



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc.

AHSA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of NSW Branch

February 2002 No.349

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February Meeting

Wednesday 6 February 2002, 7.45pm at the Powerhouse Museum. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the new area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will be a Members' Night with buy, sell and swap, and with a special theme featuring fire-fighting aircraft. The recent bushfires in NSW caused major damage to property and wildlife, but thankfully caused no immediate loss of human life. Aviation played a major, yet controversial role in the fight against the fires. Politics and emotions, whipped up by public-spirited members of the community and media entered the debate and a rational evaluation of the real value of fire-fighting aircraft has become less clear. Members and visitors are invited to bring along photographs, slides, videos and books relating to fire-fighting aircraft in Australia and overseas.

December Meeting

The December meeting, which was held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, had an "In support of Ansett" theme. Numerous items of memorabilia were on display, and a series of slides featuring Ansett aircraft was provided by Warwick Bigsworth, and other slides provided by Allen Clarke. Howard Knox provided the excellent Jeff Watson video 'The Reg Ansett Story', which had many wonderful clips and interviews from the early days of the company, right through until the mid-1990s. The video is even more poignant now than when it was made several years ago.

Members will be interested to know that we were the first organization to use the library facility at the Australian Aviation Museum for the purpose of a meeting. It proved to be far more comfortable than the hangar facility that had been used previously, and will be available for other meetings from time to time.

Committee Meeting

A Committee meeting, commencing at 6.30pm, will be held immediately prior to the February meeting. The main topic for discussion will be the 2002 program.

Aircraft Participating in the 2001/2 NSW Bushfire Disaster

Almost 100 aircraft participated in the fight against the bushfires that affected much of NSW over the Christmas/New Year period. Most aircraft involved were helicopters, with much publicity directed towards the Erickson S-64E AirCranes, but a large number of other rotary winged types, agricultural aircraft and other special purpose aircraft also participated.

The largest aircraft used was the Erickson S-64E AirCane helitanker. This aircraft is a re-manufactured Sikorsky CH-54A Skycrane, has a 9,500 litre water tank, flexible hose (hover snorkel), rigid hydrofoil snorkel (for filling from ocean water) and water cannon horizontal nozzle for high-rise fire suppression. Erickson purchased the type certificate from Sikorsky in 1992 and have re-manufactured 15 of the helicopters.

In comparison, the Bell 205A-1 (Iroquois) operated by Helicorp is fitted with a belly tank or carries at 1,600 litre Bambi bucket. The Air Tractor 502 and Air Tractor 802 agricultural aircraft carry 1,892 litres (500 US gallons) and 3,028 litres (800 US gallons) respectively.

The callsigns are allocated by the Rural Fire Service and are:

Helitak – medium and heavy helicopters (e.g. BK117, Bell 205, Bell 212 and Bell 412)

Firebird – light helicopters (e.g. Bell 206, Squirrel, Hughes 500)

Firescan – fixed wing aircraft equipped with infrared scanning equipment to plot the fire-line

Spotter – fixed wing light spotter aircraft

Bomber – fixed wing agricultural aircraft.

The following is an almost complete list of aircraft used in the fire-fighting and has been compiled from a number of sources.

Erik 30	Erickson S-64E "Elvis"	N179AC
Erik 33	Erickson S-64E "Georgia Peach"	N154AC
Erik 48	Erickson S-64E "The Incredible Hulk"	N164AC

Helitak 01	Bell 412 Lloyd Helicopters		Firebird 39	Bell 206B-III Heli-Muster	VH-JWF
Helitak 02	Bell 412 Lloyd Helicopters		Firebird 40	Bell 206B Mr John Weymouth	VH-JWM
Helitak 03	Bell 212 Lloyd Helicopters	VH-NSY	Firebird 44	Eurocopter AS350B Heli-Muster	VH-JVC
Helitak 04	Kawasaki BK-117 Kestrel Aviation	VH-KHO	Firebird 46	Bell 206 P & R Helicopter Services	VH-PRW
Helitak 05	Bell 205A-1 Helicorp Pty Ltd	VH-NNN	Firebird 47	Bell 206B JetRanger Heli-Muster	VH-AZH
Helitak 25	Kawasaki BK-117 McIver Aviation	VH-FHB	Firebird 48	Bell 206B-II Heli-Muster	VH-RLV
Helitak 26	Kawasaki BK-117 McIver Aviation	VH-FHF	Firebird 50	Bell 206L-1 Helicopters No. 1 Pty Ltd	VH-BHT
Helitak 49	Kawasaki BK-117 Rotorlift Pty Ltd	VH-RLY	Firebird 51	Bell 206B-III Helicopters No. 1 Pty Ltd	VH-BHU
Helitak 60	Bell TH-1F McDermott Aviation	VH-LIP	Firebird 53	Eurocopter AS350B Heli-Muster	VH-RLU
Helitak 66	Kawasaki BK-117 Helipro (NZ)	ZK-HYZ	Firebird 54	Bell 206B-II CHN Developments Pty Ltd	VH-MXW
Helitak 68	Bell UH-1H Helipro (NZ)	ZK-HYG	Firebird 55	Eurocopter AS350B2 Seaham Air Pty Ltd	VH-WFX
Helitak 76	Bell UH-1B Commercial Helicopters	VH-UHF	Firebird 64	Bell 206B-II Terrileigh Pty Ltd	VH-HKB
Helitak 80	Bell TH-1F HeliQuip	VH-WTT	Firebird 67	Bell 206L-1 Mr Dale Triffett	VH-WLI
Helitak 83	Kawasaki BK-117 Lifeflight Pty Ltd	VH-EMS	Firebird 69	Bell 206B-III Commercial Helicopters	VH-JAK
Helitak 89	Bell TH-1F McDermott Aviation	VH-LIY	Firebird 71	Bell 206B III Shorland Air Services Pty Ltd	VH-LXM
Helitak 98	Bell TH-1F McDermott Aviation	VH-LIQ	Firebird 72	Eurocopter EC120B VH-YAZ Pty Ltd	VH-YAZ
Firebird 20	Bell 206B-II Mr Barry Jones	VH-TFH	Firebird 73	Eurocopter AS350B Forestry Commission of NSW	VH-NFO
Firebird 21	Bell 407 Buzz Aviation	VH-YZZ	Firebird 76	Bell 206B-III Precision Helicopters Pty Ltd	VH-TBP
Firebird 22	Bell 206B-II Central (QLD) Holdings Pty Ltd	VH-EWH	Firebird 78	Bell 206B Sydney Helicopter Service	VH-SAI
Firebird 23	Bell 206B-III Central (QLD) Holdings Pty Ltd	VH-BIN	Firebird 79	Bell 206L Sydney Helicopter Service	VH-SHH
Firebird 24	Bell 206B Helispray Pty Ltd	VH-BHS	Firebird 82	Bell 206B-III The Helicopter Service Australia	VH-JGE
Firebird 27	Bell 206B Mr Albert Ho-Fei Yu	VH-AND	Firebird 84	Eurocopter AS350 Venture Helicopters Pty Ltd	VH-AQR
Firebird 29	Bell 206B Mr Lachlan Macarthur-Onslow	VH-JWW	Firebird 90	Bell 206B Heli-Muster	VH-RMJ
Firebird 30	Bell 206B Aerial Agriculture Pty Ltd	VH-CHO	Firebird 91	Hughes 500C Mr Barry Jones	VH-THZ
Firebird 32	Bell 206B-II Terrileigh Pty Ltd	VH-UHI	Firebird 92	Bell 206B-II Mr Barry Jones	VH-HWS
Firebird 33	Bell 206B Curry-Kenny Aviation	VH-JWK	Firebird 93	Bell 407 True North No. 2 Pty Ltd	VH-NSH
Firebird 34	Eurocopter AS350 Tevon Holdings	VH-RTV	Firebird 94	Bell 206L-1 Curry-Kenny Aviation	VH-BKU
Firebird 35	Bell 206B Heli-Muster	VH-BLR	Firebird 96	Agusta A109 Gro Air	VH-LUI
Firebird 36	Eurocopter AS350 Heli-Muster	VH-HVK	Firebird 99	Bell 206L-3 Helicorp Pty Ltd	VH-BHF

Bomber 5	M18A Dromader Retsof Pty Ltd	VH-FOS	Park Air 3	Cessna 206 NPWS	VH-NPW
Bomber 12	M18A Dromader Mr Colin Adams	VH-OOW	Park Air 4	Eurocopter AS350B Eurocopter International Pacific	VH-ENE
Bomber 21	Air Tractor 802 Mr Colin Pay	VH-LIR	Park Air 6	Commander 690 National Parks & Wildlife Svce	VH-WLO
Bomber 23	M18A Dromader Yataron Pty Ltd	VH-FVF	VH-NDO	Eurocopter AS350BA SA Helicopters Pty Ltd	VH-NDO
Bomber 22	M18B Dromader R & M Aircraft Pty Ltd	VH-JRN	Polair 1	Bell 206B III NSW Police Service	VH-PHW
Bomber 24	Air Tractor 802 Pay's Spraying Pty Ltd	VH-LIM	Polair 2	Eurocopter AS350B NSW Police Service	VH-PHB
Bomber 25	M18A Dromader Mr James Hutson	VH-WHR	Polair 3	Eurocopter AS355 NSW Police Service	VH-PHX
Bomber 27	Air Tractor 602 Womba Pty Ltd	VH-NUN	Westpac 2	Bell 407 Westpac Helicopter Rescue Svce.	VH-HRR
Bomber 99	S2R Turbo-Thrush Kennedy Aviation Pty Ltd	VH-NFL			

On the Internet

Further information on the operations of Erickson Air-Crane can be found on their web-site (www.erickson-aircrane.com). It provides all the information you would want to know about the S-64 as well as the company's other operations. The site also features a series of videos of various modes of helicopter operations and a special section on Australian operations.

Australian Regional Airlines (<http://users.chariot.net.au/~theburfs/regional1.html>). This is part of the Australian Aviation Archive, which I have mentioned before, but Howard Knox's presentation of the Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture in November provided some stimulus in reviewing the lost airlines of Australia. The names on this site will bring back many memories.

Peter Dunn's Australia at War (<http://home.st.net.au/~dunn>). The Military Aircraft Crashes in Australia component of this site has been mentioned before, but a recent review of this site reveals an enormous amount of historical material. It includes Military Airfields in Australia and the Western Pacific in WWII; Military Units in Australia; Command Structure of the South-Western Pacific; RAAF, RAF, 5th AF of the USAAF, NEIAF, US Army, RAN and Canadian Units in Australia in WWII; Japanese air raids and Japanese reconnaissance flights over Australia.

Fleet Air Arm Archive (www.fleetairarmarchive.net). This site covers every facet of the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm during WWII, and includes the contributions made by other members of the then Empire and the United States in *the defence of Great Britain*.

Airline History Website (<http://airlines.africonline.com>). This site provides an overview of international airline operations between 1919 and 2000. There are numerous links to airline websites and an alphabetical list of airline histories.

Air Fire 1	Learjet 35A Pel Air Aviation (Line scan)	VH-SLD			
Firescan 01	Cessna 404 Titan Australasian Jet	VH-TTK			
Firescan 02	Cessna 404 Titan Australasian Jet	VH-TTZ			
These Titans are equipped with thermal imaging fire-mapping equipment for use at FL200 and above					
Recon	Cessna 182 Mr Richard Macarthur-Onslow	VH-EIP			
Spotter 37	Cessna 182 Mr John Hedges	VH-RWK			
Spotter 65	Piper PA28 236 Mr Ross Kelly	VH-LJK			
VH-TAS	Piper PA-31-350 Brindabella Airlines	VH-TAS			
VH-ADH	Cessna 206 Mr Arthur Bailey	VH-ADH			
VH-PFJ	Cessna 152 Needham Aviation Pty Ltd	VH-PFJ			
VH-TWB	Piper PA31-350 Needham Aviation Pty Ltd	VH-TWB			
VH-SLA	Kawasaki BK-117 B2 South Region SLSA Heli Rescue	VH-SLA			
VH-WGV	Swearingen Metro II Avtex Air Services Pty Ltd	VH-WGV			
Taipan 20	Eurocopter AS350 Royal Australian Navy	820			
Taipan 21	Eurocopter AS350 Royal Australian Navy	821			
Taipan 24	Eurocopter AS350 Royal Australian Navy	824			
Park Air 2	Eurocopter AS350 National Parks & Wildlife Svce	VH-PTH			

Calendar of Events

- 9-10 February 2002 Temora Aviation Museum flying days, Temora NSW
- 6 March 2002 AHSA (NSW) Annual General Meeting, Powerhouse Museum
- 10 March 2002 Albury Airshow, Albury NSW
- 16-17 March Ozkosh Downunder Ballarat Victoria
- 30-31 March 2002 SAAA Fly-in Mangalore Victoria
- 30-31 March 2002 Temora Aviation Museum flying days
- 3 April 2002 AHSA (NSW) Aviation trivia and aircraft recognition competitions
- 12-14 April 2002 Antique Aircraft Assoc of Aust. National Fly-in, Narrandera NSW
- 13-14 April 2002 Bendigo Aviation Expo Bendigo Victoria
- 27-28 April 2002 Mildura Airshow, Mildura Victoria
- 28 April 2002 Federation Airshow, Nowra NSW
- 1 May 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
- 4-5 May 2002 Temora Aviation Museum flying days

Membership Renewal

Membership renewal is now due. Your membership renewal form is enclosed and the membership fee remains at a very modest \$25.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Double Bay Flying Boat Base..Part 2.

When Lebbeus Hordern sailed for England in 1915, intending to join the *Royal Flying Corps*, he was a young married man with an infant son. He was invalided back to Australia in 1917, with his plan to become a pilot thwarted by impaired vision and suffering the horrendous effects of shelling and gas from his time on the Western Front. However, his interest in aviation was undiminished and, following the Armistice, he was once again eager to become involved.

On April 16, 1919, *The Aerial Company* was registered in Sydney. In this enterprise the prime mover was Harold Macfie, who had been deputy manager of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Co-founders were Lebbeus Hordern, appointed Managing Director and Lt Col Woods, General Manager. The following month, on May 23, Edward J Hart convened a meeting to form a NSW Branch of the Australian Aero Club. Harold Macfie was elected President. Lebbeus too became a member, and in later years a Vice President and an Honorary Life Member.

By the time of the Aviation Luncheon on the first anniversary of Armistice Day, one of the speakers, Charles Lloyd Jones, Managing Director of *David Jones Ltd*, was able to describe the use his company had already made of the aircraft operated by *The Aerial Company*. These were two DH6s acquired from the Defence Department in Melbourne and flown to Sydney's Victoria Park Racecourse by Capt P G Taylor and Lt R F Oakes. On May 13, one of the DH6s dropped leaflets over Sydney suburbs advertising *David Jones* 81st Anniversary Sale, the first such use of an aircraft in Australia. On November 5, *David Jones* again chartered *The Aerial Company's* DH6 to deliver goods to Goulburn; another first for aircraft in Australia, this time carrying air freight on a commercial basis.

Harold Macfie left Sydney in August 1919 on company business, returning in May 1920 with the sole Australasian agency for Short Bros. Lebbeus also left for overseas in November 1919 to purchase aircraft for the planned water based operations of the company. The Double Bay Flying Boat Base, dormant since 1914, boasted a large hangar at the northern end of Bay Street and awaited the arrival of the new acquisitions. These were two Curtiss Seagull flying boats and a giant Felixtowe F5 flying boat, a civil conversion of the F2A, carried out for the company by Short Bros. Later, in June 1921, a Short Shrimp seaplane, a personal acquisition by Lebbeus, joined the fleet. The Shrimp, which could fold its wings, and the two Seagulls fitted snugly into the Double Bay hangar. The Felixtowe required a much larger building. It was a twin engined biplane with a wingspan about the same as a Catalina flying boat. A second hangar was constructed on land owned by Lebbeus on the northern shore of Botany Bay.

The business plan for *The Aerial Company* depended heavily on the Felixtowe flying boat. It was proposed that international air routes to transport passengers and freight would be developed, connecting ports on the east coast of Australia with New Zealand, New Guinea and eventually, Singapore. But when the beautiful wooden hull of the Felixtowe was uncrated there was a problem. It seems that some damage or deterioration had occurred to the hull during delivery by sea. In any case erection of the aircraft ceased.

Meanwhile the Curtiss Seagulls were taking to the air. In George Robert's biography, *Qantas By George*, there is a description of the first time young George and his brother Bert had their first flight. The time was early 1920; the aircraft was one of the Curtiss Seagulls, which took off from Sandgate and flew out over the waters of Morton Bay. Later in the year the Tasmanian Government chartered a Seagull to support a search for a missing schooner, the *Amelia J*. During 1921 *The Aerial*

Company embarked on the first aerial reconnaissance in Australia, down the south east coast, using a Seagull and the support vessel *Acielle*. One of the objectives of this work was to photograph and survey possible flying boat bases that could be used by the company along a future air route. The route surveyed was from Sydney down to Launceston and return.

By the end of 1921 the operations of *The Aerial Company* had been transferred to Botany Bay. The hangar at Double Bay was donated to the Cranbrook School for its use as a boat shed. The Cranbrook rowers soon discovered some of the difficulties that had plagued the company's pilot, Andrew Lang. Shallow mud flats at low tide and lack of shelter from Sydney's most prevalent winds caused problems for Lang. *The Aerial Company*, however, was in more serious difficulty. With the unairworthy condition of the *Felxtowe* unresolved, it was decided to cease operations altogether. It was then agreed that the assets of the company be taken over by Lebbeus Hordern.

During 1922 Lebbeus generously offered the use of one of the Seagulls and the *Shrimp* to assist a photographic expedition to Papua being organised by Frank Hurley. This Seagull, with Andrew Lang pilot and Alec Hill mechanic, was the first aircraft to fly in Papua when it took off from Port Moresby Harbour on a test flight on September 5, 1922. At the end of its mission with Hurley, the Seagull was flown from Port Moresby to Thursday Island and then shipped south early in 1923. The *Shrimp* arrived back in Sydney with deterioration of its fabric surfaces caused by exposure in the tropics. It was reassembled at Double Bay and, shortly after take-off for Botany Bay on January 20, it was caught by a wind gust and crashed off Point Piper. Andrew Lang and Alec Hill survived the crash. However, it was Lang's last flight. Interviewed after the crash he announced his decision to retire from flying. He said that, "It is a nerve-wracking game, and seven years is as much as the ordinarily constituted man is good for". Fifteen months later, at the age of thirty six, he was killed in a motoring accident.

Late in 1923 Lebbeus commissioned a new design from Short Bros to replace the *Shrimp*. To avoid the problems of rotting wood and fabric, he required the new machine to be of all metal construction. This aircraft, a small twin engined flying boat, a one-off Short S1 *Cockle*, was ready for delivery in October 1924. However, it was not accepted by Lebbeus because it was seriously under powered.

During 1923 Horrie Miller and Roy King Submitted plans to the Controller of Civil Aviation for a flying boat service connecting Adelaide with Port Lincoln on Eyre's Peninsular. Lebbeus provided his two Seagulls to Horrie Miller free of charge for route proving purposes. A flight across St Vincent's Gulf from Glenelg to St Vincent, with the attendant difficulties of handling a flying boat in rough sea conditions, convinced Horrie that flying boats were not for him and the project was abandoned.

In 1923, fearing that Australia would slip behind in the re-emerging science of gliding, Lebbeus, as Vice-President of the Australian Aero Club (NSW Section), gave £500 for a competition to promote interest in the sport.. His seminal role in the Low-Powered Aeroplane Competition of 1924 was acknowledged in the Official Report on the competition, compiled by authority of the Aero Club. It stated that, "*Mr Lebbeus Hordern's offer of £500 as a prize started the whole train of enthusiasm which carried the idea to success, and the Club and competitors, and everyone else who is interested in the advancement of aviation, owe him a great debt of gratitude*".

In July 1923, when Smithy and Keith Anderson were seriously looking for an aircraft to fly the Pacific, Smithy inspected the *Felxtowe* at Botany Bay in company with Lebbeus. Smithy was dismayed by the state of deterioration of the hull. In late 1925 Lebbeus again offered the *Felxtowe* to Smithy for £1000 as it stood. On Smithy's behalf, Lawrence Wackett had a look at the *Felxtowe* and estimated that hull repairs would cost another £1000. He also concluded that the range of the *Felxtowe* could not be extended to even 1000 miles. It was clearly not the aircraft for long distance

over water flights. However, when Smithy and Ulm did finally conquer the Pacific in the *Southern Cross* and arrived in Sydney on June 10, 1928, Lebbeus was one of the first to congratulate them, and in a practical way. He gave them a cheque for £5000, equalling the amount they received from the Australian Government.

During the early twenties Lebbeus's personal life was encountering difficulties. His wife Olga left him and took their young son, also named Lebbeus, with her to live in England. They were divorced in 1925. While Lebbeus had been unsuccessful in his bid to become a pilot with the RFC in WWI, his son became a pilot and was decorated flying with the Fleet Air Arm during WWII.

Lebbeus married for the second time early in 1926. His new bride was Frances Barry, a bridesmaid at his first wedding. Lebbeus had resigned from the board of Anthony Hordern and Sons in 1925, but in reality had had no direct role in the running of the company. He now felt free to travel extensively. He left with his new wife on a journey to Japan.

The Sunday Telegraph Pictorial, dated June 17, 1928, carried a headline about Lebbeus's gift of £5000 to Smithy and Ulm. The article also included an interview with Lebbeus that gave a description of his lifestyle, but gave no hint of the tragedy to come.

"Lebbeus Hordern has many interests in life. Camping is his chief joy, he says. Off to the woods or to his two islands north of Townsville, he goes when he wants a change of scenery. His magnificently equipped motor yacht 'Saggitas' has taken him on many pleasant excursions. He takes pride in his farm at Bowral where he breeds prize-taking ponies and pedigreed Short-horns. The delight of speeding in a high-powered car appeals to him. A new car he will have soon will create a sensation in Sydney. It is a super-charged Sports Mercedes-Benz that can develop 180 horse-power. When he is at his magnificent Darling Point home 'Hopewood House', Lebbeus Hordern has his books and his writing to amuse him."

At dusk on the day Lebbeus Hordern died, Monday September 10, 1928, Smithy, Ulm, Litchfield and McWilliams took-off from Richmond Aerodrome in the *Southern Cross* on their historic first flight to New Zealand. It is doubtful if Smithy and Ulm were told of the death of their recent benefactor. That morning, Lebbeus had been found dead in his bed at *Hopewood House*. The coroner was later to report that the cause of death was, *"Barbiturate poison wilfully administered by himself"*. He was thirty seven years old.

The funeral left *Hopewood House* mid morning on the following Thursday for a graveside service at South Head Cemetery. On its way the hearse and long motorcade of mourners passed Lyne Park at Rose Bay where, a decade later, Qantas would commence its flying boat operations. Lebbeus's dream of regular flying boat services to New Zealand, New Guinea and Singapore would come to pass. During the service, a formation of five aircraft from the Aero Club flew over the cemetery.

It is not possible here to explore the causes of the deep depression that overwhelmed Lebbeus Hordern at the very time when he seemed to be buoyed by the achievements of Kingsford Smith and Ulm and could see the promise of the near future for development of international air routes over the great oceans of the world.

In her history of the Hordern Family in Australia, *Children Of One Family*, Lesley Hordern writes, *"Lebbeus's image as a spoilt playboy - 'a very wealthy member of a very wealthy family' - followed him to his grave, and in legend superficial impressions of his undoubtedly sybaritic lifestyle have obscured the reality of his devotion to aviation. Like his uncle Tertius, he was a visionary, but Lebbeus's visions, unlike his uncle's, had no self-interest, and while Tertius's visions were down-to-earth, those of his nephew soared in the clouds. Like Tertius, he dreamed much and achieved little, but his unstinting support of flying ventures made him, in Frank Hurley's words, a benefactor in the cause of science and aviation'. For this he deserves to be remembered with respect".....***John Scott**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc.

AHSA (NSW) Inc

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PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of NSW Branch

March 2002 No.350

March Meeting

Wednesday 6 March 2002, 7.45pm at the Powerhouse Museum. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the new area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The business of the meeting will be:

The 38th Annual General Meeting

The President, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Secretary will present their respective annual reports on the activities and finances of the Society for 2001. All positions on the Committee will be declared vacant and an election for all positions will be carried out. Any financial member may be nominated for any position. Nomination and proxy forms are attached to this Newsletter. The Society depends on your support and new faces to the Committee are always welcome.

A series of slides will be shown after the AGM.

February Meeting

The theme of the February meeting was the use of aircraft in fire-fighting roles. Rob Tracz provided an excellent series of slides depicting aircraft used in North America the fire-fighting and water-bombing roles. Aircraft featured included Douglas A-26 Invader, DC-4, DC-6 and DC-7; Consolidated Catalina and Privateer; Grumman Avenger, Canadair 215 and the mighty Martin Mars. Also featured were the Cessna 337 fire spotting and control aircraft. All those who saw this presentation were greatly impressed.

David Eyre also provided another great series of aircraft slides taken at the Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia fly-in at Moruya on the Australia Day weekend. Aircraft included Rob Fox's DH-89A Dragon Rapide, and a wide selection of Austers and Winjeels as well as a Meta-Sokol, two Beagle Airedales and many home built or kit aircraft. Of particular interest was the Piccolo powered glider, complete with fold-up propeller.

David noted that many of these aircraft are now hangared on private properties or at more remote airfields rather than the more traditional main general aviation airports. Hence, it is more likely that one will only see such aircraft on occasions like this fly-in.

On the Internet

Hargrave (www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave). This site, which has an association with our friends from AHSA Inc in Melbourne, features a new section on "the Pioneers – saluting the men and women of aviation history". More importantly, there is a special page devoted to women pioneers of Australian and New Zealand skies from 1900 to 2000. Famous names include Peggy McKillop, Freda Thompson, Gaby Kennard and of course, Nancy Bird Walton.

Just Planes (www.justplanes.com). This site features airline news from around the world, although with a North American focus. The news is updated twice weekly and includes route news, new orders, airline accidents and incidents, and an ever-growing list of defunct airlines. The site also advertises hundreds of aviation videos on particular aircraft types and airports.

Aerotransport Data Bank (<http://aerotransport.free.fr/>). This comprehensive site provides details on airline histories from just about every country on the globe. There are also histories on large aircraft and order books for many types.

Imperial Airways (www.imperial-airways.com). Ah, the halcyon days of air travel. There is a full list of Imperial Airways aircraft with fates up to 1940, after which the airline became BOAC. Also featured is material on Croydon Airport and a 1933 route map highlighting many long-forgotten exotic stopovers.

Jet Airline Crash Data Evaluation Center (www.jacdec.com). Yet another accident and accident web site, but very up to date with relevant information and comprehensive databases.

Propeller Airliners Directory (<http://www2s.biglobe.ne.jp/~ito-nori/prop100.html>). This is a Japanese site, although it is mainly in English, and includes extensive information on propeller driven airliners. A wide range of types is covered, including ATR42/72, NAMC YS-11A, DHC-7, Saab 340 and 2000, Harbin Y-12 and many more. There are lots of photographs and some interesting links to otherwise obscure aviation sites.

Calendar of Events

- 10 March 2002
Albury Airshow, Albury NSW
- 16-17 March 2002
Ozkosh Downunder Ballarat Victoria
- 30-31 March 2002
SAAA Fly-in Mangalore Victoria
- 30-31 March 2002
Temora Aviation Museum flying days
- 3 April 2002
AHSA (NSW) Aviation trivia and aircraft
recognition competitions
- 12-14 April 2002
Antique Aircraft Assoc of Aust. National Fly-in,
Narrandera NSW
- 13-14 April 2002
Bendigo Aviation Expo Bendigo Victoria
- 27-28 April 2002
Mildura Airshow, Mildura Victoria
- 28 April 2002
Federation Airshow, Nowra NSW
- 1 May 2002
AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse
Museum
- 4-5 May 2002
Temora Aviation Museum flying days
- 4-5 May 2002
SAAA Fly-in Wedderburn NSW
- 2-3 November 2002
Fighters Over Port. Port Macquarie NSW
- 13-17 November 2002
Aviex 2002. Wollongong (Albion Park) NSW

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

Guinea Air Traders Moves into Migrant Trade (c1948-9).

(Part of a paper presented to the Royal Aeronautical Society by Tom Watson on Sept 22, 1999)

By chance Guinea Air Traders had got into the business of bringing European migrants to Australia in a DC3. VH-GAT was a freighter with a few military type seats. Passengers had no seat belts and were treated similarly to cargo.

The decision was taken to purchase two more DC3s in the UK. Lionel Van Praag, three times world champion dirt track rider and ex-RAAF, where he won the George Cross for bravery and a real tough diamond, was employed to collect and fly the first DC3 to Australia with a load of migrants. I went to London with Lionel and took delivery of the aircraft and as we were without any UK licence qualifications to fly the aircraft this caused quite a stir which we finally overcame. We flew the aircraft to Australia without much drama, except being forced to land at Dubbo for fuel just on dark. Dubbo had no airport lighting so to take off in the dark Lionel arranged for lights to be flared on the end of the field ; no runways then. We took off straight into cloud and the turbulence was vicious. I was acting co-pilot and it was difficult for both of us to keep control of the aircraft due to the dreadful turbulence which we came out of at 10,000 feet on top of cloud. Lionel and I were almost exhausted. I said to Lionel, " that scared the hell out of me". He, covered in perspiration replied, "you weren't Robinson Crusoe. I was as scared as you".

Today, travel is common, cheap and easy. Everyone does it. Many of the places we visit today have adopted many common features and attitudes. English is almost universally spoken and if there is a problem, it's easy to sort out. In the 1940s it was a totally different story. Each destination was culturally very different and sometimes hostile to some extent. There was no one to call upon. You were on your own in every sense. Today we fly from London to Sydney in 20 hours with one stop in an aircraft that carries 300 to 400 people in great comfort.

By comparison, the trip I'm going to talk about took 10 days and involved 15 stops. We carried 30 passengers in no comfort. Unlike today we flew the aircraft all the way without a change in crew which for obvious reasons would not be allowed now and was probably not a good idea then.

After flying the first aircraft from London to Sydney with only minor difficulties, two weeks later with a colleague from New Guinea, lets call him Joe for these purposes, we returned to the UK to collect the second aircraft. Joe was an Avro Anson pilot with no experience on DC3s and was endorsed after only a one hour dual flight from Madang to Lae.

When we arrived at Prestwick in Scotland, we discovered that the money to purchase the aircraft had not arrived. The company was always short of money and undercapitalised. The upshot was that we were stranded in Scotland for two months before funds came in. When we finally took delivery, Joe told me that he did not know how to start the aeroplane. I had many hours flying DC3s but was not endorsed to fly it as pilot in command. Eventually we took it for a test flight and then after that off we went, first stop Heathrow. Between Prestwick and London we entered a snow storm resulting in the propellers icing up and vibrating. After activating alcohol propeller de-icing, chunks of ice flew off the propellers striking the fuselage like a bomb. We then got lost over an RAF station resulting in our being chased by a fighter. Naturally enough, the radios were not working. They rarely did. Eventually, we ended up over the Isle of Wight, which as everyone knows is 65 miles south west of London. After finding London, which wasn't too difficult due to its size, we couldn't find Heathrow so followed a road to the west and as we had no radio, landed without permission. At that stage the radio receiver suddenly came on ordering us to report to the tower for the unauthorised landing. When Air Traffic

Control was told we were from New Guinea that seemed to explain everything.

It was suggested that we get back to New Guinea as fast as we could having endangered all air traffic in London.

At midnight we took off for Rome to load the 30 migrant passengers. After reaching 10,000 feet through cloud, one engine started to misfire. The decision was taken to return and purely by accident we came out, through cloud, right over the runway. I spent the rest of the night pulling everything apart trying to find the cause of the problem. At daylight we took off again towards Rome. After a storm over the Mediterranean, Joe got lost and we ended up in Marseilles. We were then arrested by the French police and taken in for questioning and ultimately released after receiving a lecture on safety and as they put it, "good manners". The next morning we left for Rome and made it without great incident. That night we took off for Athens with our 30 passengers. On the way to Athens an engine fire warning light and bell came on and Joe starts to panic and yell. As there was no sign of fire I decided to stop the noise, by pulling the contact breakers on the light and bell. On approach to Athens the wheels wouldn't come down due to a leak in the hydraulic system. The reservoir was empty. In our spares I had a can of oil and kept pouring it in until the wheels came down and then we landed. Again, in Athens no one would assist me in finding the leak which entailed removing the panel on the side of the fuselage. The next stop was Nicosia in Cyprus. We arrived when it was almost dark. On the way our automatic pilot packed it in and Joe would not proceed further without it. I pulled it to pieces on the aircraft floor finishing at 1.00 am to be ready at 4.00am to prepare for take off.

Next stop Baghdad, no problems. Then we left for Sharjah which is now in the Emirates. A fight then started in the cabin mid flight. Being a jack-of-all-trades I then had to stop the fight, which I could have done without. We then arrived at Sharjah and on landing we had to taxi into an armed barbed wire compound as the locals were shooting at everything and everyone. We then re-fuelled and took off for Karachi just as darkness fell. Once we reached 9,000 feet, Joe said he was going to have a sleep on the bunk telling me to change course twice by 5 degrees, leaving me to it. Frankly, I think it was only good luck that the lights of Karachi appeared on the horizon. Next stop was Allahabad in central India, arriving at noon. Armed Indian soldiers escorted us out of the aircraft putting our passengers in a shed. It was very hot. Re-fuelling services consisted of my hand pumping five hundred gallons from 44 gallon drums into the aircraft. I might add that, I had no sleep over all of this period. Next stop, Calcutta. The inevitable happened, we got lost over a mountain range. Trying to avoid cloud we got into a valley underneath it. We saw a wall of cloud at the end of the valley, did a steep 180 degree turn and luckily found a gap between two hills and went through it. Now in those days, aircraft used to trail radio aerials out below them to try to communicate. Well we did until that moment, it probably indicates how low we were, as our aerial got caught in a tree and got ripped out of the aircraft.

We landed in Calcutta, and then flew on via Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, Batavia, Dili, Darwin and Cloncurry. On the way to Sydney we got lost again, headed for the coast which we reached at Coffs Harbour. The cloud was getting lower and lower and by this stage we were over the sea. I told Joe that we cannot go any lower and we are heading into a large black thundercloud. I decided that this was it and took my shoes off expecting to go into the sea. Somehow, we got through the black cloud and blinding rain came out over Coffs Harbour Airport and landed. The next morning we left for Sydney. Halfway there a fire broke out in the cockpit filling it with smoke. The fire was put out and we landed in Sydney.

You can imagine that with this sort of thing it was not long before Guinea Air Traders went broke.....**(Extract by kind permission of Tom Watson, recipient of inaugural Lawrence Hargrave Award from the Royal Aeronautical Society, Aust. Division, Feb18, 1999).**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc.

AHSA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of NSW Branch

May 2002 No.351

May Meeting

Missing Issue

Please accept our apologies for not providing the April issue of Southern Skies. This was caused by an unforeseen glitch in the distribution process, however our systems have now been re-arranged to ensure such does not recur.

May Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1 May 2002, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the new area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

Our guest speaker will be Vince Fazio, whose topic will be:

Royal Australian Navy Aircraft Carriers

Vince Fazio is Immediate Past President of the Naval Historical Society of Australia Inc. He joined the RAN in 1950 and retired in 1975 with the rank of Lieutenant. During this time he served on aircraft carriers HMAS Melbourne (1956 – 58 and 1969 – 72) and HMAS Sydney (1964 – 66). His book, Royal Australian Navy Aircraft Carriers, gives a comprehensive history of our four aircraft carriers and their flying and support crews.

Please bring your friends to hear Vince's story about our naval aviation service and its contribution to our aviation heritage.

Committee Meeting

A Committee meeting commencing at 6.30pm, will be held immediately prior to the May meeting.

March Meeting

The March meeting was the Annual General Meeting. Society President, Ian Debenham presented his report, which reflected on the wide range of guest speakers we had during the year. He thanked the outgoing committee for their work and support during 2001.

Honorary Secretary, Warwick Bigsworth, presented his report, which noted that two meetings in 2001 had been held at locations other than the Powerhouse Museum, and that the outgoing Committee suggested that this trend should continue. He reminded members of the availability of Journals and newsletters which the Society receives from other organizations, and expressed thanks for the support and assistance from other committee members.

Honorary Treasurer, Keith White, presented the financial report for the year ended 31 December 2001, a copy of which is attached to this newsletter.

Income:	\$2,277.88
Expenses:	\$2,467.80
Accumulated funds	\$5,844.63

The Chair was then vacated and Allen Clarke was invited to preside over the election of office bearers for 2002. The results were:

President:	Ian Debenham
Hon Secretary:	Warwick Bigsworth
Hon Treasurer:	Keith White
Photo Archivist:	Jim Payens
General Committee:	Ken Garland; Roger Kennedy; David Marshall; Jack Powell; John Scott.

The position of Vice-President was not filled. Any other financial member willing to join the General Committee would be most welcome.

Following the closure of the AGM, Rob Tracz entertained us with another most fascinating series of propliner slides. There is nothing like the nostalgia of Convairs, Constellations and Carvairs, DC3s, DC4s and DC6s, Viscounts and Vanguard, and a whole lot more. And not only the slides, but many interesting anecdotes too.

On the Internet

Johnny Jet's Travel Portal (www.johnnyjet.com). This is a huge travel site with access to many features including airport information, live ATC, aircraft data, guide books, weather information, Time (world, naval, sunrise/sunset) and IATA airport codes.

Great Aviation Quotes (www.skygod.com/quotes). This site will provide with a quote for every occasion, and all with an aviation flavour. When you are preparing for your next public speaking engagement, wedding reception or farewell, check this one out. A memorable site!

Flight-History (www.flight-history.com). Described as a dedication to those with a common interest in aviation history. It features story archives on famous aircraft, including the P63 Airacobra, F4F Wildcat, Bf-109 and NA-64 Yale (fixed undercarriage Harvard), to name but few. There are also extensive statistics, aircraft data, museums and photo archives.

Aviation Pioneers Links (<http://calderara.com/aviation>). This site provides numerous links to other websites regarding pioneer aviators who flew before World War I. Such greats include: Wright Brothers, Hargrave, Curtiss, Bleriot and Fokker.

Roy's Aircraft Resource (www.royfc.com/acft.html). If you are looking for information on Russian aircraft, then this is where you'll find it. Aircraft, designers, news and translations, plus many weird and wonderful photographs, are all here.

Bookshops

You might be interested to know that at least two of our members operate bookselling outlets that provide attractive discounts to other AHSA members. At both locations, you will need to identify that you are an AHSA member to qualify for the discounts.

Ian Dolstra has the Argyle Bookshop at 105 Argyle Street, Camden NSW (02 4655 9020), which is a general bookshop, but has many aviation titles.

Eric Cunningham operates Air-Speed Books from

home. Eric specialises in aviation and motoring books and can often obtain that "hard to get" volume. Contact Eric at PO Box 105N, Campbelltown North NSW 2560 or on (02) 4625 1381.

On the Bookshelf

Tony Arbon has produced the 2002 Australian Civil Aircraft Register through AustAirData. This invaluable publication lists all Australian aircraft in a tabulated format that includes registration, type, construction number, and owners name and address. The price is \$26 including postage, packaging and GST. A CD version is also available, containing all the information in the book, plus additional features. The data can be sorted from any field, either an exact match or a partial match, so you can enter "PA23-250 Aztec" or "Aztec" and come up with the same result. Tony is offering the CD to members of AHSA a special price of \$75, (a saving of \$20 on normal retail price) which includes postage, packaging and GST.

Orders can be placed direct to Tony at AustAirData, PO Box 1425, Caboolture Queensland 4510. Cheques should be made out to AustAirData. For more details, phone or fax Tony on (07) 9498 3757 or Email at austair@caboolture.net.au. To ensure your discount, mention that you are a member of AHSA.

Calendar of Events

27-28 April 2002 Mildura Airshow, Mildura Victoria
28 April 2002 Federation Airshow, Nowra NSW
4-5 May 2002 Temora Aviation Museum flying days
4-5 May 2002 Boort Fly-in, Boort Victoria
4-5 May 2002 SAAA Fly-in Wedderburn NSW
5 June 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
8-10 June 2002 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days
3 July 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
6-7 July 2002 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days
2-3 November 2002 Fighters Over Port. Port Macquarie NSW
13-17 November 2002 Aviex 2002. Wollongong (Albion Park) NSW

Membership Renewal

Membership renewal is now overdue. For those few outstanding members who have not yet renewed their subscriptions, this will be the last issue of Southern Skies you will receive until your subscription is renewed.

Membership fee remains at a very modest \$25.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith
Plane Spotting.

I am grateful to David Eyre for putting me on the right track about Lebbeus Hordern's Felixtowe flying boat. It wasn't an F5 as I wrote in Loops and Landings (see February's newsletter) but an F3. David directed me to A J Jackson's *British Civil Aircraft 1919-59, Vol 2*, one of those very helpful Putnam references. In the book there is a photograph of the actual aircraft in flight, indicating that it was airworthy before leaving England. A J Jackson describes it as being one of two British civil aircraft, registered G-EAQT, c/n S.607 ex N4019, built by Short Bros Ltd at Rochester in 1918, remodelled with a cabin for Lebbeus Hordern in March 1920, and shipped to Botany Bay.

When the F3 finally arrived in Sydney by sea on August 23, 1920, Lebbeus enthusiastically described it as the... "*biggest machine that has yet come to Australia. It is 45 feet long, 22.5 feet from bottom floats to top wing and 105 feet across the top wing. It is fitted with two Rolls Royce Eagle VIII engines of 350 hp each and is capable of carrying 10 passengers on a 500 mile non-stop flight at a speed of 80 to 90 miles an hour...It has a cabin 9 feet long by 5 feet broad and 6 feet high with three lounges upholstered in grey and green, the walls being panelled with decorative wood*".

Norman Ellison described the ultimate fate of the Felixtowe in his book *Flying Matilda*. "*Without ever taking the Australian Air, it wasted in luxury and died in ignomy. To accommodate the aircraft, Hordern bought a big waterside site at Botany Bay, he erected a shed, and had a road specially laid into it. But after the hull of the flying boat had been launched the project sagged. The wings and other parts were never even uncrated. Uncared for, the hull began to rot away. Ultimately it was given away to a local fisherman, who used it as a makeshift home*". The engines eventually found their way to the RAAF.

So now you see how useful a plane spotter can be in maintaining the accuracy of the historical record. In fact plane spotting is part of the fun of being an aviation enthusiast. The really exciting news is that David Eyre is in the process of finishing off the latest edition of what has become the antipodean plane spotter's bible, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Aircraft in Australia and New Zealand*. Previous editions of the book included only those types that existed at the time of publication, including static examples in museums etc. The new edition will include all types that have ever been registered as civil aircraft, those operated by the airforce and even those that were almost complete but un-registered. For example, in the latter category, David will probably include Lebbeus Hordern's Felixtowe flying boat. Thus the new edition will become an historic illustrated encyclopedia of aircraft in Australia and New Zealand. David thinks he may change the title of the book to better reflect its much wider scope, and usefulness to aviation historians.

I must confess to coming to the community of aviation enthusiasts via the plane spotter route. I grew up in the general quiet of the rural outskirts of Bathurst in the Central West. There, in the late thirties and forties it was possible to detect the sound of an aircraft well before an actual sighting. Occasionally my grandfather's property on the Macquarie River flats would be selected for landing. It was then also possible to smell and touch these fabulous flying machines.

When WWII started I was enrolled at a small country public school where the Headmaster was Frank Bisley. His son John joined the RAAF as an aircrew trainee on October 24, 1940. After training in Australia he was posted to England in June, 1941, Joining 122Sqn RAF in October. He was posted to Malta in February 1942, flying his Spitfire off HMS Eagle onto the island. Operating from Malta, John shot down five enemy aircraft, shared another, claimed a further probable and was awarded a DFC. He

was recalled to Australia in the latter half of 1942, and it was then that a very proud Headmaster introduced his genuine Australian Flying Ace son to the students at his school. John Bisley joined 452 Sqn RAAF at Darwin in December, 1942, where he claimed a further victory against the Japanese. He ended his tour in January, 1944, and was posted to No 8 OTU based at Narromine, and later at Parkes. John Bisley's duties at No 8 OTU were initially as a test and ferry pilot, then as an instructor and finally as CO of the Bombing and Gunnery School at Parkes. In any case there were opportunities for low level visits to his father's school, much to the excitement of the students. I remember his first appearance in a Tiger Moth, and his last, a breathtaking display of aerobatics in a Spitfire. That caused some consternation in the village, and I'm sure there was a *please explain* waiting for John back at Parkes. These visits were recorded in my spotter's diary, which was lost, alas, during some clean up long ago.

My Macquarie dictionary defines a plane spotter as one whose pastime it is to spot and note numbers or types of aircraft, or alternately one who watches for enemy aircraft; as in civil defence. This latter activity probably had its origins in the early Zeppelin Raids on London during WWI. During that war The Metropolitan Observation Service provided an organisation to make effective use of the spotters. Methodology continued to be developed and improved during the inter war years. The Observer Corps was formed in the UK in 1925, taking on the title *Royal* in 1941. The Royal Observer Corps continued for another fifty years, standing down in September, 1991.

Anticipating that enemy aircraft might soon be spotted in Australian skies, the RAAF devised the Volunteer Air Observers Corps towards the end of 1941, modelled on the Royal Observer Corps. The first observation station became operational at Bairnsdale on Christmas Day 1941. Luckily, most of Australia escaped incursions by enemy aircraft. Nevertheless the volunteers became defacto coast watchers and were able to assist occasional friendly aircraft that were in distress or lost. Later in the war volunteers were also trained to act under RAAF supervision in all zone filter stations in State fighter sectors south of the Tropic of Capricorn during hours of darkness. At the peak of its activity the VAOC membership had grown to about 24000, manning 2656 observation posts. It was not until April 10, 1946, that the VOAC was finally disbanded.

Plane spotting had been scorned by some as a juvenile pastime before the commencement of hostilities in 1939. But throughout WWII, despite the rapid development of radar, the visual identification of aircraft became an important element in the training of members of the armed forces.

Last year I drove along the main road from Syracuse to Gela, that section of the south east coast of Sicily, where airborne landings, by the allies on the night of July 9, 1943, preceded the landings by sea on July 10. The airborne landings, by the British Airborne Division's Red Devils in gliders near Syracuse, and the American 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment by parachute north east of Gela, went badly for the allies. But the real tragedy was reserved for the American 504th Parachute Regimental Combat Team two nights later, when they flew in towards Gela as reinforcements. As they passed at low level over the invasion fleet, and the American land forces now established around Gela, they were mistaken for another wave of attacking Luftwaffe aircraft, and fired on: this, despite the sea and land forces having detailed knowledge of time, route and identification lights to be displayed by the C47s. The 144-plane armada, carrying 2304 paratroopers in addition to aircrew, was literally shot to pieces. Twenty three C47s were shot down; scores of others were damaged with many on board killed or wounded. Apart from the wounded, 318 American paratroopers, together with 60 pilots and crewmen, died that night as a result of mistaken identification

To-day Syracuse is regarded as Sicily's most beautiful city and Gela, much abused by industrial development, its ugliest. The British War Cemetery is located on the outskirts of Syracuse. The Americans chose to locate theirs at the Sicily-Rome Cemetery and Memorial near Anzio. **John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc.

AHSA (NSW) Inc

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of NSW Branch

June 2002 No.352

June Meeting

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5 June 2002, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the new area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

Our guest speaker will be Warwick Bigsworth, whose topic is:

Business tools, or toys for the boys? - A brief history of the business jet in Australia.

Warwick has had a long fascination with business jets in Australia. During the days of entrepreneurial business excesses in the late 1980s, Warwick gained first hand knowledge of the impact of business jets on airport capacity and the air traffic priority system, particularly at Sydney. He represented the then Department of Aviation in various negotiations with the Australian Business Aircraft Association as to how best facilitate business aircraft into the congested terminal areas and how to secure landing slots, which had previously been the domain of regular public transport aircraft.

However, operation into major airports has been only a small part of business aircraft activities. They have been used in a wide variety of roles since the first Australian business jet arrived in 1964. From that time on, many have graced the skies, whilst others have sat idly in the back of hangars. To find out who owns or who has owned business jets, who has operated them, and for what reason they have operated in Australia, please join us for a look at a somewhat different aspect of Australian aviation.

May Meeting

Our guest speaker was Vince Fazio, Immediate Past President of the Naval Historical Society of Australia Inc, who entertained the meeting with a most informative talk on Australia's aircraft carriers. Obviously very well versed on the subject, Vince described the history and development of the aircraft carrier, and in particular the

histories of the four Australian carriers: HMAS Albatross, HMAS Sydney, HMAS Vengeance and HMAS Melbourne. He spoke further about the long-standing debate of which service should operate and control aircraft, and how that had a major impact on the development of Australia's naval aviation.

One of many interesting items discussed was the development of the aircraft launch and recovery methods. At first, launch decks for seaplanes were erected over gun turrets; far different to the high performance steam catapults of today, which can accelerate a 32,000kg aircraft from 0 to 170 knots in 300 feet. Recovery of seaplanes was originally by crane, whilst today's carriers, and even the Australian carriers, had an arrestor system which caused eye-popping deceleration.

Vince described many of the aircraft by the RAN's carriers, but the one that he described as "the world's greatest aircraft", was the Supermarine Walrus (also known as the Seagull V). That claim might be debatable, but commentators at the 1933 Hendon Air Display likened the aerobatic performance given by the Walrus as one more like a fighter than that of a carrier-borne reconnaissance aircraft. Another significant aspect about this aircraft was that it was designed by RJ Mitchell (of Spitfire fame) to an Australian specification proposed by Air Marshall Sir Richard Williams.

Other classic (and some not so classic) aircraft discussed included the Fairey Firefly, Hawker Sea Fury, De Havilland Sea Venom, Fairey Gannet, Grumman Tracker and McDonnell Douglas Skyhawk. Helicopters included the Sikorsky S-51, Bristol Sycamore, Westland Wessex and Westland Sea King

Accompanying Vince's presentation were numerous ship and aircraft models as well as many photographs, which he used to illustrate many stories about the Australian carriers. His first hand experience on the HMAS Sydney and the HMAS Melbourne enabled him to detail various aspects of service life and the aircraft (in addition to the Walrus) utilised by the Fleet Air Arm. John Scott proposed a well-deserved vote of thanks.

Classic Donations

Most of our readers have an interest in aircraft museums, and will have heard of the Qantas Founders Outback Museum at Longreach. Qantas has announced that it is donating one of the "classic" B747-238Bs, probably VH-EBQ, to the museum, with delivery planned early November 2002. It should be a spectacular arrival!

Qantas is in the process of disposing of its B747 "classic" fleet, with both B747SPs, VH-EAA and VH-EAB, and converted B747-238B Combi VH-ECB already in the graveyard at Marana, AZ.USA.

For more information on the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, visit the website on www.qfom.com.au/#. The site features the early history of Qantas, news, museum information, the project development team and membership.

On the Internet

De Havilland Canada Beaver (www.dhc-2.com/index.htm). If you want to know all about this classic bush aircraft, then you'll love this site. It contains individual histories and photographs of most of the aircraft built, plus news and events concerning the aircraft. There are many great shots of Australian civil and military Beavers.

Transportation Hobby Collectibles Online (www.thconline.com). This American online shopping site has special sections featuring airline memorabilia, models, books and collectibles as well as military models, books and videos. There are also sections on cars, trains and ships.

Aviation Reference Desk (www.aviationreferencedesk.com/). This site provides a comprehensive moderated list of aviation and aerospace links for industry professionals, pilots and enthusiasts. It has links to aviation news services, airlines, cargo operators, airports, manufacturing, individual aircraft types, aviation safety, FAA register, business and general aviation and military.

Pacific Spitfires (<http://spitfirecmraaf.tripod.com>). This site focuses on camouflage and markings applied to Spitfires in RAAF service, with the emphasis on aircraft and squadrons which saw combat in the Pacific theatre of war from 1942 to 1945. There are many detailed drawings and support information, and is an ideal site for modellers as well as anyone interested in detailed markings of such aircraft.

Sport Aircraft Association of Australia (www.saaa.com). This well-known organization fosters all varieties of sporting aviation in Australia. There is much information on local chapters, projects under way, and calendar of events.

On the Bookshelf

Tony Arbon's 2002 Australian Civil Aircraft Register is available through AustAirData. This invaluable publication lists all Australian aircraft in a tabulated format that includes registration, type, construction number, and owners name and address. The price is \$26 including postage, packaging and GST. A CD version is also available, containing all the information in the book, plus additional features. Tony is offering the CD to members of AHSA a special price of \$75, (a saving of \$20 on normal retail price) which includes postage, packaging and GST.

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Calendar of Events

8-10 June 2002 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days
3 July 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
20-21 July 2002 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days
7 August 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
4 September 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting
21-22 September 2002 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days
2 October 2002 AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture
18-20 October 2002 SAAA Annual Fly-in Temora NSW
2-3 November 2002 Fighters Over Port. Port Macquarie NSW
13-17 November 2002 Aviex 2002. Wollongong (Albion Park) NSW

Electronic Version of Southern Skies

The Committee is investigating the possibility of distributing Southern Skies via Email to those with access to the internet, if they so prefer. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter in this form, please advise Warwick Bigsworth at wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au. If a sufficient number of members is interested, the Committee will evaluate the easiest format to access.

Contact

Contributions to Southern Skies are always welcome. The most expeditious way to submit contributions is direct to Ken Garland via email at garlandk@ideal.net.au, or contact Warwick Bigsworth on (02) 9872 2323 or by Email at wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

Some Thoughts On The Life Of Reg Ansett --- Part 1.

It is now over two decades since the death of Sir Reginald Myles Ansett --- and ghosts haunt the deserted halls of the Ansett Terminal at Sydney Airport.

The Sydney Airports Corporation has recently purchased Ansett's Sydney Terminal and plans to rename it the Sir Reginald Ansett Terminal. Future air travellers, entering the domestic side of the airport via Sir Reginald Ansett Drive will be further reminded of the great man when they approach the Sir Reginald Ansett Terminal. And yet there is a cruel irony in this further honour, coming as it does at the very time the company he founded has been extinguished. It is ironic too that Sydney should be so prominent in remembering Sir Reginald, when his 1958 raid on Sydney based Butler Air Transport was so bitterly resented, and the later 1972 attack by TNT on his Melbourne headquarters was, perhaps, the beginning of the end of his once unassailable position as the leader of Australian commercial aviation. There will also be some sadness felt by those, members of AHSA (NSW) Inc among them, who believe that Arthur Butler's role as an aviation pioneer and airline operator remains unrecognised at Sydney Airport. After all, it was he who made the earliest start there, joining the Australian Aircraft and Engineering Company on December 19, 1920. Arthur Butler also had his airline's terminal in Hangar 6, located on the site now occupied by the Ansett terminal, soon to be dedicated to the man who prematurely ended Arthur's career in commercial aviation.

A good biography of Reg Ansett is long overdue. In the meantime any knowledge of the real man probably resides with relatives and those few close associates still living. But from the outside it is apparent that the break-up of his first marriage resulted in considerable and long lasting emotional trauma for all members of his first family, and may have influenced his own behaviour in later years.

Reg married Grace Nicol, a sister of his close friend Stan, in Maryborough on October 1, 1932. They settled in Hamilton in Victoria's Western District. Their first child, Robert, was born on August 8, 1933, and two years later a second son, John, arrived. The years of their courtship and early married life more or less coincided with Reg's start in the road transport business. Then on Boxing Day, 1935, after registering Ansett Airways Pty Ltd, he purchased a Fokker Universal from Harry Purvis. On February 17, 1936, he commenced his air service. Grace became Ansett Airways first book keeper. But with two young children, and business expanding rapidly, she was forced to hand over accounting duties to another of her brothers, Melville.

Bob Ansett recalls riding in the front seat of a big Studebaker with his father, who drove like a racing driver, and his first flight in the Fokker Universal with Reg as pilot. Young Bob thought his father was a wonderful, exciting daredevil.

On April 14, 1937, Ansett Airways Limited was floated with 250000 £1 shares. The company then moved to Melbourne, and an order was placed for three Lockheed 10A Electras. Reg purchased Sir Stanley Bruce's old home at Mt Eliza on the Mornington Peninsula, a property that was to serve him for the rest of his life. While his family settled in, young Bob was enrolled as a boarder at Wesley College. But soon Ansett Airways was in serious financial trouble. A takeover bid by ANA was rejected by Ansett's board on January 13, 1939. On February 27, a fire in Ansett's hangar at Essendon destroyed the Fokker Universal and one of the new Lockheeds. Soon after Reg again had to fight off another attack by ANA, which was also supported by the Chairman of his own board. Throughout this period the pressure on Reg Ansett, and his young family, was unrelenting. There had probably not been much of a celebration when he turned thirty, on February 13, 1939.

At about this time Grace and Reg separated, and later divorced. A relationship had developed

between Grace and Don Campbell, an American engineer, brought out by Reg to service the Lockheeds. They subsequently married and decided, in 1943, to return to the USA. By then the world was at war and so it was a perilous voyage that Grace, Don and the two Ansett boys embarked upon to cross the Pacific, on board a Swedish freighter, the *Paracoola*. For the time being Reg had lost his sons and, potentially, his successors in the company he was building. The following year, on June 17, Reg married Joan Adams, who was his secretary at Ansett Airways.

Almost immediately after their arrival in the USA things started going wrong for Grace and her boys. Don Campbell proved to be an unreliable partner and divorce followed after a few years. By this time the Ansett boys were in their teens, living in Southern California, and more or less out of control. Grace sent John back to Australia in 1950, to be reunited with his father and for some fatherly guidance. This resulted in John applying himself sufficiently to become a qualified lawyer, although subsequently drifting away from his father's influence. On February 5, 1965, Bob Ansett, his wife Karen and their three children, boarded the P&O liner *Iberia* in Los Angeles, bound for Australia. Bob was hoping for employment with Ansett Transport Industries.

The year before Bob Ansett arrived back in Australia, John Hetherington interviewed Reg for a biographical profile in *The Age* newspaper. At the time of the interview, his father and mother, aged 86 and 84 respectively, were living with him at Mt Eliza, together with his wife Joan and their three adopted daughters. Perhaps Reg could be forgiven if he thought that a ripe old age awaited him also. When John Hetherington asked him about retirement, Reg replied, "When I started out I thought I'd work very hard till I was about 35, then retire. But you never get to that stage. Your aim always is to consolidate what you have built up, and there is always more consolidating to do. I'd love to retire. I have many interests outside my work, and I wouldn't find time hanging on my hands. But you can't spend 30 years building up a business of this kind and not want to keep it alive".

One might speculate, in the light of Bob Ansett's subsequently demonstrated abilities, how the course of Ansett Transport Industries might have changed -- and for that matter how the course of Bob Ansett's life might have changed, if Reg had given Bob a job back in 1965. As it turned out Bob's children, Reg's grandchildren, were also talented and worked successfully in business with their father. But although Reg was instrumental in getting Bob a start with Budget Rent-a-Car, he was not interested in taking his son into business with him.

In his autobiography Bob Ansett explains his father's rejection. "R. M. was an old fashioned man who believed in keeping his private life and his corporate life entirely separate. In one sense I can see his point. Perhaps my father sensed even in 1965 that Bob Ansett would not be contained in a corporate structure created by someone else, that his corporate child could not contain his son, but at the time his rejection hurt"

The sixties had been very good for Reg, and Ansett Transport Industries, with thoughts of a successor probably seldom entering his mind. When, now as Sir Reginald, he presided over the 34th AGM of ATI at his Swanston St HQ, on November 30, 1971, he could report a full decade of increasing net profit. No doubt Ken Thomas, Chairman of Sydney based Thomas Nationwide Transport, and his Managing Director, Sir Peter Abeles, were also keenly interested in the Annual Report that year. On April 7, 1972 they made their takeover bid. A furious Reg Ansett reacted immediately by applying all the political pressure he could exert. Much to the dismay of TNT, Sir Henry Bolte introduced his Select Committee (Ansett Transport Industries) Bill in the Victorian Parliament on April 26. This had the effect of blocking the takeover for seven months. A compromise was then reached whereby two seats on Ansett's board were given to TNT directors in exchange for a cap of 10% being placed on their voting rights. Sir Reginald had regained control of his company, but now, moving on into the seventies, he would need to look more and more frequently over his shoulder.....**John Scott.**