

THE CHIPPIE TURNS 80!

Photo: Garth Calitz



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All Celebrating 80 Years of the de Havilland Chipmunk: A Joyous Gathering at Jack Taylor Airfield – Laura McDermid

On Saturday, 23 May 2026, the skies over Krugersdorp's Jack Taylor Airfield lit up with more than just South Africa's signature blue – they echoed with the unmistakable growl of aircraft engines and the spirit of grassroots aviation.

Hosted by EAA Chapter 973, the event marked the 80th anniversary of the legendary de Havilland Canada DHC-1 Chipmunk. What unfolded was far more than a static display; it was a heartfelt tribute to an iconic trainer, a masterclass in aviation history, and a vibrant celebration of community in an industry that sorely needs it.

Preparations had been underway for weeks. The dedicated volunteers at Chapter 973, still only six months into their renewed presence at the airfield, transformed Hangar 973 into a welcoming hub.

Aviation legend, Scully Levin

By early Saturday morning, despite a week of tricky weather featuring low cloud, rain, and mist, the heavens delivered a perfect canvas: endless blue skies stretching from horizon to horizon.

The hangar buzzed with excitement, ready to host around 100 registered guests. Braai fires crackled to life as Ant and Stuart flipped hamburger patties, while Brenda and Vanessa prepared fresh rolls and all the trimmings. The unmistakable aroma of the braai was the signal for folk to tuck into their delicious burgers after which we gathered in the hangar for chapter president Neil Bowden to open the floor.

Scully Levin: A Living Legend Takes the Stage

The day's highlight was the keynote address by none other than Captain Selwyn "Scully" Levin – a true giant of South African aviation. With a



Chipmunk Alley at Krugersdorp!

flying career spanning over six decades, Scully's story reads like a chapter from aviation folklore. He began his journey in 1964 as a South African Air Force pilot, graduating top of his course. After serving as an instructor on Harvards, he joined South African Airways in 1971, rising through the ranks to become Chief Training Captain. Over 38 years with SAA, he flew local, regional, and international routes while building a formidable reputation as an aerobatic pilot and airshow performer.



The crowded 973 Homebase

Scully co-founded the renowned Flying Lions Aerobatic Team and has flown more than 200 different aircraft types. His passion for vintage and experimental aviation, combined with his natural storytelling ability, made him the perfect choice to unpack the Chipmunk's legacy. Brian Appleton began with a warm introduction, highlighting Scully's deep connection with Chipmunks. In the front row sat distinguished guests including General Brian Stableford, Karl Jensen, and several Chipmunk owners – a

gathering of experience that enriched every moment.

The Chipmunk: A “Poor Man’s Spitfire” Turns 80

First flown on 22 May 1946 at Downsview Airport in Toronto, the DHC-1 Chipmunk was designed by Polish émigré engineer Wsiewołod Jakimiuk as a modern successor to the venerable Tiger Moth. Powered by a 145 hp de Havilland Gipsy Major 8 inverted inline engine, the tandem two-seater offered a maximum speed of around 120 knots, excellent handling, and superb aerobatic capability.

Over 1,280 examples were built across Canada, the UK, and Portugal, serving as a primary trainer for the RAF, RCAF, and many other air forces.



Brian Appleton introduces Scully

Pilots affectionately call it the “Poor Man’s Spitfire” because its sleek lines and responsive controls echo the legendary fighter’s feel. Scully regaled the audience with anecdotes from his own Chipmunk flights, describing its



Oshkosh Warbird Style Presentation





Scully, Pete and Pete's immaculate Tiger

delightful harmony between pilot and machine. He explained how anti-spin strakes were later added to the rear fuselage to improve spin recovery characteristics – a detail that underscored the aircraft's forgiving yet spirited nature. "It was easy to fly compared to many other types I've piloted," he shared, drawing knowing nods from the pilots in attendance.

particularly the Canadian branch's charming tradition of naming aircraft after native animals. The DHC-2 Beaver, often hailed as the best bush plane ever built, is a rugged workhorse with STOL (short takeoff and landing) prowess that opened up remote frontiers. Its powerful radial engine and high-lift wings make it a legend in the Canadian wilderness – and a favourite among bush pilots worldwide.

The larger DHC-3 Otter builds on the Beaver's DNA, offering greater payload and range while retaining that incredible short-field performance. Then there's the graceful DH.104 Dove, a twin-engine light transport known for its elegance and reliability in regional airline service, and the four-engine Heron, which extended that capability further.



Brian A, Scully, the General, and Eres (from Israel)

de Havilland's Menagerie: From Beavers to Vampires

Scully didn't stop at the Chipmunk. He painted a vivid picture of de Havilland's broader legacy,



The wonderful carnival atmosphere at Jack's!

The conversation naturally flowed to the formidable Vampire – de Havilland’s first jet fighter. With its twin-boom design and single Goblin turbojet, the Vampire broke from the company’s propeller-driven traditions.

These aircraft share a common thread: purposeful design, delightful handling, and a soul that resonates with pilots who love to fly rather than merely travel.



Photo: Andre Venter

Blue skies, an ideal day for a Chippie formo!

Seven Chipmunks and Formation Magic

Seven beautiful Chipmunks graced the event – including ZS-LJU, the third-oldest Chipmunk in the world.

Sadly, Bryan Berkeljon’s aircraft developed an engine issue en route from Himeville and was left at Springs, but true to EAA spirit, a fellow pilot from Springs, Robbie Heard, ferried him across in another aircraft so he wouldn’t miss the celebration.

As the talks unfolded, 3 Orion Cub aircraft – expertly designed by Kevin Hopper – treated everyone to a graceful aerial display, showcasing the growth and innovation within the local experimental STOL scene. The cherry on the top was when several Chipmunk owners took to the skies in formation, delivering a magnificent

flypast that had cameras clicking and hearts soaring. The sight of those classic silhouettes against the picturesque backdrop at FAKR was pure aviation poetry.

A Bright Future for General Aviation

By mid-morning, the hangar buzzed with satisfied conversation. Scully was full of praise for EAA Chapter 973’s rapid progress in just six months, highlighting the stunning views from the hangar and the excellent facilities at Jack Taylor Airfield.

Over a hundred people – pilots, enthusiasts, families, and students – left inspired. Events like this remind us why we fly. At a time when general aviation faces regulatory, economic, and operational pressures, gatherings that celebrate heritage while building community are vital.

EAA Chapter 973’s efforts to uplift the airfield, support local businesses, and promote experimental aviation are making a tangible difference.

As Scully and the assembled aviators demonstrated, the Chipmunk’s 80th birthday wasn’t just about looking back – it was about fuelling the next generation of pilots with passion, knowledge, and that unmistakable joy of flight.

Whether you’re an old hand with thousands of hours or a student dreaming of your first solo, days like this at Jack Taylor reinforce one simple truth: aviation is better when shared with good friends, great stories, and the timeless music of wings soaring through clear blue skies.

Here’s to the next 80 years of the “Chippie” – and to the dedicated volunteers, pilots, and enthusiasts keeping the dream alive in Krugersdorp and beyond.



Photo: Garth Calitz

A graceful aerial display by the three Orion Cubs

Photo Album Saturday 23 May



Photo: Charlie Hugo

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Photo: Stuart McDermid



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THE CHILDREN'S FLIGHT



EAA Chapter 973's Hangar once again exploded with activity, this time on the occasion of Felix Goshier's Children's Flight Event

Giving back to the community is what EAA members love to do, so when we heard about Felix Goshier's Children's Flight coming to Krugersdorp, we were eager to get involved. Our 973 facility is ideally situated overlooking the runway, and its bright, cheerful décor creates a wonderful first aviation impression for the children arriving at the airport. EAA volunteers arrived early to prepare the hangar, not only for the distribution of the children's gift packs, but also to serve as a rest station for the many pilots flying throughout the day. Coffee stations were set up, along with rusks, muffins, and our ever-popular hotdog stand, while chairs and tables provided a comfortable place to relax. The initiative proved extremely popular — in fact, so popular that we could hardly keep up with demand. It was our small way of thanking the volunteers for all they did. A big congratulations must go to Felix and his hardworking team: five hundred children flown, zero incidents, and many, many satisfied pilots!



Early morning @ Jack's



EAA's hotdog cart was a hit!



The buzzing EAA hangar



Calendar



Every Saturday Morning | Coffee @ Jack's

Join us for coffee, rusks and EAA camaraderie at our hangar every Saturday morning. Open from 07h30. Breakfast available at the Krugersdorp Flying Club Clubhouse

Saturday 13th June | Monthly Gathering & Young Eagle's Rally | FAKR

It's International Young Eagles Day, join us as we join the world in Mission 2.5, a mission to have flown 2.5 million Young Eagles by the start of Oshkosh 2026!

Pilots, planes and ground crew needed!

"When a volunteer pilot provides a Young Eagles flight, they are not just flying, they are shaping the future of flight, one Young Eagles flight at a time."



[TAP HERE TO VOLUNTEER](#)



Saturday 11th July | Monthly Gathering

EAA Chapter 973's monthly gathering @ Jack's, Coffee from 07h30, breakfast at the KFC Clubhouse. We are waiting confirmation on our presenter, watch space for details!

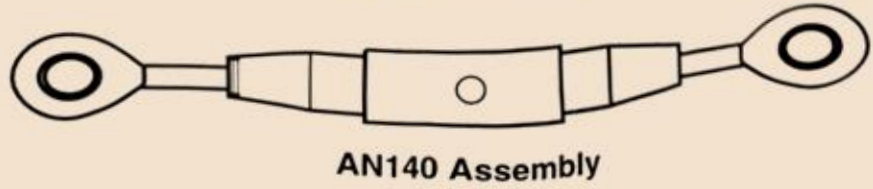
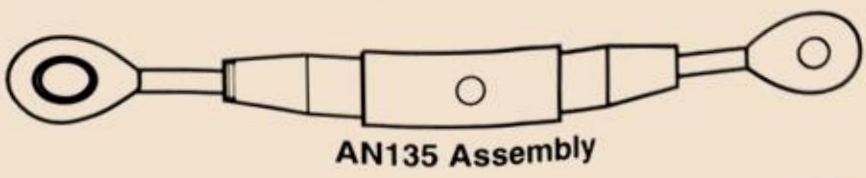
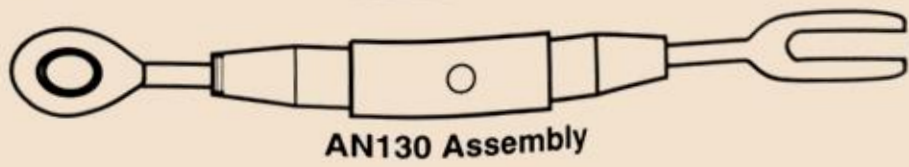
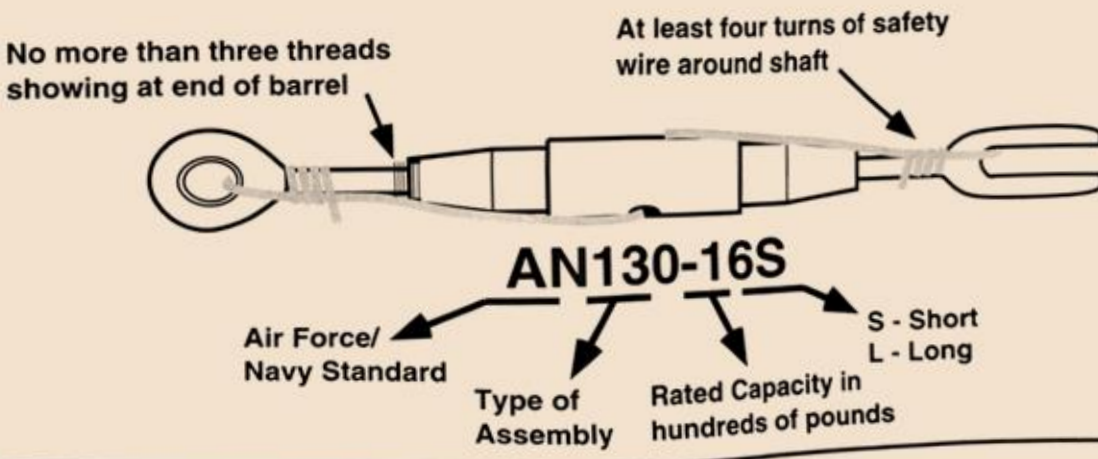
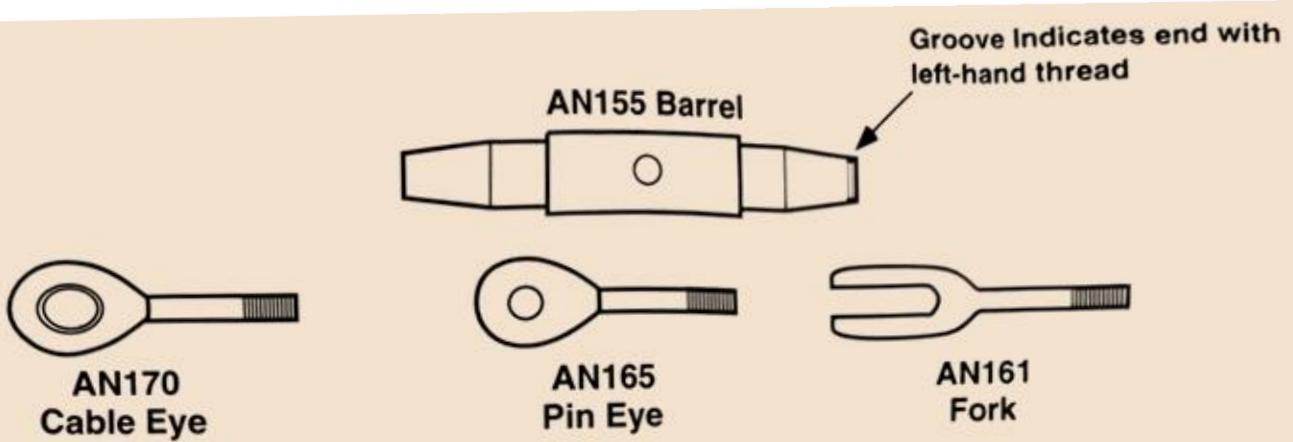
Thursday 24 to Sunday 27 September | EAA's Annual Sun 'n Fun Festival

Join us as we celebrate aviation in South Africa, encompassing ALL types of aviation from Powered Chutes to Powerful Beauties! Camping on the airfield, movie night, aircraft and flying competitions, forums and presentations, this will be aviation fun for the whole family!





TURNBUCKLES



CHAPTER 973 Merchandise



NEW!



Show your colours! EAA Chapter 973's **Merch Shop** offers a range of bright golf shirts, caps, hats and *now!* – a range of warm hoodies in different colours for those crisp upcoming winter mornings. Cash or cards accepted, come and visit us @ **Jack's**, we're open every Saturday morning for coffee, camaraderie and perhaps a breakfast at 26 South!



JOIN OUR CHAPTER!

Become part of our dynamic EAA Chapter! Chapter 973, based at one of Gauteng's best run and most friendly GA airfields, Jack Taylor, Krugersdorp, is open for membership. Our homebase, overlooking the runway, offers a warm and friendly place to hang out with fellow aviators and aviation enthusiasts.



JOIN HERE

MISSION 2.5

The Next Generation Is Ready to Fly – Are You?

Since 1992, EAA Young Eagles has introduced more than 2.4 million kids to the magic of flight. Now, Mission 2.5 sets our sights on the next milestone — 2.5 million kids flown — and we need the entire Young Eagles community to get there.

Pilot the Mission:

Recruit a first-time Young Eagles pilot and earn your chapter \$25 in Young Eagles credits.

January 1–July 31, 2026

Fly 25 for 2.5:

Volunteer pilots who fly 25 Young Eagles or more from October 1, 2025, through July 31, 2026, will be awarded a limited-edition commemorative cap.

Mission 2.5 starts with you. One mission.
One milestone. Countless futures in flight.

To learn more and be part of Mission 2.5, go to

EAA.org/Fly25YE



Chapter 973 Young Eagles Day 2026

- 13 June FAKR
Pilots, planes , marshals and admin crew needed!

TAP HERE TO VOLUNTEER





24th to 27th
SEPTEMBER

EAA's Annual Sun 'n Fun Aviation Festival

Join us
for a
weekend filled
with
flying, fun &
camaraderie!



- Catering
- Exhibitors
- Aircraft Judging
- Flying Competitions
- Camping on the airfield or BnB's nearby

Jack Taylor Airfield,
Krugersdorp
Thursday 24 to Sunday 27
September 2026

