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

February 2004 No.370

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February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 4th February 2004, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is on the left of the foyer area. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The guest speaker will be well-known member, Robin Mead, who will describe and discuss an incident involving a BOAC Stratocruiser in early 1959. After take-off from Accra, Ghana, the aircraft experienced a runaway number 4 propeller, separation and fire. This and other Stratocruiser incidents will be discussed by Robin. The talk was originally given by Robin's father, an eminent zoologist, university lecturer and Vice-Chancellor, who spent over 20 years in West Africa. Robin has now added further support information to provide what is expected to be a most fascinating talk.

Robin has had a life-long interest in aviation, with particular interest in BOAC, its predecessors and its later entities. He also worked for Talair in Papua New Guinea and has maintained a keen interest in that country's aviation activities. Robin has a large collection of BOAC and PNG memorabilia, including a Piaggio P-166, which one day we hope will be restored for display.

December Meeting

The December meeting was held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, and again we were tormented by the elements of the weather. This time it was a severe thunderstorm and torrential rain, the noise of which made hearing difficult under the iron roof of the hangar.

The theme of the meeting was: *Milestone in Aviation – the Retirement of the Concorde,* and featured a dated but most interesting video of the Concorde and a series of Concorde slides provided by Warwick Bigsworth, Allen Clarke and Keith White.

The video showed the concepts that led to the ultimate design of the Concorde and some of the aircraft specifically produced to test the efficiency of the wing design. It went on to show the production and testing of the aircraft and touched on the continuing game of politics, not only in design and manufacture, but also the certification and embargos imposed because of engine noise and sonic boom effects.

Some of the slides featured Concorde flights at Sydney Airport, including the controversial take-off from Runway 34, which caused an international diplomatic incident. Also shown were the simultaneous arrivals of Air France and British Airways Concordes at Orlando, Florida, which had been arranged to coincide with the opening of the Epcot Center at Disney World.

Allen's slides included a shot of the ill-fated Concorde look-alike, the Tupolev Tu-144 at the Paris Air Show.

Some members also brought items of Concorde memorabilia to the meeting, including a model in original BOAC logo, and numerous books, pamphlets and photographs.

Committee Meeting

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

Centenary of Flight Activities

The 17th December 2003 generated attention around the world in celebration of the centenary of successful powered flight.

There were airshows, open days and fly-pasts in several Australian cities on, or close to, the anniversary date. The Powerhouse Museum was the venue for a black-tie dinner arranged by the Royal Aeronautical Society, Sydney Branch, to commemorate the event.

It was also the day chosen by the City of Canada Bay Council to re-dedicate a memorial to Guy Menzies. Keith White attended the ceremony, and he has provided the following report on the occasion.

Remembering Guy Menzies

Ideally located beside the Parramatta River and at the eastern end of Wolseley Street Drummoyne, Menzies Reserve was dedicated some years ago to commemorate the flying skills of local identity, Guy Menzies. On 7th January 1931, he was the first person to fly solo across the Tasman Sea from Australia to New Zealand, with a flying time of just over 12 hours.

Menzies' aircraft was an Avro Avian, G-ABCF, and was the same aircraft in which Charles Kingsford Smith had flown from England to Australia in record time during the previous October.

The City of Canada Bay Council chose 7.30am on Wednesday 17th December 2003 as an appropriate time to hold a re-dedication ceremony for Guy at the Reserve. Attended by approximately 45 people, a memorial plaque for Guy was unveiled by the Mayor, assisted by Bruce Menzies, Guy's younger brother. A drum detachment from the Riverwood Squadron of the Australian Air League played selections to open and close the ceremony.

The people of Harahari, New Zealand, where Guy landed, were planning to commemorate the historic flight by placing a full-scale replica of his aircraft in their own Guy Menzies Park.

Guy Menzies joined the Royal Air Force in 1932 and was killed in action on 1st November 1940. The Avro Avian returned to Australia, where it crashed at Mascot on 12th April 1931.

Guy's biography will be published early this year – more details later.

Another Aviation Anniversary

Sixty years ago this month, the RAAF received the first consignment of its four engine long range heavy bomber, the Consolidated B-24 Liberator.

The occasion was the climax of a two year struggle by the RAAF to acquire its own heavy bomber force in the south west Pacific region in the war against Japan.

Although RAAF personnel had flown and maintained the B-24 Liberator when serving with Royal Air Force (RAF) squadrons in other theatres of hostilities since mid-1941, and even in the Pacific region when on assignment to the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) squadrons, the RAAF operations against the enemy in the region had been limited to using aircraft of a lesser capability than the Liberator.

Even in the early stages of the war against Japan, the RAAF knew it needed an aircraft capable of carrying a significant bomb load over long distances. The problem was to get such an aircraft. Eventually, the B-24 Liberator was selected, but, strategically, the need for this type of aircraft was greater elsewhere.

So, after a long wait, by which time major hostilities had moved on from the area of operations assigned to the RAAF, its first Liberators were transferred from the 5th AF USAAF, on 15 February 1944. There were five aircraft in the first consignment, followed by two more a week later. A further six arrived over the period from March to September 1944. These aircraft consisted of twelve B-24Ds and one B-24J.

Unfortunately they had been transferred from USAAF operational units, and their condition was such that most of them were unacceptable to the RAAF until major service had been carried out on them. In fact, two of them proved to be beyond economical repair!

They were allocated RAAF serial numbers A72-1 to A72-13 inclusive. Apparently, more aircraft were expected from the USAAF, but not received, as the serial numbers allocated to subsequent new aircraft, which were B-24J, L and M series, received direct from the USA commenced from A72-31 and continued to A72-405, with a break in sequence from 199 to 299 inclusive. The aircraft to which the last two serial numbers were allocated were received three days after the end of hostilities in August 1945.

A total of 287 B-24 Liberators appeared on the RAAF aircraft register. Another two, one with Australian civil registration, the other with RAF registration, flew briefly with separate RAAF units. A further two left the USA, but never reached the RAAF.

The RAAF had planned to have seven operational B-24 Liberator squadrons, but, at the end of hostilities in August 1945, only five had achieved this status. They were 24, 21, 25, 23 and 12 squadrons, and they became operational during July 1944, and January, February, April and May 1945 respectively.

In August 1944, the RAAF formed 82 Wing, its first heavy bomber wing, consisting of 21, 23 and 24 Squadrons, with 25 Squadron on attachment. In July

1945, 85 (Heavy Bomber) Wing was formed, consisting of 12, 25, 99 and 102 Squadrons, and 200 and 201 Special Flights.

Sixty years on, only one B-24 Liberator, or more correctly, only the fuselage of one B-24M Liberator, A72-176, originally ex No.7 Operational training Unit, Tocumwal, NSW, survives in Australia, and only one of fourteen worldwide. Found some fifteen years ago at Moe, Victoria, and now at Werribee Victoria, the aircraft is being faithfully rebuilt to taxiing status by the B-24 Liberator memorial Restoration Fund Inc, and its enthusiastic team of dedicated volunteers of all ages, including some who flew and serviced this under-rated aircraft all those years ago. Hopefully, its completion will be soon.

Wings, engines, gun turrets etc are only some of the estimated 1.2 million bits and pieces needed, acquired from all points, have been used to rebuild this aircraft, which, even now, stands as representative for all to see of an aircraft which helped write a new page in the history of the RAAF and Australian aviation.
Keith White

On the Internet

BBC Bristol Concorde
(www.bbc.co.uk/bristol/content/concorde)
This claims to be the most comprehensive Concorde site on the web, and that appears to be a reasonable judgment. The site features some excellent images of the Concorde, particularly in the 1970s, as well as many statistics, a Concorde web guide, a Concorde quiz and much more.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB)
(www.atsb.gov.au/aviation/)
The ATSB has a comprehensive site with much information about safety and Australian transport. Other sections on the site relate to land and maritime safety. The aviation safety section includes a large database of Australian accidents and incidents with various stages of the investigation being reported, as preliminary, interim and final.

F-35 Military Aircraft
(www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ac/f-35.htm)
The site, which is compiled by the Federation of American Scientists Military Analysis Network, provides a detailed analysis of the new frontline aircraft ordered by the US Air Force, Navy and Marines, the UK for use by the RAF and the RN and earmarked for acquisition by Australia, Canada and several other air arms. The site provides concept designs, the variant designs and technical specifications.

LAAS International
(www.laasdata.com)
The main purpose of this site seems to be promotion of the subscription service to its own magazines, LAAS International News and Review, but it also provides very handy access to search engines for corporate jets and turbo-props around the world.

Airline History
(http://airlines.afriqonline.com/airlines/index.html)
This site contains the histories of hundreds of current and past airlines from around the world. Some histories are quite brief, whilst others very detailed, and some material is well out of date, e.g. airlines long ceased operation listed as extant. There are many photographs and you could spend hours here!

Vacancy

The AHSA (NSW) Inc Annual General Meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on 3 March 2004. All Committee positions will become vacant for nomination by interested members. Our Honorary Treasurer for the past 9 years, Keith White, will not be seeking re-election to that post. Here is an opportunity for any members to seek nomination for this position on the Committee and make a valuable contribution to the running of the society.

Guest Speakers

Members are invited to consider offering themselves, or perhaps friends or acquaintances as a guest speaker during the coming year. All those who attended last year's meetings will acknowledge that we had an excellent raft of guest speakers. Many of our members who regularly attend meetings have an amazing depth of knowledge in their own specialty in aviation experience or particular interest.

Any member willing to be a speaker for one of our meetings should contact AHSA (NSW) Inc President Ian Debenham, or Hon Sec, Warwick Bigsworth.

Vale

Air Commodore William Henry "Bull" Garing CBE, DFC, DSC (USA), passed away on 1 January 2004 at the age of 93. Air Commodore Garing played a key role in the Allied successes at Milne Bay and the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, which finally saw the threat to mainland Australia subdued.

After initially entering the Army via Royal Military College Duntroon, he transferred to the Air Force in December 1930. He became the RAAF's leading specialist in air/sea operations and by the outbreak of war he had spent several years with the RAAF's seaplane squadron at Point Cook.

Flight Lieutenant Garing was in the UK in September 1939 with No.10 Squadron taking delivery of the new Short Sunderland aircraft. No.10 Squadron stayed in England to fight the German forces. In June 1940 he was awarded the DFC for engaging five German bombers which were attacking an armed merchant cruiser.

Following his return from Europe, he arrived at Milne Bay as air commander several days after the Japanese invasion. Under Garing's leadership, the RAAF made a vital contribution to the eventual victory over the Japanese land forces.

Seven months after Milne Bay, the Japanese made one last attempt to re-establish their grip on New Guinea by despatching 6400 troops from Rabaul to their garrison at Lae using a convoy of eight troop transports defended by eight destroyers and about 100 fighter aircraft.

Garing convinced (US) General George Kenney to prepare a massive, coordinated air attack against the enemy convoy. More than 90 RAAF and US strike aircraft, plus their fighter escorts, took off from Port Moresby to intercept the convoy in the Bismarck Sea. For the loss of only a handful of aircraft, the Allies sank all eight troop transports and four destroyers. Three thousand Japanese troops were killed and the remainder left in disarray.

Described by Gen. Douglas MacArthur as "the most decisive aerial engagement of the war in the Southwest Pacific", the battle of the Bismarck Sea was one of the most devastatingly one-sided air/sea battles of WWII. Never again did the Japanese try to reinforce New Guinea, which in turn meant that never again could they threaten to invade Australia.

Calendar of Events

29 February 2004 Airshow Point Cook Vic
3 March 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc AGM and monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
7 March 2004 Albury Air Show, Albury NSW
14 March 2004 Tyabb Air Show, featuring "The Great Mustang Roundup", Tyabb Victoria
27-28 March 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
27-28 March 2004 Airtourer Association Fly-in, Temora NSW
7 April 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
24-25 April 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
5 May 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum

2004 Subscription Fees

2004 subscriptions are now due at the very modest cost of $25 per annum. Renewal notices for those applicable are included with this newsletter.

Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc will be held at the Powerhouse Museum, Harris Street Ultimo on Wednesday 3 March 2004 commencing at 7:45pm.

Business

1. Accept President's Report
2. Accept Honorary Treasurer's Report
3. Elect Office Bearers for the current year:
   (a) President
   (b) Vice President
   (c) Treasurer
   (d) Secretary
   (e) Committee
4. Any other business

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

Annual General Meeting – Election of Office Bearers

The Annual General Meeting of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc ABN 83 295 759 224 will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3 March 2004, commencing at 7.45pm.

Nominations are invited to fill the following positions for the next twelve months:

President:
Nominee: .....
Nominated by: .....
Seconded by: .....

Vice-President
Nominee: .....
Nominated by: .....
Seconded by: .....

Honorary Secretary
Nominee: .....
Nominated by: .....
Seconded by: .....

Honorary Treasurer
Nominee: .....
Nominated by: .....
Seconded by: .....

Committee Member (several positions)
Nominee: .....
Nominated by: .....
Seconded by: .....

Nominees and those nominating and seconding must be financial members of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc.

Nominations should be forwarded to the Returning Officer, c/- The President, Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc, PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238, prior to the commencement of the Annual General Meeting.

If there are no nominations received for any position, the Returning Officer may call for nominations from the floor at the Annual General Meeting. Should there be more than one nominee for any position, a ballot will be held at the Annual General Meeting.

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

27 January 2004

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
February 2004 No 370

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Centenary of an Important Exhumation.

I am still reading the two books given to me by Phillipa for Christmas. The first, *Dreamers, Doers and Daredevils*, by David Marshall and Bruce Harris was no surprise, because I had arranged for my copy to be inscribed by the authors well in advance. However, the second, *The Map That Changed The World*, by Simon Winchester, was completely unexpected. It is a biography of William Smith (1769-1839), an Englishman, and an early pioneer in the science of geology. Perhaps Phillipa was thinking of my own career as a geotechnical engineer when she chose the book. Just as William Smith was working on the construction of a canal near Bath, Somerset, in the 1790s, so I too worked on a flood relief canal near King's Lynn, Norfolk, in the1950s. Because our U.K. member David Sparrow has a King's Lynn address, I suspect that he could easily have a drink for me at my old watering hole, *The Duke's Head*.

However, the remarkable thing is that, despite the fact that these two books are apparently unrelated, I became aware of some interesting links between them, the one celebrating 100 years of aviation and the other celebrating 200 years since William Smith began work on the map that was the genesis of geology as a science.The connection is through a contemporary of William Smith, who, with Smith, was nurtured in the pursuit of geology by Sir Joseph Banks , and who set in train a sequence of events that, to-day, profoundly influences the way the artefacts of aviation history are preserved. This remarkable individual was born in Paris in 1765 and was christened Jacques Louis. He died in Genoa on June 27, 1829 and was buried there in the English cemetery, on a hill overlooking the harbour. His remains were exhumed just 100 years ago, on December 31, 1903.

The exhumation had been arranged, on behalf of the United States Government, by Samuel Pierpont Langley, and he would have been in attendance except for his preoccupation with the problem of powered flight. What proved to be his final attempt, with his manned *Aerodrome,* ended in spectacular, and very public, failure on the Potomac River on December 8, 1903. Nine days later the Wright Brothers flew, less publicly, but with inspiring success. In the absence of Dr Langley, the United States Government commissioned Alexander Graham Bell, the noted inventor, to travel to Genoa and to return the remains to Washington D. C. At about this time Dr. Bell was experimenting with man lifting kites, building on the earlier work of Lawrence Hargrave. It was Bell's later involvement with The Aerial Experiment Association from 1907, that played a more significant role in the advancement of powered flight. But on the morning of December 31, 1903, he was beside the grave in Genoa when it was opened with due ceremony. Also in attendance were the U.S. Consul, an official of the British Burial Ground Fund Association and a party of Genoese workers and officials.

It had been suggested by Gilbert H. Grosvenor, the then editor of the National Geographic, that the United States Government should provide a warship to carry the remains across the Atlantic. However, this suggestion was not taken up, and the casket was placed on board the steamer *Princess Irene* of the North German Lloyd Line, arriving in New York on January 19, 1904. It was then taken by sea to the Naval Yard in Washington. From there, on January 25, draped in the flags of Britain and the USA, it was escorted to its final resting place in the Mall by a troop of the 15th Cavalry, a detachment of Marines, and the Marine Band. A signal honour indeed for a man who, during his life, had never even visited the United States.

To understand why Jacques Louis was so revered by citizens of the United States it is necessary to know a little about the circumstances of his birth and later life. Elizabeth Macie was a widow of substantial means, when she joined the sophisticated social set in Bath in the early 1760s. Here she began an affair with the Duke of Northumberland, and all was going well until she discovered she was pregnant. To avoid any scandal she immediately travelled to Paris where, in 1765, she gave birth to a son whom she named Jacques Louis. Because Elizabeth wanted her son to become a naturalised British subject, she arranged for his residence in England as he approached his 10th

birthday. She then petitioned for him to become a British subject, and this was granted by the Crown. However, influences close to George III saw to it that the new subject, now named James Lewis, was officially barred from ever becoming a member of the Privy Council, or of either House of Parliament. He could not take any civil or military office and was not eligible for any grant of land, honours or inheritable property from the Crown. It is thought that the Duke of Northumberland had exerted this influence to protect his legitimate offspring.

The course of James's education eventually led him to Pembroke College at Oxford University. With the doors to most worldly opportunity already closed to him by his father, James decided to adopt science as a future career, a field that no one had thought to prevent him entering. He graduated on May 26, 1786, with the degree of Master of Arts, and began a distinguished career in the new science of geology. His father, the Duke of Northumberland, died in 1786, followed by his mother, Elizabeth Macie, who died in 1800. On February 16, 1801, James petitioned to have his father's family name added to his. This was granted, and henceforth he was known as James Lewis Macie Smithson.

James converted a substantial inheritance from his mother to an even greater private fortune during his later life. However, he never married, but had a younger brother, (Mrs Macie had been back to visit the Duke!!), and a nephew. When James died in 1829 his brother had predeceased him. In his will he excluded inheritance by his nephew, whom he considered a wastrel, but provided for any children his nephew might have to inherit his fortune. In the event of his nephew having no children, James determined that his fortune would not reside in England, because of his treatment by the British Crown. However, he admired the way America had emerged from its revolution, and decided that, if he was to have no living heirs, his fortune would go to the government of the United States of America, ' *to found at Washington under the name of the Smithsonian Institution an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men'*. The fate of the Smithsonian Institution was held in suspense until 1835, when the nephew died, unmarried and childless. By the time James's body was exhumed at Genoa in 1903, the Smithsonian Institution had already become of inestimable cultural value to the people of the United States, and the opportunity for the Institution to receive his remains, due to quarrying operations adjacent to the cemetery, was eagerly accepted.

If Samuel Pierpont Langley, who was secretary of the Smithsonian at the time, had been successful with the *Aerodrome* on December 8, 1903, then the arrival of the remains of James Smithson at Washington would have been at a time of unprecedented prestige for the Institution, for its secretary and for the founder. The reality was that the failed attempt was financially costly to the U. S. Government, and the Institution. It also virtually destroyed the reputation of Langley, who died a discouraged man on February 27, 1906. Charles Walcott, who succeeded Langley as secretary, was a geologist. This appointment would no doubt have pleased the pioneering geologist James Smithson, but it was destined to mightily displease the Wright Brothers, and consequently to deny the Smithsonian ownership of the the most sacred icon of powered flight until 1948.

Alexander Graham Bell recruited Glenn Curtiss to the Aerial Experiment Association in 1907. It was the third design of the A.E.A., the Curtiss sponsored *June Bug*, that caused the first warning shot from the Wright Brothers about patent infringement, when it was awarded the *Scientific American Trophy* in 1908. After Charles Walcott allowed Curtiss to restore, modify and actually fly Langley's *Aerodrome*, to provide evidence in defence of legal action taken against Curtiss by the Wright Brothers , Orville's relations with the Smithsomian deteriorated significantly. He refused to allow the original *Wright Flyer* to be displayed in the Smithsonian. Instead, following a supportive lecture to the Royal Aeronautical Society in London in 1921, by Griffith Brewer, entitled *The Langley Machine and the Hammondsport Trials*, Orville decided that the *Flyer* should go to the Science Museum in London. It remained in England from 1928 until its negotiated return to the USA in 1948, where it was displayed in the Smithsonian's Arts and Industries Building and, from July 1, 1976, in the new NASM.

A new philanthropist has given his name to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, an extension of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, which has opened, just 100 years after the Wright Brothers flew at Kitty Hawk, and 100 years after James Smithson first arrived in the USA .**John Scott.**

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

March 2004 No.371

March Meeting

The March meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3rd March 2004, 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.

This meeting will be the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

The AGM will comprise reports by the 2003 President and Honorary Treasurer, and election of office bearers for 2004. At the conclusion of the reports all executive and committee positions will be declared vacant and nominations called for filling of all positions. If more than one person nominates for a position, a ballot will be conducted.

Following the AGM, a video on vintage aircraft at Duxford will be shown. Please attend this important meeting to ensure the incoming office bearers receive your continued support.

Committee Meeting

A Committee Meeting, commencing at 6:30pm will be held immediately prior to the Annual General Meeting.

February Meeting

Guest speaker was Robin Mead, who gave a most interesting talk about an event concerning the engine fire on a Boeing 377 Stratocruiser shortly after departure from Accra, Ghana and bound for London in 1959. Infant Robin and his parents were passengers on board the aircraft.

Whilst the main part of the talk was, in fact, the same speech given by his father several years ago, Robin also provided much insight into the development of the Stratocruiser aircraft and their use by BOAC. The use of Stratocruisers on many services had come about because of the withdrawal of the Comet I from service following structural failure. In order to fulfil the demand, BOAC acquired a number of piston engine airliners of various types from several sources including United Airlines (from which this Stratocruiser had come) and even Qantas.

The Stratocruiser was a development of the B-29 Superfortress, with a "bubble" on top of the original fuselage to accommodate the passenger cabin. Robin noted that only 55 were built, although many more military C-97s were also constructed. BOAC converted the ex-United aircraft that had originally been equipped with Curtiss Electric propellers to fitment with Hamilton Standard propellers.

No matter which type of propeller fitted, the aircraft suffered a worrying number of propeller and engine failures, resulting in engine fire, runaway propellers and subsequent emergency landings, oceanic ditchings or disappearance of the aircraft.

The Accra incident involved G-ANTY "RMA Coriolanus", in which shortly after take-off, the number 4 engine caught fire and incurred a runaway propeller. The captain was able to shed the propeller and return for a safe landing at Accra.

In much later research carried out by Robin, he found out just how lucky the passengers and crew were to be able to land safety without any loss. He discovered that the BOAC captain had experienced a similar propeller mishap whilst crossing the Atlantic, and on that occasion was advised by a Pan American captain, who was also crossing the Atlantic, and who had also experienced the same propeller malfunction. Been there, done that!

Robin also displayed a wide selection of West African and BOAC memorabilia and ran a video featuring Stratocruiser and other BOAC and operations.

The very large audience, which posed many questions to Robin, was certainly an indication of the great interest generated by both the speaker and the subject.

On the Internet

Pacific Book House
(www.pacificbookhouse.com.au)
This is a mail-order second hand book supplier operated by Bill and Patricia McGrath. It features a wide range of titles in specialist sections, which include Australian history, Pacific islands history, Papua New Guinea, naval history, and most notably, aviation. You will find many much sort after aviation titles and the prices are quite reasonable.

Historic VH Register
(http://pascal.brugier.free.fr/registre/txt/vh-aaa.txt) & *(http://pascal.brugier.free.fr/registre/txt/vh-jaa.txt)*
These two sites contain a large amount of the historic Australian civil aircraft register. It is not complete by any means; there are omissions and there are no dates. Some blocks of registrations are very detailed and quite recent, whilst others are minimal and well out of date. It was last updated on 18 June 2002. Whether for research (for which I'd be careful) or for just interest, these are still very fascinating sites.

The Schneider Trophy
(www.hydroretro.net/indexen.html)
This site details the Schneider Trophy races and also contains many images of vintage seaplanes. The main site is in French and contains more detailed information on individual aircraft, but the English version is still well worth a look.

Aeroclub.Com.Au
(www.aeroclub.com.au)
This very comprehensive site is where you can find many items of interest about Australian aviation. Sections include a calendar of events, aero clubs, flying schools, airfields, individual aircraft and a good search engine.

Warbird Registry
(www.warbirdresourcegroup.org/registry/index.html)
This site is still under construction, but already provides details and some images of hundreds of warbirds from around the world. Types include F4U Corsair, F8F Bearcat, P-38 Lightning, P-47 Thunderbolt, Spitfire, Wirraway, Neptune, various helicopters, various Russian types and much more.

Calendar of Events

29 February 2004 Airshow Point Cook Vic
7 March 2004 Albury Air Show, Albury NSW
14 March 2004 Tyabb Air Show, featuring "The Great Mustang Roundup", Tyabb Victoria
27-28 March 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, and Airtourer Association Fly-in,Temora NSW
7 April 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
9-11 April 2004 SAAA National Convention, Wagga Wagga NSW
9-12 April 2004 Natfly 2004 National Ultralight Fly-in, Narromine NSW
9-12 April 2004 Australian National Aerobatics Competition, Parkes NSW
24-25 April 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
5 May 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
15-16 May 2004 AAAA National Fly-in and Caboolture Air Spectacular, Caboolture Qld
2 June 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum.
3 July 2004 World Hot Air Ballooning Championships, Mildura Vic

2004 Subscription Fees

2004 subscriptions are now overdue. The cost remains at $25 per annum. Renewal notices were included with the February issue of *Southern Skies.*

Australia Day Honours List 2004

The following were awarded Order of Australia honours in the recent Australia Day Honours list:
Dr Paul Scully-Power Member in the General Division (AM) – for service to science and the community. Paul is a patron of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, was Australia's first astronaut and was a former Chairman of CASA.

Phillip Wellesley Dulhunty Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to trade through the design, manufacture and export of equipment for large high voltage electric systems and to aviation, particularly through the Seaplane Pilots' Association of Australia as President. Phil is Patron of the Black Cat Project and has been one of the driving forces in acquiring the PBY-6A Catalina now operated by HARS.

Wing Commander Robert Henry Gibbes DSO DFC (ret) Order of Australia Medal (OAM) for services to aviation and to tourism, particularly in PNG. No doubt the many other achievements made by Bobby in wartime and peacetime contributed to the award. Bobby's story in the RAAF and as founder of Gibbes Sepik Airways is related in *"Sepik Pilot"* by James Sinclair (which is a must read), as is his autobiography *"You Live But Once"*.

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).*

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

Pomp and Circumstance.

On my last visit to Bathurst I visited the current exhibition at the Bathurst District Historical Society Museum, which is located in the East Wing of one of the country's finest examples of colonial architecture, the Bathurst Court House. The exhibition celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the visit of HM Queen Elizabeth II and HR H The Duke of Edinburgh to Bathurst on February 12, 1954. On that day I was languishing in Port Moresby and was absent for most of the *Royal Tour*. And so I was interested to learn something about what I had missed – the first visit of a reigning monarch to Australia, which commenced when the *Gothic* entered Sydney Harbour on February 3, and ended when it left Fremantle on April 1. The exhibition contained details of the Queen's arrival by aircraft at Raglan aerodrome and provided the information that the C. O. of the RAAF's No 86 Transport Wing's *Queen's Flight*, Wing Commander Peter Henderson, had been raised in Bathurst and had married a Bathurst girl.

There is another exhibition about the *Royal Tour* which has just opened at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, named *A Royal Romance*. During a recent visit to that museum I searched in vain for any substantial information that would encourage a visitor to believe that Australia had played a significant role in the history of aviation. Nor am I holding my breath that *A Royal Romance* will place much emphasis on the part played by aviation during the two months the Royal couple were in Australia. Yet it would have been impossible for the comprehensive itinerary of the tour to have been completed without the assistance of a massive effort on the part of the DCA, the RAAF, the RAN and the civil airlines.

About 14500 km of the *Royal Tour* was flown, and of this about 8000 km was flown in the RAAF's *Royal Dakota*, A65-123. The remainder was shared between Australian National Airways, (Skymaster), Trans Australia Airlines, (Convair), and Qantas Empire Airways, (Constellation). Something of the organisation required by the civil operators, and the atmosphere of the *Royal Tour*, is conveyed by Jim Cowan in an interview he gave to Greg Banfield some years ago.

"Qantas provided the Constellation VH-EAF to carry the Queen from Melbourne to Brisbane, from Brisbane to Townsville, and from Brisbane to Broken Hill, then on to Adelaide, Kalgoorlie and Perth. I was among the crew of VH-EAF, with Don MacMaster in command. 'Torchy' Uren flew the support aircraft. There were always two aircraft on such tours because of the possibility of unserviceability. Such precautions are not so necessary with today's more reliable aircraft, but in those days the back-up aircraft followed the primary aircraft by half an hour to an hour. 'Torchy' followed us all the way round the tour and finally, when we got to Kalgoorlie, somebody must have taken pity on him and had a word to the Queen, as his crew was presented to the Royal couple then. It was the last opportunity they had, because if we took off successfully from Kalgoorlie for Perth, 'Torchy's' job was done and he was to return to Sydney. Perth happened to be in the middle of an infantile paralysis scare when we arrived, so the Queen was not allowed to come in contact with anybody. Everybody who met her on this arrival had to stand off at a distance and graciously bow, but there was no contact by hand with anybody except her Qantas crew. We had come with her and she shook us all by the hand, to the envy of the Perth crowd."

The RAAF and the RAN supported the tour by providing flypasts, guards of honour, parades of servicemen and lots of music from their several Bands. RAAF marine craft helped with air-sea rescue patrols during Royal over water flights. Meteorology reconnaissance flights were made constantly from Amberley, Townsville and East Sale with Lincolns, and from Laverton and Pearce with Neptunes.

The cruiser Australia, the carrier Vengeance, the destroyer Anzac and the frigate Quadrant left Sydney on January 29, to meet the *Gothic* in the Tasman, and to provide an escort. Firefly and Seafury aircraft were flown off the Vengeance for an aerial salute to the *Gothic* on February 2. Three Lincolns greeted the *Gothic* off the NSW coast on February 3. Six Vampires and six Mustangs then

escorted her through Sydney Heads. Finally, when the *Gothic* departed Australian operational waters off Cocos Island on April 5, RAAF Neptunes flew out to bid farewell. The RAAF's No 86 Transport Wing's *Queen's Flight* provided five Dakotas to transport the Royal entourage and its luggage during the tour. This required seventeen five member crews working in rotation to man the aircraft.

The current exhibition at Bathurst provides an insight to the detailed planning and safety measures required by the tour organisers at each aerodrome on the itinerary. At Bathurst a proving flight was carried out on January 15, involving RAAF and DCA aircraft. The *Royal Dakota*, A65-123, was there, with three accompanying Dakotas, all carrying the Royal cypher. The cabin of A65-123 had been soundproofed and divided into a comfortable travelling compartment and a special conference room. Arthur Affleck, who was in charge of all proving flights in NSW, also arrived in a DCA aircraft with another 17 Departmental experts.Temporary arrangements established at Raglan included a control tower with radio communication and navigation aids. While members of the various authorities involved with the Royal visit conferred at the aerodrome, the regular Butler Air Transport service arrived, adding to the busy scene. The one thing that was a worry, and potentially beyond anyone's control, was the prevalence of the common house fly at the aerodrome.

On February 12, Squadron Leader Cornish took the *Royal Dakota* on a wide sweep of Bathurst before making a perfect landing on Raglan aerodrome, exactly on time at 11.25 am. Immediately on alighting, the Queen and the Duke began to swat at the flies with their hands; something between the 'Royal Wave' and the 'Great Aussie Salute'. There had also been a drama, just before the arrival of the Queen, when the regular Butler service from Sydney was ordered back to Mascot because Raglan was closed to all traffic, other than flights connected with the Royal visit. All five RAAF Dakotas were on the aerodrome that day, as well as a charter aircraft carrying members of the press. Between 80,000 and 90,000 people welcomed the Queen and the Duke to Bathurst. It was the greatest crowd the city had ever known. At 12.40 pm the Royal train, carrying the Queen and the Duke, pulled out of Bathurst on its way back to Sydney via Lithgow and Katoomba. By all accounts, and despite the flies, the Royal visit to Bathurst had been an outstanding success.

I missed the Queen's visit, but I was present when the first member of the Royal family to come by air to Bathurst, arrived at Raglan aerodrome on October 13, 1945. Luckily it was a school free Saturday, and I eagerly cycled out to the aerodrome, then watched in awe as Avro York C Mk1, *Endeavour*, carrying the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, touched down smoothly at 11.20am. At the time the Duke of Gloucester was Australia's Governor General and he had come at the invitation of the Prime Minister, Ben Chiflley. I waited three hours for the Royal party to return and watched the take-off of *Endeavour* on its way back to Canberra.

The Duke of Gloucester first visited Australia in 1934, the main purpose being to help celebrate the centenary of the state of Victoria. He arrived at Fremantle on October 4. His tour concluded on December10, in Brisbane. It was the 15th anniversary of the arrival of Ross and Keith Smith at Darwin, and his final duty, appropriately, was the inauguration of the Australia-England air mail service at Archerfield aerodrome. The year 1934 was a benchmark in world aviation, with Australia and Australians prominent in much of the activity. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to include air transport for at least part of the Duke's tour. His departure from Sydney for Lismore, on November 28, was chosen for the first flight of a member of the Royal family in Australia. Then on the following day he flew a second leg from Coffs Harbour to Newcastle. The most modern airliner on the Australian register at the time, the DH86, had been grounded. The aircraft selected for the honour was Charles Ulm's *Faith in Australia*. The departure from Macot of the *Faith*, piloted by 'Scotty' Allan, was described as follows.

"The aeroplane had the coat of arms of the Duke of Gloucester painted on its side and when HRH went on board his standard was flown from the cockpit. The machine was taxied down the aerodrome towards the southern end and turned into the wind. A Royal salute of 21 guns was fired by a company of the Royal Australian Artillery. The *Faith in Australia* then took off and was joined by a formation of three Wapitis as escort. Thousands of people watched the departure from the roofs of city business houses. The huge monoplane soared over Sydney with her silver grey wing gleaming in the bright sunlight, and the three Wapitis in perfect formation close behind".....**John Scott.**

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

April 2004 No.372

April Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7th April 2004, 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.

Yes, it's that time of year again. This meeting will comprise the Annual Aviation Trivia and Aircraft Recognition competitions.

It is the 21st annual aviation trivia competition, hosted this year by Ian Dolstra. Ian won the coveted Slipstream Trophy in 2003, so this year he will tease you with some more cunning questions, and hand over this prestigious trophy to the winner.

Following the trivia competition, Robin Mead will conduct the 36th annual aircraft recognition competition. Participants will compete for the elegant Brian White Memorial Trophy, whilst the person achieving the closest average score will receive the handsome President's Trophy. Those members who attended the March meeting and who agreed to assist in the aircraft recognition competition are requested to bring in 10 slides each.

Last year's winners are reminded to return their suitably inscribed trophies for the handover ceremony.

There will be a small charge to enter the competitions, however, for the chance of winning one of the fine trophies and book prizes, the cost is small indeed.

Why not bring a friend and join us for another entertaining meeting?

March Meeting

The main business of the March meeting was the Annual General Meeting, which was followed by a video on flying legends that featured propeller driven warbirds at Duxford. Highlights of the AGM were:

The Report from the 2003 President, Ian Debenham, covered many issues from the past year. Ian noted that we had an excellent array of guest speakers during the year, and made special mention of the Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture by David Craddock, who resolved yet a few more mysteries about early Australian aeronauts; Tony Hilton, who related some most interesting facts about the life of his late father, Dr Bill Hilton, the man who coined the phrase "sound barrier"; and, Peter Phillipps, who entertained the October meeting with an excellent slide show and talk about Lord Howe Island and its aircraft.

Ian encouraged members to consider participating in a members' night, to be held next August, in which 4 or 5 members will each give a 15-20 minute talk on their particular interests or experiences in aviation.

Ian also gave thanks to supporting members of the Committee, particularly Warwick Bigsworth for his role as Honorary Secretary, and to John Scott for his entertaining contribution to *Southern Skies* through his *Loops and Landings* pages, as well as his organisation and arranging of guest speakers. Of special note though, was his recognition of and thanks to our retiring Honorary Treasurer, Keith White, who has maintained the financial records so diligently, and who has exhibited exceptional dedication to that position for the past nine years.

He also thanked several members for their individual contributions during the year: Ken Garland and Bill Holswich for their generous donations of food and supper supplies; Al Bovelt for his frequent contributions of articles and newsworthy items; David Marshall and Peter Phillipps for their generous donations of books to the Society.

In his Treasurer's Report, Keith White reported that the Society incurred an operating loss of $313.74. Whilst this caused concern to some members, Keith assured the meeting that the Society is still financially sound, with assets of $5,153 in current or fixed deposit accounts. He advised that the increase in expenses could be attributed to unexpected costs

associated with hiring of equipment and the imposition of a fee for using the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown for one meeting. Additional costs were also incurred through the increased Public Liability insurance premium, increases to postage and stationery expenses.

Keith reported that an expense minimisation strategy had been formulated, which would include items such as ceasing our donation program to museums, restoration societies and the like, and not hiring equipment. The effect is expected to result in a small surplus at year's end.

Following the Honorary Treasurer's Report, Robin Mead moved a vote of thanks for Keith's outstanding contribution in the role of Treasurer. This was soundly endorsed by all those present.

The election of the 2004 committee was held, with the following results:
President: Ian Debenham
Honorary Secretary: Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Treasurer: John Swanson
Photo Archivist: Jim Payens
General Committee: Ian Dolstra, Bill Holswich, Roger Kennedy, David Marshall, Jack Powell, John Scott and Keith White.

On the Internet

WWW.PBY.COM *(www.pby.com)*
This is the definitive site for PBY/Catalina/Canso enthusiasts and researchers. It contains many archive documents, aircraft database, restorations and many photographs. The site features mainly American material, but also has some interesting links.

The Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia
(www.home.gil.com.au/~bfillery/mossie08.htm)
This site features objectives of the association, Mosquito history, production, variants, pilot's notes and much, much more. Well worth a look.

Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia
(www.faaaa.asn.au/index.htm)
This is definitely the site for all those with an interest in naval aviation. It provides a history of the FAA, the aircraft, ships, photographs, along with association news, information and links.

Flying Fighters *(www.flyingfighters.com.au)*
This is the site of the historic fighter collection, which is based at Archerfield. The collection includes the Yak-3, Sea Fury, Avenger, MiG-15, MiG-17, Harvard and Albatros. The site includes plenty of photographs and data on the aircraft, restoration projects, merchandise, events calendar and much more.

Queensland Air Museum *(www.qam.com.au)*
We mentioned this site several years ago, although since then it has been renamed and considerably updated. It features many items about the museum, the collection, photo album and new information.

News Items

Important DC-3 Saved

Al Bovelt has advised that DC-3 VH-BPL, (c/n 12873) which has been parked for several years in the open at Hoxton Park, has been donated to the Qantas Founders Outback Museum at Longreach. It will be dismantled and taken by road to Longreach.

This historically significant aircraft, crewed by Capt W Forgan-Smith and F/O L Purkiss, arrived in Lae on 12 June 1948 as VH-EAP to establish Q.E.A. DC-3 operations in New Guinea. It later became VH-EBY (2) with Qantas, then VH-SBG with TAA and P2-ANP with Air Niugini. When Air Niugini disposed of its DC-3s, this aircraft was sold for use by the Red Cross in South East Asia as N5590A. It did not take up this role and was sold to Bush Pilots Airways, later Air Queensland, where it was registered as VH-BPL. It was later sold to Laurie McIver at Hoxton Park, where it has since resided, although in 1993 it was sold to John Williams in Tasmania. John has now generously donated it to the QFOM.

Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown

The Society's collection of historic papers, documents and books is held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown. Committee member, John Scott, has undertaken to liaise with the AAM on matters relating to our collection, including accessibility by members, storage and contributions. A report on his discussions will be published in a forthcoming newsletter.

Belated, but welcome, Catalina News from the North

Our regular North Queensland correspondent, Roy Fordham, was delighted to see the HARS Catalina transit through Cairns last year on its delivery to its new home at Albion Park. Roy has sent this entertaining story of the Cat's brief visit to Cairns:

"The old adage of 'being in the right place at the right time' really rang true for me on the occasion of the HARS 'Cat' gracing us with her presence, here in Cairns. Her arrival had not been publicly announced or widely known of, whether this was of necessity for some reason or other I know not.

I do know that after her departure there was a great deal of disappointment in the local community, many locals having memories of the Catalina base in Cairns.

However, for me a chance word from a friend at the airport informing me that the 'Cat' was coming in from Darwin, its first landfall in Australia after a really long Asian sector, for fuel, much needed maintenance and overnight stay, was music to my ears. Those of us fortunate enough meet and greet this lovely old, magnificent PBY, and the dedicated people who nursed her back to Australia, revelled in the experience; this had been a journey of quite epic proportion, let there be no doubt.

The word "dedicated" cannot be over emphasised in the case of these people, I'm sure the journey will be well catalogued in the not too distant future, hearing just some the things experienced on the long trek from France, will I am sure make fascinating reading.

From the brief, but very pleasant conversation I had with Bruce Simpson, the Captain, and Donna Porter, First Officer, both very experienced Qantas pilots, I gathered that they had both enjoyed a very unique, albeit demanding time.

Flying a very different type to which they usually crewed, the overall speed capabilities, especially against strong headwinds was one of the many noticeable differences. Very difficult to coax a high speed climb to more favourable winds, at altitude unavailable to this old girl, very different from the modern jets they've been used to driving, no doubt.

I managed to have a few words with the engineers, only a few, as they were going to be extremely busy preparing the now very tired old lady for the remainder of her journey south to the new make over she so richly deserves.

A very different, and I must say very rewarding experience, was to be forthcoming due to another chance conversation I had with one Mr Alex Bonazzi. It is at this point that I digress a little, just enough to say, that I hope, most of you reading this item, will have the opportunity of meeting this gentleman.

Alex, on the occasion I first met him, had been following, and filming the 'Cat' during the journey to Australia, for the purpose of preserving this epic story for H.A.R.S, the owners of this piece of aviation history. A previous epic true story of WW2 Catalina wartime record is currently available on VHS or DVD recordings, a product of Alex's dedicated interest in flying boats.

It was obvious to me that he was under some stress at this time, trying to arrange for an air to air film shoot for the departure of the 'Cat' the following morning. He was in discussion with a helicopter company for this mission and from what I understood, it was going to cost a fortune, and although it was then getting late, I persuaded him to let me try to arrange for a more reasonable deal.

I knew that my good friend Paul Phelan, a much respected aviation writer and accomplished air to air still's photographer, had organised a fixed wing aircraft for a similar mission. I suggested Alex should talk to Paul with a view (pun intended) to easing the cost with a joint cover plan, which to everyone's agreement worked out very well, and the results of which I am sure will be seen in the future.

Whilst all this had been going on, it became apparent that Alex was by now starving hungry, and without accommodation for the night. Another fact had emerged also, this was that the poor old engineers, still working of course, had no idea of the location of their hotel, in Cairns, while the pilots had been whisked away in grand fashion, these guys had been left to their own devices, nice one I thought.

By this time Alex had things sown up for the morrow, but was desperately craving Cairns prawns for dinner. I told him I could furnish the accommodation also, but not all at once, there will be a delay in between, as I have vowed to get the engineers to their hotel on completion of maintenance duties.

So whizz Alex off to a sea food restaurant for his prawns, leave him there while I return for the workers, and drop them off at their hotel. Return to pick up a refuelled Alex and take him home to clean up, recharge the batteries, ready for the departure filming next day."

From your North Queensland Correspondent, Roy Fordham.

PS. Before light's out I am given a private preview of the film Alex had taken previously, great viewing and very impressive, I'm sure once it's all stitched together it will be a masterpiece, and sincerely hope it will be a best seller for him.

PPS. Be sure you buy a copy of "BLACK KNIGHTS", it's a must for any enthusiast's video or DVD library, WW2 record of RAAF Catalina Squadron activity. This is a quality product I can assure you.

Point Cook Update

Many of our readers will be aware that the Department of Defence has been considering the sale of Point Cook aerodrome, which is reported as the oldest continuously operating military aerodrome in the world. Petitions to the Government had been

organised through many interested organisations over the past months.

In late February, the Federal Government announced that it has dropped plans to sell the historic site. Under the plan, Point Cook will remain in public ownership, with the airfield and 210 hectares of land being leased for 49 years to a new, not-for-profit National Aviation Museum Trust. The Trust will manage the commercial, recreational and educational aviation activities, be responsible for the National Aviation Museum on the site, preserve heritage buildings and work with veterans and community groups.

Department of Defence will keep control of the 33 ha RAAF College, RAAF Museum, Australian Flying Corps memorial, Parade ground and air force cadets.

More Flying Boats

Last month, I received the following story from the Post Courier, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea:

PNG Aicraft Wreck Found After 67 Years

A PLANE that sank 67 years ago in the deep and murky waters of the Port Moresby harbour has finally been discovered. Brian Bells power generation manager Michael Roberts and Moresby Truck and Tractors managing consultant Don Lowe, who discovered the wreckage two weeks ago, say it is a Fairchild model 91 amphibian.

Mr Lowe, who has been searching for the aircraft for three years, said it was brought into the country by Richard Archbold in 1936 to explore the Upper Fly River and the Sepik Divide as part of a huge expedition. He said it supplied parachute drops of supplies for explorers far up the Fly River and guided new exploration to various regions. Equipped with the latest radio equipment, it acted as the communication command centre for the expedition.

He said the Fairchild could land on rivers, lakes and the few airfields at that time and was chosen by Mr Archbold as the ideal plane to explore the Papua New Guinea. The aircraft had a single Wright Cyclone engine, a wingspan of 67 feet, a payload of 4000 pounds and 1300 mile endurance with a cruising speed of 140 miles an hour.

Mr Lowe said in late June 1936, the Fairchild was flown to Port Moresby to buy supplies for the expedition from Burns Philp and was anchored in a seaplane alley. He said on July 2, 1936, a strong gale overturned the aircraft which was anchored in the Port Moresby harbour and it sank into the deep waters, unable to be salvaged.

Now 67 years later, on February 20, a vessel was retrieving its anchor to depart when pieces of aircraft wreckage began surfacing. "When I heard this from the skipper about aircraft wreckage, I immediately presumed it to be the Fairchild aircraft and contacted Don Lowe who has been looking for the missing aircraft," said Mr Roberts.

On February 21, at 6am, Mr Roberts and Mr Lowe dived into the waters to begin their search. Mr Lowe said after 50 minutes, they came across bits of the missing plane and after conducting further dives that morning, they confirmed it was the missing Fairchild aircraft with its engine and hull/fuselage sitting on the muddy harbour floor.

He said they were 99.9 per cent sure it was the Fairchild aircraft because the engine propeller and shape of the fuselage matched the photographs. He said they needed to find the serial number to confirm the find. After several years of searching for this aircraft, it came as a great relief for us to find the remains of this once graceful bird of the sea and sky which was lost 67 years ago," said Mr Lowe.

Calendar of Events

9-11 April 2004 SAAA National Convention, Wagga Wagga NSW
9-12 April 2004 Natfly 2004 National Ultralight Fly-in, Narromine NSW
9-12 April 2004 Australian National Aerobatics Competition, Parkes NSW
24-25 April 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
5 May 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
15-16 May 2004 AAAA National Fly-in and Caboolture Air Spectacular, Caboolture Qld
2 June 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum.

2004 Subscription Fees

2004 subscriptions are now overdue. This issue will be the last one sent to those few who have not renewed their subscription. Renewal notices for those members are again included with this issue.

News

News items, other contributions, advertisements 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*
April 2004 No 372

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Most Compelling Story In Australia's Aviation History.

Dick Smith and Pedr Davis used the above title to describe the *Coffee Royal Affair* in their book 'Kookaburra', Lansdowne Press, 1980. It is now 75 years since Easter Saturday, 1929, when the *Southern Cross* took-off from Richmond NSW for Wyndham WA, on the first leg of a planned flight to England. On the following day, March 31, the *Southern Cross* and her crew went missing. The next two key dates were April 12, when Les Holden found the *Southern Cross* and April 21, when Lester Brain found the *Kookaburra*, and reported that her crew had perished. This period, falling as it did between Good Friday and Anzac Day, filled the newspapers with sensational news day after day. The sentiments of Easter and the mateship of Gallipoli were invoked in the minds of Australians as the tragedy unfolded. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends," (John 15:13), seemed a particularly apt quotation at the time.

The details of the *Coffee Royal Affair* have been well covered in 'Kookaburra', and more recently in Ian Mackersey's book 'Smithy', Little Brown and Company, 1998. I will not even attempt to summarise the events of 75 years ago in the two pages available to Loops and Landings. Instead I have recorded a few of the stories following on from *Coffee Royal* , that have always interested me.

On the day Les Holden took-off from Richmond in the *Canberra*, on his search for the *Southern Cross*, April 5, so too did the Wackett Widgeon II. This latter aircraft was of course piloted by Wing Commander Wackett. However, it was unable to gain sufficient height to cross the Blue Mountains and returned after about twenty minutes. Then, on April 11, the seaplane carrier *Albatross* was dispatched from Sydney for the search area, but was abeam Port Stephens when the *Southern Cross* was found. Finally, when the Widgeon III of Anderson and Hitchcock went missing, the RAAF sent five DH 9As off from Laverton on an ineffectual search . Only two returned, the other three having been written off in the desert. *Coffee Royal* was a frustrating affair for the Defence Department.

Bob Hitchcock was a Gallipoli veteran and first met Smithy and Keith Anderson when he worked with Western Australian Airways as an aircraft mechanic, and they were employed as pilots. Hitchcock's body was returned from the Tanami Desert to Perth, where his family had requested the dignity of a quiet family funeral. His burial took place at Perth's Karrakatta Cemetery on July 3, 1929. He left behind his estranged wife Violet, and their three sons. When the circumstances of his widow and children were revealed, the Federal Government assured Mrs Hitchcock that employment for her sons would be found in the defence forces as soon as they were of age. Eventually all three served in the RAAF. The eldest son Robert joined the RAAF in 1934 as a stores hand. Later, his application for a cadetship was given preferential treatment, and the RAAF persisted with his subsequent training as a pilot, despite his apparent lack of aptitude for flying. He graduated as a pilot from 1 FTS in July, 1936.

As fate would have it, Robert Hitchcock was the pilot of No2 Sqn Hudson, A16-97, which stalled and crashed on approach to Canberra airport on August 13, 1940, with the loss of ten lives. A memorial cairn on the crash site, situated in the low hills to the south east of RAAF Fairbairn, commemorates the death of Fl Lt Robert Edward Hitchcock, together with the Chief of the General Staff, the Minister of State for the Army, the Minister of State for Air, the Vice-President of the Executive Council, ,the Private Secretary of the Minister for Air, three fellow RAAF members and a senior army officer. News of this disaster, on the eve of the Battle of Britain, compounded the grim news from overseas. The Hitchcock family had again suffered tragedy as a result of an aircraft accident, perhaps made harder to bear because of its links to *Coffee Royal*.

On the 50th anniversary of the *Kookaburra's* forced landing, April 10, 1979, Dick Smith laid a commemorative plaque in Alice Springs, and at the same time John Haslett laid a plaque at the actual Tanami Desert landing spot. On the 60th anniversary, Bob Hitchcock's sister Pretoria Bliss, then aged 88, was flown in to the Tanami Desert site by helicopter. Exactly 60 years after the forced landing, at 4.35 pm. on April 10. 1989. Perry Morey. the leader of the Central Australian Aviation Museum's

expedition, made a short speech. "Aviators such as these two stalwart men placed Australia in the lead of the international aviation scene - a place that we still maintain today. They gave their lives attempting to save their mates. Greater love hath no man than this. We will remember."

In Ian Mackersey's book, 'Smithy', there is a description of Smithy's first meeting with Keith Anderson in the middle of 1922 at Carnarvon's aerodrome. "Yet as the two shook hands at the aerodrome and hurtled in a column of red dust on Smithy's motorbike, towards the Gascoyne Hotel, one of the staunchest and most tragic mateships of Kingsford Smith's life began." When Smithy and Anderson left Western Australian Airways in 1924 they went into the trucking business, with some initial financial assistance from Keith's mother Constance. They named their company Gascoyne Transport. The company was sold to a Carnarvon businessman, Mick Stroud, in November 1926, to finance their return to aviation. Gascoyne Transport was next sold to a group of pastoralists in 1935. It passed to the Wesfarmers Group in the 1950s and the name changed, in 1996, to Wesfarmers Transport. In November 2001, the company became part of the Toll Group. The business has thus traded for almost 80 years, and is a continuing link with its co-founders, Smithy and Keith Anderson.

By the time Keith Anderson's body arrived in Sydney by train, on July 30, the report of the three man *Air Inquiry Committee* had already been completed. Its findings simply added to the wave of public emotion and sympathy for those close to Anderson and Hitchcock.There was no resistance to the very public ceremony planned by Church, Commonwealth and State, for the funeral of Keith Anderson in Sydney. His coffin was taken to the mortuary chapel of Motor Funerals Ltd in City Road where it lay in state until July 5, when it was removed to St Stephen's Church in Macquarie Street. On that day one of the largest crowds ever to visit the church filed past the coffin. That evening the coffin was taken to the Presbyterian Church in Mosman where 50 men from the RS&SIL kept an overnight vigil. Thousands attended the full military funeral on Saturday July 6, culminating in the burial of Keith Anderson in Rawson Park. A large floral model of the *Kookaburra* was placed on the grave and a formation of aircraft flew overhead in the form of a cross.

Ian Mackersey portrays Smithy and Ulm as unfeeling in his book 'Smithy', where he writes, "There was no wreath at his, (Keith Anderson's), funeral from Kingsford Smith or from Ulm. Nor were they among the mourners. In the repaired *Southern Cross* they had flown out of Sydney.... to resume their record attempt and were now halfway to England." The truth is that the record attempt was only secondary to the demands of business, which by then had necessitated the resumption of the flight. Also, a careful reading of the list of wreaths at the funeral will show that prominent among them was one from the *Crew of the Southern Cross* and another from *Australian National Airways Ltd.* It is well recorded that both Smithy and Ulm were devastated by the death of Anderson and Hitchcock.

In 'Smithy', Ian Mackersey also writes, "The three wise men who sat in judgement on the *Coffee Royal* aviators are not on record anywhere subsequently revealing their private views of the events they were asked to examine." However, the son of Geoffrey Hughes, Geoffrey Jnr, was quoted as saying that, "on his deathbed in Sydney, our father said that he was not sure that he had been altogether fair in the judgement he formed of Kingsford Smith." There is also the biography of another of the wise men, C. N. McKay, who was President of the Victorian Aero Club at the time he was a member of the *Air Inquiry Committee*. The author, Cecil McKay's wife Marjory, includes a letter from her husband to Smithy, written on June 17, just three days after the *Committee* had completed its public sittings. "Dear Smithy, I had no opportunity before leaving Sydney of a word with you. Charles Ulm I did meet at the Australia and he was good enough to suggest that if I had any letters for England I might send them by the *Southern Cross* - that is the reason for the accompanying package. As a matter of fact several letters I should have written during the past few weeks comprise the bundle, and it may be that I shall not appear quite so remiss as if I rely on the RM steamers. I understand that you intend leaving about Wednesday 19, or shortly afterwards - whenever it is you can be sure that you take with you the good wishes of a host of people, and I for one cannot anticipate anything but success for this flight. Believe me and with kindest regards, Yours sincerely, C. N. McKay." That letter is a clear indication that Cecil McKay, even after a month of sittings and listening to seventy four witnesses, still maintained his high personal regard for both Smithy and Charles Ulm.....**John Scott**.

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

May 2004 No.373

May Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5th May 2004, 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 guest speaker for the evening will be Mr John Goble, who will discuss

Australians in the Royal Naval Air Service

John will provide a slide presentation about these Australians, along with the narrative including some details about the aircraft they flew. He will also outline the various installations of armament leading to the use of aircraft as fighting platforms.

John is the Vice President of the Australian Society of World War I Aero Historians. He served in the Royal Australian Navy between 1941 and 1976, being involved in aviation from 1945, interspersed with staff duties and sea commands.

Please join us for what should be another most interesting and entertaining evening.

Committee Meeting

A Committee meeting, commencing at 6:30pm will be held immediately prior to the May meeting.

April Meeting

This meeting featured the 21st Annual Aviation Trivia competition and the 36th Annual Aircraft Recognition competition.

Ian Dolstra hosted the aviation trivia competition, which was won by Jack Powell, and who is now the proud holder of the fabulous Slipstream Trophy for the next twelve months. A few of the questions are included later in the newsletter, with answers being provided next month.

The aircraft recognition competition was hosted by Robin Mead. A selection of slides was provided by several other members for use in the competition, which was won by Warwick Bigsworth, and who is now the holder of the Brian White Memorial Trophy. Runner up was Roger Kennedy, whilst the winner of the President's Trophy was John Scott.

The contribution of slides by several members ensured a wide selection of aircraft types, the most obscure being a Myasishchev M-17. Other not-so-recognisable types included Lisunov Li-2, Aermacchi Bosbok, Monett Sonerai, Ercoupe, EAA Acro Sport, Chrislea Super Ace, Percival Gull, Douglas Skyray and Yak 40, to name but few.

The entertaining evening also included a raffle, which will also feature at forthcoming meetings.

On the Internet

Planenutz (Ray Parer Story)
(www.apbs53.dsl.pipex.com)
This site features two sections; one dedicated to Dinky Toys, the other to Ray Parer. The latter provides an excellent series of articles, photographs and sound files of this famous airman. It covers the early years, the war years, the England Australia air races and adventures in New Guinea.

Australian Aviation in Antarctica
(www.antdiv.gov.au/default.asp?casid=3405)
This is part of the Australian Antarctic Division website. It includes a history of Australian aviation in Antarctica, with details on fixed and rotary winged aircraft. There is also information on the planned regular air services between Australia and the Antarctic continent.

Airchive Webseum of Commercial Aviation
(www.airchive.com)
A mainly US orientated site, but it has a wealth of information on selected defunct and some still operating airlines, timetables and route maps,

memorabilia, vintage and scrapped aircraft. It also has a detailed description of the Stephen Udvar-Hazy Air Museum at Washington D.C.'s Dulles Airport.

The Early Birds of Aviation Inc
(www.rcooper.0catch.com)
This site represents an organisation of pioneers who flew solo before December 17 1916. It includes biographies of 598 original early birds and early U.S. and foreign flyers. There are many interesting links to other early aviator sites. Two Australian entries are included; Harry Hawker and the much lesser known Laurie Marshall. You will find some fascinating material here.

Gippsland Aeronautics
(www.gippsaero.com)
Gippsland Aeronautics is the manufacturer of the GA200C Fatman agricultural aircraft and the very successful GA8 Airvan utility aircraft. The site features company information and technical and performance details of the Fatman and the Airvan. There are recent media releases, operators, new orders and some interesting images of these aircraft too.

2004 Aviation Trivia Quiz

The following five questions came from Ian Dolstra's list in the aviation trivia quiz held at the last meeting.

1. The R34 and the Los Angeles were the first two airships to do what?
2. What was the second V-bomber type to enter service with the RAF?
3. What was the second jet fighter to enter service with the RAAF?
4. What is the most successful (in terms of numbers built) Australian designed and manufactured jet aircraft?
5. Which three countries produced versions of the DC-3 / C-47 during World War II?

Answers next month.

News Items

B-24 Liberator, Werribee

Keith White has provided an extract from the February 2004 newsletter from the B-24 Liberator Memorial Restoration Fund Inc, which reported the consequences of a disastrous storm on the night of 27 January 2004. During the storm, some 50% of the asbestos cement sheet roof of the Fund's stores hangar collapsed. This was followed two days later by torrential rain and thunderstorms. Entry to the entire old airfield site was restricted until all hangars had been inspected by structural engineers.

At the time of the newsletter report, the Fund had not been able to assess its loss in parts and equipment, which will have to be decontaminated before being stored elsewhere. Some may be damaged or destroyed as a result of the roof collapsing, or the rain.

The Fund has received offers of alternative storage space from Wyndham City Council and the RAAF, as well as expressions of interest to help by several aviations and politicians. The use of heritage grants for such a calamity is also being investigated.

The report finished with the statement: "We will need a lot of help to get through this one..."

Should you wish to help financially, donations can be sent to:
The Secretary
B-24 Liberator Memorial Restoration Fund Inc
3 Eldorado Court
Wyndham Vale VIC 3024.

Aeronaut's Liability

In John Scott's excellent series on matters Bathurstian, which featured in his *Loops and Landings* pages last year, he made reference to the first serious aircraft accident to occur on Shute's Paddock. In September 1935 Mr Milton Kent, flying Westland Widgeon VH-UHU, attempted to land at Kelso whilst en-route from Narromine to Sydney. "As he approached the usual landing ground on Shute's Paddock, he noticed a number of cows grazing on the ground, so he decided to land in the next paddock, but the bumpy surface caused the aircraft to "crack-up"".

Perhaps he had in mind a past event, which Keith White has brought to our attention. The following is an extract from a Sydney newspaper of 10 May 1912:

"The Australian aviator, Mr W.E. Hart was sued in the Sydney District Court yesterday by Hugh Byrne, of the Elizabeth Dairy, Epsom Road, Waterloo, for damages, assessed at 20 Pounds. The claim is the first of the kind that has been made in Australia.

The plaintiff claimed that the defendant propelled an aeroplane over, upon, and against his land, on which his dairy cows were depasturing, made a great noise and disturbance with the machine and thereby frightened, disturbed and stampeded the herd, with the result that two of the cows were killed and others injured, besides which the supply of milk was greatly diminished, and he was hindered and disturbed in carrying on his business. Plaintiff further claimed that the defendant broke and entered upon his premises wherein the cows were being depastured.

The defence was that it was not an actionable wrong

for an aviator to pass over a man's land.

The plaintiff said, in his evidence, that he owned a herd of 320 cows. The stampede took place early in the morning when the defendant flew over his paddocks. The machine was first of all at a distance of about 10 feet over the telegraph wires, but afterwards it sailed lower. The cattle rushed in all directions. Besides the two killed, several were injured. He had an interview with Hart, when he offered to accept 10 Pounds in full satisfaction. Hart said he would send his manager along to settle the claim, but the appointment was not kept.

Francis Galvan, a stockman for the plaintiff, said the aviator made several flights over the land, lasting over an hour. The machine, which was about 40 feet from the ground, made a great noise. The cows raced in all directions, galloping over each other; as many as 25 fell together. He also said that he felt the whirling air from the machine as it passed over. Witness waved his hand to the aviator and cooeed to direct attention to the way the cattle were being frightened.

Oliver Simpson, in the employ of the plaintiff, estimated the machine was 20 feet above the telegraph poles.

The defendant, William Ewart Hart, said the paddocks were at least half a mile from where he rose first of all. In a normal flight he would rise at least 25 feet in 100 yards, and upwards accordingly. The height he would travel at when going would be from 700 feet to1000 feet. On no other occasion had complaints of stock being frightened been made, excepting at Penrith, when a racehorse owner asked him to detour. Stock as a rule did not take any notice. As to the height, it would be courting disaster to fly at a low level, owing to the chance of the machine getting out of order. He certainly did not think it would be safe to fly at a lower level than 200 feet at the spot referred to. He could not recollect passing over the plaintiff's farm at all, as he flew some distance that day, and on different occasions.

Henry Dixson, an airman, said the average height for an aeroplane to travel was 50 feet to 200 feet. As a rule, cattle did not take much notice. If the machine was lower down, cattle might take fright. The rapidity of the rise depended on circumstances.

His Honour said the question to settle was narrowed down to the height of the machine at the time. As far as he could see, it was not a case of trespass, but he did not bind himself to that. He gave a verdict for the amount claimed."

"The decision is a serious one for aviators", said Mr Hart last evening. "I will fulfil all my present engagements, but it is my intention not to take part in any other flights until the decision has been finally tested. Like other airmen, I do not mind taking the risks of the flight, but the legal risks are too great. If the verdict is held to be correct, it will retard aviation in Australia very seriously indeed."

And just two months later……..

Reported from Paris on 9th July 1912, the Civil Court has ordered M. Farman, the famous aeronaut, to indemnify a farmer for the damages caused to his stock through an aeroplane alighting upon his farm and causing animals to injure themselves in a stampede.

More Flying Boats

Last month, we reported on the finding of the Fairchild model 91 in Port Moresby harbour. By courtesy of John Scott, the story on the back page, which was extracted from Aircraft magazine, relates to the expedition carried out by Richard Archibald.

Calendar of Events

1 May 2004 10th Anniversary Fly-in, Watts Bridge Qld
2 May 2004 Barossa Airshow, Rowland Flat SA
15-16 May 2004 AAAA National Fly-in and Caboolture Air Spectacular, Caboolture Qld
2 June 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum.
15-16 June 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
3 July 2004 World Hot Air Balloon Championships, Mildura Vic
7 July 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
4 August 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
28-30 August 2004 Queensland Vintage Aircraft Group Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld

2004 Membership

Thanks to all members who have renewed their subscriptions for 2004. Welcome to new members, Des Cooke and Leen Van Lien who have recently joined.

News

News items, other contributions, advertisements 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).*

Archbold Expedition

MR RICHARD ARCHBOLD, eminent American Zoologist, arrived in Brisbane on 28th February to make final preparations for his expeditionary flight into the wilds of New Guinea. With him came the well-known American pilot, Russell Rogers, and three mechanics, who will operate the Fairchild amphibian which is being used for transport and to convey supplies to the expeditionary party. The supplies will be dropped by parachute. Mr Archbold has found that the correct distance to release the parachute is about 130 feet from the ground. An automatic rip-cord attached to the 'plane opens the chute and the load floats gently down, to land in the camp clearing of the inland party.

So extensive is the programme planned that Mr Archbold has arranged with Vacuum Oil Company to make 15,000 gallons of Stanavo Ethyl Aviation Gasolene 87 available at operating bases, the chief of which will be Daru. An advance party led by Dr. Alvin Rand has already gone to Port Moresby.

Details of the Fairchild amphibian are as follow: 645 h.p. Pratt & Whitney engine; cruising speed 158 m.p.h. at 3000 feet; maximum speed, 179 m.p.h.; range 750 miles; loading accommodation for 1000-lb. freight and ten people including the crew of two: dual control; sound-proof cabin with artificial heating and ventilation, retractable landing gear; tail wheel and wing-tip floats.

Test flights were carried out from the Brisbane River and the Archerfield Aerodrome before the party left for New Guinea.

Overseas Expert

MAJOR VICTOR S. BERTRANDIAS, the Export Manager for Douglas Aircraft, will arrive in Australia in April to co-operate with Holyman's Airways in the inauguration of

Major Victor S. Bertrandias, of Douglas Aircraft, who will shortly arrive in Australia.

the fast air service using the Douglas DC2 aircraft.

Major Bertrandias is one of the pioneering figures in American Civil Aviation. After twelve years' service in the Army, including active flying service in France during the Great War, he resigned to interest himself in the development of civil aviation. Major Bertrandias operated the first passenger air line between Philadelphia and Washington in 1926. For the past three years he has been engaged, as Export Sales Manager for Douglas, in the testing and demonstration of their modern aircraft.

According to information received from Vacuum Oil Company, the Douglas DC2 which will be used by Holyman's Airways on the Tasmanian service will carry two pilots and fourteen passengers. All modern devices, such as wireless and instruments for blind flying, will be provided, and the comfort of passengers will be cared for with every latest convenience, including controlled heating by means of a warm-air system. The machine has a top speed of 213 m.p.h., but its probable cruising speed will be round about 190 miles per hour. An up-to-date version of the machine flown in the Centenary Air Race, the new Douglas will be the most modern machine in civil aircraft operation in Australia.

* * * *

Air Service On The Air

A BROADCAST of a type new to Australia and N.Z., and possibly to older countries, was carried out when Union Airways of New Zealand, Ltd., opened its service recently.

Passengers in the DH86 on the first run were government, municipal, aero club officials, and journalists. One of the latter, an experienced broadcaster, described the scenery, and told of features of the machine and its equipment through the machine's radio transmitter. This was relayed through national stations.

Letters and comment showed that the unusual broadcast had stimulated interest in the air service and civil aviation generally.

* * * *

Dual Record Holder

FURTHER flying honors were won by Flight-Lieut. Tommy Rose last month and he now holds the London-Capetown and Capetown-London record.

Earlier in the year he set up a new record from London to Capetown of 3 days 17 hours 35 minutes.

Last month he covered the return journey — 6250 miles — in 6 days 7 hours 11 minutes, beating the record established by Flying-Officer David Llewellyn and Mrs Jill Wyndham by 5 hours 6 minutes.

Rose would have made better time if he had not been held up in Tripoli by Italian officials, who held that he had not observed the regulations.

The Fairchild amphibian attached to the Archbold Expedition moored on the Brisbane River. Vacuum photo.

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
May 2004 No 373

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On Wings Of Song - Part 1.

Music has sustained the human spirit for many thousands of years. Today, with unprecedented access to recorded music in all its forms, there is still no substitute for audience access to a live performance. That is why even the budget of our Federal Government supports *The Contemporary Music Touring Programme*, designed principally for audiences in rural and regional Australia. Applications by groups for funds in Round 7 of the programme closed in February. Presently the successful groups are planning their itineraries, which will begin in July.

Exactly 70 years ago a distinguished Australian violinist was planning a similar music tour of rural NSW. However, there were some differences from today's tours. His tour involved a classical repertoire and was self funded, except for a small sponsorship from the Vacuum Oil Co. His touring group was to be entirely transported by aircraft, which he would pilot himself. He named his group *The Australasian Aerial Concert Artists*. His itinerary embraced 12 of the principal towns of NSW over a period of two weeks. Whereas today's Round 7 groups were able to start planning in February, he purchased the airframe of a Travelair 2000, VH-UGY, in February 1934, in preparation for his tour.The Round 7 groups will start their tours in the middle of this coming winter. The *Australasian Aerial Concert Artists* were to be flown around the countryside in an open cockpit Travelair in July, 1934, also in the middle of winter. Aerial navigation, and aircraft reliability at that time, would demand a pilot of exceptional skill, if the tour schedule was to be met without mishap. The violinist/aviator responsible for what was described in the press as, "an enterprise unique in the annals of music", was the remarkable Patrick Moore MacMahon.

To find out more about Patrick I spoke to Frank Walters who remembers him as a tall, pleasant man who hangared his aircraft with Air Travel Ltd at Mascot. The Travelair was painted silver, with its name, *Wings Of Song*, written in green on each side of the fuselage. Frank suggested I contact the Local Studies Centre at Hurstville for more information. I am grateful for the kind assistance I received there. I also spoke to Nancy Bird Walton and Brian Southwell, both of whom had contact with Patrick when he was at Mascot. Nancy confirmed Frank's recollections. Brian also had the experience of a joy ride in *Wings Of Song* and remembers well the noise, and the feeling of power, generated by the 220 hp Wright Whirlwind up front. Brian also recalls Patrick as a very approachable person, whereas there were some, in the aviation fraternity at Mascot during the thirties, who were not. But to start at the beginning.

Patrick was born in 1898, at the MacMahon family home *Moyarta*, at 16 MacMahon Street, Hurstville. His father Timothy was the eldest son of Patrick MacMahon Snr, who as a young man, educated in the fields of surveying and civil engineering, came to Sydney from County Clare, Ireland in 1854. Patrick Snr prospered and his Hurstville estate was extensive. The Hurstville street directory has several names associated with the MacMahon family and its Irish connections.

Patrick was the only child of Timothy and his third wife Catherine who, at the time of Patrick's birth, was in her forties. The birth, however, was premature and fears were held for the baby's health. It was found that his eyesight was weak and medical opinion predicted that he would probably die before his 21st birthday. Catherine's maiden name was Moore, and this was given to Patrick as his second Christian name. Later, at his mother's request, Patrick adopted Moore MacMahon as his surname . Patrick's father introduced him to the violin, and gave him his first lessons at the age of five. During his later period at Riverview College, from !911 to 1913, he was 1st violinist in the College orchestra. After leaving College, he continued his musical education at the Sydney Conservatorium.

While still a student, Patrick gave a recital at the Conservatorium Hall on Monday, July 15, 1918. His performance featured the Max Bruch Concerto in G Minor, which is a particular favourite of mine. I was, therefore, interested in the reviews. The music critic for Sydney's Sunday Times wrote that. "Mr Moore MacMahon, a violinist of some intelligence, made a good impression at his recital at the

Conservatorium on Monday night." The critic then embarked on an extraordinary demolition of the composer. "Max Bruch - is a German, who celebrated his birthday in January. It was his eightieth by the way, and the dear Hun's idea of enjoyment was to write a Hymn of Hate to England, so 'tis to be hoped that we won't hear his Concerto again for some little time."Perhaps this review also drew attention to Patrick's non-attendance at the Western Front. One could speculate about the reasons why Patrick did not enlist - poor eyesight and a very protective mother being perhaps two. In any case, shortly after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, Patrick departed for Geneva to study under the renowned Hungarian violinist, Joseph Szigeti.

Patrick remained in Europe until he learned of the death of his father Timothy in 1922. During his time in Geneva he met his future wife, Catherine Michel, a French national who was working at the League of Nations. Soon after he returned to Australia he contacted her and asked her to follow him out to Australia. They were married in Sydney in 1923. During the twenties Patrick was involved with concert performances, and with work as a teacher and music examiner. He and Catherine set up home at *Moyarta* and had three children there, Yvette, Owen and Brian. In about 1929 Patrick became interested in aviation. A note in the NSW Aero Club magazine, *Flying*, dated September 1, 1931, records that, "Mr P. Moore MacMahon has been successful in obtaining his "A" licence." But then in 1932, Patrick's mother died. In a recent interview, his son Brian relates that Patrick was, "so dependent on her all his life that he literally fell apart and he fell into the bottle so to speak. His music and everything went to pot and at the same time he had inherited a lot of money. Not a good situation for anyone, and it was more than he could cope with."

There may also have been risks in continuing with his flying training at a time of such personal turmoil. But for Patrick, flying appears to have exposed him to fresh experiences and the support of a new circle of friends. Also, he was not dead, as his doctors had predicted, and his poor eyesight had not disqualified him from proceeding to his "B" licence. He had been elected to the Tours and Contests' Sub-Committee of the Aero Club and taken the course in advanced aerobatics. He had also trained for an instructor's licence. On one occasion when his wife Catherine rang him at Mascot, to say that she had locked herself out of *Moyarta* , Patrick simply flew across to the nearby Hurstville Oval and, swooping low, dropped a spare set of keys, wrapped in a handkerchief, to his waiting wife. He was obviously getting some fun out of flying. He once expressed the view that, "given the right nerve and temperament, musicians should make excellent aviators. Acute sensitivity and a refined sense of touch were essentials in either playing or flying, and a rhythmic sense was helpful in the air." By 1934 he was a confident pilot, and his plan to combine flying with his return to the concert platform had matured.

After the Wright Cyclone engine was fitted, Patrick's aircraft had its C. of R. renewed as a Travelair 4000 in July, 1934. It could carry two passengers in the front cockpit, and was flown from the rear. The aerial concert touring group was, therefore, restricted to three people, one of whom was the tour manager, Mr F. B. Haines. The two performers were Patrick himself, and his associate artist, the pianist Frank Warbrick. It says a lot for Patrick's powers of persuasion that his companions were prepared to risk discomfort, injury, or worse, in order to be part of his novel aerial adventure. Patrick was able to carry his instrument, a rare Guarnierius violin, with him in the rear cockpit. But Frank Warbrick had to rely on whatever piano was available in the pre-booked hall at each town visited. In relation to one of the pianos available on tour, a music critic wrote, "Frank Warbrick, despite the heavy handicap of having to play on an instrument which many years of hard usage has rendered totally unfit for concert work, created a furore, and proved himself in both solo work and accompanying, a pianist of outstanding ability."

In fact Frank Warbrick had been something of a prodigy himself at Ipswich, Queensland, the city of his birth. He too eventually trained overseas at the Royal College of Music, London and on the Continent. He continued to be involved with the *Moore MacMahon Aerial Concert Tour,* on and off, until the outbreak of WWII. Many years later one of his students, Nigel Butterley, composed the music for a two-act opera, *Lawrence Hargrave Flying Alone,* which premiered in Sydney in 1988. But back in 1934, it was *Three Men Flying Together,* who set out to bring music to the NSW bush....**John Scott**.

AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

June 2004 No.374

June Meeting

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2nd June 2004, 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 guest speaker for the evening will be Des Cooke, who will discuss

Memoirs of a retired airline pilot

Des will relate many tales of his flying and engineering career in Ansett, A.N.A. and Qantas and perhaps some of his general aviation activity after he retired from Qantas.

Des began his airline career with Ansett Engineering during the early stages of World War II. His flying career started with training at the Royal Victorian Aero Club, where he went on to become an instructor. He later joined Australian National Airways, where he flew Bristol Freighters, DC-3s, DC-4s and DC-6s. Shortly before the demise of A.N.A. he joined Qantas where he flew Super Constellations, B707s and the B747. He later flew for and maintained a range of Aero Commander and Turbo Commander aircraft for Auto-Bake before retiring from active flying duties.

Although Des has only been a member of AHSA for a relatively short time, he has established himself as quite a raconteur on matters aviation. Please join us for another enjoyable evening, and hear some of Des's yarns from years gone by.

May Meeting

The guest speaker was John Goble, who entertained the meeting with a most interesting and informative talk and slide presentation on Australians in the Royal Naval Air Service. As Vice-President of the Society of World War I Aero Historians, and recognised authority on such matters, John's knowledge and passion for the subject was most evident.

There were about 120 Australians in the RNAS and John discussed the feats and, in some cases fates of about 20 Australians, including Charles Rumley Simpson, Harry Hawker, Bert Hinkler and John's father, Stanley Goble, who became Chief of Air Staff RAAF on three separate occasions.

The slides included images of these Australian airmen as well as some of the machines that they flew. Such aircraft included Short seaplanes, Sopwith "one and a half strutter", Sopwith Baby, Sopwith Tabloid, Bristol Fighter and many others. There were also images of other aircraft flown by the Royal Flying Corps, as well as several excellent photographs of some not-so-successful aircraft.

John also showed images of, and discussed various armaments carried by some of these early aircraft. The use of Vickers guns and Lewis guns mounted on frames or wings must have been a great challenge.

One other interesting facet of RNAS operations was the use of coastal airships. John discussed the use of these spectacular craft and also provided some excellent images of them

Following the talk, there was the inevitable number of questions and answers, some of which John undertook to provide in more detail. He has now very kindly provided the further information below.

The outstanding points were:

1. The Porte Baby Flying Boat was shown with a biplane on the upper wing. I stated this to a Bristol fighter. The aircraft was a Bristol Scout C. its purpose being to act as a fighter. I probably unintentionally misled one or two people because the Bristol F2b was known as the Bristol Fighter. I am not sure when the term Fighter superseded the term Scout.

2. Supermarine Nighthawk. I think it was Mr. Jack Powell who asked if the Nighthawk ever flew. It did. Trials were carried out at Eastchurch, and the aircraft achieved its designed speed of 75mph. Designed in 1915 to counter the Zeppelin threat and perhaps later could be used against the Gotha, the Armistice removed any need for further development, thus only one was built.

3. BE2C. Closer inspection of the slide shows the cross bar between the centre-section rear struts is fitted with a central spigot which is almost certainly the mounting point for a single Lewis gun.

4. Effect of synchroniser failure. Our armament file discloses the aircraft was a 1916 Fokker C type. The mechanical drive from the propeller is shown, together with an "anchor' strut to the muzzle end of the so called Spandau.

On the Internet

Federation of American Scientists – Military Analysis Network *(www.fas.org/man)*
This site has an enormous amount of information on US defence, including aircraft, ships, land warfare and aircraft equipment. The aircraft section provides detailed data and specification of just about all current US military aircraft.

Classic Aviation Literature
(www.gruner.com/flight/appendix/aviators/literature.htm)
Spend some time browsing this site and you'll find many excellent excerpts from great aviation writing in the 1930s and 1940s. You can also navigate your way to some other fascinating aviation stories by Ronald H Gruner.

The History of Boeing
(www.boeing.com/history/boeing)
This is part of the main Boeing site, which is also well worth browsing. The history section covers the beginning, the war years, post war, jets and rockets. It also features an excellent chronology of Boeing related events.

All About Military Aviation
(www.air-attack.com)
This US site features many articles about military aviation and space. Items covered include experimental and secret projects and technology, military installations, plus technical data and images of a variety of US and other military aircraft.

History of European Airlines
(www.europeanairlines.no/)
This Norwegian site (in English) provides some interesting histories of European airlines that operated before 1945. There are plenty of interesting images and links to several equally fascinating sites relating to European aviation.

2004 Aviation Trivia Quiz - Answers

These are the answers to the five questions from Ian Dolstra's aviation trivia quiz held at the April meeting.

1. The R34 and the Los Angeles were the first two airships to do what?
   Cross the Atlantic Ocean
2. What was the second V-bomber type to enter service with the RAF?
   Vickers Vulcan
3. What was the second jet fighter to enter service with the RAAF?
   Gloster Meteor
4. What is the most successful (in terms of numbers built) Australian designed and manufactured jet aircraft?
   GAF Jindivik
5. Which three countries produced versions of the DC-3 / C-47 during World War II?
   USA, Russia, Japan.

Wanted

The following members are seeking assistance on projects.

David Eyre
David Eyre, who is in the process of producing a greatly enlarged and more comprehensive book on Australian and New Zealand registered aircraft, is seeking photographs of several aircraft. He requires a photo of each of a Nord 3202, Focke Wulf Steiglitz and Bucker Jungmann, an example of each is registered in Western Australia. A colour print would be the preferable type of photograph.

David can be contacted at 35 Benwerrin Crescent, Grasmere NSW 2570 or on (02) 4655 3634 or via email *david_eyre@bigpond.com.au.*

Roger McDonald
Roger McDonald, who is one of the original members of the NSW Branch, is seeking any small detail on the whereabouts, owner or other information on the Piaggio P.166C model VH-FSC which was last noted in the Mascot area.

Roger is preparing an extensive article on P.166 model operations in Australia and is seeking this information for his own records as well as on behalf of a small Italian Restoration Group who are restoring to flying condition, the P.166C model prototype I-PIAS, which had been abandoned on an airfield outside

Milan. The "C" model is very rare with only three being built.

The group hope to have this aircraft flying by the end of the year. Their web site is:
http://www.ifenicotteri.com/velivolo.htm

Roger can be contacted on (03) 9840 6721 or by email at *mcdonair@bigpond.net.au*.

News Items

Office of RAAF History

Extract from *Air Force News* of April 22 2004:
An important element of the Air Power Development Centre reorganisation is the establishment of the position of RAAF Historian to manage the new Office of RAAF History and be the principal point of contact for all RAAF history matters.

The RAAF Historian will supervise the collection and retention of relevant historical records by the RAAF Historical Record section at Campbell Park, ACT. The Historical Record section holds unit histories, Air Board documents, campaign briefs, personal memoirs, information on aircraft accidents and a large number of reference books.

The records are being transferred to electronic media to ensure they are available in good quality for future reference.

The primary role of the Office of RAAF History will be to ensure that appropriate lessons, from both history and current operations, are analysed and used optimally in the development of air power being undertaken at the Air Power Development Centre.

The Office of RAAF History will promote Air Force heritage by managing the Heritage Awards program. The award program, suspended for 2004 while a review is done, is expected to be reinstituted for 2005. For more information on the centre, visit *www.raaf.gov.au/airpower*.

Lockheed Hudson VH-KOY

The Temora Aviation Museum has announced the permanent addition of Lockheed Hudson VH-KOY to its aircraft collection. The aircraft has been on loan to the Museum since December and formal acquisition occurred on Friday May 14th, 2004.

Lockheed Hudsons served during World War II on most battle fronts with the Allied Forces, including the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The aircraft was operated in a variety of roles including maritime patrol, trainer, transporter and bomber. A total of 2,941 Hudsons were built, and of these, 6 remain in existence today. Only one, VH-KOY, remains in flying condition.

The RAAF received 247 Hudsons in total between January 1940 and May 1942. These served with 12 squadrons in the Australian and South West Pacific regions. The Museum's Lockheed Hudson, A16-112 (VH-KOY), was commissioned by the RAAF in December 1942 and served in coastal anti-submarine patrol off the coast of Western Australia. On transfer to No.6 Squadron it served out of Milne Bay, PNG on bombing, armed reconnaissance and patrol work.

Temora Aviation Museum Chief Executive, Kenny Love, stated "It is an honour to have the Hudson join our aircraft collection as it is the only World War II bomber that remains in flying condition in Australia. It serves as a tribute to all the men and women that serviced, maintained and flew bomber aircraft in defence of Australia."

The Hudson will become an important part of the Museum Flying Days which are held regularly throughout the year.

Calendar of Events

15-16 June 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
3 July 2004 World Hot Air Balloon Championships, Mildura Vic
7 July 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum – Fred Lane
4 August 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum – members' short talks
28-29 August 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
28-30 August 2004 Queensland Vintage Aircraft Group Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld
1 September 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum – Ian Debenham
3 October 2004 Amberley Air Show. RAAF Amberley Queensland
6 October 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum
9-10 October 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW
3 November 2004 AHSA (NSW) Inc, Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture – Phil Dulhunty OAM
27-28 November 2004 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

News

News items, other contributions, advertisements 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)*.

BACKSTAGE WITH QANTAS

The Captain Checks Out.

BEFORE AN AIRLINER is ready to depart from the airport a certain amount of time is spent by the captain and his crew on the formalities connected with checking out. These formalities are set by Civil Aviation Department regulations and by Company routine, and are designed to provide the captain with the fullest possible information and service, and to ensure that his aircraft is in the most perfect possible condition.

On arrival at the airport some time before departure, the crew divides into three working parties. The first officer contacts the chief ground engineer, and the two check over the aircraft very thoroughly.

This may involve walking half a dozen times round the aircraft and subjecting to keen scrutiny everything between one wingtip and the other and between nose and tail. Assured that everything is "buttoned up", the party board the aircraft and check instruments, controls, crew equipment. Even the loading is examined for security and trim.

The radio officer seeks out the signals officer and discusses last-minute communication details for the route he is about to fly. He then contacts the chief ground radio engineer and the two inspect the aircraft radio installation to see that all is functioning normally.

Meanwhile, the captain and navigation officer are in the control building discussing the flight plan with the meteorological officer and the flying control officer.

Route and weather both come under consideration here. Weather plays a most important part in forming the plan. With the wind velocity given for standard recognized zones, the ground speeds across those zones to the destination are worked out for the various altitudes. The most suitable altitude is selected after considering the time element and avoidance of weather fronts. An estimated time of arrival is determined and considered against the terminal forecast for that period. Thus the captain gains an idea of the weather he may expect from take-off right through to touch-down.

The selected flight procedure is made out in duplicate, one copy to be taken aboard the aircraft and the other to be left with the flying control officer.

Not until the flying control officer has affixed his signature to the flightplan is the captain able to board his aircraft.

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LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On Wings Of Song - Conclusion.

The concert programmes, for the first tour of NSW country towns by the *Australasian Aerial Concert Artists*, always ended with Achron's arrangement for violin of Mendelssohn's composition, *On Wings of Song*, rendered with "glorious singing tone" by Patrick Moore MacMahon. This piece was an obvious favourite of Patrick's and was the source of the name he gave to his Travelair 4000, VH-UGY. The tour was planned for two weeks from July 6, 1934, visiting Mudgee, Parkes, Cowra, Bathurst, Young, Wagga, Tumut, Temora, Cootamundra, Yass, Canberra and Goulburn.

The opening concert at Mudgee Town Hall on Friday, July 6, was a great success. The music critic for the *Mudgee Guardian* wrote that, "both Mr MacMahon and Mr Warbrick thoroughly vindicated their high reputations as violinist and pianist respectively, their performances being practically faultless." A similar triumph was reported for the concert given on the following night at West's Hall, Parkes.

However, it was not long before *Wings of Song* was involved in the first of a series of incidents. The *BathurstTimes* reported that, "Messrs Moore MacMahon and Frank Warbrick, the flying concert artists who are to give a performance at Bathurst to-night, (Wednesday), met with slight engine trouble while flying from Parkes to Bathurst yesterday afternoon, and were forced down at Cargo near Orange. The plane's trouble will be rectified by Kingsford Smith's service men, and the flying musicians are expected to arrive in Bathurst this afternoon." *Wings of Song* landed on Shute's Paddock that afternoon, and the Bathurst concert commenced at the Cathedral Memorial Hall at 8pm . According to the *Bathurst Times*, "a most entertaining and diversified programme was provided." The following morning *Wings of Song* took-off on its way to Young.

Besides aircraft reliability, there was another problem threatening the economic viability of the tour - poor advance bookings for the concerts. The effects of the Great Depression were still being felt in the bush, and when entertainment was looked for, it was more likely to be a travelling vaudeville show or a film at the local cinema. The heating of halls in NSW country towns at night during the thirties, in the middle of winter, also left a lot to be desired. A couple of days before the concert at the Southern Cross Hall in Young on July 13, an anonymous letter in the *Young Witness*, probably written by the tour manager Mr Haines, admonished the music lovers of the town for not supporting the visiting artists adequately through the booking office, and warned that it would be hard to attract such virtuosi in the future. At the same time Patrick announced that he would undertake some joyriding in *Wings of Song* during his stay in Young.

For the July 17 concert at Wagga's Plaza Theatre, an addition to the usual programme of music was advertised. A screen performance by John Boles in the musical comedy, *I Believed in You*, would be shown. Whether the selection of a warmer theatre and the change of programme, would have resulted in a larger audience at Wagga was never known because, as the *Daily Advertiser* reported on July 17, "Mr Moore MacMahon, the violinist aviator, who was billed to give a recital at the Plaza Theatre to-night was compelled to make a forced landing at Young yesterday morning. His *Wings of Song*, which he was piloting, was damaged in the landing and it was railed back to Sydney yesterday. Mr MacMahon and his associate, Mr F. Warbrick also returned to Sydney. Neither was injured, but all arrangements for the continuance of the tour were cancelled." Perhaps inevitably, the first aerial concert tour of NSW country towns ended prematurely.

The experiences of the first aerial tour did not discourage Patrick from using *Wings of Song* as a means of transport in connection with his career as a professional musician. In the future he would travel to country areas by air to perform at concerts and to fulfil his obligations as an examiner for the Sydney Conservatorium. His travels took him as far north as Cairns. He was sometimes accompanied by Frank Warbrick. As late as December 1939, Frank Warbrick and Patrick were promoting the *Moore MacMahon Aerial Concert Tour* for travel throughout the Commonwealth under the auspices of the

Australian Broadcasting Commission. However, the manager for NSW of the ABC responded with, "the special programmes which you submitted to the Artists Tours Committee have now been forwarded to this office, and we shall advise you as soon as we are able to make use of any of them." Or, in other words, don't ring us, we'll ring you!

Patrick struck up a friendship with Smithy during his comings and goings from Mascot. Smithy had also provided assistance to Patrick when *Wings of Song* got into trouble during the first aerial concert tour. After Smithy was lost on November 8, 1935, Patrick said of him in an interview, "Smithy was the dearest, most understanding and helpful, and most human personality in my experience." Therefore, when Smithy asked a favour of Patrick in early 1935, there was never any doubt that he would oblige. Smithy was planning the Jubilee Air Mail Flight to New Zealand but the engines of the *Southern Cross* were causing concern, particularly the starboard engine, which was consuming oil at the rate of about a gallon per hour. Smithy asked Patrick for the loan of the Wright Whirlwind installed in the *Wings of Song*. The *Southern Cross*, with Smithy, Bill Taylor, John Stannage and the Jubilee Mail, took-off from Richmond on May 15, 1935. About half way across the Tasman the centre engine exhaust manifold disintegrated, and part of it flew into the starboard propeller causing the engine from *Wings of Song* to be shut down. How the *Southern Cross* and her crew struggled for the next nine hours to get back to Mascot is undoubtedly the epic story of Australian aviation history. It wasn't until after the *Southern Cross* had been flown from Mascot to Richmond on July 18, when its ownership changed to the Commonwealth of Australia, that Patrick was able to negotiate the return of his engine. De Havillands at Mascot overhauled *Wings of Song*, replaced the fabric on its wings and refitted the Wright Whirlwind.

During 1936, Patrick seemed to attract more publicity for his activities as an aviator than he did as a musician. In March the *Sydney Sun* newspaper announced that a local airman who did not want to be named, was preparing for an attempt to establish an Australian altitude record for light aircraft. The *Sun* kept the mystery airman's identity secret for a few days until a high altitude trial flight was undertaken on April 2 with a *Sun* reporter on board. It was then revealed that the airman was Patrick Moore MacMahon using his Travelair, *Wings of Song*. The maximum height reached on that occasion, without the use of oxygen, was about 20000 ft, but this was not accurately recorded. Preparations were then undertaken to modify the engine and to properly equip *Wings of Song* for the record attempt. Part of the equipment was a short-wave radio transmitter installed by Mr S. V. Colville, which would be used to broadcast from *Wings of Song* during the record attempt. On April 19, the G.P.S. boat race was conducted for the first time on the Nepean River. To test the transmitter Patrick flew over the boat race, which Mr Colville descibed from the front cockpit, transmitting to a loud speaker at the Civil Aviation Building at Mascot, where reception was described as excellent. I have no details of whether Patrick did finally attempt the record. It may have all become a bit complicated, not to say dangerous. John Kingsford-Smith did subsequenly establish a record of 20100 ft for light aircraft, in a Tiger Moth at Mascot, on March 2, 1938.

At the end of 1936, the big event in Australian aviation circles was the South Australian Centenary Air Race from Brisbane to Adelaide. As it happened there were 31 aircraft that actually started in the race on December 16, and *Wings of Song* proudly carried the number 31 on its rudder. As it also happened, 30 aircraft made it to Adelaide. Patrick Moore MacMahon and *Wings of Song* ran into a storm south of Benalla on the second day of the race, and were forced to land. Unfavourable winds continued that day, preventing him from taking-off. He failed to reach Essendon the following morning in time to join the other competitors when they took-off for Adelaide.

Patrick's son Brian remembers that his father was anxious to join the RAAF in 1940, as a flying instructor, but was rejected because of his eyesight. He was also in his early forties at the time. He then tried to join the army, but was rejected as medically unfit. He sold *Wings of Song* early in 1942. Patrick returned to music, his first love, and ended his career as conductor of the Illawarra Symphony Orchestra. In retirement he gave occasional performances in aid of fellow musicians who had fallen on hard times. He died at Kiama in 1974. Frank Walters went on a nostalgic search for *Wings of Song* in about 1949. He found its skeleton in the rafters of Barrett's ice cream factory at Orange.. **John Scott**.