

Healthy bastards back in town

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Ivor Yockney flies a Maule MX7-180B

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Marlborough Aero Club president Craig Anderson with bush flying plane.

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Daring pilots from around New Zealand will descend on Marlborough on Saturday for the second annual **Healthy Bastards Bush Pilot Championships**.

The Marlborough Aero Club will again play host to the event it put together last year to highlight its bush pilot training course. That contest turned out to be far bigger than expected with 56 pilots taking part, half of whom were from outside Marlborough.

Aero club president Craig Anderson says they hope to have at least the same number of entries, but it could well be even bigger this year.

"The idea is to encourage the guys to get out and have some fun. In aviation everything is so regulated things can get a bit boring, so this is a great way to do something different," he says.

Despite the more relaxed and fun attitude, safety still remains the top priority.

Members of the public are encouraged to watch the pilots show off their skills in two categories; short take off and landing [Stol] and precision landing.

Pilot Nick Milne says the Stol event requires pilots to take off in the shortest possible distance and then land in the shortest distance.

"Last year the winner did it in 40 metres, which is incredible," Nick says.

Precision landing sees pilots trying to touch down as close to line on the ground as possible, with last year's winner coming within just two metres.

The contest is a good reflection of the skills bush pilots need, as they will often need to land and take off in small areas and on unconventional runways like river beds.

The day will also feature live music and food and drink on sale, with a gold coin donation as the entry fee.

The contest will begin at 10.30am and run until around mid-afternoon. If the weather is bad the event will be postponed until Sunday.



Bruce Gibson pictured with his daughter Serafina Varley-Gibson holds a private pilot's licence and is also a contract aviation engineer. He will be flying a 1957 Piper Super Cub which he keeps at Omaka.