# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**July 2003 No.364**


### July Meeting

The July meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2nd July 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

Guest speaker for the meeting will be George Roberts, who will talk on:

***Qantas Empire Airways - Indian Ocean Operations***

In World War II, the Japanese invasion of South East Asia necessitated an alternative air route from Australia to England. In July 1943, Qantas embarked on a bold new route across the Indian Ocean from Perth to Ceylon, flying non-stop in Catalinas. George's brother, Norm, who also worked for Qantas, was sent as station engineer to establish a base on the Swan River. The Catalina service was carried out in radio silence and was undetected by the Japanese for its duration. George will talk about the lead up to, and all about this operation, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this month.

George was born in Ipswich, Queensland in 1909 and was apprenticed as a mechanic. He joined Qantas at Archerfield in 1936 and soon established the company's instrument and electrical overhaul section. He worked on many aircraft types, including the DH-86 and later the Empire Class flying boats. As the base for the flying boats was to be Rose Bay, George transferred to Sydney, and continued with the instrument and electrical overhaul of these aircraft. During World War II, he worked extensively on RAAF, American and other Allied aircraft.

Although George sought to enlist in the RAAF, he was not permitted to do so because he was considered far more valuable by carrying out his tasks supporting Australian and Allied aircraft during their maintenance and overhaul in Sydney.

In 1947 he went to the USA to learn about the complex systems associated with the new L749 Constellations ordered by Qantas. In 1952 he became Engineering Equipment Officer and during the next few years oversaw the introduction of the L1049 Super Constellation and the Boeing 707.

George retired from Qantas in 1970, at the then compulsory retirement age of 60. But that of course was not the end of his association with Qantas. Since his "retirement" he has worked two days a week on the Qantas Historical Collection, and still does!

George is also well known for his interest in vintage cars, and was an entrant in several of the famous Redex Trials of the 1950s.

Please join us for yet another memorable talk from one of the truly great characters in Australian aviation.

### June Meeting

Guest speaker was John Ulm, whose talk, *Empire, Myth and Hard Bloody Fact,* was sub-titled "Geopolitics and High Command". In it, he discussed the development of aviation in Australia, and particularly the influences and pressures exerted by Great Britain on Australia to "Buy British". The following is a summary of just a few of the many issues addressed by John in his talk.

John traced the development of British industrialisation from the 19th century, through World War I and into the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, he discussed the growth of Britain's aircraft manufacturing industry and compared it with that of the development of aircraft manufacturing in the USA.

The British never really caught up to the Americans, although the development of the Comet and the Viscount showed the way of the future, without being able to capitalise on the concepts, although the Viscount did meet with some success.

## Important Anniversary

July 27 2003 will mark fifty years since the ceasefire in the Korean War. The declaration of the armistice became effective at 10.00pm on 29th July following the signing of the agreement between the United Nations and Communist forces in Panmunjon.

## Vale

**Bryan Arundell Wills Monkton**

Bryan passed away peacefully at Southern Highlands Private Hospital, NSW on May 29, 2003, aged 85 years. The Society was privileged to have Bryan as its guest speaker for the 2001 Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture. He gave an enthralling talk on the development of flying boats, accompanied by some magnificent slides, and provided numerous tales of his exploits in the RAAF, Trans Oceanic Airways and Antilles Air Boats.

**Fraser Shannon**

Killed in a training accident, when his Robinson R22 helicopter crashed near Bent's Basin State Recreational Area NSW on 20 June 2003. Aged 42, Fraser was also a pilot with Child Flight aeromedical helicopter service. He was the guest speaker at the September 2001 AHSA (NSW) meeting, where he gave an impressive talk on the rescue service, and his enthusiasm and professionalism were most apparent.

## Aviation Museums and Memorials

Frank Walters' interesting piece about the USAF Museum at Dayton Ohio has prompted John Scott to provide the following aviation highlights in that state of the USA.

***Oh To Be In Dayton Now That July Is Here.***

Frank Walters' report on his recent visit to the USAF Museum prompted a glimpse at the net to find out what else is available for the aviation enthusiast at Dayton this year. As might be expected there is a year long programme of events, relating to the centenary of flight, leading up to December 17. However, if you can get yourself over there, from July 3 to July 20, you will experience the pinnacle of their year long celebrations entitled, 'Inventing Flight-Dayton 2003'. Here are just some of the attractions.

**July 3**: Inventing Flight Gala Opening Ceremonies. Coinciding with Dayton's Independence Day Celebrations.
**July 4-20**: Orville & Wilbur, The Wright Brothers' Legacy. Will exhibit never-before seen original Wright photographs.
**July 4-6**: Balloon Celebration at USAF Museum. Includes balloon race from Dayton to Kitty Hawk
**July 11-13**: The Great Blimp Meet at USAF Museum. Will Feature largest number of blimps in one location since WWII.
**July 13**: Tuskegee Airmen. Part Of Dayton Black Cultural Festival.
**July 14-17**: American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and the International Council of the Aeronautical Sciences meet at the Dayton Conference Centre.
**July 17-20**: Dayton Air Show at Dayton International Airport. Features daily performances by the Thunderbirds, the Blue Angels and the Canadian Snow Birds.
**July 18-19**: National Aviation Hall Of Fame Ceremonies. Harrison Ford will be Master of Ceremonies at an unprecedented gathering of America's living aviation heroes.
**July 20**: Closing Ceremonies. If you had time during the 'Inventing Flight' celebrations you could follow the aviation history trail in Dayton.

There is Carillon Historical Park where the original Wright Flyer III is preserved at Wright Hall, together with a replica of the Wright Brothers' bicycle shop. During the three weeks festival there will be a recreation of the sights and sounds of the Wright Brothers' era, featuring Wilbur and Orville in person. You will be able to inspect Hawthorn House at Oakwood, the mansion designed by Orville and Wilbur, and finished after Wilbur's death, but only during July. It is normally closed to visitors. You would have to visit the Wright Brothers' Memorial overlooking the Huffman Prairie Flying Field, where the brothers conducted a flying school and perfected the techniques of flight. This became the U.S. Army's Wilbur Wright Field and is now included in the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. You might also visit The International Women's Air & Space Museum and the 1806 home of Asahel Wright, Wilbur and Orville's great uncle, which is filled with memorabilia commemorating the contribution of women to flight.

And, of course, there must always be time to re-visit the USAF Museum itself!

## Special Interest

Al Bovelt has provided an interesting A5 size journal published by the Australasian Aviation Postcard Society. The journal features articles on current and historic aviation postcards. Subscription to the Society is $10 and contact address is c/- 13 Plymouth Street, Aldinga Beach, South Australia 5173.

## News

News items, other contributions or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth via Email *(wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au).*

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
July 2003 No 364

# LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

## Shute's Paddock - Part 5.

One Family's Brush with a Century of Aviation.

Just before last Christmas, a beautifully restored Westland Widgeon III was flown from Bankstown to Dick Smith's property, *Bowylie*, north west of Canberra. This historic aircraft, carrying its original registration markings, G-AUGI, had been brought to its current airworthy condition by husband and wife team, John and Chris Gallagher, following its acquisition by Dick Smith in late 1998. According to Chris Gallagher, "At *Bowylie* Dick Smith has built a hangar especially to house the Widgeon.....and there it stays surrounded by a myriad of memorabilia from the era of its heyday."

Dick Smith is well known for his deep interest in Australian aviation history and indeed has been a significant participant in it. But his interest in the Westland Widgeon III, or more particularly G-AUKA, named *Kookaburra*, could well be described as obsessive. The 25th Anniversary of Dick Smith's re-location of G-AUKA, in the Tanami Desert of the Northern Territory, occurs this year on August 31. The book, *Kookaburra, the most compelling story in Australia's aviation history*, co-authored by Dick Smith and Pedr Davis, describes the events surrounding the Coffee Royal Affair and explains why Dick Smith formed such an attachment to the Westland Widgeon III. The remains of the *Kookaburra* are now at the Central Australian Aviation Museum in Alice Springs, displayed in the condition in which it was found by Dick Smith 25 years ago.

When Keith Anderson and Bobby Hitchcock set out from Richmond in the *Kookaburra* on April 4, 1929, on their quest to find the missing *Southern Cross*, the Westland agent Milton Kent and his friend Colin Ferguson were with a small group that saw them off. Earlier in the year Colin Ferguson had been promoting the Widgeon at Bathurst. Now Bathurst was to be one of the early checkpoints for Anderson. However, he experienced strong headwinds and low misty clouds west of Blackheath and, ominously off course, tracked well to the south. He decided to land at Blayney to find out where he was! The most compelling story in Australia's aviation history was just unfolding. It culminated with the burial of Bobby Hitchcock at Perth's Karrakatta Cemetery on July 3, and the highly ceremonial interment of the remains of Keith Anderson in a specially reserved plot in Rawson Park at George's Heights,on July 6. Another compelling story, involving Bathurst, a Westland Widgeon III and the loss of two lives was about to begin.

The Coffee Royal Affair was on the mind of Archdeacon Oakes at the end of May,1929, when he wrote his letter to the editor of the Bathurst Times objecting to the irreverent activities of the Western Aero Company and its aeroplane, the *Macquarie*. The company pilot, Horace Young, had subsequently expressed regret about any disruption to the Patronal Festival of Holy Trinity Church, and assured Bathurstians that, in future, it would be company policy to refrain from allowing the *Macquarie* in the air during church services. But to a degree the damage had already been done. During June, the *Macquarie* was active in the Mudgee area giving joy flights and doing some charter work. Percy Moodie reported in the local press that, "big extensions of the company's operations are proposed and when these come to fruition, not only will Bathurst greatly benefit, but all allied towns will equally profit by the pioneering work which this company has taken on." Nevertheless, he had to admit that,"The company has not yet got by any means all its needed capital." Perhaps the final straw was added at West Cowra on July 14, when Constable Caldwell observed the conduct of joy flights by the Western Aero Company. His report led to the prosecution of Horace Young by the Commonwealth Attorney General, under the Air Navigation Act, 1920, for operating an aircraft which, "by reason of proximity to persons, was dangerous to public safety." In the meantime, in order to raise its standing, the Western Aero Company put on a flying carnival on Sunday August 4, in aid of Miss Bisset's canditure in the "Miss Bathurst Carillon" contest. But on October 23, at the Police Court in Cowra, Mr Broomhead P.M. found Horace guilty as charged, and he was fined £5. By November, Percy Moodie had considered his options.It may be that he began to sense the risks of further involvement with an

# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**August 2003 No.365**


### August Meeting

The August meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6th August 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

Guest speaker for the meeting will be Tony Hilton, who will talk on:

***Exceeding the Speed of Sound***
***– the contribution by Dr Bill Hilton***

On 14 October 1947, Captain Charles "Chuck" Yeager flew the Bell X-1 at 670mph at a height of 42,000 feet (Mach 1.015) to become the first person to achieve supersonic flight. The American research programme, which led to this historic flight, commenced in 1944, but it was the British who designed the Miles M.52, which was the first supersonic design. One of the British scientists involved in the investigations into supersonic flight was Dr Bill Hilton.

Tony Hilton is the son of Dr William Francis (Bill) Hilton, whose work will be at the forefront of this talk. There will be some previously unpublished anecdotal insights into what went on behind the scenes to make the engineering possible to solve the problems for the daring pilots to fly more safely at these exciting high speeds, which, due to their everyday nature and acceptability, are nowadays more or less taken for granted.

Tony will also explain how some of the specialist terminology surrounding high- speed flight originated, and what some of it actually means.

Tony Hilton BSc FMPA ABIPP LRPS, recipient of the Royal Photographic Society Fenton Medal, has spent an interesting life as a scientific and technical photographer, starting work with Sir WG Armstrong Whitworth (Aircraft) Ltd in the UK. For the last 18 years he has taught commercial photography at TAFE NSW. He is now retired, so he can spend more time enjoying motor racing, music and philately.

Please join us for yet another entertaining meeting.

### Committee Meeting

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

### July Meeting

Guest speaker was the inimitable George Roberts, whose talk not only featured Qantas Empire Airways' Indian Ocean Operations, but also included much, much more.

Whether it's his enthusiasm, knowledge, passion or age (a sprightly ninety-something lad), or all of the above, there is something that just captivates the audience when George speaks about one of his favourite subjects: aviation, and in particular, Qantas. This talk was no exception. There is no wonder why Paul Byrnes wrote the excellent book, Qantas by George, which traces much of George's life and his involvement in aviation.

George spoke about his first experience with flying boats, which was assisting in the refloating of the Curtiss Seagull, owned by Lebbeus Hordern, off a sandbank after it arrived in Morton Bay in 1920. His next experience with a flying boat was after he had joined Qantas, and where he was required to assist in the assembly of a Sikorsky S38, which had arrived in Brisbane by ship, and was to be flown to New Guinea.

His next involvement with a flying boat was with the Cutty Sark, which had been acquired by Qantas and flown from Melbourne to Brisbane by Lester Brain. The ensuing catastrophes, which caused this aircraft not to enter service, could almost be described as high farce. George recounted a series of mishaps to the aircraft that brought about its demise.

He went on to relate many tales about his Qantas days, particularly involving flying boats, and it was these stories that demonstrated Qantas' expertise in long distance over water navigation. He described the task given to Qantas to ferry Catalinas across the Pacific for the RAAF, and how pilots such as Crowther, Denny and Tapp were able to manage fuel flows and extract such endurance from these aircraft.

It was this background that provided an excellent introduction to George's description of the events that led to Qantas commencing the Indian Ocean flights. As Japanese forces moved south and flights via south-east Asia were cut off, the route via the Indian Ocean using Catalinas was suggested by Captain Bill Crowther to Lester Brain and then to Hudson Fysh. When the proposal was put to the Controller of Civil Aviation, Mr A. B. Corbett, he rejected the idea because it was "too dangerous". Fysh contacted BOAC, who in turn approached the RAF, which supported the idea and provided the Catalinas. As they say, the rest is history.

It was through the original flying boat experience and particularly that involving ferrying the Catalinas across the Pacific, that enabled Qantas to so successfully operate the Catalinas between Perth and Lake Koggala, Ceylon. Qantas later operated Liberators and then Lancastrians on the route, which enabled the continuation of air links to Britain throughout the war period.

He also paid tribute to his brother, Norm, who also worked for Qantas and was sent as station engineer to establish a base on the Swan River. Through Norm's dedication and ingenuity, the aircraft were kept serviceable and operational for the duration.

The questions following George's talk could have continued all night. He proved yet again to be an entertaining and informative guest speaker, and those in attendance were indeed privileged to be present.

## On the Internet

Unreal Aircraft *(www.unrealaircraft.com)*
This site provides a wealth of information about many unusual aircraft. Categories include "roadable aircraft", "parasite aircraft", "weird wings", "VTOL aircraft", "Twin fuselage and hybrid aircraft" and lost classics. The site features data and many fascinating photographs.

Where are they Now?
*(http://dbromage.railpage.org.au/aviation/ex-vh/)*
This site comprises a list of jet and turboprop aircraft formerly operated by airlines in Australia. Obviously still under development, with several more types yet to be listed, it provides information and some excellent photographs of aircraft that once graced our skies.

David Marshall Aviation and Marine Art
*(www.davidmarshallaviationart.com)*
Well-known AHSA (NSW) member and noted artist David Marshall has his own web-site featuring many of his works on offer. Watch for major news concerning David's latest efforts, coming up soon.

Beaver Aircraft Canada
*(www.beaveraircraft.com/default.html)*
This company is recommencing the production lines of the venerable Beaver, Otter and Seabee aircraft. The Beaver is being offered with turboprop engine, the Otter with turboprop engine and possible tricycle undercarriage, whilst the Seabee has been re-launched as the TriGull. The site includes technical details and drawings on all aircraft, as well as extensive historical material on the Beaver.

Scramble Air Show Section
*(http://home.wanadoo.nl/showreports/showreports.htm)*
This site provides the lists of participants at air shows from all over the world. Currently the site hosts approximately 2000 different logs of air shows in more than 50 different countries that took place between 1945 and today. Australian air shows include Avalon, Canberra, East Sale, Edinburgh, Nowra, Williamtown, Albury and Mangalore.

## Calendar of Events

**16-17 August 2003** Temora Aviation Museum flying days
**29-31 August 2003** Qld Vintage Aircraft Group Festival of Flight 2003, Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield Qld
**3 September 2003** AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting Powerhouse Museum
**5-7 September 2003** Queensland Aviation Expo and Airshow, Archerfield Qld
**27-28 September 2003** AeroFest 2003 75th Anniversary Coffs Harbour Flying Club Air Show, Coffs Harbour NSW
**1 October 2003** AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting Powerhouse Museum
**4-6 October 2003** Warbirds over Scone, Scone NSW
**5 October 2003** Australia's Museum of Flight Airshow, Nowra NSW
**18-19 October 2003** SAAA Chapter 11 Fly-in Temora NSW
**2 November 2003** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day Wedderburn NSW
**5 November 2003** AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture - David Craddock, Powerhouse Museum
**3 December 2003** AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

**Shute's Paddock - Part 6.**

The last communication I had, as a member of the Royal Aero Club of NSW, was notice of a meeting to be held at Bankstown Airport on Sunday, December 8, 1996.The meeting was to consider the tenancy of the clubhouse premises, then in dispute, and to approve the Club's accounts. Income for the year ended June 30, 1996 was $4.29! Thus, from the meeting at Royal Society House in Sydney on May 23, 1919, convened by E. J. Hart to form a NSW Section of the Australian Aero Club, through almost eight decades of support for the growth of civil aviation in Australia, and assistance with the training of pilots for national defence, it had finally come to this. Found to be structurally unsound, the clubhouse was demolished, and the once proud RACNSW itself is but a fading memory.

The clubhouse at Bankstown differed, in architecture and facilities, from the first clubhouse established at Mascot for the enjoyment of a select group of pre-war gentlemen pilots. When the Club relocated its flying activities from Mascot to Bankstown during 1946/47, it renovated buildings recently vacated by the RAAF. But it wasn't until December 15, 1951, that the new clubhouse was officially opened by the Patron, General Sir John Northcott. In his speech welcoming the Patron, the President of the Club, Brigadier General Denzil Macarthur Onslow, paid tribute to the pioneering President, Oswald Watt and his successor, Geoffrey Hughes. However, during latter years, the name most honoured in the clubhouse was that of Neil Stewart. This was because Ray Le Sueur, a long standing member of the Club, created the Neil Stewart Room in 1976.The walls of the room were panelled in finely grained wood, and the floor was covered by a luxurious fleck-green carpet to match the Stewart tartan that decorated a leather upholstered bar. Photographs of Her Majesty the Queen, Neil Stewart and other aviation personalities and aircraft, adorned the walls. It was the custom, in later years, to hold the Club's AGM in the Neil Stewart Room.

Neil Stewart was a member of the 'first team' of Club trained pilots, following the establishment of the Flying Section in 1926. It was said that no one showed finer skill or greater enthusiasm for the sporting side of aviation than Neil Stewart, and he was soon regarded as the outstanding Club trained pilot in Australia. He was elected Chairman of the Tours and Contest Sub-committee, and was always leader of Club organised tours. He was selected as Captain of the Club aerobatic team for 1929.

On Sunday afternoon, July 28, 1929, Neil Stewart and his wife, together with another 'first team ' member, E. B. Wilshire and his passenger, L. A. Adams, stood on the Western Aero Company's airfield at Kelso, in discussion with Percy Moodie. The two Aero Club Moths were returning from a week-end tour to a property near Dubbo and the crews were resting before the last leg of the flight back to Mascot. The Blue Mountains crossing was always problematic, because of the rugged terrain and frequent low cloud limiting visibility. It was agreed that Neil Stewart would lead, and the Moths took-off, climbing away to the east. They had reached Wentworth Falls when deteriorating visibility caused Wilshire to attempt an emergency landing. Neil Stewart soon discovered that his companions were no longer following, and he commenced a search. Distracted by concern for his friends, he allowed his Moth, G-AUHN, to stall at low altitude, and it crashed near the Wentworth Falls golf course. Ironically, Wilshire and his passenger were not injured in their emergency landing. Neil Stewart suffered spinal injuries and his young wife had injuries to her face, ankles and ribs. Both were taken to the Blue Mountains District Hospital. On Monday Neil Stewart's condition was satisfactory, but early on Tuesday a severe haemorrhage set in and he died at 10.30 that morning.

This tragedy emphasised the need for Bathurst to provide an official landing ground so that pilots who, having attempted a crossing of the mountains and perhaps with limited fuel, could turn back to land safely and await improved weather conditions. Having lost its most proficient pilot during an attempted crossing of the mountains, the Aero Club of NSW became more cautious when planning tours to western country towns. Even before Neil Stewart's crash, Percy Moodie had been searching for a more suitable landing ground than the one currently in use by his company. On Wednesday, July 10, 1929, Squadron Leader Hepburn landed at Bathurst in a Westland Wapiti, following a request to

# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**September 2003 No.366**


file 2003_2

### September Meeting

The September meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3rd September 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the meeting will be a

***Members' Night***

It will include the showing of several historic videos featuring early Australian aviation.

Buy, sell and swap will also be available, so bring along your trading material. The books, *Luck is no Accident*, by Col King, *Escape from North Korea – the Ron Guthrie Story*, by Col King and Ron Guthrie, and *Aussie Moths* by Bruce Winley will be on sale, as will back issues of *Aviation Heritage.*

### August Meeting

Guest speaker was Tony Hilton, who spoke on the enticing topic of *Exceeding the Speed of Sound – the contribution by Dr William Hilton*. This excellent presentation was made with the help of some modern technology. In a first for our Society meetings, Tony used a laptop and projector to present a most interesting account of his late father's life and some of the many stories associated with the quest for, and development of supersonic flight.

Dr "Bill" Hilton was an aerodynamicist who, in the 1930s, worked at the National Physical Laboratory in London. Amongst his many projects was the investigation into the effect of shock waves on aircraft propellers when they went supersonic at their tips, which could cause fragmentation. This research went on to investigate supersonic flight. It was in 1936, when describing the relationship between speed and drag to a gathering of representatives from the press that the term "sound barrier" evolved. Dr Hilton had drawn graphs of speed/drag, which were thought to be too complex for the media and general public to comprehend. He then used the expression "sound barrier" as a simplified description of the aerodynamics associated with speed and drag, and it was one that caught on forever.

Dr Hilton worked with the high speed Compressed Air Tunnel at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, and Tony displayed some magnificent images of the wind tunnel and support equipment. Dr Hilton was also associated with the development of other wind tunnels, which were essential elements of the research into high-speed flight.

Tony recalled some of the names of famous people associated with his father, and who visited the Hilton residence on social occasions. Sir Frank Whittle, Barnes Wallis, Sir Sydney Camm, John Stack and Roy Fowler were some of these illustrious characters that Tony became acquainted with at his home.

During World War II the Hilton family moved to the USA, where Dr Hilton worked at John Hopkins University, Maryland. Tony again became acquainted with many aerospace pioneers who often visited the family home.

Dr Hilton later worked with Hawker Siddeley with much of his skill being used in the design of satellites. Following the British Government's scrapping of many aerospace projects, including the TSR-2 and Blue Streak, Dr Hilton returned to the USA where he worked on the Telstar satellite project. As Tony was already an expert with the camera, he took numerous memorable photographs of his father and associates. Perhaps the photograph of Dr Werner Von Braun, along with the amusing anecdote, was one of the more interesting.

Dr Hilton died in 1997, but his research and design achievements contributed greatly to the improvements in modern aviation, and Tony's presentation was indeed a great tribute to his father and pioneer of high-speed flight.

# *Melbourne-Darwin Return in "Lascondor" Triumph for Australian Industry—5,000 Mile Flight Completed*

On the 21st July, 1930, the "Lascondor" (Australian-made, triple-engined monoplane, by Larkin Aircraft Supply Co. Ltd., at their Melbourne Aircraft factory), chartered from Australian Aerial Services Ltd., and piloted by Capt. Frank Neale, left the Melbourne Airport, Dudley Street, with Mr. W. Oliver and party (Messrs. H. Peck, D. Oliver and Selim Merinen), a camping outfit, and the intention of having a good time.

The north-bound flight was made via Echuca, Junee, Narromine, Bourke, Charleville, Longreach, Cloncurry, Mt. Isa. All were very much impressed with the magnitude of mining operations existent at the last-named town, approximately £2,000,000 having been spent on equipping these fields.

The flight then continued via Camooweal to The Rankine, where a landing was made, and Mr. W. Oliver met an old friend whom he had not seen for 20 years.

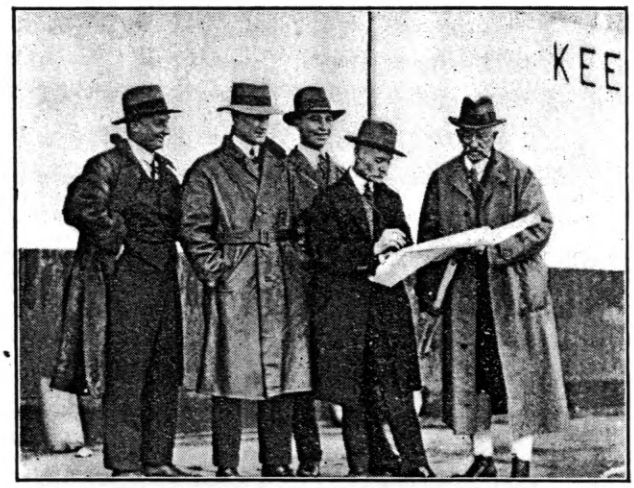
The next stop was made at Alexandria (to partake of lunch), the night being spent at Daly Waters, where the telegraph operator very kindly shared his accommodation with the party.

After arriving at Darwin, Mr. Oliver chartered a small steamer to convey the party about 50 miles out across Clarence Strait to Bathurst Island, which adjoins Melville Island. Mr. Arthur Peck, with two dark companions, crossed over Apsley Strait and had a look at Melville Island.

It was here that Mr. Oliver suffered indignity at the hands of a northern resident —a cockatoo companion of the natives working on the beaches. After anchor had been dropped on the first day, a cry was heard, "Hello Cocky! Good Morning." The bird had flown across the water from the beach, and from his perch on the mainmast called his greeting. After being fed with biscuit, and having had a good look around, Cocky flew back to the beach and rejoined his old friends.

The following morning came the call again, "Hello Cocky! Good Morning." This time, however, the bird was more inquisitive (or perhaps acquisitive). He refused his biscuit, preferring to investigate the mysteries of the ship. A great discovery was hailed with a chuckle of delight from cocky—Mr. Oliver was indulging in a shave. Cocky hung down-side up from the boom, peering at himself in the mirror, much to the delight of our party, shaving operations being suspended to watch his antics. It came! With a gleeful gurgle, Cocky pounced on Mr. Oliver's shaving brush, and still cackling cheerfully, sped off across the water to the beach, where he proudly displayed his find.

After a good look around Darwin, preparations were made for the return trip to the south, this being made via Tennant Creek, where a good aerodrome is reported to be in existence for the modest outlay of £8, and following the Overland Telegraph line to Alice Springs.




From left to right: **Pilot Frank Neale, Mr. Don Oliver, Selim Merinen, Mr. H. Peck and Mr. W. Oliver, about to emplane in the "Lascondor."**

From this latter town the party took a run out to Hermannsburg Mission Station, where two days were spent with their old friends, Messrs. Albrecht and Heinrich.

**Thank you for recommending "Wings"**

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
September 2003 No 366

# LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

## Shute's Paddock - Part 7.

One Family's Brush with a Century of Aviation.

In April 1927, a Sydney solicitor Mr Cherry Willis, arranged a meeting between Charles Ulm and members of Interstate Flying Services, including Smithy, his brother Leofric, brother-in-law Bert Pike and Keith Anderson. The rest as they say, is history! But that wasn't the first meeting between Smithy and Ulm. They had met six years earlier at Mascot when Smithy had just joined Diggers Co-operative Aviation Co. At the time Ulm was struggling with the financial problems of the Aviation Service Co. Ltd., which culminated in its demise at Bathurst on April 12, 1921, shattering his immediate prospects of a future in commercial aviation. Also in April, during Bathurst Show Week, Smithy had been confronted by a painful reminder of his humiliating removal as a competitor in the 1919 England-Australia Air Race. Within a few months both men had severed their connections with the Central West of NSW. When Smithy and Ulm returned separately to Bathurst a decade later, they had achieved fame on the world stage.

In the months following the Armistice in 1918, Smithy teamed up with another Australian, Cyril Maddocks to form a joy-riding company. After the announcement by the Australian Government in March 1919, of a £10,000 prize to the first all Australian crew to fly from England to Australia within 30 days, Smithy and Maddocks joined up with another two Australians, Rendle and Booker, who already had an arrangement with the Blackburn Company to enter its long range bomber, the Kangaroo, in the race. However, when the activities of Kingsford Smith - Maddocks Aeros Ltd. came to the ears of Robert Blackburn, particularly with regard to some dubious insurance claims, it became clear to Smihy and Maddocks that they were no longer welcome on the Blackburn team. When the Blackburn Kangaroo left Hounslow for Australia on November 21, 1919, Smithy had been replaced by Reg Williiams, acting as co-pilot, and Maddocks by Hubert Wilkins, acting as navigator. Valdemar Rendle was the pilot and Garnsey Potts the mechanic. Following this disappointment, Smithy sailed for the USA to stay for a period with his brother Harold, then living in San Francisco. There, with the Pacific Ocean between him and home, the dream to be the first to cross that vast expanse by air took hold. He made several abortive attempts to organise an aircraft and financial support for the venture. Once again denied the chance of involvement in a great aerial adventure, he sailed for Sydney in January 1921, disconsolate and broke.

At the end of February, 1921, Smithy joined Diggers Co-operative Aviation Co. and, on his first day in the job he was instructed to fly an Avro 504K from Sydney to Wellington, stopping at Oberon on the way to pick up some joy-riding business at the local show. By the time the Bathurst Show started on April 6, Smithy was there in his Avro 504K, which by now had been transformed into the *SILVER STREAK*. Still haunted by his rejection as a suitable member of the Blackburn Kangaroo crew, Smithy must have had mixed feelings to find that his replacement, Reg Williams, was also in Bathurst for the Show, competing for business. In the local papers, Reg Williams ran a rather reserved ad. in which he described himself as,"the pilot in the Blackburn Kangaroo, which essayed the task of attempting the Flight from England to Australia and who piloted the Bristol Fighter throughout the North Coast recently.....see Bathurst from the Air in a safe machine with an experienced pilot." Dick Wilkins, Manager of Diggers Aviation, countered with a much more aggressive ad. "The *SILVER STREAK* will be piloted by Flight-Lieut Kingsford Smith MC and bar, late wing examining officer of the Royal Air Force, who also has a big Hun record. This man is one of the finest Pilots in Australia, and has just fulfilled 12 months engagement in America trick flying and wing walking in the air for the movies."

Just as the performance of the Aviation Service Co. failed to match Ulm's earlier rhetoric, so too Smithy failed to live up to the expectations of Diggers Aviation. A similar fate to that of Aviation Service Co. awaited Diggers Aviation, mainly as a result of a series of accidents and incidents, most involving Smithy. Meanwhile at the Diggers Aviation office in Wellington, Smithy had prevailed on Dick

# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**October 2003 No.367**


### October Meeting

The October meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1st October 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is in the area near the entrance. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the meeting will be

***Flying Boats and Lord Howe Island***

Peter Phillipps, who is the author of the book: *The Flying Boats Days – The Early Aviation History of Lord Howe Island,* will present a series of slides of the early aviation activities at Lord Howe Island, including, of course, many fine shots of the flying boats. Many of these slides come from the collections of Island residents, who have captured images of aircraft and events that have not been previously published, or seen at forums such as AHSA meetings. Peter will also show a video on the Lord Howe Island flying boats and will have copies of his book for sale.

Peter, who is now the Postmaster on Lord Howe Island, spent eight years and interviewed hundreds of people to compile his excellent book on the early history of aviation on the island. He was born in New Zealand and his initial interest in aviation was sparked by the sounds of Pratt and Whitney powered Harvards doing circuit training near Christchurch.

Peter moved to Australia in 1979, and then to Lord Howe Island in 1992, where he was appointed as Postmaster in 1999. For those who have been to Lord Howe, they will be familiar with the most interesting small Post Office in Australia, adorned with photographs, models and posters of aircraft of all shapes, sizes and vintages.

Please join us for yet another entertaining evening on this most popular facet of Australian aviation.

### Committee Meeting

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

### September Meeting

The advertised theme for the meeting was a Members night, with several videos to be shown. After our newsletter was distributed, member Rob Tracz kindly offered to show a small selection of slides that he took at the recent Oshkosh AirVenture 2003 displays, which of course featured the centenary of flight theme. No doubt, one has to be there to get the real feel of the Oshkosh adventure, but Rob's excellent set of slides certainly provided the next best thing.

The incredible number and types of aircraft flying and on display is overwhelming; the large number of Mustangs of several different marques and in a wide variety of squadron and air force markings is just an example. But there were many other types, including AT-6s in various forms and colour schemes, Stearmans, T28 Trojans, a B-17 Flying Fortress, Ford Tri-motor, F-86 Sabres, an immaculate FJ-4 Fury, Spitfires, Sea Furies, Corsairs and Bearcats. There were modified types, including an exotic Howard 500, and others not quite positively identified.

In addition to the hundreds of warbirds was a large collection of kit-built aircraft and many early model and more contemporary racing aircraft. Not far away was a lake upon which rested dozens of float planes, and flying boats, although not quite examples of which we will see at the October meeting. Rob showed many other fine shots of these aircraft, too.

One other fascinating diversion from the main displays and activities at Oshkosh was the Basler facility. Basler converts old DC-3/C-47 aircraft to turboprop power, with over 40 aircraft now having gone through this process. The aircraft are modified with a slightly extended fuselage forward of the wing and equipped with two Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-67R turboprop engines.

Charles Ulm had just returned from another flight to New Zealand in the *Faith* when, five days later, on April 19, Prime Minister Lyons announced the outcome of the overseas airmail tenders. For Ulm there was no good news. Sixty years later 'Scotty' Allan wrote, "an enormous injustice was done to Charles Ulm. Charles had done all the groundwork for the venture. In his application for the franchise, he included his estimate of the mails which would be carried. He was almost exactly correct, whereas the other applicants were way out. He had the most experience in this type of operation. But he still didn't get the franchise. And the reason for this was simple: Qantas did a deal with Imperial Airways."

On the eve of Anzac Day, 1934, Charles Ulm brought the *Faith in Australia* in to land on *Shute's Paddock*. Despite the personal financial stress he was under at the time he had made the *Faith* available to the R.S.&S.I.L.A. to support an appeal to the citizens of NSW country towns for additional funds to complete the ANZAC Memorial, then under construction in Hyde Park. He had chosen Bathurst to stay overnight and to attend the dawn service the following morning. Charles Ulm was present at Gallipoli as a sixteen year old, and had been wounded there. What were his thoughts as he stood in the pre-dawn cold of a Bathurst autumn morning in King's Parade? He had probably spent the night at the Royal Hotel at the southern end of the Parade, from where he had conducted the business of the Aviation Service Co. fourteen years previously. And what lay in the future for him?

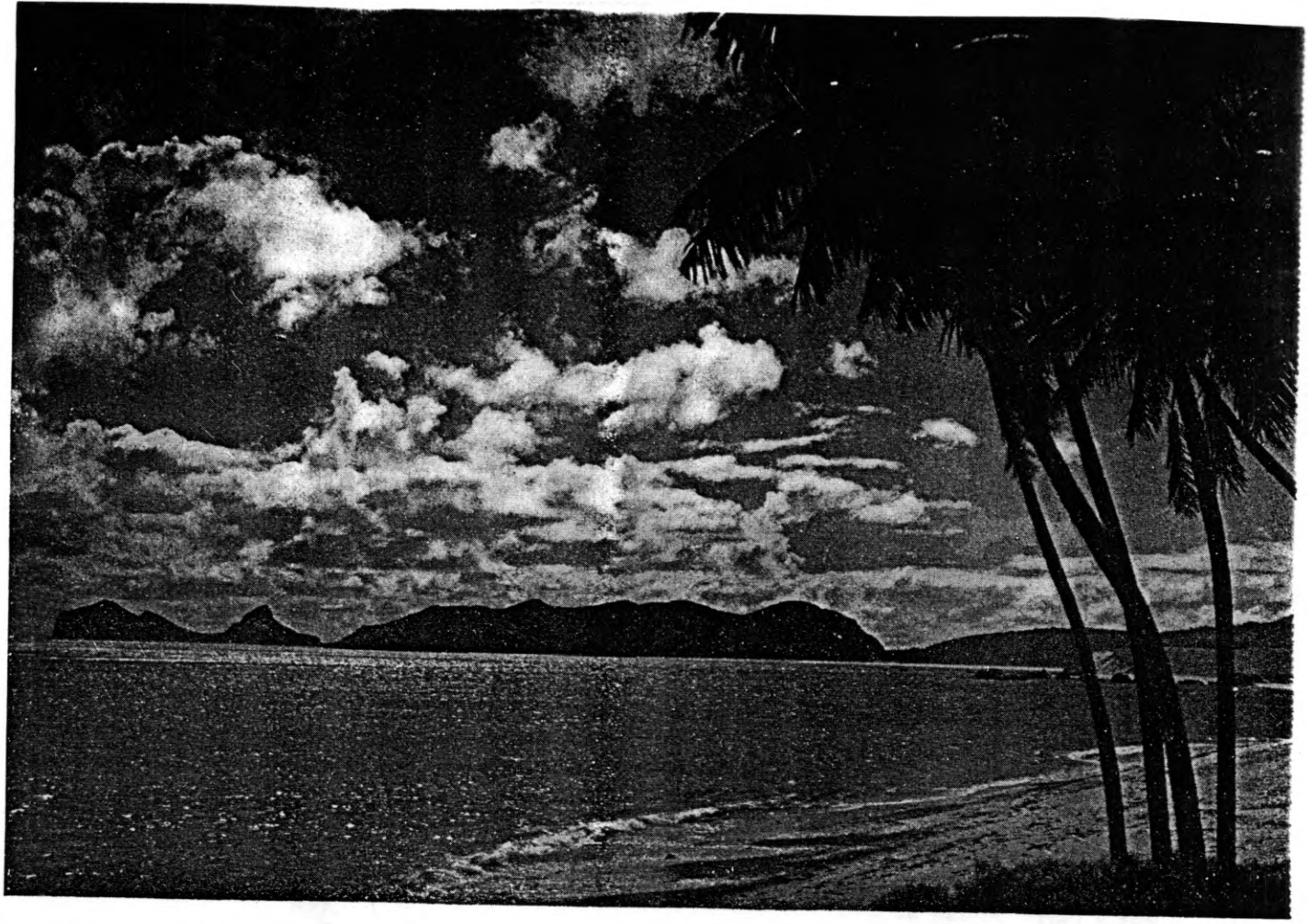
We have been left an evocative description by Percy Moodie of the flight of *Faith in Australia* back to Mascot that morning. "I awakened to the ringing of the alarm at 3.30am and after preparing myself for an air journey - the flight being made possible through the generosity of Flight-Lieutenant Ulm -- set forth across King's Parade to participate in the dawn service. A heavy frost cast a mantle of white over the lawns of the Parade, where some 160 people had gathered for the service. The ceremony was only of short duration, but nevertheless was a solemn and striking one, being brought to a fitting conclusion with hymns played on the Carillon.

The service over, Mr Ulm, myself and the remainder of the party, departed to Shute's paddock where we found the mechanic and crew awaiting us beside the huge monoplane, the *Faith in Australia*. Although this was not my first trip across the Blue Mountains by 'plane, I was anticipating the coming flight with a great amount of joy.

The *Faith in Australia* had a coating of frost, and the three engines, being very cold, took some 30 or 35 minutes to warm up. At last everything was in readiness for the departure, and Mr Ulm escorted the party consisting of Mrs Robb, Messrs L.A. Robb, H.V. Ellens, B. Gregg and myself to our seats. Mr 'Scotty' Allan was the co-pilot. Before taking off we were all presented with a copy of the *Times* which we were all very pleased to receive.

With the drone of the three mighty engines, we felt ourselves slowly but surely leaving the ground in a superb take-off at exactly 7.15am. Within a very short time we were well over our beautiful city, and without hesitation , headed for the 'big smoke'. We passed over Tarana over 6000 feet up, and ahead of us we could see huge banks of heavy clouds. This made it necessary for the pilots to fly above them as they were lying so very low over the mountain tops.

The scene as we made our way over the clouds was one never to be forgotten. As far as the eye could see there was one huge white mantle. Passing south of Lithgow at a height of a little over 8000 feet we could just obtain a glimpse of that city through a break in the clouds. About this time co-pilot 'Scotty' Allan vacated the cockpit, and invited Mrs Robb to take his seat. We were still climbing and still viewing the beautiful panorama before us. Then I was agreeably surprised when Mr Ulm invited me to take Mrs Robb's seat in the cockpit. Therein I saw not only the delightful panorama below us, but also ahead huge mountains of white clouds through which we passed from time to time. We were now at 9000 feet, and at such a height one would expect to experience cold conditions. However, we were as cosy as though we were travelling in a closed in motor car. Still continuing our way over the mountains, we could see in the far distance, a break in the vista of clouds. Just after passing the Nepean River we could see distinctly in the clouds below a small rainbow. Within this rainbow fell the shadow of the huge monoplane. We soon passed over Riverview College continuing on towards the Harbour Bridge and Government House, and then headed for Mascot. We at last reached our goal, Ulm making a perfect landing right on 8.30am -- the exact scheduled landing time."..... **John Scott**.



*The lagoon at Lord Howe Island.*

# Lord Howe Island Holiday

**BY MARJORIE TAYLOR**

ONCE upon a time "Lord Howe Island" didn't convey very much to me. It was the name of a small island some 450 miles N.E. of Sydney. Its most notable feature was the fact that it was part of the East Sydney Electorate! It wasn't until a friend from the office took advantage of the Company's Service to Lord Howe and spent a holiday there that I became really interested. My friend was so enthusiastic that I decided that I, too, would like to go there and see for myself. In fact, three of us decided to go.

We made an early booking (which is very necessary), and one February morning found us at Rose Bay.

Our trip by Catalina was grand. All the passengers were holiday-makers, and there was an air of expectancy about us all. The crew added to the holiday spirit with their frequent visits to the cabin and cheery talk, and our picnic-box lunch fitted in with the whole scheme of things.

It was a thrill, on arrival over Lord Howe, to see all the Island—the whole 7 x 1½ miles of it—beneath us, and as I looked down two things flashed through my mind. Firstly, the colour and clearness of the water. On the west side of the Island a coral reef forms a lagoon, which is bright aqua and so clear you can see right to the bottom. Bordering it is a beach of creamy sand. On the other side of the Island the sea is a deep Reckitt's blue, with snowy white foam. As the 'plane touched down we were all incredulous—no water could be as green as that outside a Hollywood technicolour opus!

The other thing that impressed itself upon me was the ruggedness of the island. On the eastern side there are sheer cliffs, while at the south, dominating the whole island, tower Mount Gower and Mount Lidgbird. No matter where you go on the Island these twin mountains steal the scene.

We climbed into a launch manned by a sun-tanned crew and were taken to the end of a

# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**November 2003 No.368**


### November Meeting

The November meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5th November 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting will be held in the Target Theatre. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member.

Supper will be available after the meeting. Members are requested to bring a small plate of finger food.

The meeting will feature

***The 21st Annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture***

***Guest Speaker David Craddock***

***"Some Untold History"***

For this year, the centenary of the first powered flight, we are most privileged to have eminent aviation historian, David Craddock, as our guest speaker for the 21st annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture.

Cecil Arthur Butler was involved in many aspects of aviation – from designing his own small aircraft, performing maintenance, through to owning and operating his airline. He also flew in the barnstorming era and piloted the tiny Comper Swift from England to Australia in what was then a record time of just over 9 days. The pioneers from the 1840s proposed feats that Arthur Butler eventually accomplished, whilst some of the tales about other early adventurers have remained obscure, until now.

When David first started to read about early Australian aviation he suspected that the relatively little that had been documented, had been well and truly investigated. In recent years, when his special interests turned towards the early days of aerial navigation in Australia, David was surprised to discover that most of the history recorded in hardcover books had certainly not been thoroughly researched. In March this year, David presented a paper to the Sydney Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society and detailed some of Australia's early interests in aerial navigation. Since that time, he has found even more interesting stories and pictures of those days.

David is an aeronautical engineer who commenced his career with Hawker de Havilland in 1968. His early projects included work on the Wamira trainer designed for the RAAF, and later he had engineering responsibility for several projects, including manufacturing activities, which were being performed by Hawker de Havilland for McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Lockheed and British Aerospace Airbus. In 1987 he commenced work in the Department of Defence, where he now holds the position of Regional Manager for the Defence Quality Assurance (Air).

His particular interest in aviation history has been demonstrated through his writing and publication of six small books on the subject. He has also carried out the aerodynamic and structural design of replicas of Lawrence Hargrave's kites and gliders, as well as Australia's first successful glider, which was designed by George Augustine Taylor in 1909. The main area of his current research is Australia's involvement in aeronautics prior to the Wright Brothers success in 1903.

David has been a member of AHSA, the Australian Society of World War I Aero Historians, the Lawrence Hargrave Foundation, Bathurst Soaring Club, American Institute for Aeronautics and Astronautics, and the Sport Aircraft Association of Australia. He has retained membership of the Royal Society of New South Wales (President in 2001 and 2002), the Royal Australian Historical Society, the Royal Aeronautical Society, Vintage Glider Association, Hornsby Shire Historical Society and the recently formed Australian Society for the History of Engineering and Technology.

Please join us for the highlight of our calendar and for what should be a most entertaining and informative evening.

The display by the Zivko Edge aerobatic aircraft was spectacular to say the least. The performance defied all normal aerodynamic forces, let alone the + and – G forces on the pilot. Col Pay's Aermacchi SM-1019 "Wog Dog", the turbo-prop Italian built version of the Cessna Bird Dog was also spectacular in short field performance and general handling, as well as the reversing off the runway and to dispersal.

Overall, it was quite entertaining but a little disappointing from the lack of participants. For the photo enthusiasts, however, there was plenty of opportunity to walk amongst the aircraft and capture some great shots.

## Calendar of Events

**30 Oct – 1 Nov 2003** Aviation Field Days Wagga Wagga *(www.aviationfielddays.com* for details)
**2 November 2003** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day Wedderburn NSW
**15-16 November 2003** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days Temora NSW
**3 December 2003** AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown.
**6-7 December 2003** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days Temora NSW
**24–25 January 2004** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days Temora NSW
**4 February 2004** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting Powerhouse Museum
**29 February 2004** Airshow Point Cook Vic
**3 March 2004** AHSA (NSW) Inc AGM and monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
**7 March 2004** Airshow Albury NSW
**14 March 2004** Airshow Tyabb Vic
**27-28 March 2004** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days Temora NSW

## From our Cairns Correspondent

Our Cairns correspondent, Roy Fordham has provided this interesting piece following his recent visit to the Northern Hemisphere.

"The journey to England is indeed a long one, but not without its many rewards for those of us with an interest in aviation history.

Just the thought of names such as Duxford, Biggin, Old Warden and Shuttleworth, conjure up visions that cause an adrenalin rush.

The de Havilland museum at Ridge, in Hertfordshire, as I am sure I've mentioned in the past, a purist's pilgrimage, no less. With de Havilland in mind, I attended this year's 23rd International Moth Rally on the weekend of 16th/17th August at Woburn Abbey.

The weather was perfect, providing ideal conditions for flying many early, resplendent DH aircraft. Anyone fortunate enough to have visited Woburn, will appreciate the splendour in acres of age old English paddocks, with roaming herds of Deer, in close proximity to the sights and sounds of 'Dragons', 'Tiger' 'Leopard' and 'Puss' of the Moth variety, plus the modern 'Chipmunk', music to the ear, enough to soothe the any furrowed brow.

This trip also allowed me to achieve a long awaited wish, to see the Battle of Britain Memorial, situated on the cliffs of Kent at Capel le Ferne, between Dover and Folkestone. Whilst visiting friends at Leigh on Sea, near Southend, on the Essex coast, I ventured along to a local aero club at the airport, hoping to access a charter for an aerial view of the Memorial.

Receiving a very pleasant welcome and enthusiasm at my request, the CFI, genuinely disappointedly, informed me there were no aircraft available this day, could I possibly return early tomorrow?? Affirm say I, most assuredly, Time for a coffee, affirm say I, local GA chat, and this man is a 'Tiger' fanatic, good vibes here. Perfect weather I should add here.

Come the morrow and 'Murphy' is in attendance, low scattered cloud and heavy early mist, approx' 60 min' delay, not a problem!!, only aircraft available a '172' booked for a Nav' exercise, student and instructor happy to have me along, agreed but only if Nav' plan includes Capel le Ferne, also agreed.

On this day 'Murphy' proved to be a blessing for me, while awaiting weather, I am introduced to an engineer dedicated to keeping a "Vulcan" operable, no longer airworthy but regularly performs abortive take-offs with brake 'chute deployment, on display days. Having an hour to spare, I am offered, and very happily accept, a personal inspection of this giant, plus a brief light and burn procedure, very impressive.

This day exemplifies the term, ' All one's Christmas's coming at once '.

Return to flight office, Nav' exercise on, Capel le Ferne and return, 1500ft VFR advised, difficult to maintain, but just, through gaps in cloud. On reaching the fabled White Cliffs of Dover, target difficult to locate, but after flying up and down the Kent coast, now down to 1000ft, we find it, vis' not the best, but after three orbits, with photographic evidence, back up to 1500 and return to base, mission accomplished."

More of Roy's adventures next issue.

## News

Contributions for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth via Email *(wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au).*

# LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

## Shute's Paddock - Part 9.

One Family's Brush with a Century of Aviation.

On behalf of its citizens, the Mayor of Bathurst, Martin Griffin, in company with Percy Moodie, entertained visiting airmen of the NSW Aero Club at an informal function, held at the Royal Hotel on October 22, 1933. Mr Bridgeland, manager of the aero club's goodwill tour, spoke about the need for an official aerodrome at Bathurst and, concluding his remarks, paid tribute to Messrs. Williams and Shute for their generosity in making available their properties for the landing ground. The early signs of complications for the use of *Shute's Paddock*, as a future aerodrome for Bathurst were beginning to surface.

The death of Mr E. S. Williams of Kelso occurred at Bathurst District Hospital, on July 11, 1934, after a protracted illness. Percy Moodie approached Bill Shute the following month, to determine his attitude to council developing *Shute's Paddock* as an official landing ground. Bill Shute said that he would be glad to make the land available subject to certain conditions, which included gaining permission of the new owner. This was because The facility known as *Shute's Paddock* involved access through Bill Shute's property, *Glen Ayre*, and included adjoining land leased by him from the late Mr Williams, which was now part of a deceased estate.

An enthusiastic public meeting at Bathurst Town Hall on November 1, 1934, unanimously decided to form a branch of the Australian Air League. " It was freely expressed by several present that the formation of a branch of the League would definitely precipitate the establishment of an official landing ground." Following the end of the public meeting, the first meeting of the Bathurst branch of the Air League commenced, at which Percy Moodie was elected Company Commander. A resolution was then carried, on the motion of the new Commander : -" That the Defence Department be written to asking for an officer of the Department to visit Bathurst and go into the matter of an official or registered landing ground for Bathurst as previously requested by council." Following this meeting Percy Moodie again spoke to Bill Shute and was assured of his willingness to turn the paddock over for use as a landing ground.

Wilfred Kingsford Smith spent the weekend of Jan12/13, 1935, in Bathurst in consultation with Percy Moodie about the future operations of a new airline, Western and Southern Provincial Airlines Ltd. Percy Moodie was an early investor in, and subsequently a director of the new venture. During the weekend the two men visited potential landing grounds around Bathurst. It was hoped to include Bathurst in the inaugural service of the new airline, but time was running out. The airline's first aircraft, General Aircraft ST-10 Monospar, VH-UST, reached Mascot on February 1, having been flown out from England. On February 12, Captain Burgess, Superintendent of Mascot aerodrome, inspected a number of possible landing grounds at Bathurst, and returned to Sydney to prepare his report. However, nothing had been resolved before Harry Purvis flew VH-UST from Mascot to Narromine on March 23. There, on March 25, the aircraft was christened *Narromine Wasp* and then departed for Sydney to inaugurate the new service.Bathurst had to be content with a message to the Mayor, dropped by parachute onto King's Parade from the *Narromine Wasp* on its way to Mascot.

It was time to organise a major aeronautical event to demonstrate to Bathurstians, and more particularly to the Federal Government, that Bathurst Council was serious about joining the air age with its own aerodrome, serviced by a regular airline schedule. Accordingly it was arranged that the NSW Aero Club would conduct an Air Pageant on *Shute's Paddock* on the weekend of April 6/7 at which the club's planes would, "engage in daring and graceful evolutions and aerobatics," as well as conduct joy-rides. The new W.A.S.P. Airlines machine, *Narromine Wasp*, would also, "make exhibition flights of nearly 20 miles at low charge for adults and children, with longer flights to outlying towns such as Orange, Blayney and Lithgow." The *Times* reported that:- "The visit of the *Narromine Wasp* will be of special interest in view of the fact that so many residents are interested in W.A.S.P. Airlines Ltd. The

# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**December 2003 No.369**


### December Meeting - Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown

The December meeting will be held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown on Wednesday 3rd December 2003, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via Starkie Drive, near the Milperra Road end of Bankstown Airport. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member.

The meeting will feature:

***Milestone in Aviation – the Retirement of the Concorde***

Whilst this year is acknowledged as being very important as the centenary of powered flight, the retirement of the Concorde is indeed another milestone in aviation history. Both Air France and British Airways have decided that to keep any examples flying would be prohibitively expensive; hence all aircraft have been donated to museums or particular airports for display.

Much of the Concorde memorabilia that has been available for auction via the Internet has attracted very high prices, which surely must be an indication of the admiration for this aircraft held by so many people interested in aviation.

The Concorde visited Australia on several occasions: as a prototype on test and demonstration flights, and on charters operated by Air France and British Airways. It generated an enormous amount of attention from media, enthusiasts and of course the anti-noise lobby. On the occasions when it visited Sydney, all viewing areas were well and truly taken up by those who admired the grace (and the noise) of the aircraft.

For those fortunate enough to have flown on one, or even been on board, they would have noted that the cabin width was about the same of that of a Fokker F-27 Friendship, although quite a bit longer. However, the quality of the seats and the Mach meter were always a bit of a give away.

A video of the Concorde and several slides of the aircraft will be shown at the meeting. If members or guests also have slides, videos or other memorabilia concerning the Concorde, please bring them.

Please join us for our final event on our annual calendar and for what should be another entertaining and informative evening. In addition to our theme, buy, sell and swap will be available, and members and guests will be able to view the aircraft and other exhibits in the Museum. Supper will be available after the meeting.

### November Meeting

This year, the centenary of the first powered flight, our Guest Speaker for the 21st Annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture was eminent aviation historian, David Craddock. David's lecture was titled "Some Untold History", and featured many stories about early aeronauts in Australia, prior to the first successful powered flight by the Wright Brothers.

In a first for our Arthur Butler lectures, David utilised computer technology with an excellent PowerPoint presentation of some well-known and not so well known aviators. The names of Captain Penfold, Pierre Maigre and Dr William Bland were familiar to many in the audience, but other aeronauts such as Mudie and Marriott, William Dean and Thomas Gale, who were not so well known, also played interesting roles in the quest for flight.

Most of David's lecture focussed on balloon flights, some of which were successful. Other such intended flights failed miserably, much to the disappointment of the thousands of eager spectators, many of whom had paid several shillings for the privilege.

He spoke about Henri L'estrange, who had walked across Middle Harbour on a tightrope, and his unsuccessful endeavour to fly a balloon, and about

**3 March 2004** AHSA (NSW) Inc AGM and monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
**7 March 2004** Airshow Albury NSW
**14 March 2004** Airshow Tyabb Vic
**27-28 March 2004** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days Temora NSW
**7 April 2004** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, including annual aircraft recognition and aviation trivia competitions, Powerhouse Museum

## From our Cairns Correspondent

Our Cairns correspondent, Roy Fordham has provided Part 2 of his recent escapades in the Northern Hemisphere.

*"Incident- Assistance - Happy Coincidence.*
An incident involving the forced landing of an American registered Cessna 340, nine miles south of Cairns International Airport last year, initiated an incredible on-going chain of events. While monitoring Cairns ATC listening out for progress of a 'Tiger' flight, I heard transmission of an emergency situation concerning an aircraft on approach into Cairns. It was apparent from the call sign that it was not a local aircraft, it appeared to be an American registration, the pilot reported a minimum fuel situation and the tower asked if he wanted to declare an emergency, to which "affirm" was the reply.

The pilot lowered the landing gear in descent, after being advised of a small strip about 10 NM to the south east of Cairns, unable to locate this strip, when one or both engines began to surge, he decided he had to land. With rapidly decreasing airspeed the aircraft impacted the ground in a cane field and slid for about 20 meters, mercifully there was no fire but there was major damage.

Miraculously, the passengers, mother and two small children, walked out of the wreck with minor scratches and bruises, the pilot, father, not so fortunate, sustained severe scalp lacerations, facial injury, complicated elbow fracture and neck whiplash.

My thoughts were of the need for support for this family, strangers to this area and surely devastated after the experience they had been through. I visited the hospital in order to offer any assistance, immediate or ongoing, finding to my amazement, this family were from my home town in England.

To add to this incredible coincidence, Brian (the pilot, who I am to get to know so well) flies out of Elstree, just north of London, where I have spent many hours over the years. The following months saw a bond of friendship grow and I became an adopted Grandfather to the children in the process.

It is now when I learn that Brian flies a radio station's aircraft, engaged on reporting peak hour traffic, covering Central London and the outer suburbs. I am very aware of this radio station, 'Capital Radio' is London's top commercial radio station, and has been for many years. I of course can't resist the question of the possibility to fly with him on one of the traffic sorties during my planned trip to the UK, but one can only ask the question.

On my arrival in the UK, I duly contact Brian for a get together we had planned, and he informs me that since 9/11 security is very tight, however enquiries have been made and the outlook is good, but be prepared at short notice, to be at the airfield 0630, can't specify a date yet. Am I prepared, or what?!!

I am now traversing England at a fair rate of knots (speeding ticket as proof), places to go, people to see, lots of, and only five weeks to do it all. One lovely evening in Lincolnshire (Lancaster country) I get the call, 0630 in the morning, be there, on time, we don't wait. MAGIC!!!.

On the road 0415, airborne 0645, overhead Central London, NOT ABOVE 1500ft, radio report's peak hour traffic light but building up, especially on the approaches to London, my camera getting much use.

Incredible views at this altitude, Tower Bridge, Westminster, Big Ben, Marble Arch, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus, Buckingham Palace, Queen Victoria Monument, and Statue, the London Eye, just amazing, what a buzz to start the day. And these guy's get paid for this??.

Hope you have enjoyed this saga, as much as I have re-living it." Roy Fordham

(Roy also provided some spectacular digital photographs of his flight, which unfortunately could not be reproduced for this newsletter. Ed)

## Address Update

In our last newsletter we provided information on the South Australian Air Journal. Its editor, Nigel Daw has advised that his new address is 19 Hawker Avenue, Plympton Park, South Australia 5038.

## News

Contributions for inclusion in the newsletter are always welcome and can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth via Email *(wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au).*

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
December 2003 No 369

# LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

## Shute's Paddock - Final.

One Family's Brush with a Century of Aviation.

The future of *Shute's Paddock*, as Bathurst's first official aerodrome, evaporated in September, 1935. However, the use of *Shute's Paddock*, as an unofficial landing ground continued, sometimes with the permission of Bill Shute, and sometimes without.

Bill Shute was concerned by the unexplained loss by fire of the Moth, VH-UIH, on his property on September 14, 1935, but his patience was sorely tested when, two weeks later, his cows were upset by the first serious aircraft accident on *Shute's Paddock*. After all, he had a dairy farm to run and the paddock was occasionally occupied by livestock. *The BathurstTimes* described the accident that occurred on Monday, September 30. " The 'plane, (Westland Widgeon III, VH-UHU), which was piloted by Mr Milton Kent, was returning to Sydney from the Narromine air pageant, and believing he had insufficient fuel for the remainder of the journey, he decided to land at Kelso. As he approached the usual landing ground in Shute's paddock, he noticed a number of cows grazing on the ground. Realising the danger of coming down among them he decided to land in the next paddock, but the bumpy surface caused the 'plane 'to crack up'. The machine, as it struck the ground, fell into a hole about three feet deep, and spinning round in a terrific broadside, one wing tip touched the ground." There is a family fable about the subsequent confrontation between Bill Shute and a severely shocked Miltom Kent, amid a herd of thoroughly traumatised dairy cows. The farce was compounded when the wreckage of VH-UHU, lashed to a tow truck on its way to the Bathurst railway yards for shipment to Sydney, toppled over on the turn into the Sydney Road at Kelso, and was further damaged.

Early in April 1937, the Royal Aero Club of NSW, contacted the Bathurst hospitals it had supported during its previous goodwill tours in 1933 and 1935. The Club requested assistance with arrangement for the usual joy riding passengers in return for the hospitals' percentage of money raised. The Club was no doubt taken aback by the response of the secretary of the District Hospital who replied, "In my opinion, judging from the amount received following previous visits, the 'percentage' paid to the hospitals is not sufficient to warrant their names being used publicly as beneficiaries." Nevertheless, the air pageant went ahead on *Shute's Paddock* over the weekend of April 17/18, with ten aircraft in attendance. The event was not without incident. On arrival, Moth VH-UAK, piloted by J. Martin, stalled on approach to land and fell 50 feet, causing extensive damage to its undercarriage and propeller. For the second time Bathurstians were presented with the novel sight of a wrecked aircraft being towed through the streets on its way to the railway yards.

In July, 1937, the prospect of a regular air service to Bathurst was once again in the local news. Where before there had been the prospect of human passengers enjoying the benefits of a regular air service, it was now proposed to transport fresh fish to Bathurst from the coastal towns of Nowra and Moruya. The General Air Transport Syndicate was formed by Mick Healy, and he arrived on the first experimental flight to Bathurst and Orange on July 20, in Short Scion, VH-UVQ, piloted by Norman Littlejohn. It was planned to maintain a twice weekly service, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, with backloadings of fruit, vegetables and poultry to the coast. The initial route was Mascot-Nowra-Orange-Bathurst-Mascot. Cowra and Grenfell were soon added. The service became established on a more or less regular basis and continued until the outbreak of WWII.

Between 1931 and 1935, what was promoted as Sir Alan Cobham's Flying Circus toured the UK giving airshows in a crusade to make Britain air minded. His 'National Aviation Day' airshows consisted of a mixed fleet of aircraft performing formation flying, aerobatics, dropping parachutists and giving joy rides. Compare this to the following news item from *The Western Times* describing an event planned for Shute's Paddock for Sunday October 27, 1937. " An interesting exhibition of trick and formation flying will be given at the aerial pageant to be staged at Kelso on Sunday by the 'Circus'

Feat

# Memories of hi

**A Qantas jet on a delivery run to Australia retraced the flightpath of the Southern Cross in which Sir Charles Kingsford Smith flew the Pacific for the first time. Peter Morley reports**

PRIVILEGED . . . George Roberts, 93, overhauled the flight instruments in The Old E

SEVENTY-FIVE years ago today, George Roberts was among 20,000 people at Brisbane's Eagle Farm airport who watched the Southern Cross land after making the first aerial crossing of the Pacific Ocean.

Roberts, now 93, arrived at the field at 3am after Brisbane learned that "The Old Bus", flown by Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm, had taken off from Fiji on the last leg of the journey.

"I had driven down from Ipswich early because there was no way of knowing when the Southern Cross would land — whether it would actually arrive for that matter," Roberts recalls.

"Then we learned the plane had crossed the coast at Ballina and about mid-morning we finally saw a speck in the sky that gradually grew and I recognised it as the Southern Cross.

"It was quite a thing because, at the time, it was hard to appreciate an aircraft could cross the Pacific."

Brisbane-born Kingsford Smith, later knighted for this and other flying feats before he disappeared in the Bay of Bengal, had achieved what seemed the impossible and the crowd went wild.

With Ulm and navigator Harry Lyon and radio operator James Warner, he was carried shoulder high from the Southern Cross with police unable to control the crowd which also lined the streets as the crew was driven to the city for a reception.

The next day, Smithy flew the Dutch-built Fokker tri-motor to Sydney, touching down at the airport now bearing his name. The reception was even bigger — 300,000 people turned out to idolise the crew.

Its members battled engine failure, navigation and communication problems and tropical storms to reach Australia after a trans-Pacific crossing which began nearly 10 days before and about 12,000km away in Oakland, California.

For nearly a third of that time — 83hr 15min — the Southern Cross was in the air as it island-hopped to Australia via Hawaii and Fiji. It averaged little more than 140km/h and flew at heights ranging from 200m to 2000m, depending on weather conditions which ranged from dead calm to atrocious.

Between Hawaii and Fiji, Ulm logged: "The storm seems all around us now. Smithy is at the controls. Thank God he is the flier he is. Rain, bloody rain, all around and that ripsnorter of a wind!"

Each take-off saw the aircraft lumbering into the sky because the Fokker was carrying up to 1300 gallons of fuel and heavy state-of-the-art navigation devices and radio equipment Lyon and Warner operated in the main cabin.

They used a stick to pass course changes to the pilots, who were separated from them by a fuel tank.

They were to experiment with telephony but the idea was discarded because engine noise drowned out conversation and virtually deafened the four by the end of each leg of the flight.

In Fiji, Kingsford Smith was forced to

ures

# gh-flying days

and aviator Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and the Southern Cross in flight c1929.

d in a park because there was no air- and then relocate to a beach for e-off to Brisbane. That leg was posed to be an easy hop, with Ulm ing in the log that the aircraft bed 30m in the first minute before ing over Suva where the crowd red it on its way.

o hours later, a message was passed e pilots partly exposed in the cockpit a compass had failed. Ulm then re- ed: "Terrific rainstorm with very vi- bumps, sometimes losing 400 feet e bump, and incessant rain. Plane difficult to control. At times, when hy was flying blind, the bumps were d as to necessitate all the strength th of us on the wheel."

er enduring the cold and wet conditions for another eight-and-a-half hours, Ulm wrote: "Sorry so few entries in this log but been forced to fly high and hands too numb to write now."

Somehow, the Southern Cross, constructed mainly of wood, wire and fabric, held together despite the nightmare conditions and buffeting – made the journey, an indication of the preparation that had gone into the flight.

This work had to be meticulous as Kingsford Smith purchased what was a badly damaged aircraft – in a previous life the Southern Cross had crashed early in an expedition to the Arctic.

It was shipped back to Seattle where it was rebuilt by Boeing Aircraft, which fitted three new engines. By that time, Kingsford Smith was strapped for cash and it appeared he would have to forgo the attempt and sell the tri-motor. But a benefactor arrived in the form of American millionaire shipbuilder Captain Allan Hancock, who bought the aircraft for the $16,000 Kingsford Smith and Ulm needed to get out of debt and then loaned them the aircraft for the trans-Pacific attempt.

When they succeeded, Hancock absolved them of debt and gave the aircraft to Kingsford Smith and it is now on display at a memorial at Brisbane Airport, having been bought, in 1933, by the Federal Government.

Before that purchase, however, Roberts, an engineer with Qantas, (the airline established eight years before the Pacific crossing, in 1920) developed a closer relationship with The Old Bus.

"I had the privilege of overhauling the flying instruments," Roberts said at a Brisbane ceremony to mark the arrival of a Qantas Boeing 737-800 which followed Kingsford Smith's flight path while on its delivery run.

The jet, badged to commemorate the historic crossing, was in the air for 16 hours after the crew was farewelled from Oakland by Charles Kingsford Smith, son of the famous aviator, and Charles Ulm, grandson of the co-pilot.

Flying at 13,000m above the Pacific, pilot Alec Passerini marvelled at the courage and skill of Smithy and his crew.

"We fly above storms, using the most sophisticated navigation gear and HUD – a heads-up display that provides essential flight information and guidance throughout all phases of the flight," he said.

"They more or less bounced along just above the waves following instruments that, at one stage, had them 200 miles (321km) off course.

"Yet they managed to find tiny dots in the middle of a vast ocean. They were extremely brave men."

Brave, yes, but they were still uncertain if they would make the long hop.

When the Southern Cross took off, it was equipped with saws so the crew could cut away the engines and then separate the wooden wing from the fuselage if the aircraft had to ditch.

Stored in the wing was another radio transmitter and a desalination plant they intended to use while they floated, awaiting rescue by ship.