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Unconventional pair



FLY GUY: Maurice Kirk prepares for take-off from Hawke's Bay Airport.

PHOTO: SARAH BICKNELL

Eccentric Welshman up in the air again

ROGER MORONEY

As a means of long-distance aerial transport, the well-weathered Piper Cub Grasshopper is anything but conventional.

But then neither is its adventurous and slightly eccentric pilot,

Welshman Maurice Kirk... so the pair are perfect for each other, really.

Mr Kirk was making final preparations at Hawke's Bay Airport this morning for a flight to Auckland, where the 60-year-old Piper (once used to carry General

George Patton) will be readied at Ardmore for a journey back to his UK home.

An avowed opponent of bureaucracy and officialdom, his flight notes were detailed on the back of his hand and on a few notes of paper tucked in pockets.

The aircraft had been stored in Australia for three years after he took part in the London to Sydney race, and he returned Down Under a few months ago to take part in the Round New Zealand Air Race.

"I'm taking a quick flight home, but I'll be back to pick up

the Piper in two or three months to fly it home," he said. "They were only built to last six weeks," he said as he patted its fabric-covered flanks.

"We've had some times... my wife says that its welded to my hip."