



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

July 2005 No.386

*file 2005-2*

### **July Meeting at Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown**

The July meeting will be held at the **Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown** on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2005, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via Starkie Drive, near the Milperra Road end of Bankstown Airport. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

Guest speaker will be Jock Wylie, who will discuss:

#### *The Role of the Bristol/DAP Beaufort in the RAAF*

Jock Wylie was a Wireless Air Gunner who flew on Lockheed Hudsons and later on Beauforts during WW II, serving in several RAAF squadrons, including Nos. 1, 6 and 7. He joined the RAAF in 1940 and initially was a crew member on Lockheed Hudsons in Malaya before being transferred to Beauforts which were based at Horn Island and Milne Bay. Jock flew in some 50 different Beauforts, and survived two crash landings. He was discharged from the RAAF in November 1945 and studied science and forestry at University. Although he had no further direct involvement in aviation after the war, he has maintained an active interest in many facets of World War II, and has spoken at many venues about his experiences in the front line of the defence of northern Australia and New Guinea.

The Bristol Beaufort was designed in Great Britain in 1937 and first flew in 1938. Seven hundred were also manufactured in Australia by the Department of Aircraft Production, the first locally built model being delivered to the RAAF in August 1941. The RAF used the aircraft initially as a general purpose bomber and later a torpedo bomber, yet it was being phased out of active service by the RAF whilst the RAAF was still receiving its new aircraft.

Jock will describe the virtues and vices of the Beaufort and will also relate many interesting occurrences that he experienced during his tenure with the RAAF. Please join us for another entertaining evening of aviation history.

### **June Meeting**

The guest speaker for the night was Dr Richard Gates, who discussed *A Brief Illustrated History of Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome: Heritage as Cash Cow*. In a very effective PowerPoint presentation Richard gave an in-depth history of the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome during World War II as No.1 Bombing and Gunnery School, and later as No. 1 Air Observers School.

He displayed many photographs of the base during the War, including the vast expanse of the operational area, its buildings, runways and aprons. Images of Avro Ansons, Fairey Battles and the famous Lancaster, *Q for Queenie*, flown by Flt Lt Peter Isaacson DFC DFM were also amongst the excellent array of photographs.

Honorary Treasurer of AHSA (NSW), John Swanson, was one of the 11,000 service personnel who spent time at the base, and he was able to provide further detail of many of the incidents and occurrences that Richard spoke about. In particular, he noted that the crash of Lancaster *Q for Queenie* had perhaps unofficial and official causes. After repair from its landing accident, John witnessed the memorable beat-up of the aerodrome by the aircraft.

The Evans Head RAAF Station was one of the first to be established as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme, and its first commander was Valston Hancock, later to become Air Marshall Sir Valston and Chief of Air Staff. Of the 6,200 RAAF personnel to die during WWII, approximately 2,000 of them passed through Evans Head at some time.

In the second part of his talk Richard discussed a series of government failures and accountability issues in the management of the site. He described the review processes leading to the listing of the Aerodrome on the NSW State Heritage Register in November 2002, but more significantly described the land grab and the threatening Plan of Management proposed by Richmond Valley Council.

The ongoing planning process for the future of the Memorial Aerodrome was also discussed with the focus on the 'hard' lessons of politics, and he encouraged interested persons to voice their concern

to The NSW Heritage Office. (*AHSA (NSW) Inc has written to the NSW Heritage Office expressing its concern about the threat to this important piece of Australia's aviation history. Ed.*)

### **Guest Speaker Wanted**

Roger Kennedy and Leen Van Lien have already volunteered to give relatively short talks on their special interests in aviation at the August meeting. We are still seeking one more willing member who is interested in telling his story or discussing his special interest in aviation. Any further volunteers should contact John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth.

### **Vale**

#### **Raymond Earnest Le Sueur 21.7.23 to 27.5.05**

Our society has suffered a significant loss with the death of Ray Le Sueur. Ray was a dedicated custodian of the history of the Royal Aero Club of NSW and, as a member of AHSA (NSW) Inc, he was a consistent supporter of our efforts to preserve Australia's aviation heritage.

Ray was born at Brighton-Le-Sands, within sight and sound of Mascot aerodrome and it was inevitable that he would be influenced by the airmen and aircraft using the aerodrome during the thirties. He had his first flight there with one of the joyriding enterprises that proliferated on Mascot before the war. At the outbreak of WWII Ray was working as a carpenter's apprentice. As the war progressed he was recruited by the army. However, with the seeds of aviation already sown in him during his boyhood contact with Mascot, he applied for a transfer to the RAAF for aircrew training. Eventually his application met with success and he became a trainee with 11 EFTS at Benalla, Vic. He progressed through Tiger Moths to Wirraways, but the war ended before he could get further involved.

Back on Civvy Street, Ray returned to the building industry, and the formation of his own company, R. Le Sueur Pty Ltd. He started with cottage building and over the years became involved with home unit development and dealing in real estate. He was supported throughout by his wife Joan, and their two sons, Geoffrey and Lindsay.

Early in the post war years the call of aviation was too strong to resist; he joined the RACNSW as a flying member soon after the Club moved to Bankstown. He was a frequent competitor in Club organised aerobatic competitions and during the 1970s his support for the Club continued as a member of the committee, being Chairman of the Gun Society and later Chairman of the Tours and Contest Sub-Committee.

Ray came back onto the RACNSW committee in

1990 in what was then a valiant effort to save the Club from the fate that eventually overtook it. He created a new role for himself, that of Club Historian and, with the help of his daughter-in-law Angela, he took on the editorship of a new-look newsletter. In the Winter, 1990 edition of the newsletter he announced that, through an initiative of the RACNSW, negotiations were well advanced towards the establishment of an Australian Museum of Aviation. The site dedicated for it was on land between the then existing clubhouse and Marion Street.

In the Autumn, 1991 edition of the newsletter he was able to announce that the publishing house of Kevin Weldon and Associates had started work on researching the history of the RACNSW with a view to publication. Ray saw his vision of an aviation museum at Bankstown become a reality, albeit on another site on the aerodrome and without the involvement of the Club. However, he deeply regretted the demise of the RACNSW, and the lack of progress with the publication of its history.

By the spring of 1991, Ray was forced to advise Club members that his medical condition prevented him standing for re-election in 1991/92. In a message to members he wrote, "I thank you sincerely for allowing me to serve on your committee. It was an honour to be associated with such a gloriously historic Aero Club. Happy Landings."

And now we say, "Happy Landings to you too Ray." **John Scott**

### **Calendar of Events**

**2 July 2005** Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

**16-17 July 2005** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**16-17 July 2005** Queensland International Air Show Bundaberg Queensland

**30-31 July 2005** Qld Vintage Aircraft Group flying weekend, Watts Bridge Qld

**31 July 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**3 August 2005** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum

**6 August 2005** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**26-28 August 2005** Qld Vintage Aircraft Group Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld

### **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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### A Coodabeen Champion Of Australian Aviation History. The Ryan B-1 Brougham. Final.

A few weeks ago Nancy Bird Walton forwarded some papers, to be retained in the Society's archives, relating to the life of Captain Gordon Campbell Wilson, M.C., A.F.C., D.C.M. 'Billy' Wilson had worked for Nancy's father during the 1920s when he was between jobs as a pilot for various short lived aviation enterprises in NSW. In her book, *My God! It's A Woman*, Nancy wrote, "Bill Wilson, a WWI pilot, used to drive my father's horse team. Bill, an ex-member of the Australian Flying Corps, terrified the locals as he drove that team down the mountain roads and forced it through flooded rivers. He was a friend of Kingsford Smith and, after Smithy's Pacific flight, he went back into aviation only to be killed later in a motor accident. He also taught Charles Ulm to fly."

Amongst the papers sent to us by Nancy, there is a copy of a telegram that was a link in the chain of events that led to the death of 'Billy' Wilson. Just as in Banjo Paterson's ballad, where a letter was sent to an itinerant stockman in up-country NSW addressed, *Clancy of the Overflow*, this telegram was sent to an itinerant airman, also in up-country NSW, addressed, *W Wilson Care Ryan Monoplane Trundle*. It was dated March 9, 1929. The message read, "Coming up Monday bringing valves ring me Sunday night if require anything Smith." The Ryan monoplane referred to in the telegram was the B-1 Brougham, G-AUIZ. The person who sent the telegram was David Alfred Bernard Smith, at the time the youngest licensed pilot in Australia.

Dave Smith joined the Australian Aero Club (New South Wales Section) in April 1927, at the age of seventeen. The minimum age for acceptance by the Aero Club of a pupil member for flying training, was seventeen. However, all pupil members under the age of twenty one required parental consent. Dave Smith was the eldest son of W. J. (Gunboat) Smith, who in 1927 was a director and general manager of Australian Glass Manufacturers Ltd. He was a man of considerable intellect and strength, and in his mid forties was one of Australia's leading industrialists. He left his state school in Melbourne and obtained work with AGM at the age of twelve. Now he ran the company with scant regard for his board of directors. He had just moved with his family to a new home, *Danmark*, at 10 Wolsley Road, in the prestigious Sydney suburb of Point Piper. He was a wealthy, self made man, not a parent one would think, who would readily permit his eldest son to risk his neck in the hazardous sport of aviation. No doubt young Dave had to work hard at gaining his father's permission to commence his flying training. On the Register of Civil Pilots as at June 30, 1928, he is recorded as holding an 'A' licence. Around this time, with the spectacular achievements of Hinkler, Kingsford Smith, Ulm and others, creating some vision of what the future of aviation in Australia might be, it is apparent that Dave's ambitions extended beyond mere private flying. 'W. J.' continued his support for his son through the purchase of a Ryan B-1 Brougham, and the creation of a company to facilitate its commercial operation. The Ryan arrived on board S. S. *Yngaren* on September 30, 1928. It was registered G-AUIZ, and transferred to the new company, NSW Airways Ltd on November 19. It was christened *City of Sydney*.

It was planned that *City of Sydney* would initially carry out charter work and joyriding, and because Dave Smith was not qualified for commercial flying at this time, the employment of a pilot with appropriate experience was necessary. To introduce *City of Sydney* to the Australian public, Keith Anderson carried out an inaugural record breaking flight of 4 1/2 hours, from Sydney to Brisbane. Later, 'Billy' Wilson was employed, and he was in charge of *City of Sydney* in March 1929, carrying out joyriding in the Parkes area. When a mechanical problem with the Wright Whirlwind J5 was experienced at Trundle, 'Billy' Wilson contacted Dave Smith in Sydney for assistance. This resulted in the sending of the telegram described above. Dave Smith elected to fly himself to Trundle in a DH60, on Monday, March 11, with the necessary spare valves. Nearing Manildra he was himself forced down with mechanical problems, and contacted 'Billy' Wilson and his mechanic, M. A. Taylor, for assistance. It

was then necessary for Wilson to arrange for the use of a car, which was owned by Mr N. Bloomfield of Trundle. The trio set off post haste for Manildra late on Monday afternoon. All three sat in the front seat with Taylor driving, Bloomfield in the middle and 'Billy' Wilson next to the passenger door. Nearing Bogan Gate the car struck a deep patch of sand on the road shoulder, and as Taylor applied the brakes and turned sharply to regain the road, it overturned. The occupants were pinned beneath the car until nearby quarry workers were able to right it. By then 'Billy' Wilson, a survivor of the air war during WWI, and the risky business of civil flying in the twenties, was dead. His two companions escaped with relatively minor injuries.

Charles Ulm spoke at the funeral service for 'Billy' Wilson in St Philip's Church, Newcastle. Among the many tributes received were floral wreaths from W. J. Smith and family, the Directors of NSW Airways Ltd, Charles Kingsford Smith, Charles Ulm and Nancy's father, W. R. Bird. The telegram from Dave Smith to 'Billy' Wilson was passed to his fiancée, Miss Isabel Homewood, who kept it with other letters and photographs of 'Billy' until her death in 1993.

The services of commercial pilot G. McCausland were then secured, and NSW Airways resumed operations, joyriding at air pageants and engaging in charter work. All went well until *City of Sydney* was seriously damaged at Tamworth on November 19, 1929. The Ryan was on charter to the federal government to fly a party, including a cabinet minister and a geologist, to Roma. During a planned landing at Tamworth, McCausland was forced to carry out a ground loop to avoid horses on the aerodrome. The aeroplane was returned to Sydney for repair.

In the meantime Dave Smith had progressed with his flying training. His father had purchased a Westland Widgeon III, which was registered G-AUKE on February 19, 1929. Dave was able to gain experience on this high wing monoplane, a similar configuration to the Ryan, as he worked towards his commercial licence. Finally on March 12, 1930, he announced his plans, which he had probably nurtured ever since the arrival of the Ryan, for an attempt on the Australia-England record. He countered criticism of his youth and relative inexperience by engaging Wally Shiers, a veteran of the 1919 England-Australia flight by the Vimy G-EAOU, as his companion for the flight.

The Aero Club's magazine, *Flying*, reported that, "Dave Smith and Wally Shiers left Mascot on Monday, March 24, at 6.45am. en route for England. Long before dawn enthusiasts arrived at the aerodrome, and by 5am a crowd of over 100 had gathered. IZ took off into a slight southerly. She left the ground after a run of about 500yards, climbed to 500ft, and then headed for the mountains, escorted by a Club formation of three Moths and two private 'planes. The escort turned back at Penrith, where the Ryan had reached 3,400ft." *City of Sydney* was on its way to Wyndham, the departure point for the record attempt. Aerial navigation over central Australia proved to be a problem for the crew of *City of Sydney*. They lost a day by flying on the wrong heading after leaving Cloncurry. When finally reaching the vicinity of Wyndham, on March 29, they became lost and were forced to land in wild country with mountains all around, damaging the Ryan in the process. It was just one year since the disappearance of the *Southern Cross* in the same area, and the start of the *Coffee Royal* affair. Happily, rescue was achieved within a few days, although repair and recovery of the Ryan delayed departure from Wyndham until April 20. The flight ended ignominiously with a forced landing about 20 miles south-west of Bangkok due to fuel starvation. The Ryan was again badly damaged. It returned to Australia as ship's cargo. It was the fourth Ryan B-1 Brougham to avoid every effort to create for it a significant place in the history of Australian aviation.

Dave Smith returned to Sydney on board SS *Malabar* on May 24. Soon after his return he was given the honour of flying Amy Johnson's Moth, *Jason*, from Sydney to Melbourne. Then, on September 17, 1930, while testing the DH71, Tiger Moth, VH-UNH, over Mascot with his safety strap not fastened, he was thrown from the cockpit, and fell to his death into the bush-house of Hillsden and Watts' nursery. He was only twenty years old. His distraught father sold VH-UIZ the following month to the New England Motor Co. From there it served with New England Airways for several years as *City of Lismore*. After it was damaged in December 1935, it was sold to the Clancy Brothers at Mascot. Following a lengthy repair, Stephens Aviation Ltd of Wau, New Guinea, became its new owner. It was destroyed on the ground at Wau, by Japanese air attack, on January 21, 1942.....**John Scott.**



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The following morning came the call again, "Hello Cocky! Good Morning." This time,

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

After a good look around Darwin, preparations were made for the return trip to the south, this being made via Tennant Creek, where a good aerodrome is reported to be in



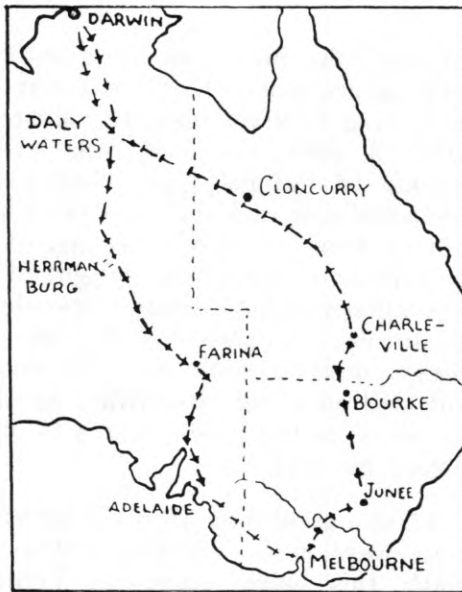
From left to right: Pilot Frank Neale, Mr. Don Oliver, Selim Merinen, Mr. H. Peck and Mr. W. Oliver, about to emplane in the "Lascondor."

existence for the modest outlay of £8, and following the Overland Telegraph line to Alice Springs.

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

Thank you for recommending "Wings"

Returning to Alice Springs they flew along the centre of the McDonnell Range at a height of 6,000 feet, all members of the party agreeing that the panorama excelled all scenery they had ever viewed.



Route followed by Mr. W. Oliver and party in the "Lascondor."

Continuing southward they reached Oodnadatta, setting a course from there to Farina,

where they encountered a dust-storm. On enquiring from the local hotel-keeper whether these occurred frequently, they were advised that only one had been experienced that year—but it had lasted from January 1st to date!

The next stop was Quorn, and after refuelling the flight was continued to Adelaide, Nhill and Melbourne, which was reached at 1 p.m. on Thursday, August 21.

"We have had a holiday covering 4½ weeks," said Mr. Oliver on arrival at Melbourne.

"It is not generally realised that an aeroplane enables one to cover so much country, spending only 50 hours, or approximately two days, actual travelling time. The rest of our holiday was spent to the best advantage—sight-seeing."

Speaking of the "Lascondor," Mr. Oliver said it was a credit to Australian industry, and that he had never before flown in such comfortable circumstances.

No mechanical trouble was experienced with the machine or the three "Mongoose" engines, and an average cruising speed of approximately 100 m.p.h. was maintained throughout.



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## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**August 2005 No.387**

### **August Meeting**

The August meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2005, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the night will be

### *Presentations from three Society members*

Each of our speakers will give a short talk about one of his particular interests in aviation. Roger Kennedy will tell the story of the DH.121 Trident, which was originally known as the Airco DH.121 and later as the Hawker Siddeley Trident. It failed to meet the competitiveness of the Boeing 727 but it did have an interesting, albeit relatively short operational life.

Leen Van Lien will provide original sound recordings of several aviation greats including Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, Charles Ulm, Bert Hinkler and Jean Batten. He will also discuss various songs that were composed in honour of famous aviators.

Keith White will discuss the fate of four famous Catalinas that were disposed of in interesting and controversial circumstances after WWII.

Please join us for another entertaining meeting about Australia's aviation past.

### **Committee Meeting**

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

### **July Meeting**

The guest speaker for the July meeting was Jock Wylie, who was a Wireless Air Gunner on Lockheed Hudsons and later on DAP Beauforts during WWII.

Jock joined the RAAF as a gunner and proceeded to Malaya with little training, serving on Lockheed Hudsons. He left just before the Japanese invasion and was posted to No.1 OTU at Bairnsdale, Victoria. He mentioned the large losses of aircrew at the OTU, which had resulted primarily from inexperience,

as pilots progressed rather rapidly from Tiger Moths to Ansons to Beauforts.

After six months in Bairnsdale he went to East Sale and then was posted to 7SQN crewing Beauforts at Ross River near Townsville, although he usually operated out of Horn Island and Wards Strip, Port Moresby. Later with 6SQN at Milne Bay, Jock flew on missions over Gasmata and Rabaul. He survived two crash landings on Beauforts; one of which was due to a loss of hydraulics resulting in no flaps, no wheels at night on an unlit runway. Perhaps his description of the Beaufort being a robust aircraft was somewhat an understatement.

Arguably the most interesting facet of Jock's talk was in relation to the trim tab problems encountered by the Australian made Beauforts. The problem did not materialise with the British built aircraft, but caused several unexplained crashes in the Australian aircraft. The fault was with poor quality metal in a screw which held the elevator trim tab. He recalled several notable occurrences concerning the trim tab problem which involved "Blackjack" Walker and Wing Commander Charles Learmonth DFC and Bar who described the problem whilst out of control and on his way to his untimely death. (*see story below*)

The lengthy question and answer period concluded this most entertaining night.

### **On the Internet**

A-Z World Airports

([www.azworldairports.com](http://www.azworldairports.com))

This site features a comprehensive list of world airports and their vital statistics, including airport data, passenger traffic and aircraft movement data, operators and individual airport websites.

Pilotfriend Century of Flight

([www.century-of-flight.freeola.com](http://www.century-of-flight.freeola.com))

Give yourself plenty of time to explore this vast site which includes hundreds of pages on aviation matters including history of flying boats, history of helicopters, Wright Brothers, databases, images, aircraft pre World War I, WW I, World War II, post WWII, history of airliners and much, much more.

The Aviation History Online Museum  
([www.aviation-history.com](http://www.aviation-history.com))

We mentioned this site on a previous occasion, however it has been somewhat enhanced with updated material and features the Garber Restoration Facility Tour, World War I aircraft, aircraft and airmen of the early years and a large photo gallery.

Flight-History.com  
([www.flight-history.com](http://www.flight-history.com))

This is a very extensive site featuring story archives, particular aircraft, individual aviators, air forces and special occurrences. There is also a vast photo archive which includes air carriers, bombers, fighters and aviation posters.

The Piaggio P-166 website  
([www.p166.com](http://www.p166.com))

This site is still under development, but features some interesting details of the history of the aircraft, plus some images (including several supplied by AHSA member Roger McDonald) and a database.

### Calendar of Events

**30-31 July 2005** Qld Vintage Aircraft Group flying weekend, Watts Bridge Qld

**31 July 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**6 August 2005** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**7 August 2005** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Fly-in / Drive-in, Wedderburn NSW

**14 August 2005** Salute to Veterans Air Display Lake Burley Griffin ACT

**26-28 August 2005** Qld Vintage Aircraft Group Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld

### Wg Cdr Charles Learmonth DFC and Bar

On 6 January 1944, a Beaufort bomber of 14 Squadron RAAF, piloted by 26 year old Wing Commander Charles Learmonth, DFC and Bar, plunged into the sea 20 miles west of Sorrento during a training flight between Pearce and Rottneest in Western Australia. Learmonth, who was the Commanding Officer of 14 Squadron RAAF, was leading a formation of 3 Beauforts at the time of the tragic accident. Learmonth and the other 3 crew members were all killed.

Maurice Flynn, a wireless operator in one of the other 2 Beauforts stated that he saw a lone parachute floating on the water after Learmonth's Beaufort crashed into the sea.

Prior to the crash, Wg Cdr Learmonth asked the No. 2 aircraft in the flight of 3 Beauforts to come in

close to his aircraft to inspect his tail plane as he was having some handling problems with his aircraft. The crew of the other Beaufort noticed that the rod to the elevators was hanging down. All other Beauforts were immediately grounded after this accident until the fault in the elevator coupling was rectified.

Sqn Ldr Learmonth was awarded the DFC for his attack on a Japanese destroyer in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March 1943. Learmonth led 5 Boston bombers of 22 Squadron RAAF during the attack. He scored two hits on a destroyer which subsequently sank. He was awarded a Bar to his DFC in August 1943 as Commanding Officer of 22 Squadron RAAF.

As many as 93 Beauforts based at Sale in Victoria had crashed during training, killing many crew members. Until this accident involving Wg Cdr Learmonth, the cause of all of the crashes had been unknown. One suspicion was that engine/exhaust fumes may have leaked into the cabin causing the crew the black out. Ernest Baker of Albany, an ex fitter and turner at Sale contacted the "Western Australian" newspaper in May 2000 to reveal that he had reported the faulty elevator coupling as the likely cause of the many Beaufort crashes way back in 1942. He said that he was not believed by his superiors and was in fact accused of sabotage and confined to barracks when he reported it.

In about 1998, a company carrying out a cable-laying survey for Telstra reported a mound of metal debris on the sandy seafloor about 20 kms west of Sorrento in about 40 metres of water. Western Australian maritime archaeologists were not sure whether it was a shipwreck or the remains of Wg Cdr Learmonth's Beaufort bomber. WA Museum staff used a side scan sonar system to try to determine the nature of the debris. On 24 May 2000, archaeologists Jeremy Green and Mike McCarthy returned to the location with staff from "The Western Australian" newspaper. They used a torpedo-shaped sonar device and a magnetometer to probe the 10 metre by 20 metre mound of debris which rose about 2 to 3 metres above the sea floor. Professor Green stated that a further survey would soon be carried out using a remotely operated video camera. It was hoped that this would confirm whether it was the remains of Wg Cdr Learmonth's Beaufort bomber or a shipwreck.

In anticipation of war, Charles Learmonth joined the RAAF in 1938 aged 21 years. He graduated from Point Cook in Victoria when World War II was declared. His widow remarried in 1947 becoming Mrs. Le Souef. In May 2000, Mrs. Le Souef said that she did not expect her first husband to be killed in Australia just off the coast and indicated that she preferred the possible wreck site be left in peace.

# Appendices

## BEAUFORT DIVERSIONS FROM RAF

### BEAUFORT PRODUCTION BREAKDOWN 1938-1944

#### British-built 1938-43

| Mk  | Quantity       |
|-----|----------------|
| I   | 1 013          |
| II  | 167            |
| TII | 249            |
| III | (0) project    |
| IV  | (1) conversion |

Total 1 429 built  
(less 3 actually delivered  
due to crashes on test)

#### Australian-built 1941-44

| Mk    | Quantity         |
|-------|------------------|
| V     | 50               |
| VA    | 30               |
| VI    | 40               |
| VII   | 60               |
| VIII  | 520              |
| IX    | (46) conversions |
| Total | 700 built        |

Royal Australian Air Force: L4448 (1).

Royal Canadian Air Force: L9967, L9968, N1005, N1006, N1007, N1021, N1026, N1027, N1029, N1030, N1045, N1078, N1107, W6473, W6484. (15).

South African Air Force: L9940, L9941, L9954, L9956, L9957, L9960, N1004, N1008, N1046, N1047, N1076, N1145, DD883, DW886, DW892, DW896, DW898, DW946. (18)

Turkish Air Force: DW893, DW930, DW945, DW954, DW960, DW981, DW985, DX125, DX144, DX147, DX149, DX153, ML492, ML495, ML499, ML500, ML501, ML506, ML515, ML518, ML542, ML543, ML544, ML545. (24)

#### Royal Air Force Beaufort Serial Allocations

L4441-4518, L9790-9838, L9851-9897, L9932-9972, N1000-1047, N1074-1109 Mk I. N1110 Mk II prototype. 111-1118, N1145-1186, W6467-6506, W6518-6543, x8916-8939, AW187-221, AW234-243 Mk I. AW244-253, AW271-315, AW335-384, DD870-911, DD927-944 Mk II. DD945-959, DD974-999, DE108-126, DW802-836, DW851-898, DW913-962, DW977-999, DX114-157, EK969-999, EL123-141, JM431-470, JM496-517, JM545-593, LR885-908, LR920-963, LR976-999, LS113-128 Mk I. LS129 Mk II. LS130-149, ML430-476, ML489-524, ML540-586, ML599-635, ML649-692, ML705-722 Mk II(T). Additionally T9540-9569, T9583-9618, T9624-9657 was allotted for Mk IIs to have been built in Australia of which seven were completed and renumbered in A9 Australian series below.

#### Royal Australian Air Force Beaufort Serial Allocations.

A9-prefix common to all. 1-50 Mk V, 51-90 Mk VI, 91-150 Mk VII, 151-180 Mk VA, 181-700 Mk VIII (46 of these converted to Mk IX and re-numbered 701-746).

### BEAUFORT DATA

#### Construction

The fuselage was of monocoque construction with duralumin formers and hiduminium stringers, covered with Alclad sheet flush-riveted into position. Alclad was a light alloy sandwiched between an aluminium coating of high purity, which combined light weight, with strength and a high resistance to corrosion. Wings were similarly of dural and hiduminium, covered with Alclad. An exception was the main control surfaces, rudder, ailerons and elevators, which were covered in doped fabric. The whole could be broken down into three major components of wings, forward fuselage and rear fuselage so that in dispersal production as planned in Australia, any major portion would match up to any other.

#### Dimensions

Wingspan: 57ft 10in  
Height: 12ft 5in  
Track: 18ft 0in

Length overall: 44ft 3in  
Wing Area: 503sq ft

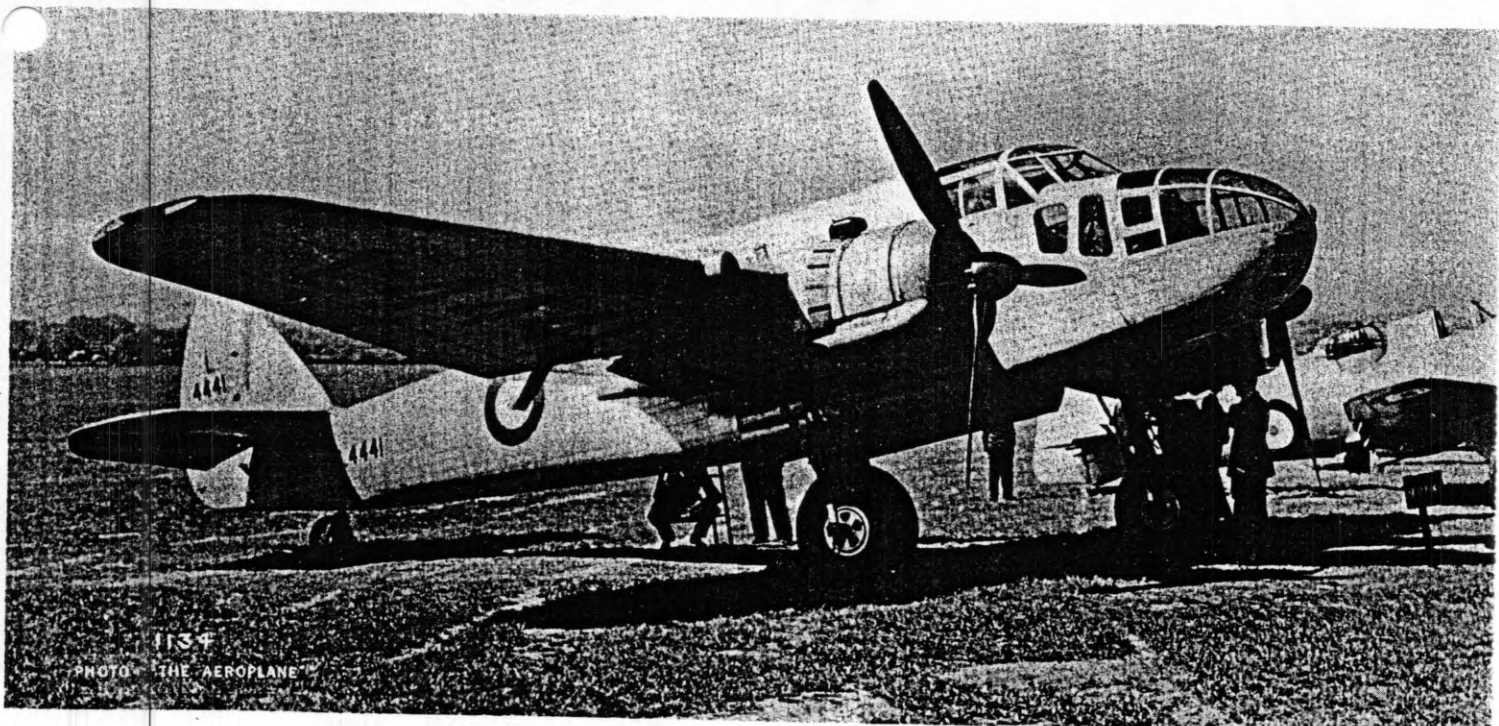


PHOTO THE AEROPLANE

### Weights

Tare: 13 107lb Mk I, 14 074lb Mk II, 14 070lb Mk VIII  
 Loaded with torpedo: 21 228lb Mk I, 22 083lb Mk II

### Tankage

Fuel capacity: 570 gallons (DTD230/87 octane)  
 Oil capacity: 39 gallons (DTD109)

### Performance

Maximum speed (Mk I without torpedo): 271.5mph at 6 500 feet  
 Maximum speed (Mk I with Mk XII torpedo): 263mph at 6 500 feet  
 Maximum speed (Mk II with Mk XII torpedo): 270mph at 14 500 feet  
 Maximum cruising speed (Mk I without torpedo): 255mph at 6 500 feet  
 Maximum cruising speed (with Mk XII torpedo): 225mph Mk I & 230mph Mk II at 6 500 feet  
 Take-off run (Mk I without torpedo): 255 yards  
 Take-off run (Mk I with Mk XII torpedo): 295 yards  
 Service ceiling: 16 500 feet Mk I, 18 000 feet Mks II/VIII  
 Normal range: 1 600 miles Mk I, 1 450 miles Mk II  
 Endurance (all Mks): Approx 6 hours  
 Initial rate of climb: 1 200 feet per minute

### Armament

Maximum of 2 000lb bombs or Mk XII or Mk XIV torpedo and up to 9 x .303 machine-guns, with some substitution of .5 machine-guns in Australian-built models in 1945. Load variations and gun position variation as given in text and captioning.

### Beaufort Marks

| Mk | Engines—2 Per aircraft                 | Remarks                 |
|----|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| I  | Bristol Taurus II, III, VI, XII or XVI | Main production version |
| II | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S3C4-G | Late production version |

|      |                                         |                                 |
|------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| III  | Rolls-Royce Merlin XX                   | Project only                    |
| IV   | Bristol Taurus XX                       | Experiment, AW372 only          |
| V    | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R-1830-S3C4-G | Curtiss propellers              |
| VA   | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S3C4-G  | Hamilton propellers             |
| VI   | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S1C3-G  | Curtiss propellers              |
| VII  | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S1C3-G  | Hamilton propellers             |
| VIII | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S3C4-G  | Curtiss propellers              |
| IX   | Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp R1830-S3C4-G  | Transport conversion of Mk VIII |

*Notes:* The original Mk I Taurus was not used on the Beaufort. The prototype L4441 was fitted with the Mk III and the majority of early production the Mk II. Modified Mk II engines to Mk III standard were designated initially Mk IIA and later re-designated Mk VI. These early marks were rated at 860/900hp at 2 800rpm, with a maximum power of 1 065hp at 3 225rpm. The improved Mk XII and XVI had a maximum of 1 130hp. Standard propeller with Taurus engines was the de Havilland Type D19 constant speed airscrew.

The Twin Wasp, giving 1 200hp, was fitted with either Curtiss-electric or Hamilton bracket type variable pitch airscrews as tabled.

*Left and below:* Alpha and Omega represented by L4441 and A9-700 the very first, and the very last, Beaufort built. / *Real Photographs and RAAF*



## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### A Male Bonding Session at the Masonic Temple, Longueville.

**Introduction.** In 2005 we commemorate the 75th anniversary of a memorable year in aviation history. 1930 also saw several notable achievements in the adventurous life of Charles Kingsford Smith. On January 1, the airline he founded with Charles Ulm, Australian National Airways, began its operations with services between Sydney and Brisbane. In June, with E. van Dyk, J. Patrick Saul and J. Stannage, he flew the *Southern Cross* from Portmarnock Beach, Ireland, to Newfoundland and then on to New York. He completed his circumnavigation of the world in the *Southern Cross* by flying across the United States to San Francisco, arriving there on American Independence Day, July 4.

Flying solo on a long distance flight for the first time in his career, Smithy took off in Avro Avian IVA, G-ABCF, *Southern Cross Junior*, from Heston, England, on October 9. He arrived at Darwin 9 days, 21 hours and 40 minutes later, thereby taking 5 1/2 days off Bert Hinkler's record. This flight was heralded in the U.K. press as possibly the most remarkable flight in the history of aviation. Smithy received messages of congratulations from the King, the British Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald, and the new Air Minister, Lord Amulree. In Australia the Commonwealth Government elevated his honorary rank in the RAAF, of Wing Commander, to Air Commodore. Sydney gave him a hero's welcome when he landed at Mascot on October 22. Finally, 1930 was the year of his marriage to Mary Powell. The wedding, besieged by about 10000 well wishers, took place at Scots Presbyterian Church in Collins Street, Melbourne, on Wednesday, December 10. Charles Ulm was best man.

Longueville, a Sydney suburb within the Lane Cove Municipality, has a special connection with the Kingsford Smith family. Around the early 1920's there seemed to be a mass migration of the clan to Arabella Street. Smithy's brother Leofric took up residence at *Werona*, No 75, and another brother, Wilfrid, lived at No 93. Wilfrid's mother-in-law, Elizabeth Slatter, lived at *Bringa*, No 65, and after Wilfrid moved his family to Albury in 1925, his eldest son, John Kingsford-Smith, stayed on at *Bringa*. Smithy's parents, William and Catherine, lived at *Kuranda*, No 73, a house they rented. In August 1928, soon after serious money came his way following the Pacific flight, Smithy purchased *Kuranda* from his parents' landlady for an amount of £1350. Smithy really was a dutiful son.

Other Longueville aviators in 1930 were Laurie Nall and Bill Pennell, the latter was introduced to readers of L&L in *The Log of the Rouseabout*, included with the October, November and December newsletters last year. Bill kept a diary which now provides a window through which we can gain a more intimate glance at the events of seventy five years ago. After several days and nights of official functions in Sydney, in recognition of his flight in the *Southern Cross Junior*, it was probably a welcome relief for Smithy to attend the Longueville masonic temple on Thursday, October 30, for a relaxed evening with his mates. The following is an extract from Bill Pennell's reminiscences of the evening.

**A "Smoko" Evening at the Masonic Temple, Longueville, to Honour Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm.** "Smithy had landed at Mascot on Wednesday, October 22nd at 2.50pm in his Avro Avian, *Southern Cross Junior*, establishing a new solo record from England. He did the time in under 10 days, beating Hinkler's time by about 5 days. His arrival at Mascot was only 8 days before the "Smoko", so he was well in the public eye again.

The organisers of the evening were Rus Garling, a pioneer radio personality and manager of the *Heenzo* cough remedy firm, and his friend, Keith Morris of the *Craven A* cigarette firm, Carreras Ltd. The Garlings were of considerable assistance to Arthur Butler when he formed his company, B.A.T. Smithy's parents lived in Longueville close to where Rus and Keith lived, and they were all very good friends. Flight Lieutenant Jim Moir, who was my dentist, also lived at Longueville and he took the Chair for the evening. Some years later Jim became A.D.C. to Governor General Lord Gowrie and he

also became a President of the Aero Club of NSW.

The previous year Jim and Flying Officer H.C. Owen of the RAAF, Richmond, were to accept the challenge of flying the first air-freighter from England to Australia. The plane they used was a specially designed and constructed Vickers Vellore, powered by an Armstrong Siddeley Jaguar radial engine. Some bad luck was experienced on this flight, which ended in a crash landing, through lack of fuel, in the small garden alongside Cape Don lighthouse, north of Darwin. The garden was on a steep slope. There was no possible chance of getting through to Darwin, and as the plane had no radio, Jim decided that he must get as close as possible to assistance. Because of the formidable character of the country and the absence of any kind of emergency landing ground, Jim took a chance on the soft looking lighthouse garden, realising at the same time that the result could be unsuccessful. In this instance success meant survival. Jim told me that by approaching as slowly as possible he calculated that he could drop into the up-hill garden with a minimum of forward speed. He did this skilfully, piling the plane up against the lighthouse wall. There was some good luck also. The big plane was completely wrecked and some physical injuries were sustained. Jim told me he was right on course, which was a difficult feat because of the very strong westerly encountered across the Timor Sea.

Although Moir and Owen were in safe hands at Cape Don, officially they were missing because Cape Don was without radio. Captain Lester Brain, the Qantas pilot who found the ill-fated *Kookaburra* five weeks earlier, spotted the wrecked Vickers Vellore at Cape Don about a week after it had crashed, and Moir and Owen were brought to Darwin by the lighthouse tender. Lester Brain had radio. Most of the early flyers had interesting stories attached to them, which were never, or seldom recorded.

However, I must continue my description of the "Smoko" evening held at Longueville to honour Smithy and Ulm. An aero club pilot who also lived in Longueville at this time was the writer of these notes, Bill Pennell, who sat at the official table alongside former Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes. The official party also included Jim Moir, (Chairman), Smithy, Ulm, Squadron Leader Garnet Malley and Smithy's brother Wilfrid. Joe Palmer's grandparents lived in a large two-storey stone house and were early residents of Longueville, so the suburb was to develop a real aviation atmosphere to it. There were about sixty men present at the "Smoko" and it cost each of them a one pound note in the hat at the door to gain admittance. The first part of the evening was taken up with a sing-song of old popular songs. Then the Chairman announced that all the bachelors present were to stand and sing *Love's Old Sweet Song*. The result of this was a trio rendered in pretty good style by Smithy, Jim Moir and Bill Pennell. It was known that Smithy had become engaged to a Melbourne lass he had met on board ship when returning from the USA, sometime earlier, so it was appropriate that he should be invited to sing as a solo the romantic song, *Kind, Kind And Gentle Is She, Kind Is My Mary*. The young lady's name was Mary Powell. The character of the song hardly suited Smithy's rather robust voice and naturally breezy manner, but he put great spirit and feeling into his performance, as expected.

W. M. Hughes was then called upon to address the gathering and he spoke on the great achievement of the Trans-Pacific flight so successfully carried out by Smithy and Charles Ulm. It was obvious that Hughes had great respect for the flying exploits of these men and he made reference to what was described as proper, well earned public recognition. Hughes didn't have a great deal to say but his presence and advice served the purpose very well. Yet it was 1932 before Smithy's knighthood was conferred. I found the former Prime Minister eager to converse on the subject of the aero club's civil pilot training scheme, which was under the control of the Department of Defence. He knew a lot about it from the Commonwealth Government's angle and he was very interested in knowing how it was proceeding. His hearing aid apparatus was contained in a sizeable polished wood box which he placed on the table in front of him. He turned it off to suit himself. We exchanged private cards and parted good friends. Before the singing of, *Show Me The Way To go Home*, Chairman Moir presented Smithy with a fine, tall, grandfather clock. While the evening was in progress, Smithy's father was very ill in hospital. He died on the following Sunday, and he left a wish that his ashes be scattered from the air over the Pacific Ocean. On Tuesday, November 4th, Smithy fulfilled his father's wish from the *Southern Moon*, with his mother Catherine on board." **W.J.C. Pennell, 1897-1995.**



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

September 2005 No.388

### September Meeting

The September meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2005, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the MacArthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the night will be:

### *Your Ten Most Interesting Aviation Slides*

Members are invited to bring their ten most interesting slides featuring aircraft or aviation related matters. We held a very successful and similar meeting last year and saw some excellent images of old, or unusual or historic aircraft. The slides could include rare aircraft, images from yesteryear, or even something more recent that we might not have previously seen. Please join us for another entertaining evening.

### August Meeting

The August meeting featured presentations from four Society members. At the July meeting, Jock Wylie identified the tragic RAAF OTU training record, particularly in relation to the Beaufort. Following up on this segment of Jock's talk, Bill Holswich discussed the overall training accident record experienced by the RAAF. Bill displayed a statement by Air Vice-Marshall G. Jones concerning the accident rate, which was reportedly costing £3 million per quarter. A series of posters and photographs of various accidents were also shown.

Roger Kennedy told the story of the DH.121 Trident, which was originally known as the Airco DH.121 and later as the Hawker Siddeley Trident. The Trident was initially designed to a BEA specification during the mid 1950s. However, in 1958 BEA demanded a smaller aircraft, which turned out to be too small for the airline's routes. The first flight was made on 9 January 1962 and the last BEA flight in May 1986. Its last flight anywhere was by CAAC in May 1991. Only 117 Tridents of all marques were

built and operators included BEA, Channel Airways, Northeast, Cyprus Airways, Iraqi Airways, Kuwait Airlines, Air Ceylon and CAAC. The aircraft was the first airliner featuring the "autoland" system; however in its first low visibility use, the aircraft landed successfully, but could not taxi because of the reduced visibility on the taxiways. Roger's talk was concluded with a promotional video of the aircraft from BEA.

Leen Van Lien and guest Max Rout provided several sound recordings, including the song "Lone Girl Flyer" dedicated to Amy Johnson and speeches by Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm. The recordings were of quite good quality, given their age and the fact that they were on original 78rpm records. Max provided the wind-up record player, which itself was a fascinating piece of antique equipment. Also on display were numerous posters and sheet music of Amy "Johnnie" Johnson's song. Absolutely fascinating material.

It was quite evident that Keith White has gone to much trouble in his research on the fate of the Catalinas that had been used by Qantas on the Perth - Ceylon air route during World War II. He gave details of the evocative photograph of the Qantas Catalina *Rigel Star* (which is contained in *Qantas at War*, by Sir Hudson Fysh), whilst en-route between the ports. Keith has discovered that it was, in fact, taken by Digby Bull, a flight engineer on a Catalina travelling in the opposite direction, although credit is only ever afforded to Qantas. Keith went on to discuss the fate of the five Catalinas that were used on the service. One, *Spica Star*, was sent to Sydney for repair and later scuttled off the NSW coast, whilst the other four had been reported elsewhere as "towed out to sea from the Swan River" and recorded as destroyed on 28 November 1945. However, Keith's research has found that the aircraft were flown from the Swan River and scuttled over a five week period from 17 January 1946. Keith provided some of the excerpts from the detailed statement that had been given by one of the crew who was part of the team selected to destroy the aircraft. The destruction of the aircraft was one of the conditions that was required

under the Lend-Lease agreement.

Many thanks to those members who participated in this very entertaining evening.

### **On the Internet**

USA Federal Aviation Administration

([www.faa.gov/index.htm](http://www.faa.gov/index.htm))

This site provides access to the vast US Civil Aircraft Register database plus FAA Rules and Regulations, news, airport status and several interesting links. Information on aircraft can be obtained by entering aircraft type, construction number or registration, and there is in some instances data on aircraft previously holding that registration number.

USA National Transportation Safety Board – Aviation

([www.ntsb.gov/aviation/aviation.htm](http://www.ntsb.gov/aviation/aviation.htm))

Those who have an interest in aircraft accidents will find this site almost overwhelming. It provides extensive databases on all aircraft accidents in the USA, plus many others where U.S. or Canadian manufactured aircraft are involved. Each report contains factual information about the accident as well as technical data on the aircraft concerned.

AVDB Experimental Aircraft Database

([www.avdb.com](http://www.avdb.com))

This site is ideal for those interested in homebuilt and experimental aircraft. It features many images of homebuilt aircraft and provides excellent links to other sites pertinent to this category of aviation.

Republic Seabee RC-3

([www.seabee.info](http://www.seabee.info))

All you need to know about this venerable amphibian is contained on this site. There is plenty of technical data, history and many images. Also featured is the Twin Bee and a production list, but unfortunately the information on Australian registered Seabees is negligible.

Aviation.CA

([www.aviation.ca](http://www.aviation.ca))

This site provides a comprehensive news source for Canadian aviation, including current events, history and images.

### **Information Wanted**

Member Bill Kendrick is seeking information on the RAAF PBV-5 Catalina, A24-1, which crashed on take-off from Darwin in August 1945. Bill particularly wants to know the colour scheme and squadron markings on the aircraft when it crashed. Any information can be forwarded through the Hon Secretary.

### **Special October Event**

Instead of our usual meeting at the Powerhouse Museum, Ken Garland has kindly invited members to visit his Sadler Vampire manufacturing facility at Albion Park Airport on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Ken will also have the barbeque ready, so bring your own meat and have lunch from about 1:00pm before the tour starts at 2:00pm. We also hope to have access to the HARS facility also located at Albion Park.

### **News**

#### **From the cold, cold North – Destination Townsville Victory in the Pacific Commemoration**

In 'True Blue' style, the Cairns Tiger Moth answered the call of duty. The call came from the *Townsville Bulletin* requesting the pleasure of the Tiger to participate in the Air Force Tribute in commemorating the end of WWII hostilities in the Pacific region. It was indeed an honour and a pleasure to answer the call, and on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2005 an intrepid aircrew took to the skies over Cairns; the 'Target', Townsville.

With a 10-knot tailwind all bode well for the operation, and in the initial stages, proved to be so. Shortly after the half way mark, operations became a tad uncomfortable---, I LIE, IT BECAME BLOODY UNCOMFORTABLE

Brass monkey weather was now the order of the day, I sorely wished for my Irving Jacket of yore. Combined with the rapid temperature drop came weather suitably described as 'Chop', and yours truly has been most unaccustomed to both elements in these latter years.

Suffice to say, this made for one very cold, unhappy chappy, and thoughts similar to, "Oh Townsville, please rush to meet us", seemed appropriate. Finals into Townsville for this now lesser intrepid aviator, I can describe euphoric, not for many years have I had the desire to disembark so strong.

A very strong, hot cuppa' (tea of course, typical pom,) soon had the world looking a much nicer place. The welcome we received and the adoration of the Tiger from the locals, put all thoughts of the previous two hours to rest, -----Tigers Rule OK.

The commemoration activities, all well planned, were a great success and a credit to all of the organisers. The fly past and display, led by the Tiger, and in company with the most resplendent Boomerang making it extra special. The Boomerang needs to be seen to be believed; immaculately restored by owner/pilot Mathew Denning, this aeroplane must rate among the best airworthy Warbirds in Australia, if not the world. It was a great pleasure for me to be in the company of this young gentleman, his very able LAME friend Kerry, and his magnificent aircraft.

A very pleasant experience, this event will be long remembered, taking the 'Tiger' home also come into this category,----- the flight TO Townsville I now donate to Alzheimers.

Roy Fordham, Your Northern Correspondent.

### **Mareeba C-47 Update**

Also received from our Northern Correspondent, Roy Fordham is an update on the C-47.

A busy North Queensland Warbird team has been breathing life back into the 'Jungle Skippers' C-47, c/n 25495, formerly VH-BAB, VH-CAO, VH-DMV and 43-48234, now based in Mareeba.

Excitement mounting, awaiting hopefully, a static engine run, current engines time expired, anyone wishing to donate a pair, (one would be quite acceptable initially ) with hours on them, feel happy to contact me ANYTIME.

### **Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome**

Members will be aware of the presentation given by Dr Richard Gates at our June meeting, where he described the plans by Richmond Valley Council to permit development of a retirement village on land at the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome. AHSA (NSW) was one of several organisations who wrote to the NSW Heritage Council arguing that, in order to protect this important part of Australia's aviation history, such development should not be permitted to proceed. On 4<sup>th</sup> August, we received the following good news from the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee:

"The Heritage Council yesterday refused to sign off on the Draft Plan of Management because the retirement village would conflict with aviation. They have told the Richmond Valley Council and the retirement village developers to go away and do some more 'homework' as to where it can go so there will not be a conflict with aviation. They have 2/3 weeks to do this.

The Heritage Council also confirmed on at least 5 occasions that aviation was the top priority for the Aerodrome. That aviation was THE main feature of the Aerodrome that needs protection and that is why they put a stay on their decision. This meant that any compromise for the village was NOT to be at the expense of aviation or the aviation future viability of the Aerodrome. This pleases us enormously!!!!

Lots of issues were raised at the meeting about unresolved matters that RVC needs to do.

This is really GOOD news for us as we now have more time to press our case home about how badly the RVC has handled the issue and also to come up with alternatives which are aviation related. We already have a plan drawn up but have more to do.

HOWEVER - this is not the end of it. The RVC will not be 'happy campers' and there will be more to come, so it isn't quite time to break out the final bottle of champagne yet and we will keep you informed."

Gai Taylor – Honorary Secretary, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee.

### **Calendar of Events**

**3 September 2005** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**25 September 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**1 October 2005** Wright Flyer Replica Launch, Narromine NSW

**1-2 October 2005** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**7-9 October 2005** Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia Auster Fly-in, Broken Hill NSW

**9 October 2005** AHSA (NSW) October meeting, Sadler Vampire factory, Albion Park NSW

**28-31 October 2005** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National Convention & 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Wagga Wagga NSW

**29-30 October 2005** Queensland Vintage Aircraft Group Flying Days, Watts Bridge, Qld

**30 October 2005** Australia's Museum of Flight Airshow Nowra NSW

**2 November 2005** AHSA (NSW) Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, Dr Ron Houghton, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

**6 November 2005** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day, Wedderburn NSW

**19 November 2005** Orange Airport Open Day, Orange NSW

**19-20 November 2005** Gathering of Moths, Mt Beauty Vic

**27 November 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**7 December 2005** AHSA (NSW) Monthly Meeting, Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown NSW

**30 December 2005** Great Eastern Fly-in, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome, NSW

### **Contributions and Contacts**

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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

You can contact Society President, Ian Debenham, or Honorary Secretary, Warwick Bigsworth at the above address, for any information on the Society or its activities.



VH-MHR Mat Denning's CAC CA-13 Boomerang at Townsville during the Victory in the Pacific Commemoration



What is it? More next month

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### **The Federation Aeronautique Internationale - A Centenary.**

Less than two years after the Wright Brothers' first powered flight at Kitty Hawk, the Federation Aeronautique Internationale was born. It is perhaps remarkable that the birth of the FAI had more to do with a resolution passed at a congress of the International Olympic Committee, meeting in Brussels, than the momentous events of December 17, 1903. The IOC had recognised the future emergence of various forms of aerial sports that would require control and guidance before competition could be organised. Consequently representatives of the aero clubs of Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the U.S.A. were invited to a meeting in Paris. The outcome was the foundation of the FAI on October 14, 1905. Ever since, the FAI has been the only international body empowered to make and enforce rules governing aviation sporting meetings and air records. The validation of records in space also became its responsibility. In 1910 the FAI produced regulations for the granting of pilots' licences, and the first international licences issued by the national aero clubs were based on these regulations. By 1912 the FAI had adopted the first rules for international air navigation, and these rules formed the basis for future international air navigation regulations.

The highest honour granted by the FAI is its Gold Air Medal. This award was established in 1924 and was first presented in 1925. It is assessed on an annual basis and granted to an individual who has contributed greatly to the development of aeronautics by his or her activities, work, achievements, initiative or devotion to the cause of aviation. The Committee of the FAI may choose not to award the medal in any particular year. One would expect a few Australians to be among the distinguished recipients of the FAI Gold Air Medal. However, there is only one pioneer Australian airman on the list, and it is not Charles Kingsford Smith. The FAI Gold Air Medal for 1928 was awarded to Bert Hinkler. Only two other Australians have received the medal, Sir Donald Anderson, who won the vote in 1973, followed by Peter Lloyd in 1989. Each of these three men also received Australia's highest aviation award, the Oswald Watt Gold Medal: Bert Hinkler for the years 1927, 1928, 1931 and 1932; Donald Anderson for 1957; Peter Lloyd for 1969. The life and achievements of Bert Hinkler are well documented in aviation literature, and in museums at Brisbane and Bundaberg. But it is timely to be reminded of the two consummate negotiators and administrators, Sir Donald Anderson and Peter Lloyd, and their contributions to the progress of aviation in Australia in all its various forms.

Sir Donald Anderson had a special relationship with the Aviation Historical Society of Australia. In the November-December 1973 issue of the *Journal*, our then President, Les Turner, advised members that Sir Donald had accepted an invitation to be our first Patron. We enjoyed this honour all too briefly, due to his death on November 30, 1975, at the relatively young age of 58.

Don Anderson was born at Waikerie, South Australia on March 1, 1917. By the outbreak of WWII he had qualified as a primary school teacher. At the end of 1940 he joined the RAAF and commenced training as a pilot. During his air force career he logged 3000 hours as a transport pilot in New Guinea and later as a test and acceptance pilot with Ferry Command in the USA. He was *Mentioned in Despatches*. At the end of the war a fellow RAAF pilot, Robert Law-Smith, suggested to Don Anderson, then still a lowly Flight Lieutenant, that he should join the Department of Civil Aviation. Neither could have predicted that the new recruit to the Department in 1946 would progress from examiner of airmen to Director-General in just ten years. When Don Anderson took up his position as head of DCA on January 1, 1956, he was 38 years old, the youngest head of any similar body in the world at the time. From an examiner of airmen in 1946 he became Superintendent of Air Traffic Control in 1948. His organising skills and knowledge of air traffic control were demonstrated as a member of Australian delegations to the International Civil Aviation Organisation conferences at Montreal and Chicago. By 1952 he had become Assistant Director-General (Personnel and Establishments) of DCA. During his subsequent period as Director-General, from 1956, he became widely recognised as one of the world's foremost negotiators of international air transport agreements. In 1959 he became a

Commander of the *Order British Empire*, and was created a *Knight Bachelor* in June 1967. In 1972 he was appointed to the Board of Qantas as a director, where he joined his old friend Robert Law-Smith. Then on December 2, 1972, a Federal election saw the return of a Labor Government for the first time since 1949. It was time for change, and for Sir Donald's beloved Department of Civil Aviation the change was dramatic. The new Minister for Transport, Charles K. Jones, announced his plans for a single Department of Transport incorporating the old DCA. Sir Donald was to become Chairman of the Qantas Board from July 1, 1973, and stand down as Director-General of DCA at the end of the year.

In January 1974 I first met Peter Lloyd. He was then the President of the Aero Club of NSW, which I had just joined. At the same time Sir Donald Anderson was a Senior Vice President of the Club. On a very gloomy, wet Saturday afternoon, March 23, the new Secretary of Transport, Charles Halton, carried out his first official duty, which was the opening of the new flight office of the RACNSW at Bankstown Aerodrome. He was introduced to the official guests and members present by Peter Lloyd. During his speech Peter Lloyd said, "The Executive Head of the Department of Transport, our guest here to-day, has been encouraged by me and others to take a strong, bold, independent stand and to return the aero clubs to the 'sacred cow' position they enjoyed in 1934, 40 years ago." However, as Peter Lloyd well knew, the RACNSW was about to experience something quite the opposite, Minister Jones's aviation cost recovery programme.

Later in 1974, the 67th General Conference of the FAI was held at the Sydney Opera House from October 27 to November 2. This was only the second occasion on which the General Conference was held in the Southern Hemisphere. It was also the conference at which Sir Donald Anderson received his FAI Gold Air Medal. The overall success of the conference was due in large part to the organisational skills of Peter Lloyd who, as a Past President of the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia, and Australian Delegate to the FAI, had taken on the Chairmanship of the FAI Conference Organising Committee. At the time, the RFACA was the representative of the FAI in Australia. I well remember "Australiana Day", held at Bankstown Aerodrome on Thursday, October 31, as part of the conference programme. Conference delegates were entertained at the RACNSW clubhouse while an air show was put on for their enjoyment. The flying display featured two F111s from Amberley, and included exhibitions of gliding, hang gliding, parachuting, crop dusting, aerobatics, and hot air and hydrogen filled ballooning. The general public had not been invited and club members were able to mingle with conference delegates, including Russian and American astronauts. For one last day, members of the RACNSW were able to bask in the warmth of 'sacred cow' status.

A quick look in *Who's Who in Australia* will reveal a remarkable entry for George Alfred (Peter) Lloyd, AO, OBE, FAIM, FCIT. As with Don Anderson, Peter Lloyd's young adult life was interrupted by WWII. He served with the AIF in the Middle East and in Papua New Guinea, and was *Mentioned in Despatches*. In 1948, he founded the Peter Lloyd Group, operating in the fields of motor transport and tourism. He also began a life long involvement with aviation. He was President of the RACNSW from 1957 to 1967, and from 1972 to 1974. In 1958 he became President of the Aero Club Federation of Australia, which became the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia from 1960. Peter Lloyd remained President of the RFACA until 1970, then took the position of Honorary Treasurer until 1991. He served as Chairman of the Australian Region of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators from 1975 to 1976. He was founding President of the Australian Aerobatic Club from 1970 to 1977, and is an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Parachute Federation. He was a Councillor of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, NSW Section, from 1967 to 1980.

Peter Lloyd's association with the FAI progressed from Australian Delegate since 1971 to Treasurer-General from 1976 to 1984, becoming a permanent Trustee of the FAI International Fund in Switzerland. He was World President of the FAI from 1986 to 1988, and has been President d'Honneur since then. From 1990, the Australian Sport Aviation Confederation took over from the RFACA as the Australian representative of the FAI. Peter Lloyd was then made Honorary Governor of the Confederation. When delegates meet in Paris this year to attend the 98th General Conference of the FAI from October 12 to 14, and to celebrate the centenary of their organisation, Peter Lloyd will be there. Two months later, on December 15, he will celebrate his own 85th birthday. **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

October 2005 No.389

### **October Meeting Albion Park Aerodrome Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

The October meeting will be in the form of a visit to the Sadler Vampire factory at Albion Park Aerodrome on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2005. The factory is at Hangar 4, just off Airport Road, Albion Park Aerodrome and between the Australian Aerial Patrol hangar and the Aerial Patrol Flying School. Signs to the venue will be on display.

Long time member, Ken Garland recently purchased the rights to manufacture the Sadler Vampire ultralight aircraft. Ken initially set up production at Camden Aerodrome, however he moved into the new facility at Albion Park several weeks ago. He has invited Society members and friends to attend a Bring Your Own barbeque lunch commencing at 1:00pm, followed by an inspection of the Sadler Vampire assembly hangar. We suggest that you aim to arrive at Albion Park by about 12:30pm and the barbeque will be fired up for lunch at 1:00pm.

Following the inspection of the Sadler Vampire facility, a tour of the nearby HARS hangar will be available, possibly for a small charge. HARS is the home of the Catalina, Super Constellation, Neptunes, C-47s and much more.

The Sadler Vampire was manufactured by Skywise Ultraflight during the late 1980s at Bankstown. Manufacture of the refined Australian version, constructed under the provisions of Air Navigation Order 95.25, is based on the US Sadler Vampire which was designed by Bill Sadler and built by American Microflight. Ownership rights to manufacture the Sadler Vampire have changed hands several times, but are now with Ken Garland.

### **September Meeting**

The theme for the night was *Your Ten Most Interesting Aviation Slides*, and a number of unusual and historic slides were provided by members. Allen Clarke had several from the USA including images taken at Chino, California where warbirds are found in large numbers. Tony Coleiro had several shots of his early flying training days and some particularly interesting artistic images. Ian Debenham provided a

number of slides taken during the prop days at Essendon and Sydney, featuring Viscounts, DC-3s, Electras and a Mini Guppy as well as early model B707s and DC-8s. Ian also showed slides that had been taken in Tucson, Arizona when he was involved in the Super Constellation restoration project.

David Eyre provided a different range of shots of light aircraft at Wedderburn and Hoxton Park, and his images from the air display held at Omaka, New Zealand earlier this year featured many WWI flying machines that were particularly noteworthy.

Ken Garland showed a wide range of special purpose Beechcraft King Airs and Queen Airs, some of the latter being fitted with turbo-prop engines. Most of these aircraft were used by United States defence forces in circumstances better left unsaid, but the weird looking antennae and other non-standard bits gave an indication of their surveillance and intelligence gathering uses.

Rob Tracz showed some of his excellent collection of propeller driven airliners now used as tankers or water bombers. All the above contributors provided a fine collection of most interesting images.

Our regular North Queensland correspondent, Roy Fordham, made another welcome visit and provided a video on his visit to the De Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre, which incorporates the Mosquito Aircraft Museum. The video showed many of the aircraft on display as well as a short discussion with John Cunningham, the famous former de Havilland chief test pilot.

Many thanks to those members for their contributions.

### **On the Internet**

Australian Flying Corps

([www.australianflyingcorps.org/2004\\_2002/index.html](http://www.australianflyingcorps.org/2004_2002/index.html))

This excellent site covers a vast amount of the history of Australia in the air during the Great War of 1914 – 1918. The introductory history covers the formation of the Australian Flying Corps, service in New Guinea, Mesopotamia, Palestine and France. The history also includes some of the achievers and characters of the Australian Flying Corps as well as

information on units, people, aircraft, squadrons, heraldry and much, much more. This site is a must.

#### Boeing Photo Store

([www.boeingphotostore.com/source/Home.aspx](http://www.boeingphotostore.com/source/Home.aspx))

This site has been mentioned before but has been somewhat enhanced. It provides a large variety of images of Boeing civil and military aircraft as well as flight decks and early advertisements. Images can be purchased over the net.

#### Scramble

([www.scramble.nl/index.html](http://www.scramble.nl/index.html))

This site, which is that of Scramble Magazine and the Dutch Aviation Society, was also mentioned some time ago. Its primary focus is on military databases and activity, but also provides access to much civil information. Subscription to Scramble Magazine allows much greater access to databases.

#### De Havilland Aircraft

([www.dehavilland.ukf.net/index.html](http://www.dehavilland.ukf.net/index.html))

This site features the designs of Geoffrey de Havilland and intends to present a complete history of every aircraft produced by the company, its subsidiaries and licencees from the incorporation of de Havilland in 1920 until its takeover by Hawker Siddeley. Some of the links are unfortunately out of date, but there is much interesting information.

#### News

##### Happy Birthday Nancy Bird

All AHSA (NSW) Inc members wish one of our special Honorary Life Members, Nancy Bird AO OBE, a very happy 90<sup>th</sup> birthday for the 16<sup>th</sup> October.

##### 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the return of WWII PoWs by Catalina

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2005 a large number of invited guests and spectators attended the fly-past of seaplanes over Rose Bay in commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return to Sydney of 9 Catalina flying boats each carrying 17 repatriated Prisoners of War from Singapore.

The fly-past, which was organised by the Seaplane Pilots' Association of Australia, was held in honour of the Catalina crews and the PoWs that they brought back and consisted of a formation flight of 3 DHC-2 Beaver floatplanes, followed by another formation flight of 3 SeaRey amphibians, a Cessna C206 floatplane and Cessna 180 floatplane, followed by the HARS Catalina VH-PBZ, which made several approaches and overshoots at Rose Bay.

The Seaplane Pilots Association was also able to promote its proposed flying boat museum which it wants to establish at Rose Bay.

#### Avro Bomber Preservation Association Inc

This organisation has been negotiating for the past 10 months for the purchase of the dis-assembled Avro Lincoln RF342 and the remains of the cockpit and fuselage of Avro Lancaster KB976/994 from England and recover them to Australia for static display purposes. The Association has received ATO endorsement as a charitable institution and is now seeking Tax Deductible donations to secure the option to purchase these aircraft.

The Association notes that the restoration of the B-24 Liberator proves the task can be done, and where else at any time in the future will an Avro Lincoln be available? The objective is to see a static restored Avro Lincoln exist in Australia and there will be a significant portion of an authentic Lancaster cockpit and fuselage along for the ride, which is intended for preservation and display as well. Both are earmarked for donation to bona fide museums.

A website has been created for the Project:

[http://aarg.com.au/Avro\\_group.htm](http://aarg.com.au/Avro_group.htm)

Donations can be made to:

Avro Bomber Preservation Association Inc., PO Box 176 LARA, VIC 3212 Australia.

#### Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome

Further to last month's information relating to Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome, we have received some disappointing news from Gai Taylor:

"Thank you all for supporting us with our determination to keep the Aerodrome for aviation. The Heritage Council has ratified the Draft Plan of Management despite two weeks before maintaining aviation was of prime importance to the site and that the Richmond Valley Council and developer had to go away and find an alternative and against the opinion of the consultants employed by the Heritage Office to go through the Plan.

Thus they have decided to let the retirement village be built, 150 m from the main runway and next to the southern apron area used during the Great Eastern Fly-in and other aviation events. There are plans for a Heritage Agreement to be signed between the Heritage Council and RVC 'securing' aviation for the future but we will wait and see. What this does is to leave virtually no other areas available for aviation development use, ie Air Park or aviation industry, as the village will use most of that land.

Well, if they thought that was the end of it and that we would go away quietly, they are mistaken! From our point of view this is only Round 3. What we've done and are doing now.

1. We have sought legal advice and notified the HC of that opinion - that the entire development of the Plan was pre-empted etc.
2. Gathered a large amount of information about

our options - legal, bureaucratic and lobbying.

3. Started actions on a number of those options.
4. Establishing a 'Fighting Fund' for the future, if and when it is needed.
5. Other actions which may be useful."

We will keep you informed on this continuing saga.

### **Special November Event – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture**

This year, the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture will be presented by AHSA (NSW) Inc member, Dr Ron Houghton DFC, *BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD, FRAeS, FRGS, FRMS*. Ron has had an extraordinary involvement with aviation in his long career: as a Wellington and Halifax pilot in WWII, where he was awarded the DFC; as a Qantas pilot for 36 years and later seconded to a series of Asian airlines to assist with the introduction of B747s into their operations. Following his long and successful career as a pilot he attained his PhD and now lectures in aviation subjects at Newcastle University and the University of Sydney.

Don't miss this Lecture which will be held in the Target Theatre at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

### **What was it?**

There were several guesses about the identity of the mystery photograph in last month's issue of Southern Skies, but John Williams was correct in his identification of the Flightship FS-8.

Our North Queensland correspondent, Roy Fordham, has provided this startling find.

### **THE SAD FATE OF A FLIGHTSHIP.**

The visions witnessed in recent years, with hundreds of modern aircraft committed to early retirement, mothballing or to be scavenged for spare parts, is to me a sad sight, and a thought provoking indictment of technology and world wide needs.

A singular sad sight for me this week, was the dismembered, questionable beauty of a Flightship, beauty of course 'tis said, to be in the eye of the beholder.

The Flightship enterprise, in my humble opinion, was a missed opportunity for a very unique market, but who am I to judge such things. Anyone who may have witnessed the trials of this fascinating machine, as I was fortunately, on many occasions, could but only be impressed by its graceful lines and feel excited for its future possible potential.

However, to plagiarize just a little, there was written, of an immense future for this enterprise, in traversing shallow water passage, and inlets around

the world, for both passenger and freight carrying.

Whatever happened to these plans is something of a mystery, as was the scene I encountered in scrubland, to see one of this breed, languishing broken in the bush, only a few short kilometres from its natural environment, where its sister ship flew so gracefully, was indeed a heartbreaking experience.

Should any of our members be able to shed any light on the situation to date, I should be most interested to hear of it; maybe some of our seaplane members may be aware of current plans, or lack thereof.

### **Calendar of Events**

**1 October 2005** Wright Flyer Replica Launch, Narromine NSW

**1-2 October 2005** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**7-9 October 2005** Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia Auster Fly-in, Broken Hill NSW

**28-31 October 2005** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National Convention & 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Wagga Wagga NSW

**29-30 October 2005** Queensland Vintage Aircraft Group Flying Days, Watts Bridge, Qld

**30 October 2005** Australia's Museum of Flight Airshow Nowra NSW

**2 November 2005** AHSA (NSW) Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, Dr Ron Houghton DFC, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

**6 November 2005** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day, Wedderburn NSW

**19 November 2005** Orange Airport Open Day, Orange NSW

**19-20 November 2005** Gathering of Moths, Mt Beauty Vic

**27 November 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**7 December 2005** AHSA (NSW) Monthly Meeting, Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown NSW

**30 December 2005** Great Eastern Fly-in, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome, NSW

### **Contributions and Contacts**

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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

For any information on the Society or its activities, contact President, Ian Debenham, or Hon. Sec. Warwick Bigsworth at the above address.

### **Nostalgia**

Page 4 features the Newsletter from September 1972.



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

P.O. BOX C 208,  
CLARENCE STREET,  
SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2000.

N.S.W. BRANCH NEWSLETTER No. 32  
SEPTEMBER, 1972.

NEXT MEETING: The format of our monthly meetings usually means that a majority of the available time is allocated to guest speakers, special films and so on. Under such circumstances, it very rarely allows any of our own members to have the 'floor' for any great length of time - a situation that your Committee have been acutely aware of for some months. Therefore we decided that our next meeting will be exclusively devoted to featuring the photographic records of two of our long-standing members - Jim Sawdy and Eric Allen. Both Jim and Eric have spent a long time with aviation, and over the span of many years and much travelling their cameras have clicked some very interesting aviation scenes. Jim's topic will be centred around Northern Territory aviation whilst he was with Connellan Airways ... and Eric (who, incidentally, will shortly visit South East Asia) will run through a military and civil aviation scene between the years 1956 and 1964. Your Committee are certain this evening will be one of utmost interest and enjoyment to you - and we look forward to welcoming you and your friends to our next meeting which will commence at 7.45 p.m. on Thursday 5th October at the Qantas Airways Theatre, Qantas House, 70 Hunter Street, Sydney.

THE DAY WE BROUGHT BACK THE PAST: For the first time in some 20 years a large flying boat alighted on the waters of Lake Macquarie. Its arrival created an atmosphere that took many people back into the past - to a time when these same waters were a hive of flying boat activity. The occasion, as those who attended will so warmly recall, was the 16th September unveiling of the "Catalina Memorial" at the famous ex-RAAF flying boat base at Rathmines. This Memorial, in honour of the aircrews who trained and operated from there during and after World War Two, was officially unveiled by Air Vice-Marshal Townsend during the afternoon as a flight of Mirages passed overhead. But, to all the ex-airmen present on the day, the sight of sleek and fast Mirages was no match to the 'big Short Sandringham riding at her moorings in the bay. It seems very appropriate that the Sandringham (a civilian version of the famous wartime Sunderland) was present for this important day ... and it was also very appropriate that our Society was responsible for it being there. We believe our charter of the Sandringham fulfilled an important function on this occasion and, judging by the great interest taken in it, we undoubtedly had a lot of attention focused on the Society and its activities. Another important fact about our participation was that for the first time ever our contingent was made up of members representing all four State Branches, apart from our own N.S.W. contribution we had with us Ron Cuskelly and Barry Flood from Queensland, Mike Madden from Victoria, and Robert Haig from South Australia.

A.H.S.A. DISPLAY AT RATHMINES: The Society operated a small but highly successful display at Rathmines on 16th September, from which a substantial number of our publications were sold. The Committee wish to gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic assistance given by members and friends - in particular to Joan Koesters and Cheryl Favelle; who more than improved their salesmanship by trespassing, among other places the hallowed premises of the officers' mess!

GOING INTERSTATE? From time to time we have members, who are about to travel interstate, ask when other Branch meetings take place. The Committee are pleased to receive such enquiries, and we will gladly inform the other Branches of your plans to attend their monthly meetings. For the books Queensland have their meeting on the third Tuesday of the month, Victoria have theirs on the fourth Thursday. Further details available from the Secretary or the writer.

WE WANT YOUR SUGGESTIONS: Over the course of each year your Committee endeavour to plan the monthly meetings so that they cover the widest possible range of aviation topics. But, there may be something we have omitted from our programme, and perhaps it is something you would like to see included. If so the Committee will welcome your ideas and suggestions - and you will have the opportunity to put them forth at our October meeting.

Gregory T. Anderson,  
Hon. Publicity Officer.



An early model of the Sadler Vampire that was constructed in Australia by Skywise



The Flightship FS-8

# Flightship

# FS 8

## Safety, Comfort and Reliability

The Flightship FS 8 provides reliable, low maintenance coastal transport at a fraction of the operating cost of a comparable amphibious aircraft and at speeds many times faster than normal shipping and ferries.

Ride quality in the Flightship FS 8 is smooth and comfortable; wave action has no effect when airborne. Retractable hydraulic water thrusters provide silent and precise docking and taxiing. A 3 point steerable undercarriage also allows for unassisted ramp operations.

The Flightship FS 8 is an amphibious ground effect marine craft based on 30 years of development by a division of Dornier Germany and now owned by Flightship. Every FS 8 is built under survey to Lloyds Shipping Registry Classification complying with current IMO Guidelines for Wing in Ground Effect Craft.

Australian Government accredited training for 2 crew and 1 maintenance engineer at the Flightship Training School is included with every FS 8. Each craft comes with a spare parts inventory, special servicing tools set, 12 months warranty and worldwide 24/7 technical support.

Special fitouts of the Flightship FS 8 are also available for coastal patrol, medical evacuation, anti-smuggling and other configurations. Extended operating envelopes can apply to some government agencies.

## Technical Specifications

| Dimensions          | Imperial           | Metric             |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Wing Span           | 51' 0"             | 15.6 m             |
| Length Overall      | 57' 3"             | 17.45 m            |
| Height Overall      | 13' 6"             | 4.1 m              |
| Draft               | 23"                | 0.58 m             |
| Cabin Height        | 60"                | 1.5 m              |
| Cabin Width         | 6' 7"              | 2.0 m              |
| Baggage Compartment | 53 ft <sup>3</sup> | 1.5 m <sup>3</sup> |

| Masses                       | Imperial   | Metric    |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Payload (Not including crew) | 1,850 lbs  | 840 kgs   |
| Fuel (91 Octane ULP petrol)  | 396 lbs    | 180 kgs   |
| Empty Weight                 | 7,870 lbs  | 3,570 kgs |
| Maximum Take Off Weight      | 10,471 lbs | 4,750 kgs |

| Operating Limits          | Imperial | Metric   |       |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| Wave Heights (SWH)*       | Take off | 20"      | 0.5 m |
|                           | Cruise   | 6' 7"    | 2.0 m |
| Hydraulic Water Thrusters | 6 kts    | 11 km/h  |       |
| Take Off/Landing          | 55 kts   | 100 km/h |       |
| Cruising                  | 86 kts   | 160 km/h |       |
| Range                     | 300 nm   | 555 km   |       |
| Operating Height          | 9' 10"   | 3.0 m    |       |
| Wind Speed                | 25 kts   | 46 km/h  |       |

| Engine                           | Imperial | Metric |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------|
| General Motors 6.65 litre V8 efi | 450 hp   | 337 kW |

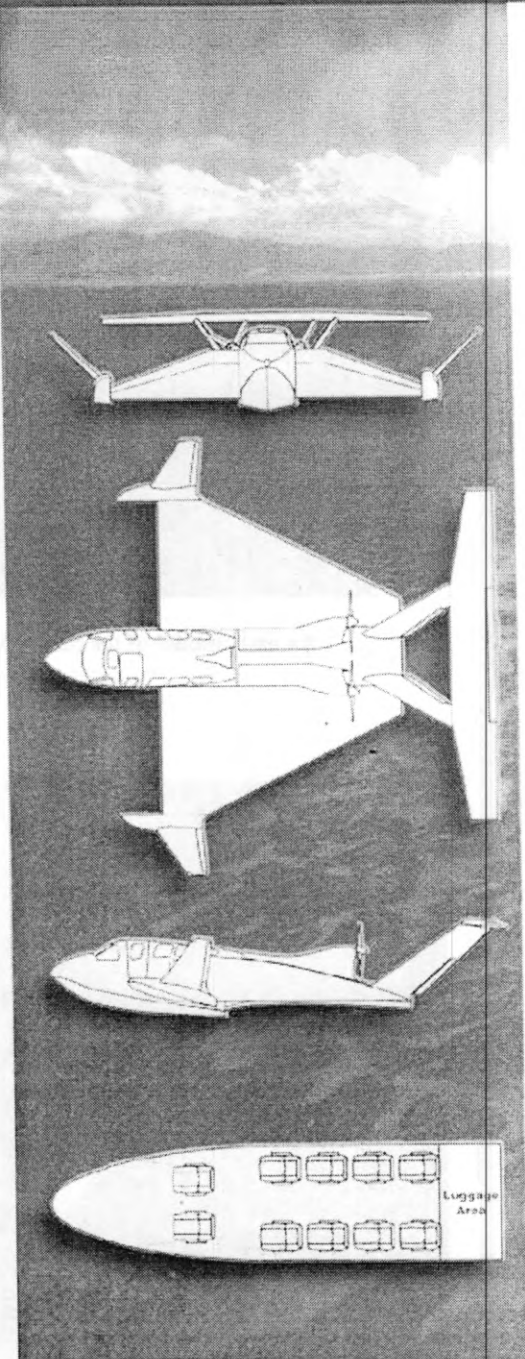
| Propellers           | Imperial | Metric    |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|
| 4 Blade, Fixed Pitch | 87" dia  | 2.2 m dia |

| Construction | Material            |
|--------------|---------------------|
|              | FRP Epoxy Composite |

All specifications subject to change without notice.

\* SWH (Significant Wave Height) is the average height of 1/3 of the highest waves encountered during any given time. For a 2.0 m SWH approx 5% of waves will be around 4.0 m in height from crest to trough.

\*\* Typical operating costs shown may vary slightly depending upon local operating conditions and costs.



## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Q Queenie VI And The Accident At Evans Head.

Dr Richard Gates was the guest speaker at our June 2005 meeting on his subject, *A Brief Illustrated History of Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome - Heritage as Cash Cow*. During the second part of his talk, Richard alerted us to the threat to the aerodrome, which is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register, by a plan of management proposed by Richmond Valley Council. Subsequently, Warwick Bigsworth, on behalf of AHSA (NSW) Inc, wrote to the NSW Heritage Office, lending support to the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee, and expressing our concern about this threat. In our last newsletter, Warwick reported the good news from Gai Taylor, Honorary Secretary of the Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome Committee, that the Heritage Council had refused to sign off on Richmond Valley Council's draft plan of management. In less than a month, Gai was again in contact relating the bad news that the Heritage Council had now ratified the RVC draft plan. The Heritage Council had managed this back-flip neatly between the conclusion of commemorations associated with the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII, and the start of commemorations for the 65th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Gai, who is a daughter of Sir Gordon Taylor, has aviation heritage in her veins. I believe her when she says, "If they think that is the end of it and we will go away quietly, they are mistaken!"

At the conclusion of the talk by Dr Richard Gates, our Honorary Treasurer, John Swanson, told us about his experiences as a member of the RAAF, while undergoing training at Evans Head during WWII. In particular, he mentioned the accident to *Q Queenie*, and its repair and recovery which took place while he was at the base. Later, John reminded me that it was he who had arranged for the Flight Engineer and crew member responsible for the repair of *Q Queenie*, Don Delaney, to be our guest speaker on August 3, 1988. Don Delaney received both a commendation and a reprimand from his RAAF superiors for his stoic efforts to return *Q Queenie* to airworthy status. The commendation reads in part, "In October 1943, A 66-1 (*Q Queenie VI*), was extensively damaged due to a crash landing in swampy country at Evans Head. Despite the inadequate equipment and heart breaking conditions Flight Lieutenant Delaney worked for six months, before he succeeded in making the aircraft again airworthy." The reprimand was for taking command of *Q Queenie*, while not being authorised to do so, and taxiing her under power from the site of the repair to the hangar area at Evans Head.

I had the honour of attending Don Delaney's 80th Birthday on January 13, 1989, at his home on the banks of the Georges River at Oatley. Don celebrated with his wife Alice, four sons and their families, and members of the *Q Queenie* crew, including Peter Isaacson and Alan Ritchie. He had impressed me, from our first meeting in 1988, as a person with abundant enthusiasm and energy. He seemed eternally youthful. But in fact Don was born in 1909, six months before Bleriot crossed the English Channel by air. He married Alice Leonard on January 12, 1934, when the effects of the Great Depression were still being felt and times were hard. Their first son was born in 1936.

On the outbreak of war in 1939, Australia's first call was on single men over the age of 18 to volunteer for the armed services. Married men with children, who had the desire to join up, confronted a particularly harrowing decision. It was essential that they could rely on the courage and forbearance of wives left at home. Even so, Don Delaney's patriotic response, at the age of thirty, was exceptional. He enlisted in September 1939, and was inducted into the RAAF on June 2, 1940, training at No1 Engineering School as a Fitter II E. In April 1941, he volunteered to serve anywhere overseas with the RAF, while still being allowed to wear the RAAF Blue uniform. He left Australian shores for the UK in June, 1941. In July 1942, he volunteered to serve as a Flight Engineer. His first operation was with 460 Sqn RAAF in a Lancaster on November 29, 1942. At the request of Peter Isaacson, Don Delaney volunteered to join 156 Sqn, Path Finder Force. He finished his tour of operations with Path Finder Force as a member of Peter Isaacson's Lancaster crew. He left the UK on May 22, 1943, as Flight Engineer in a brand new Lancaster, *Q Queenie VI*, en route to Australia via the Atlantic and Pacific.

On August 10, 1945, Don was posted to the Governor General, H.R.H. Duke of Gloucester's

Flight as the Flight Engineer on Avro York, MW140, *Endeavour*. It was then that another Alice came into his life - Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. I was intrigued to learn from Don how he, of Irish forbears and Catholic Faith, and she, the third daughter of the 7th Duke of Buccleuch, got on so well together at a time when sectarian divisions still existed in Australia. After Princess Alice returned to England, Don corresponded with her regularly. During many of their trips to the UK, Don and his wife Alice were the guests of the Princess at Kensington Palace or at Barnwell Manor.

A book has been written about Don's next Lancaster adventure in 1965, when he was Flight Engineer on board *NX611*, on a delivery flight from Sydney to Biggin Hill for the British Historical Aircraft Preservation Society. He carried out the exhausting job of all servicing on the aircraft en route.

Don Delaney died suddenly on October 9, 1993. On Valentine's Day, 2004, his wife Alice followed him. Eight months later, the oldest ever living member of the British Royal family, Princess Alice, also died. On Christmas Day 2004, she would have been 103 years old.....**John Scott.**

#### **The Q Queenie VI Accident at Evans Head - as Told by Don Delaney.**

" On October 26, 1943, we took off from Tamworth to carry out flights over all the North Coast towns, especially Lismore. After a 3 hour 20 mins flight we arrived over Evans Head. Our landing instructions were to use only the short, east-west runway as the long, north-south runway would not take the Lancaster's weight of about 60,000 lbs. As we turned on our final leg, the wind changed to a tail-wind and we went through the boundary fence, through a creek and into a swamp, with our port wing, undercarriage, bomb bay and tail wheel buried in the ground, including both port engines. No-one was injured as Peter had done a terrific job. So ended the 4th Liberty Loan Tour. In a sense I was relieved, as the pressure of keeping *Queenie* flying was a great burden, even though I was given an assistant Flight Engineer, Flight Sergeant Harry Neil, a Queenslander.

My first estimate was that, with the nearest spare parts being available at Toronto, Canada, *Queenie* was effectively a write-off. However, with great assistance from Wing Commander Walter Nicholson, Chief Technical Officer of 3 Aircraft Depot, Amberley, and a bunch of wizard Oz fitters that he sent me, we commenced initial repairs. We lifted the aircraft with small Wirraway jacks and sandbags, removing all the damaged parts, including the 35 ft long bomb bay doors. The damaged parts were sent to 3 A.D. Amberley. To my astonishment almost all were returned as irreparable. That is when I got my Irish up, and with my gang of wonderful Oz fitters we rebuilt *Queenie* in the snake infested swamp using the Evans Head facilities, and great help from all on the Base. Quite often we were surrounded by 2ft of water and used a row boat to gain access. On one December night, 12 inches of rain nearly swamped us.

All four engines and propellers were removed and shipped to Laverton for overhaul and repair. These were sent back to us and we installed them by March, 1944. All we required then were the ten crates of parts ex-Canada which were due to be unloaded in Brisbane. In consultation with the Minister for Air, Mr Drakeford, and the Minister for Supply, Mr Beasley, backed by Mr Curtin, I received permission to unload the spares in Sydney. With two transport drivers I drove to Sydney and met opposition from the stevedores and wharfies. But when I said, 'Who will I phone; Mr Curtin, Mr Drakeford or Mr Beasley?', there were no further problems. We got great help to go down into the hold and locate the ten cases, then non-stop back to Evans Head with our final necessary spares.

With great help from the NSW Department of Works, we built a road into the swamp. Extensive undercarriage retraction tests and other tests were then carried out. Finally I taxied *Queenie* back to the hangar area. On about the 2nd April, 1944, I sent a signal to RAAF HQ Victoria, requesting F/Lt Isaacson DFC AFC DFM arrive on 4th April for a special air test flight.

On 4th April, at 11.15am, Peter Isaacson arrived at Evans Head. Peter, my 2nd Flight Engineer and I, wearing parachutes and with full emergency teams on the ground at the ready, took-off in *Queenie*. At 3000ft we carried out two-engine flying, both port and starboard; high speed dives at 320 knots; feathered all engines; several undercarriage retractions, and landed after 35 minutes with all systems go. This was a tremendous tribute to my team of Oz technicians, God bless them. Viewing this flight were all Evans Head personnel, and crowds of spectators, as word had passed around." ( John Swanson was among them.).....**Michael Dormer (Don) Delaney. 1909 - 1993.**



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

November 2005 No.390

### November Meeting

#### Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture

The November meeting will be held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2005 at the Target Theatre, Powerhouse Museum at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the Target Theatre is just past the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member.

Supper will be available after the meeting, and members are requested to bring a plate of supper food.

The meeting will feature the 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, which will be presented this year by AHSA (NSW) member, Dr Ron Houghton DFC, BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD, FRAeS, FRGS, FRMS. The title of Ron's address will be:

#### *From the Dawn of Aviation to the Development of Air Transport in Australia*

Ron joined the RAAF Reserve in 1941 and he enlisted full time in the RAAF in 1942. He initially trained at Temora on Tiger Moths and later at Uranquinty on Wirraways. On posting to the United Kingdom he trained on Oxfords followed by OTU on Wellingtons and then on to Halifax Mk.3 aircraft in which he completed a tour of 33 operations over enemy territory. After this tour he was posted to Fighter Command where he converted onto Spitfires and Hurricanes.

Following the War, Ron embarked on a course of Aeronautical Engineering at Sydney University, however after one year he decided to defer this academic training and started a career flying with Qantas which lasted for 36 years. He flew a variety of types with Qantas, including Sunderland, Liberator, Lancastrian, DC-3, Constellation, Super Constellation, B707 and B747. Towards the end of his career with Qantas, Ron was seconded to AirLanka and later to Philippine Airlines to assist with the introduction of B747s into their operations. His log book shows over 30,000 hours.

After his successful flying career Ron attended Macquarie University where he completed a BSc

(Hons) and MSc and later completed his PhD in Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Sydney. Ron now lectures in aviation subjects at the University of Sydney.

Members are requested to bring a plate of supper food. Please join us for this premier event on our calendar.

### October Meeting

The meeting took the form of a visit to the Sadler Vampire factory at Albion Park Aerodrome, generously hosted by Ken Garland. Ken's new hangar was well prepared for the event with a new barbeque and theatre arrangement being especially provided for the day, and several aircraft of interest were available for inspection. An enthusiastic group of members and partners attended and enjoyed the barbeque facilities provided by Ken. He spoke in detail about the history and development of the Sadler Vampire and showed a most interesting video of the aircraft.

Tony Coleiro arranged an inspection of the Australian Aerial Patrol hangar and its Chieftain, Partenavia and Cessna 182 special purpose aircraft, which are used primarily for Search and Rescue purposes.

Following the inspection of the Sadler Vampire facility and the AAP hangar, visitors undertook a tour of the nearby HARS hangar and accompanying aircraft, including the Catalina, Super Constellation, Neptunes, C-47s, Drover and C310. HARS provided an excellent guide for the tour, who discussed various aspects of this remarkable collection.

Many thanks to Ken Garland and Tony Coleiro for making this a most enjoyable outing.

### On the Internet

Plane Sailing – The Archaeology of Aircraft Losses over Water in NSW

[www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/docs/aircraftlosses\\_nsw.pdf](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/docs/aircraftlosses_nsw.pdf)

This excellent site consists of a paper prepared by Tim Smith, Maritime Archaeologist with the NSW Heritage Office and discusses wartime wrecks and mass dumping sites off the NSW coast.

### The Octave Chanute Pages

([http://spicerweb.org/chanute/chan\\_ind.html](http://spicerweb.org/chanute/chan_ind.html))

This site focuses on Chanute's contributions to the invention of the aeroplane and his glider experiments in the Indiana Dunes in 1896.

### The Crash of the Phoenix

(<http://stripe.colorado.edu/%7Esteinerd/Phoenix.html>)

This site describes the construction of and the real flight of the Phoenix in the original movie and the accident that killed famed stunt pilot, Paul Mantz. Be sure to look at the links as well.

### International Aerospace Hall of Fame

([www.allstar.fiu.edu/aero/iahf.htm](http://www.allstar.fiu.edu/aero/iahf.htm))

This site lists and provides biographies of a large number of internationally acclaimed men and women who have been involved in aviation and aeronautics. Australia's representation is scant, with only Sir Charles Kingsford Smith mentioned, however there is much interesting material on others.

### Ed Coates' Civil Aircraft Photograph Collection

([www.edcoatescollection.com](http://www.edcoatescollection.com))

This site features hundreds of aircraft images, mainly black and white from the 1930s to the 1950s. There is an excellent selection of Australian registered aircraft, as well as many more from New Zealand, the USA and Canada. The site is still being added to.

### News

#### Nancy Bird – 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Surprise

At a special 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party held on 16<sup>th</sup> October and organised by Qantas for Nancy, it was announced that Qantas' first Airbus A380 will be named in her honour. Congratulations, Nancy!

#### Valé Doug Fawcett

Members will be sad to learn of the passing of Doug Fawcett on 10 October 2005. He was born on 9 January 1922 in England and migrated with his family to Australia in 1927. Doug's achievements were indeed grand; he was the youngest person in Australia to obtain 4 ground engineer licences; he was an engineer for New England Airways, Airlines of Australia and Butler Air Transport. During WWII he became Head of the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production and was seconded to the RAAF with the rank of honorary Flight Lieutenant as a technical representative when the Beaufort entered operational service.

Doug formed Fawcett Aviation and later the Illawarra Flying School and Chieftain Aviation. He manufactured the Fawcett 120 aircraft, the only example of which currently resides in the Australian

Aviation Museum Bankstown.

These brief notes above do not do justice to Doug's achievements and adventures. Many more of his achievements are included in his autobiography, *Pilots and Propellers – a lifetime in aviation*, a book which is a great inspiration to all.

#### Valé Bill Kendrick

Bill Kendrick passed away suddenly on 18<sup>th</sup> October following a heart attack. Bill joined AHSA (NSW) after attending the Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture last year, where Phil Dulhunty stirred up his passion for seaplanes. Bill served on Catalinas in WWII and was stationed in Darwin. He maintained a very strong interest in Australian aviation history and particularly in Catalina aircraft until his untimely passing.

#### Calendar of Events

**28-31 October 2005** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National Convention & 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Wagga Wagga NSW

**29-30 October 2005** Queensland Vintage Aircraft Group Flying Days, Watts Bridge, Qld

**30 October 2005** Australia's Museum of Flight Airshow Nowra NSW

**6 November 2005** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day, Wedderburn NSW

**19 November 2005** Orange Airport Open Day, Orange NSW

**19-20 November 2005** Gathering of Moths, Mt Beauty Vic

**27 November 2005** SAAA Hoxton Park Fly-in, Hoxton Park NSW

**7 December 2005** AHSA (NSW) Monthly Meeting, Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown NSW

**30 December 2005** Great Eastern Fly-in, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome, NSW

#### First Flights

The Hawker Hurricane first flew on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1935.

The Fokker F-27 Friendship first flew on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1955.

#### Contributions and Contacts

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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

For any information on the Society or its activities, contact President, Ian Debenham, or Hon. Sec. Warwick Bigsworth at the above address.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Cockatoo Island And Its Aviation Connections - Part 1.

Our April and May 2005 newsletters contained a copy of an article written by Phil Dulhunty about the Japanese seaplane night reconnaissance of Sydney Harbour during the early hours of May 29, 1942. Phil had been in communication with the Japanese pilot of the seaplane, Itoh Susumu, whose written report on the reconnaissance flight is included in the article. Describing his observations of Cockatoo Island, Itoh wrote, "At Cockatoo Island we noted there were two or three destroyers in dock, and on the west side of the island there appeared to be one light cruiser moored. While reconnoitring around Cockatoo Island at a height of 300 metres three search lights were suddenly turned on and caught us in their beams. Naturally I rapidly increased height, getting into cloud to cover escape." A few weeks ago I was able to inspect one of the WWII search light towers still existing on Cockatoo Island, a beam from which caused Itoh Susumu so much anxiety.

My opportunity to inspect Cockatoo Island came at the invitation of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust during the 2nd International Engineering Heritage Conference, held at the Powerhouse Museum from September 21-23. The conference emphasis was on railway heritage - the 150th Anniversary of the first Government-owned steam railway service in Australia, from Sydney to Parramatta, was celebrated on September 26. However, the conference didn't entirely neglect aviation heritage. It opened with a paper titled, *Recovery, Restoration & Operation of Historic Aircraft*, given by Bob De La Hunty, President and Chief Pilot of the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society. Also, on the last day of the conference, Professor Michael Hough used the Historic Aircraft Restoration Society as a case study to illuminate his paper, *Business Planning for Posterity*. Members who attended our meeting at Albion Park, on October 9, learned that HARS is now supported by about 550 volunteers and operates a fleet of approximately 23 flyable aircraft. Michael Hough explained how a mix of organisational, financial, in-kind and volunteer based resources was essential for the long term survival of such a large and complex operation as HARS.

It was on the second day of the conference that I set foot on Cockatoo Island for the first time. The European history of the Island dates from 1788. The move to establish a convict penitentiary on the island in 1838 was a consequence of recommendations by a select committee of the House of Commons. In June 1841, Cockatoo island was formally declared a penal establishment. In 1847 the NSW Legislative Council approved the building of a dry dock on the Island to serve the needs of the Royal Navy, using convict labour for its construction. The dry dock, named after Governor Fitzroy, was finally completed in 1857. From the time the Royal Navy brig *HMS Herald* entered Fitzroy Dock in December of that year, until the dockyard was decommissioned in 1992, Cockatoo Island provided heavy engineering support for naval and merchant vessels. Although almost completely overshadowed by the Island's maritime associations, aviation also played a small part in its history. In fact the first record of the Island is on Captain Hunter's 1788 chart of the harbour on which he names it Bird Island. The predominant avian species inhabiting the eucalypt forest on the island at the time was the white sulphur crested cockatoo.

The first reference I could find connecting Cockatoo Dockyard with aviation was in *Flypast*, by Neville Parnell and Trevor Boughton. In May, 1916, following the establishment of the NSW Government School of Aviation on the site of what is now RAAF Base Richmond, it was proposed to build six Caudron biplanes for the school. Six Anzani engines would be required to power them. An order for the construction of the engines was placed with the Dockyard. I could not find out whether this order was fulfilled, although *Flypast* records that a subsequent order, placed with the Government Workshops at Walsh Island, Newcastle, resulted in the eventual delivery of three Anzani engines.

The first substantial relationship with aviation came as a result of the British Labour Government's decision in February, 1924, to defer the building of a Naval Base at Singapore. The Australian Federal Government's response was to order the construction of two cruisers and two

submarines in British shipyards to boost the strength of the Royal Australian Navy. There was immediate controversy because Australian ship building facilities had been by-passed. In an apparent attempt to appease the critics, and without the RAN itself expressing a particular requirement for such a vessel, the government announced, on June 10, 1925, that a seaplane carrier would be built at Cockatoo Island. The ship would be named *Albatross*. If the Navy was bemused by the Government's announcement, it was nothing to the surprise experienced by the RAAF Chief of Staff. In his autobiography, *These Are Facts*, Sir Richard Williams wrote, "I read in the press one morning that on the previous day the Government had placed a contract with a dockyard in Sydney for the construction of a seaplane carrier, to be known as HMAS *Albatross*. I had heard nothing of this from the Navy so I sought confirmation of it from the Minister, and when I asked him who was to supply the aircraft he said, 'You will'."

The design was placed in the hands of the Director of Naval Construction in London. Because of the lack of communication between the RAN and the RAAF, the designers were not told the type or number of seaplanes to be carried. They overcame this difficulty by assuming that the Fairey III D float plane operated by the RAAF, would be accommodated in the ship's hangar. A further arbitrary assumption made by the designers was that the ship would carry nine aircraft. By coincidence, at the time of the decision to build a seaplane carrier, the RAAF had ordered six Supermarine Seagull III amphibians to replace its Fairey IIID's. No 101 (Fleet Co-operation) Flight was formed on July 1, 1926, to operate the Seagull IIIs. Luckily they were almost identical in dimensions to the Fairey IIID. However, shortly after the six Seagull IIIs were delivered to Melbourne during March / May 1926, the type was declared obsolete in British service. This enabled the RAF to release three Seagull IIIs from its reserves, which were then offered to the RAAF at scrap value. These aircraft thus made up the magic number nine. They arrived in Melbourne in January 1927.

Realising that the RAAF was being placed in the farcical position of operating obsolete aircraft from the RAN's brand new seaplane carrier, 'Dicky' Williams and his Director of Technical Services, Wing Commander Harrison, set about drawing up a specification for the aircraft type required to replace the *Seagull III*. In 'Dicky' William's words, "It needed to be a boat amphibian of metal construction to carry a crew of three - pilot, observer and wireless operator, who must be located close to one another. The wings must fold and the aircraft be limited to dimensions which would allow it, when folded, to go into the ship's hangar. It must be capable of being picked up from the water and slung aboard by a crane and it must be a pusher with an air-cooled engine with facilities for a member of the crew to get on to the top plane and hook it on to the sling without obstruction from or damage to the airscrew. The Navy was proposing to carry a seaplane in its cruisers and to fit the cruisers with a catapult, so the aircraft must be designed for this." Thus it can be shown that Reginald Mitchell's immortal Supermarine *Walrus* owes its origin to a contract let in 1925 for the building of a seaplane carrier at Cockatoo Island. The Australian requirement was met by the Supermarine *Seagull V*, the prototype of which first flew in June 1933, two months after HMAS *Albatross* had been paid off into the naval reserve. Although *Albatross* operated as a static base for seaplanes visiting Sydney Harbour thereafter, it wasn't until she was recommissioned into the Royal Navy in September 1939, that she was able to operate six *Walrus* aircraft from 710 Sqn FAA, in the role envisaged by Williams over a decade earlier. The *Walrus* subsequently proved to be so versatile that production continued until January, 1944, by which time a total of 741 had been built.

If the holder of the President's Trophy, Allen Clarke, were to look on the back, he would see that its donor, Nigel Apperley, has written, "Wing Pieces of *Walrus* / HD874, w/o Heard Island Dec 1947. Pieces returned to Aust Feb 1987." The wreck of HD874 had in fact been recovered by the RAAF in 1980, and has since been restored at the RAAF Museum, Point Cook. A second Australian operated Seagull V / *Walrus*, (A2-4 / VH-ALB), is preserved at the RAF Museum, Hendon. There is another enduring tribute to the *Walrus*. It was chosen by the artist to represent all ASR aircraft in a memorial window of St Mary's Church near the castle at Dover, not far from where Bleriot landed in 1909. The window is dedicated to all ranks of the Allied Air Forces and Air-Sea Rescue and Maritime Craft Sections of the RAF who perished in the seas throughout the world during WWII.... **John Scott.**

## SPECIFICATIONS

## PERFORMANCE

**Wingspan**  
**Length**  
**Height**  
**Wing Area**  
**Wing Loading**  
**Wing Structure**  
**Ultimate Design Limit**  
**Engine Manufacturer**  
**Engine Model**  
**Engine Type**  
**Horsepower Rating**  
**Fuel Capacity**  
**Propeller**  
**Empty Weight**  
**MPTOW**  
**Useful Load**  
**Manufacturer**

6.78m  
 4.98m  
 1.36m  
 8.5m<sup>2</sup>  
 34.1 kg/m<sup>2</sup>  
 2 Spar Cantilever  
 + 6g, - 4g  
 Bombardier - Rotax GMBH  
 Type 447 fan cooled  
 Normally - Aspirated, reduction drive, Air-cooled two cylinder in-line, Carburettor equipped. Two stroke, 436 cm<sup>3</sup> displacement.  
 41 H.P. at 6,500 R.P.M. Continuous  
 40 H.P. at 6,300 R.P.M. Max. Continuous.  
 40 litres useable  
 3 blade Ultra-Prop  
 50" diameter x 18° pitch.  
 170 Kg  
 290Kg  
 120Kg  
 Aero V. Australia

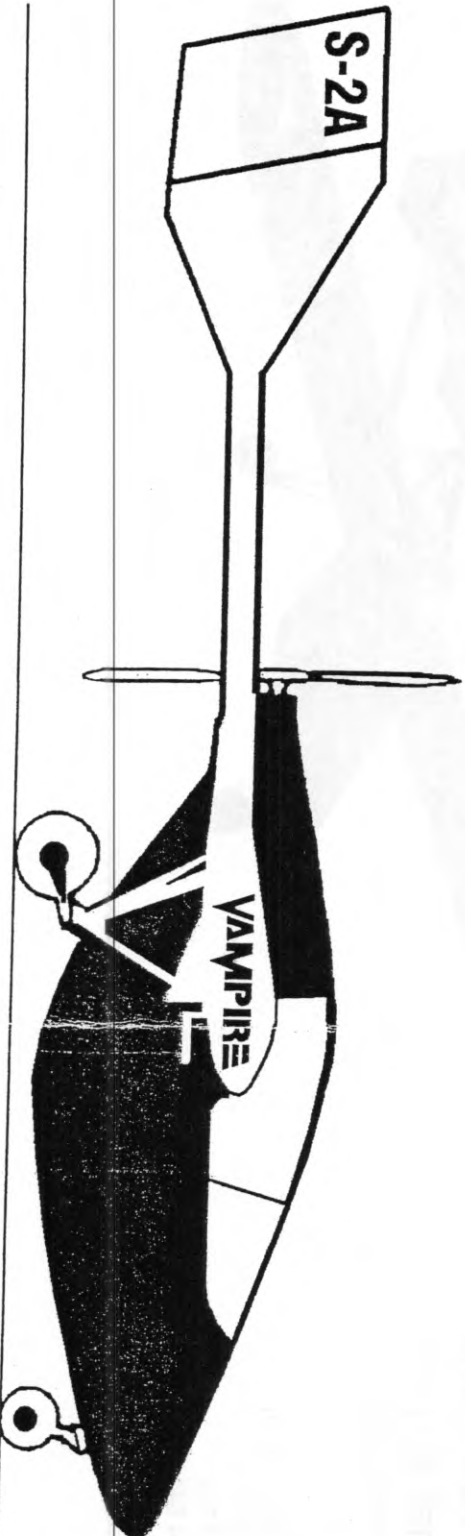
Maximum Cruise Speed at 6,300 R.P.M.  
 Cruise Speed at 6,000 R.P.M.  
 Cruise Speed at 5,000 R.P.M.  
 Stall Speed (Flaps Up)  
 Stall Speed (Flaps Down)  
 VNE (Velocity Never Exceed Speed)  
 VNO (Max. Structural Cruising Speed)  
 VA (Manoeuvring Speed)  
 VFE (Max. Flap Extended Speed)  
 Climb Rate (Sea Level)  
 Take-off Run  
 Landing Roll  
 Fuel Consumption: at 6,000 R.P.M.  
 at 5,000 R.P.M.

85 K.I.A.S.  
 75 K.I.A.S.  
 60 K.I.A.S.  
 38 K.I.A.S.  
 34 K.I.A.S.  
 107 K.I.A.S.  
 93 K.I.A.S.  
 83 K.I.A.S.  
 64 K.I.A.S.  
 800 Ft/min  
 120 metres  
 100 metres  
 14litres/hour  
 9 litres/hour

All performance figures are based on standard atmospheric conditions, level hard surface dry runways and are calculated values derived from flight tests under carefully documented conditions and will vary with individual aircraft, flight technique and numerous factors affecting flight performance.

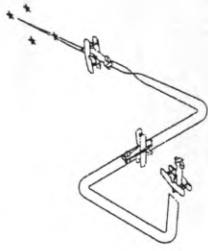
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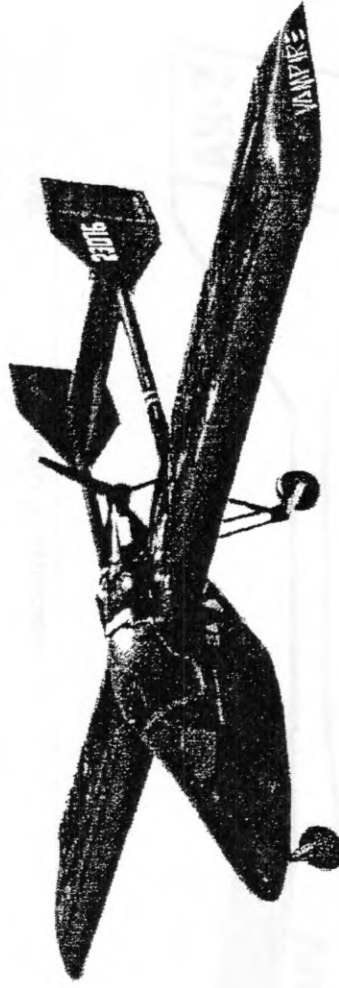
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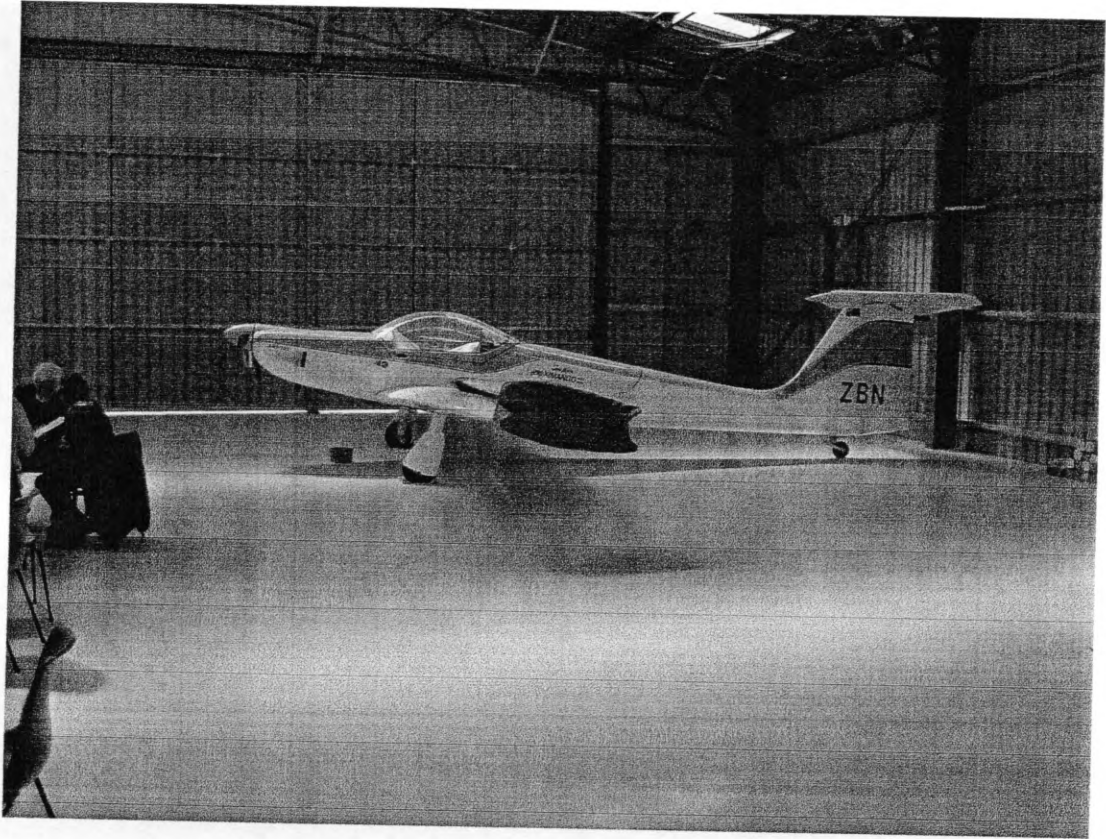
Email: [kgarland11@bigpond.com](mailto:kgarland11@bigpond.com)

# VAMPIRE

## S-2A

### SPECIFICATIONS & PERFORMANCE





An Aeromot AMT-200 Super Ximango in the Sadler Vampire hangar



Autogyro in the Sadler Vampire hangar



Chefs in Action – Barbeque at Albion Park Sadler Vampire Hangar



Barbeque and indoor picnic arrangements at Albion Park



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

December 2005 No.391

### **December Meeting at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown**

The December meeting will be held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown on Wednesday 7th December 2005, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via Starkie Drive, near the Milperra Road end of Bankstown Airport. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the night will be:

#### *In recognition of the Fokker F-27 Friendship*

The Fokker F-27 Friendship celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first flight on 24<sup>th</sup> November. This aircraft revolutionised travel in rural Australia following its introduction into service by Trans Australia Airlines on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1959. It was hailed as a DC-3 replacement, the aircraft which coincidentally celebrates the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first flight on 17<sup>th</sup> December.

Over 70 Fokker built Friendships have been operated in Australia by airlines including Ansett, Airlines of NSW, Airlines of South Australia, MMA, Queensland Airlines, Airlines of Northern Australia, Connair, Northern, TAA, East West, Air Queensland, Air Cruising Australia, as well as the CSIRO and Department of Civil Aviation. Friendships were operated for Associated Airlines, Setair, Spirit Airlines and Guinea Airways. All marques were operated in Australia at some stage as well as its successor, the Fokker 50. Only one F-27, VH-EWP, is still in active service, as well as 5 Fokker 50s.

The Friendship was also licence-built by Fairchild, and at least two examples operated in Australia, although they were not VH- registered. One Indonesian example was operated between Darwin and West Irian during the construction of the large Freeport McMoRan mine at Timika, whilst the other was chartered by Ansett during the 1989 pilots' dispute.

So bring along any slides, videos, books, brochures, memorabilia, or just be prepared to tell or listen to anecdotes about this aircraft which served

Australia so well from the late 1950s to the present.

### **November Meeting**

The guest speaker for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture was Dr Ron Houghton DFC who presented a most enlightening dissertation on the history of air transport operations in Australia prior to World War II.

In the lecture titled "From the Dawn of Aviation to the Development of Air Transport in Australia", Ron introduced his subject by noting that over 300 airlines have existed in Australia, yet over two-thirds of them have lasted less than 3 years. He described several flights that took place before the onset of World War I, and identified that the experience gained during that time inspired the likes of Fergus McMaster and Hudson Fysh to take aviation further.

He also spoke about William Morris Hughes who took up the initiative to promote air transport by appointing a controller of civil aviation, Colonel H.C. Brinsmead, who established three sections: flying operations, aerodromes and air routes, and aircraft. The number of accidents also required attention, hence operating standards, medical examinations for aircrew and airworthiness inspections were also introduced.

With the formation of the Civil Aviation Branch of the Department of Defence, the Government decided to subsidise air routes, the first of which was awarded to Major Norman Brearley for an airmail service between Geraldton and Derby.

Ron went on to describe the development of the other subsidised services and the growth and demise of the first Australian National Airways, Qantas, the second Australian National Airways and the companies that grew and eventually merged to form that organisation.

Ron also showed a large number of photographs of the aircraft that were operated during this period of aviation development in Australia.

Society President, Ian Debenham made a presentation to Ron and thanked him for the effort which he quite obviously put into the preparation of the lecture.

## On the Internet

PNGAir.com

([www.pngair.com](http://www.pngair.com))

As the title suggests, this site is all about aviation in Papua New Guinea. The contributors have provided numerous aviation related anecdotes about the country prior to independence, along with a large selection of images of airstrips, TAA, Ansett and TAL aircraft and their staff. There are also many black and white images of early aircraft operations.

USMC / Combat Helicopter Association – Images

([www.popasmoke.com/visions/index.php](http://www.popasmoke.com/visions/index.php))

This site provides the visions of Vietnam from the US Marine Corps, with plenty of images and the stories that accompany them. It is mainly Vietnam material, but there is other associated information as well.

Dave Wise's Home Page

([www.dave.wise.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.dave.wise.btinternet.co.uk/index.htm))

This is a very handy site for those interested in production lists for General Aviation aircraft. Some of those included are Jodel, Robin, Nord NC-580 series, Victa/AESL/PAC Airtourer family, PAC Fletcher FU-24 and the CAC Ceres. There are also some interesting links.

Canada Aviation Museum Aircraft

([www.aviation.technomuses.ca/pdf/Douglas\\_DC3.pdf](http://www.aviation.technomuses.ca/pdf/Douglas_DC3.pdf))

This site describes various civil aircraft held in the Museum, which is located at Rockcliffe, Ottawa. The aircraft described in most detail is the former Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. DC-3, C-FTDJ. Other types discussed include the Boeing B-247, Junkers F.13 and Ford Trimotor.

## News

### Temora Aviation Museum Sabres

The Temora Aviation Museum has recently taken delivery of three additional CAC built Sabre jet aircraft. These aircraft will be used in the restoration and long term operation of one airworthy example for the Temora Aviation Museum collection.

The three aircraft, A94-942, 953 and 965, were disassembled by the Museum's engineering staff and transported from Sydney to Temora where the final choice of the rebuild candidate will be made.

The Museum undertook the recovery of Sabre A94-909 from the USA a number of years ago together with a quantity of spares. This aircraft is in excellent condition, however it had been completely stripped of internal components in preparation of its planned rebuild in Florida. A94-909's restoration has been on hold due to the Temora Aviation Museum's rapid expansion and building program.

The Sabre rebuild will commence in early 2006 in a purpose built restoration facility following a complete examination of the three airframes and an inventory of the Museum's spares holdings.

### FAI Gold Medal – Jon Johanson

In John Scott's *Loops & Landings* Supplement to the September issue of *Southern Skies*, he wrote about the Centenary of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale. He mentioned that Australia had had three recipients of the FAI's highest honour, the Gold Medal. At this year's anniversary event held on 12<sup>th</sup> October, Adelaide pilot Jon Johanson was also awarded the Gold Medal for his outstanding contribution to the development of aeronautics in sport aviation. Just two days later, Jon was honoured at another FAI event as a "High Flyer", in the company of Buzz Aldrin, Steve Fossett, Valery Poliakov and Bertrand Piccard.

### Calendar of Events

**03 December 2005** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**30 December 2005** Great Eastern Fly-in, Evans Head Memorial Aerodrome, NSW

**28-29 January 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**01 February 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly Meeting, Powerhouse Museum

**04 February 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**19 February 2006** Tyabb on Show, 2006 Air Show, Tyabb Vic

**04 March 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**04-05 March 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**11-13 March 2006** Great Southern Fly-in, Latrobe Valley Vic.

### Contributions and Contacts

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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

For any information on the Society or its activities, contact President, Ian Debenham, or Hon. Sec. Warwick Bigsworth at the above address.

**Next Meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> February 2006**

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS



## DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE

CPA - /05  
DRAFT

24 November 2005

### NAVY COMMEMORATES THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOKKER F27 AIRCRAFT

The Royal Australian Navy's Laser Airborne Depth Sounder (LADS) Flight crew celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Fokker F27 Friendship aircraft flight today, during a survey mission from Cairns Airport to RAAF Scherger, Weipa.

The first flight of the Fokker F27 prototype took place in the Netherlands on 24 Nov 1955. Today, the modified Fokker F27-500 aircraft operated by LADS is the last operational F27 in Australia. The LADS team marked the occasion by carrying 50 commemorative philatelic covers during the seven-hour survey flight over waters to the east of Torres Strait.

The commemorative covers, bearing a photograph of the Navy's F27-500 and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary details, were postmarked prior to departure from Cairns earlier today, and signed by the pilot and the Commanding Officer of the LADS Flight, Lieutenant Commander Richard Ball, RAN on completion of the flight.

The commemorative covers were provided by South Australian Air Journal Editor and keen aviation historian, Mr Nigel Daw. "I'm absolutely wrapped that the Navy wanted to commemorate this event and their participation will ensure it is appropriately recorded" said Mr Daw.

#### **Background:**

The Laser Airborne Depth Sounder (LADS) Flight is part of Navy's Hydrographic Branch and entered service in October 1993. The LADS system uses a scanning laser to collect hydrographic survey data to a depth of 50 metres. The Royal Australian Navy is one of only two military organisations in the world to have this capability

The seven Navy personnel at LADS fly in teams of two and operate the laser survey system from the main cabin of the aircraft. Survey data is used in the compilation of nautical charts. The aircraft is piloted and maintained by Tenix LADS Corporation.

#### **Media Contact:**

Mr Mark Tanzer, PAO-NQ, Coordination and Public Affairs (07) 4771 1602 or 0407 467 235



VH-EWP Fokker F-27-500 operates for the Royal Australian Navy



VH-NLS Fokker F-27-100 when operated by Aircruising Australia

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Cockatoo Island And Its Aviation Connections - Part 2.

Visitors arriving by ferry disembark at Parramatta Wharf on the northern tip of Cockatoo Island. From there a short stroll along the north western apron of the island will bring you to the site of Slipway No.1, where the keel of HMAS *Albatross* was laid on April 16, 1926. She was launched on Thursday, February 23, 1928, with a large crowd of spectators and dignitaries in attendance. Her Excellency Lady Stonehaven christened *Albatross* with a bottle of Australian wine and the naval band played *Advance Australia Fair* as the vessel glided majestically down the ways in the direction of Drummoyne. The Federal Government was represented at the launching ceremony by the Minister for Defence, the Naval Board by a Rear- Admiral, and the Military Forces by a Brigadier-General. Perhaps reflecting the Chief of Air Staff's general antipathy towards *Albatross*, the Air Force representation was delegated to Wing Commander L. J. Wackett.

Two days previously, at Mascot aerodrome, Wackett had coaxed his *Widgeon II* amphibian into the air for the first time. One year earlier, during the building of *Albatross*, he had flown his *Widgeon I*, by then converted as an amphibian, to Cockatoo Island for inspection by dockyard engineers. He had proposed the building of this aircraft type for the Defence Department, using the facilities available on the island. During this period he developed a close friendship with Jack Payne, the Cockatoo Dockyard manager. Wackett regarded Jack Payne as an outstanding engineer. In turn Payne visited the Randwick Experimental Station several times to acquaint himself with Wackett's aircraft building activities. While Wackett's approach to the Defence Department for construction of the *Widgeon I* was unsuccessful, the first seeds of an aircraft industry on Cockatoo Island had been sown.

After launching, *Albatross* was towed to the cruiser wharf on Cockatoo Island for the installation of machinery. It wasn't until the following November that she was ready for her acceptance trials. On January 23, 1929, she was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy and sailed for Hobart to take part in the annual regatta. On her way back to Sydney she called in to Corio Bay, off Point Cook, to receive her *Seagull III* aircraft for the first time. By the end of March she was back in Sydney and commenced a maintenance period. On March 30, the *Southern Cross* took off from Richmond for Wyndham, WA, on the first leg of an intended flight to England that became instead the infamous 'Coffee Royal Affair'. Long after it was evident that the *Southern Cross* and her crew had become lost, the Defence Department was slow to act. A reluctant Wing Commander Wackett was pressured into setting off from Richmond to join the search on April 5, in his *Widgeon II*. Problems with its engine forced a return after about twenty minutes. The RAAF DH 9As that had been dispatched from Laverton to assist, had encountered problems of their own. Of the five involved in the search, only two eventually made it back to Laverton. Finally, on April 11, HMAS *Albatross* and her complement of *Seagull IIIs* sailed from Sydney for the search area. The following day the Navy was informed that Les Holden in his DH 61, *Canberra*, had located the lost airmen. *Albatross* was ordered back to Sydney.

*Albatross* was also involved in the unusual outcome of another pioneering flight. The first solo east-west crossing of the Tasman Sea by air was achieved by Francis Chichester on June 10, 1931, in his DH 60 Gipsy Moth seaplane *Mme Elijah*, ZK-AKK. His planned route was Auckland-Norfolk Island-Lord Howe Island-Sydney. He took off from Lord Howe Island for Sydney at 9:30 am local time on June 10. He arrived in Sydney Harbour on June 12, on board HMAS *Albatross*. On his way to Sydney Chichester had encountered severe storms and unpredictable winds, with the result that his landfall was at Jervis Bay, eighty miles south of Sydney. After alighting and being informed of his location he attempted to take off. However, the engine of his Moth was not delivering sufficient power and the water surface was too choppy. He abandoned further attempts to take off after being offered assistance by the Captain of HMAS *Albatross*, which happened to be in Jervis Bay at the time. Although thoroughly exhausted, Chichester elected to involve himself in the attachment of slings and

the handling of a large crane hook, during the lifting of his Moth on board *Albatross*. In the process the fingers of his right hand were caught between the hook and the slings. In his autobiography he wrote, "When I came to I was in the ship's hospital. my right hand was crushed, but I lost only the top of one finger. The surgeon cut off the crushed bone and sewed up the flesh. I then became the guest of the wardroom officers as well as of Captain Feakes, and it is hard to recount such marvellous hospitality. It was like staying in the best club with the mysterious fascination of naval life added." And so Francis Chichester and *Mme Elijah* proceeded to Sydney.

The officer on board *Albatross*, who negotiated the handling of Chichester's Moth was Squadron Leader J. E. Hewitt. Joe Hewitt was part of the RAAF detachment flying *Seagull III*s from the carrier at the time. On July 10, 1929, *Albatross* embarked the Governor General, Lord Stonehaven on a Vice-Regal Tour of New Guinea. Also on board was Wackett's *Widgeon II*, for which tropical trials were planned. There are two contrasting assessments of the *Widgeon II* contained in the respective autobiographies of Wackett and Hewitt. Wackett wrote that, "When the plane was ready for its first flight it looked a superb example of the aeroplane builder's art, and I felt that everyone would regard it as a first class product....There was no doubt that the performance of the *Widgeon II* compared favourably with the best contemporary amphibians of 1928. It was the best aircraft in the RAAF...." Compare the designer's opinion with that of Joe Hewitt. "On 21st October *Albatross* arrived at Portarlington with L. J. Wackett's recently redesigned *Widgeon II* amphibian which had been tested for naval cooperation but not recommended as a replacement for *Seagull* amphibians. I was assigned to fly it from *Albatross* to Point Cook...After it lifted off, which required some effort in the rough sea, I flew it to Point Cook, landed on the aerodrome and taxied to the tarmac to hand it over to the Seaplane Squadron. Flight Lieutenant Briggs, an experienced flying boat pilot from the RAF and now in the RAAF, asked me as I got out how I liked the *Widgeon II*. I said, you can have it." The beauty of Wackett designed aircraft was definitely in the eye of the beholder. Finally, on January 6, 1930, Flight Lieutenant Briggs, Captain the Hon. Hugh Grosvenor and a mechanic, LAC D. C. Evans, took the *Widgeon II* on a test flight. The aircraft was seen to dive almost vertically into Port Phillip Bay from a height of about 400 ft. The bodies of the three airmen were never recovered.

Wackett's time at the RAAF Experimental Station, Randwick, was nothing if not prolific. From 1924 to about 1930, when the Station closed, he designed and built five aircraft: the Warbler, the *Widgeons I & II*, and the trainer / fighter, *Warrigals I & II*. He was also involved with maintenance and repair work for the RAAF, as well as fulfilling a role as aide-de-camp to Lord Stonehaven. Wackett had a proprietorial attitude towards the Experimental Station at Randwick. It had been established largely on his own initiative and with funding obtained from his approach to the Controller of Civil Aviation, Colonel Brinsmead. He also had a loyal supporter in the Chief of Air Staff, Dicky Williams, who allowed him to enjoy a large degree of autonomy at his Sydney base. The beginning of the end of this golden period was heralded by the arrival of Sir John Salmond in June 1928, to examine the RAAF and report on its future development to the Federal Government. In his report, presented later that year, Salmond recommended that the functions, as a factory, of the RAAF Experimental Station cease, and that the reconditioning work be done elsewhere. In October 1929, Wackett's position was further destabilised by the election of the Scullin Labor Government, followed two weeks later by the Wall Street crash. Feeling besieged from all sides, Wackett resigned from the RAAF.

The Air Board had considered closing Randwick down during 1929 but this was delayed by the fact that the *Warrigal II* was still under construction, and the Commonwealth Shipping Board, no doubt encouraged by Wackett and his friend Jack Payne, had proposed that a nucleus of the operation be moved to Cockatoo Island to supplement a diminishing ship building industry with aircraft manufacture. However, the new Minister for Defence directed that Randwick cease operation on April 2, 1930, and all necessary tools and machinery, together with the unfinished *Warrigal II*, be transferred to Richmond. Meanwhile Wackett, now a civilian, had earmarked the personnel and machinery at Randwick that he would need for what was now planned as his own private venture. When RAAF officers were sent from Richmond to pick up the equipment they required from the Experimental Station at Randwick it had all gone - gone over the sea to Cockatoo Island. **John Scott.**