulator and flying phases, the course demanded the highest standards from its students, making graduation a significant professional achievement for all involved.

The inclusion of four RCAF personnel represented a unique opportunity to further strengthen the longstanding defence relationship between New Zealand and Canada. Having previously operated the CP-140 Aurora, Canada's equivalent of the P-3 Orion, the exchange members brought extensive maritime patrol experience and a shared understanding of maritime warfare concepts, procedures, and operational culture. Their participation enhanced the learning environment for all students and instructors, while fostering closer integration between our two air forces.

As the RCAF transitions from the CP-140 Aurora to the P-8A Poseidon, the opportunity to train alongside RNZAF personnel provides tangible benefits for both nations. Beyond supporting Canada's own transition, the exchange strengthens interoperability between two Five Eyes partners, ensuring both forces can operate more effectively together in future coalition and regional operations. The four exchange personnel will remain with No. 5 Squadron for a further two years, continuing to build experience on the P-8A across both familiar and new operating environments.

Despite less-than-favourable weather, nothing could stop the graduation and awards ceremony from proceeding. Reviewed by BCDR OH GPCAPT Mark Whiteside and attended by RCAF DCOMD Maj Gen Denis O'Reilly and AIRCDRE Peter Gibson DCAF RNZAF, personnel were presented with graduation parchments, trophies and, for three individuals, Air Warfare Specialist brevets.

The following personnel graduated from the 26/1 P-8A Operational Conversion Course:
Graduates were:

- CAPT Jacques Robicheau (RCAF)
- CAPT Matt Pepper (RCAF)
- CPL Jordan Riley (RCAF)
- CPL Joe Sutton-Tafe (RCAF)
- FLTLT Leighton Joll
- FLTLT Jamie Hull
- FLTLT Lydia Bamford
- FGOFF Kelvin Brown
- FGOFF Jane Glendinning
- FGOFF Phil Paskwietz
- FGOFF Tim Adam
- SGT Mark Graham - AWS Brevet
- SGT Jordan Moeke - AWS Brevet
- CPL Liam Stephens - AWS Brevet

Sir Robert Clark-Hall Trophy

Presented by members of the RNZAF Association in memory of Air Vice-Marshal Sir Robert Clark-Hall, the Sir Robert Clark-Hall Trophy is awarded to the Air Warfare Specialist who achieves the highest aggregate marks on the Poseidon Operational Conversion Course. The recipient of the 26/1 P-8A OCC Sir Robert Clark-Hall Trophy was **SGT Mark Graham**.

Gats Pleasants Airmanship Trophy

Handcrafted by Mr Gats Pleasants, a former Master Air Electronics Operator at No. 5 Squadron, this trophy depicts a P-3 Orion and has been carried forward into the P-8A era. The Gats Pleasants Airmanship Trophy is awarded to the NCO student who, in the opinion of the instructional staff, demonstrates the highest standards of attitude, aptitude, teamwork, airmanship and all-round personal qualities throughout the Operational Conversion Course. The recipient of the 26/1 P-8A OCC Gats Pleasants Airmanship Trophy was **CPL Joe Sutton-Tafe (RCAF).**

In addition, No. 5 Squadron recognised a number of personnel for their service to the RNZAF through the presentation of medals and badges.



Medal recipients were:

- FLTLT Nathan Knight NZOSM
- FGOFF Tara Nicholls NZDSM & NZOSM
- SGT Brendon Davies NZOSM
- CPL Chris Bing NZOSM
- CPL James McKenzie NZOSM
- CPL Courtney Meighan RNZN Sea Service Badge
- CPL Caitlin Munn NZOSM
- CPL Daniel Turner NZOSM
- CPL Coen Bligh NZOSM
- CPL Janie Hall NZOSM
- CPL Suhail Singh NZOSM

Finally, congratulations to all graduates and award recipients on their achievements. The successful delivery of the largest P-8A OCC conducted to date reflects not only the commitment of the students, but also the professionalism and dedication of the instructional staff. Thank you for your adaptability, flexibility and tireless efforts in turning an ambitious training plan into a successful outcome. *Article Credit – W/O Nick Rowe. Photo Credit – CPL Rachel Pugh.*

South Island Aerobatic Champs

Late last week and over the weekend Alex from AFM OH competed in the South Island Aerobatic championships placing a close second in his class and highest points for a biplane. Not bad for his rookie year. *Article Credit – Mr Paul Smillie.*



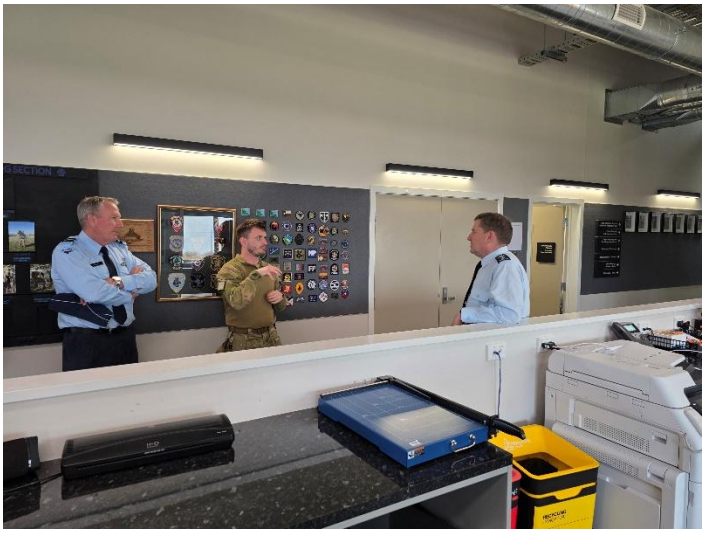
Deputy Chief of Royal Canadian Ari Force Visit

Tue 10 Nov saw the Deputy Chief of the Royal Canadian Air Force, MAJGEN Denis O'Reilly, visit Base Ohakea. He was hosted by our very own DCAF, AIRCDRE Pete Gibson. This visit was scheduled as part of the bi-lateral talks held each year between our respective countries. To start the visit a powhiri was held at the Tūrangawaewae before MAJGEN O'Reilly attended the No 5 Squadron graduation mentioned above. Following this he visited units around Base which included: 5 SQN, 42 SQN, FTW & Ops SQN.









Medal Ceremony

Thu 12 Nov was the last medal ceremony the current BCDR, GPCAPT Whiteside will present at in his current rank and position. Congratulations to the following medal recipients. As the BCDR said in his speech, without these years of experience, the RNZAF would not be able to operate as it does. Thank you for your long and outstanding service. Special mention must go to SQNLDR "Patch" Nelson who received his fourth clasp (Gold) to his AFDA. 42 years of unblemished service is a fantastic achievement. Thank you for you long and outstanding service Patch. It is great to see you still have the same passion for your job as you did when you first joined.



SGT	**Faulkner**	**LSGC**
CPL	**Burnside**	**LSGC**
SGT	**Eastwood**	**LSGC**
F/S	**Woodburn**	**LSGC and 1st clasp**
SQNLDR	**Pryor**	**AFA Clasp 1 and 2**
SQNLDR	**Smith**	**AFA Clasp 1 and 2**
SQNLDR	**Nelson**	**AFA Clasp 4**



Last Word

Yet another bumper issue which demonstrates there is a lot still happening around Base Ohakea and the wider community. As we fast head to the end of the year, Ohakea is still operating at a high tempo with units still away overseas and all of Base preparing for the High-Risk Weather Season. If the opportunity allows, don't forget to take some time while you can to reflect on what has been a busy year so far. Congratulations to our newest WGCDR, Luke Elliott. Once again, a big shout out goes to Patch for his outstanding long service. And of course, not getting caught!! Congrats to our 5 SQN and Canadian Aviators on graduating their conversion course and to the 5 SQN medal recipients.



Remembrance Day

Lastly, it is timely to acknowledge that Wed 11 Nov was Remembrance Day. A small group of Team Ohakea Aviators attended the service in Palmerston North. The weather was hot and sunny and the timing of the flypast by 14 SQN was spot on. It was the 110th Anniversary of the RSA, the 100th Anniversary of the Palmerston North Cenotaph, and the 108th Anniversary since the end of WWI. Lest we forget.

Keep sending stories to be shared with Team Ohakea to: gavin.hey@nzdf.mil.nz.

Editor's Note:

The Microsoft outage prevented some extra photos being added to this edition of ITW.

