



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHS (NSW) Inc

February 2006 No.392

file 2006-1

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1st February 2006, 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 meeting will be a **Members' Night**, featuring a follow up on the slides presented at the December meeting and any other new slides that members might have taken or found during the summer break.

Buy, sell and swap will also be available for those wishing to trade in aviation memorabilia. Please join us for another entertaining night of Australian aviation history.

Committee Meeting

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

December Meeting

The December meeting, which was held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, featured the theme: "In recognition of the Fokker F-27 Friendship". The meeting, which acknowledged the 50th anniversary of its first flight and the contribution that it made to Australia, was most successful with a large turn up of members and visitors.

A brief history and description of the aircraft was provided by Warwick Bigsworth, followed by a wide collection of slides provided by Eric Favelle, Roger Kennedy and Warwick Bigsworth. Images featured most of the liveries carried by Friendships in Australia, plus examples from Europe, New Zealand, South East Asia and North America.

We were most fortunate to have as a guest, Jack Hailey, a former Airlines of NSW captain who had accumulated over 10,000 hours flying Friendships. Jack gave a most entertaining talk about his experiences and has agreed to be a guest speaker

at one of our regular meetings this year. Jack flew the delivery flight of the second Ansett Friendship to Australia and was an Ansett company representative at the Fokker factory during the production of several Ansett aircraft.

Ken Garland related some amusing anecdotes about his flying on "Mystery Flights" on Friendships and his treasured membership of the TAA Junior Flyers Club.

Robin Mead gave a most interesting account of the use of Friendships in Nigeria and made the comparison with their use in Papua New Guinea. But perhaps the most interesting facet of his brief talk was about the use of a Friendship as a bomber during the Biafran War. The particular aircraft was extensively modified to accommodate its cargo, however whether this conversion program was a success is most doubtful.

On the Internet

B2 Spirit at the 2005 Edwards AFB Show

(www.richard-seaman.com/Aircraft/AirShows/Edwards2005/B2/)

This excellent site features the flight display by the B-2 Spirit at the 2005 Edwards AFB display. There is also a link to other aircraft at the display, including B-1B Lancer, a very modified F-15 Eagle, F-22 Raptor and F-117 Nighthawk, and links to other airshows.

Aircraft Crashes Record Office

(www.baaa-aero.com)

This is an accident database and archive, with an excellent range of statistics, photographs, accident details and photographs, and information for aircraft spotters.

Australian Hydrographic Service

(www.hydro.gov.au/aboutus/lads/lads.htm)

This is part of the AHS site which is also most enlightening, however this section relates particularly to the use of the Laser Airborne Depth Sounder as used on F.27 Friendship VH-EWP. The site provides details on how the system works as well as technical information on the aircraft.

Civil Aviation Historical Society
(www.airwaysmuseum.com)

Although this site has been mentioned previously, it is well worth a re-visit. There is a wealth of information about the provision of air traffic services in Australia, plus data on navigation aids and the ground infrastructure, as well as details and photographs of the aircraft operated by DCA and its successors.

For Sale

John Williams offers for sale the following items:

'Flypast' by Parnell and Boughton Mint condition in D/W. \$85

Two framed colour photo prints- differing angles - of EWA's first F27 at Sydney Airport in 1960 with EWA DC-3. 55cms x 95 cms. \$30 each. (Will email copies to those interested.)

John can be contacted at: Phone 0400 129 250
email: williamsxjd@yahoo.com.au

Calendar of Events

28-29 January 2006 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

04 February 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

12 February 2006 SAAA meets Tom Poberezny, President of the Experimental Aircraft Association. McMahon's Point Community Centre, 165 Blues Point Rd, McMahon's Point 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.

26 March 2006 Australia's Museum of Flight 1930s Air Pageant, Nowra 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).

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

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now due for 2006. Please complete the enclosed subscription form and return as soon as practicable.

Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

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Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc will be held at the Powerhouse Museum, Harris Street Ultimo on Wednesday 1st March 2006 commencing at 7:45pm.

Business

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

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

Cockatoo Island And Its Aviation Connections - Final.

A group of five industrial buildings, erected on the Cockatoo Island plateau between 1911 and 1918, caused a major impact on the skyline which visually defines the island even today. Among these buildings are the Drawing Offices and the Electrical Shop, both utilised by Lawrence Wackett during his time there from 1930 to 1934. In his autobiography, 'Aircraft Pioneer', Wackett has included a photograph showing repairs being carried out on the wing of the *Southern Cross* in the Electrical Shop, with at least twenty men hard at work. He wrote, "After the disastrous crash at Mascot of the *Southern Cross* on the night of the celebrations for the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 he, (Charles Kingsford Smith), came to me to arrange for the plane's rebuilding. This time it was a major undertaking . It required the replacement of fully fifty per cent of the entire structure, and the monoplane now to be seen in the Kingsford Smith National Memorial at Brisbane Airport has about half the body of the aircraft which flew the Pacific. The rest was constructed by me while at Cockatoo Dock." Currently the Drawing Offices and the Electrical Shop are vacant, just as Lawrence Wackett would have seen them when he departed the island in 1934 due to the NSW government leasing the dockyard to a private consortium, problems with union demarcation and the ravages of the Great Depression. His staunch ally, Jack Payne, had died in 1932.

Wackett's time at Cockatoo Island coincided with a period of personal financial stress and serious health problems suffered by close family members. It is therefore remarkable that his productivity did not falter. He left behind on Cockatoo Island drawings and blueprints of aircraft and fast boats that are now preserved at the National Archives of Australia. Drawings were produced for a four engine monoplane, *Corella*, one of several aircraft designed by Wackett but never built. During this period on Cockatoo Island he designed and built a couple of racing hydroplanes, producing also designs for a high speed ferry and a twin screw passenger vessel.

The arrangement Wackett worked out with Jack Payne was that he be installed as technical head of a new section for aircraft repair and manufacture, set up under the overall management of the Cockatoo Island Dockyard. Dickie Williams promised to support his friend by making seaplane repair and maintenance work available to the new section, as required by the RAAF. On September 12, 1932, the Air Board placed an order with Wackett for the construction of one DH60, with the promise of more if costs proved to be within Wackett's estimate of from £350 to £400. The Moth was completed and given Serial No A7-55. However, there was a significant cost overrun and while the aircraft first flew in about April 1933, no repeat orders were forthcoming. In his book, 'Aussie Moths', Bruce Winley wrote, "A7-55 was a DH60G 'Gipsy' Moth, built by Lawrence Wackett at Cockatoo Island. It was issued to No 2 AD Richmond on April 4, 1933, and attached to No 3 Squadron. Early in 1934 it was transferred to No 1 FTS, and operated as a seaplane in the Seaplane Flight until it was transferred on December 12, 1935, to the Ellsworth Relief Antarctic Expedition. It returned to Melbourne on the *Discovery II* on February 16, 1936. The only further information I have is that it was converted to components on April 22, 1937, because of excessive corrosion. Very likely it suffered from the effects of salt spray while operating in Antarctica and being in an exposed situation on the deck of the *Discovery II*. I think this aircraft deserved a better fate than that. Perhaps it should also have been placed in a museum."

Even before the work described above on the wing of the *Southern Cross*, Wackett's team on the island had rebuilt the wing of an Avro 10. Queensland Air Navigation Company's second Avro 10, VH-UPI arrived in Sydney on August 11, 1930 on board *SS Matakana* as deck cargo. The wing of the Avro had been damaged in heavy seas between Durban, South Africa and Fremantle. Wackett was commissioned to build a replacement wing.

In 1933, when Charles Ulm planned the transformation of the former Australian National Airways Avro 10, *Southern Moon*, into his long range *Faith in Australia*, VH-UXX, he naturally sought

the assistance of Wackett. In his book, 'VH-UXX', P. G. Taylor wrote, "Now there were nights at Charles Ulm's home when consultations took place and the requirements were examined in detail. Roughly, the problem was to make the aeroplane lift, and reasonably safely carry, 16,000 pounds of weight instead of 10,225 - a really tremendous overload. The machine itself weighed 6000 pounds. Besides the structural alterations necessary to provide the additional strength in the fuselage the question had to be settled of suitably accommodating the extra fuel tanks, navigation equipment, and providing quarters for the crew. The wing span was to be increased to give greater lift and new, more powerful engines were to be fitted.... The seventy-two-foot wing was unbolted from the fuselage and taken over to Cockatoo Island, where Wackett was in charge of the aircraft section of the dockyard. There the plywood was stripped, the spars were lengthened, and the whole wing was faithfully rebuilt to lift its great load." *Faith in Australia* was ready for flight by June, 1933.

During 1933 Wackett undertook work for Genairco and later Tugan, involving the design and manufacture of floats for Genairco seaplanes being supplied to the Rabaul Airways Syndicate. Pilot W. J. Duncan took off from Rose Bay for Rabaul in VH-UNY on August 12, 1933, arriving there after many vicissitudes on September 26. The second Genairco, VH-URH, constructed by Tugan Aircraft Ltd, which by then had taken over the defunct General Aviation Company Hangar at Mascot, arrived by ship at Rabaul on April 5, 1934. The original partners of Tugan, Messrs Turl and Gannon gave their names to the new enterprise. Tugan Aircraft Ltd features prominently in association with Wackett during the interim period between his departure from Cockatoo Island in 1934 until his appointment as general manager of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation in 1937.

The aircraft that best defines the achievements of Lawrence Wackett during his time at Cockatoo Island is his LJW .6, VH-URP, which he named appropriately, *Codock*. Chris O'Neill and David Eyre have provided an excellent reference on the *Codock* in the March-April, 1975, edition of the AHSA Journal. The *Codock* was designed to a specification prepared by Charles Kingsford Smith, who required a twin engined passenger monoplane capable of crossing the Tasman, and also to be suitable for operation on the Australia-Singapore link of the proposed Royal Mail service from England to Australia. Construction of the *Codock* started in about August 1933, and it made its first flight at Mascot on March 6, 1934, with Kingsford Smith at the controls. As events unfolded the *Codock* was never used for the operations planned by Kingsford Smith - perhaps fortunately for the designated pilot for the Tasman crossing, Squadron Leader 'Tiny' White, and his crew. However, the *Codock* did perform useful service for several regional airlines in NSW during the next four years. Travelling to Sydney by car from Bathurst on the Great Western Highway, I remember seeing the *Codock* at the end of its career in a paddock near the old Minchinbury Estate vineyard. Its pose was dramatic - frozen in a power dive with its nose a few feet from the ground. On its wings was painted an advertising slogan as degrading to the aircraft as it was confusing to the reader, "DONT CRASH - DRINK PENFOLDS". The *Codock* was later destroyed in a grass fire.

An obituary appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on January 5, 2005, for Mary Shelley Clark. Mary was a high school teacher, an author and a conservationist with a great love for Sydney Harbour and its islands. Mary and her husband Jack, called a public meeting at the Drummoyne Sailing Club in 1995 to form the group, 'Friends of Cockatoo Island', when it became known that the federal government of the day had plans to sell the island for the development of a hotel/casino and high rise residential blocks. With others, she played a major role in persuading the new federal government not only to preserve Cockatoo Island in public ownership, but also to include other former harbour foreshore defence properties under the management of the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, which was formed in 1999. Mary was born in Brisbane in 1929, and lived near Archerfield aerodrome. Her father was Oliver Shelley, an aeronautical engineer employed at Archerfield.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust is currently reviewing over 1000 expressions of interest from organisations wanting to be part of the Trust's plan to revitalise Cockatoo Island and preserve its heritage. The current expectation is that a mix of boat building, artistic, cultural and tourism activities will create a new future for the Island. A small museum, perhaps in Wackett's old drawing office dedicated to Cockatoo Island's aviation connections, would not be out of place.... **John Scott.**



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The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

March 2006 No.393

March Meeting Different Venue

The March meeting will be held at the **Harwood Building, which is to the south of the Powerhouse Museum**, on Wednesday 1st March 2006, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via the normal car park, and proceed to the southern end of the building adjacent to the car park. Signs will direct you to the meeting venue.

The main business for the night will be the

Annual General Meeting

The meeting will comprise the President's Report, Honorary Treasurer's Report and election of office bearers for 2006. Nominations for office bearers will be called at the meeting.

A video on aviation will be shown after the AGM.

Buy, sell and swap will also be available for those wishing to trade in aviation memorabilia. Please join us for this important night in the Society's calendar.

Committee Meeting

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

February Meeting

The February meeting was a Members' Night and featured slides provided by Dudley Reynolds and Warwick Bigsworth.

Dudley's slides again revealed many historic shots of aircraft at Sydney Airport, including Qantas L-1049s, an RAF Avro Vulcan, the arrival of the first TAA F.27 Friendship at Sydney, Hawaiian Airlines Convair 340, the arrival of the first Qantas B707-138B, a RAAF CV-440 and VIP C-47. From Norfolk Island, Dudley had slides of RAAF Lincolns and a NZNAC F.27 Friendship.

Warwick showed several more F.27 Friendship slides, including aircraft from the RNZAF, the Philippine Air Force SAR Group, NZ Post and Air New Zealand. He also provided several images of the

Airbus A380 taken during its brief Sydney visit last year. Also shown were a number of vintage slides provided by John Williams, including CSIRO Cessna C310Bs that were used for rain-making in Tasmania, TAA DC-4, DC-3 and Beech Queen Air aircraft, Brain & Brown DC-3s and an assortment of de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver aircraft used for agricultural work.

The meeting concluded with a video on unusual aircraft, such as Flying Wings, Lifting Bodies along with not unrelated spectacular accidents.

On the Internet

Aircraft Crashes Record Office

(www.baaa-acro.com)

This site was mentioned in last month's issue of Southern Skies. A small typo in the address precluded access to it; the correct address is above.

Qantas Foundation Memorial B707 Project

(www.qfm.org.au/707)

Some readers may already be aware of the proposal to return one of Qantas' original Boeing B707-138Bs to the Qantas Founders Outback Museum at Longreach, Queensland. Read all about the proposal and much, much more on Qantas B707s and follow the link to the site listed below.

VH-JET#1 and her Sisters

(www.707.adastron.com)

Despite the name, this excellent site provides a comprehensive list and photo series of all of Qantas' Boeing B707s.

Northern News

Received late last year from our Cairns correspondent, Roy Fordham:

Viewing the Giants in the North.

It's not often one has the opportunity of getting 'up close and personal' with interesting 'Objet d'art', but this rare experience I would like to share.

Having been privileged to have my request granted for a photo session alongside John Travolta's

superb B707-138B, N707JT, a very rare opportunity indeed, the only regret being not having a peep at the interior, (some people are never satisfied).

I then am aware of a different from the norm situation, of being confronted, head on, to another giant in aviation, the Antonov AN-124 no less. I had been aware of its pending arrival, but had not expected to have the opportunity of obtaining such a nice picture of this aircraft.

Its arrival on runway 33 in Cairns, the norm for this time of the year, positioned it at the opposite end of the airport, to where the 707 was parked meant that I would, I thought, miss the action, quite differently as it turned out.

The required backtrack for the Antonov proved to be the ideal positioning for several close-up shots, presenting ideal camera opportunity, taxiing in and holding for departing traffic.

Prior to all this excitement, the previous week offered much activity, Monday, a normal quiet sort of a day, but the evening brought an invitation to go fly with the mail the next morning, Tuesday, Mmmm, think I can cope with that.

Off at 0730 for a five point mail drop to outlying stations in the Cessna 310, returning 1230. Nice experience, smiling faces greet us, "seen any rain?" the question on everyone's lips, it's hot 'n' dry on the stations.

Wednesday 16th, hot foot it down to BNE, day trip to witness the departure of the A380, last we shall see of this big bird until the return to OZ in Singapore colours, in 2006 I believe.

I would note here, a very co-operative and understanding Qantas security manager in BNE, who, after I managed to locate him, most graciously made time to escort me around the Qantas maintenance facility, enabling me the chance of some close up pictures of this extremely large aeroplane.

The most striking impression, in my view anyway, whilst the aircraft was on the ground, was the very visible gull shape of the wings, a very obvious feature. Also very noticeable, as all seem to agree, is the really quiet lift off, a graceful bird.

Thursday and the 'Tiger', after making a couple of tourists ecstatic, enjoying scenic views of Cairns with some loops and rolls, carried yours truly up to Mareeba for some work to be carried out on the Warbirds 'Chipmunk', labour of love this.

I have to say this retirement caper has its moments, I sometimes wonder how I found the time to go to work.

Which brings me back to this week----- another 'giant' (of the sporting world) unfortunately missed, was the arrival, and departure of Greg Norman, in his exec' jet, but I guess two out of three I should be content with, who says all the action is in

the 'big smoke'. As we say up here, reverently, "Another day in Paradise".

Your Northern Correspondent, Roy Fordham.

Anniversary

Thanks to Eric Cunningham who has submitted the extract on the following page, which refers to the 75th anniversary of Guy Menzies' famous flight from Australia to New Zealand.

Calendar of Events

25 February 2006 SAAA/HARS Fly-in Inaugural event Wollongong (Albion Park) NSW

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.

18-19 March 2006 AAAA Short wing Piper Fly-in Tocomwal NSW

26 March 2006 Australia's Museum of Flight 1930s Air Pageant, Nowra NSW.

1 April 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

2 April 2006 Antique and Classic aircraft fly-in, Parafield SA

14-17 April 2006 Recreational Aviation Australia (RAA) Natfly 2006, Narromine NSW

14-17 April 2006 Australian Aerobatic Club, National aerobatic championships, Parkes NSW

15-16 April 2006 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

15-16 April 2006 Kyneton Easter Air Show, Kyneton Vic

22-23 April 2006 AAAA National fly-in, Narranderra NSW

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The Antonov AN-124 in Cairns, which captured Roy Fordham's attention



John Travolta's B707-138B, which visited Cairns and Brisbane in November. A similar B707-138B will hopefully be bound for the Qantas Founders' Outback Museum in the near future.

TRANS-TASMAN FLIER IS REMEMBERED

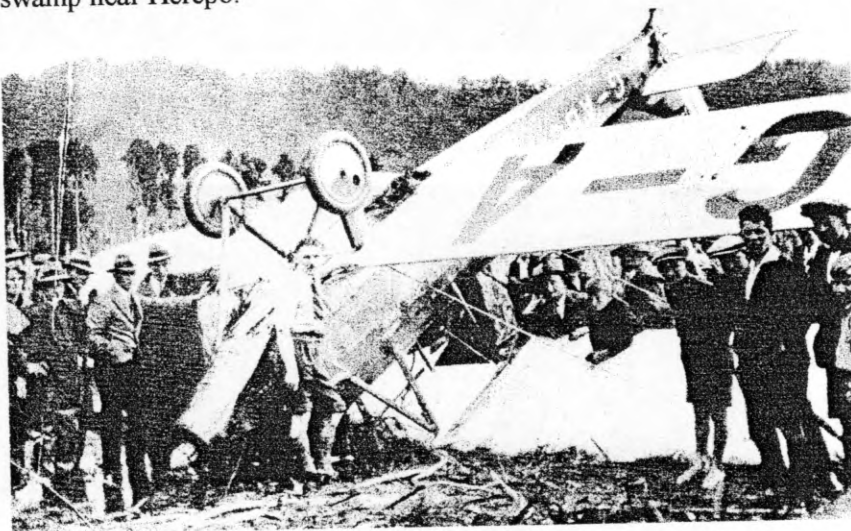
In pitch darkness around 1am on 7th January, 1931, a little biplane bumped on the grass of Mascot aerodrome (now Sydney Airport) as it took off in what the small crowd below believed was an attempt to fly non-stop to Perth in Western Australia. But at least three spectators were privy to the pilot's real intention: to fly east to New Zealand.

The pilot, Guy Menzies, was part of a three-man partnership which had bought the Avro Avian (registered as G-ABCF, and known as "Southern Cross Junior") from (Sir) Charles Kingsford Smith. (The other two partners were racing driver, Norman "Wizard" Smith, and Englishman, A.E. James.)

Menzies, perhaps inspired by the American aviator, "Wrong Way" Corrigan, who flew across the Atlantic to Ireland after telling the US authorities his flight plan was to fly west across the States, flew 1190 miles in 12 1/4 hours before making landfall on the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand, and then making a somewhat undignified landing in a swamp near Herepo.

*A Safe Landing
Is One You Can
Walk Away
From.*

*Guy Menzies, in
shirtsleeves, is
seen standing
by his plane the
day after land-
ing it in a
swamp into
which he fell
headfirst, get-
ting covered in
mud.*



This month Guy Menzies' step-son, Mike Menzies, is guest of honour at a ceremony in New Zealand to unveil a memorial in honour of his valiant dad.

Mike followed in the footsteps of Guy Menzies, in that both were pilots in the RAAF before flying airliners for Qantas. Mike, of course, is well known in the Club as the owner of an SD series 12/50 Beetleback Alvis, Chassis No.5563.

The above photo is from "Wings Across The Tasman" by Leslie Jillett (A&R, 1953)

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

Vegemite Could Go Chinese: Dick Smith.

Under the above headline, in a recent Sydney Sunday paper, Dick Smith was quoted as saying that "even Australian icon *Vegemite* was in danger after US owner Kraft said it was closing a Melbourne factory and moving biscuit making to China.... Kraft would move *Vegemite* making to China as well, if it made more profits for US parent company Altria, the new name for cigarette giant Philip Morris." As I read this over breakfast I nearly choked on my *Weet-Bix*, which I am assured is made in Australia and is 100% Australian owned.

I have to confess that I don't like *Vegemite*. What I do like is *Cherry Ripe*, with its ripe juicy cherries and coconut in *Old Gold* rich dark chocolate. Also, in the halcyon days of my youth, I was not averse to the odd *Freddo Frog*, or three. Back then *Old Gold*, *Cherry Ripe* and *Freddo Frog* were all products of the Fitzroy factories of MacRobertson, an all Australian operation. But in 1967, MacRobertson was taken over by the multinational Cadbury, and while *Old Gold*, *Cherry Ripe* and *Freddo Frog* still soldier on, the name MacRobertson has disappeared from the wrappers.

On my summer reading list this year was a biography, *MacRobertson The Chocolate King*, written by Jill Robertson - no relation to her subject. In many respects Jill Robertson found parallels between Sir Macpherson Robertson and Dick Smith. Their interests in aviation and Antarctica, their fervent beliefs in Australian-made goods and their contributions to charities and philanthropic causes from their self-made fortunes are all subjects for comparison. It was no surprise to find that Dick Smith contributed a foreword to the biography. In it he wrote: "Robertson was much loved by his employees and highly respected by his peers. He was extremely public-spirited in the use of his wealth. I was amazed to learn that during his lifetime he gave away more than £450,000, (approximately \$28 million in today's currency)....I share with Robertson a love of adventure, aviation and the belief that just about anything is possible. When I was assisting the Australian Antarctic Division, I actually flew over MacRobertson Land, the area discovered by Douglas Mawson and named for the man who financed his expedition. It was a tangible link with my hero".

This year in December, Australian aviation historians could well celebrate the 90th anniversary of the first batch of *Old Gold* chocolate. In 1916 MacRobertson commenced the large scale production of superfine chocolate in a new factory in Fitzroy, using machinery also designed and built by the company. At the end of the year the first product using the *Old Gold* label was distributed to the Australian consumer. By then the founder of the company, Macpherson Frederick Robertson, was 57 years old. He had commenced in business on his own in 1880, when he was just twenty. Always innovative and with a flare for self promotion, Robertson expanded his business year by year. But it was the success of *Old Gold*, on which he had risked £350,000, that ensured the long term future of MacRobertson, and supplemented his personal wealth to such an extent that, by the early 1920s, his charitable donations were becoming well known. Further profits flowed from the launch of *Cherry Ripe* in 1924 and *Freddo Frog* in 1930. (*Freddo* was named after Fred McLean, the foreman of MacRobertson's packaging department). When, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Australian aviation became a significant beneficiary of Robertson's philanthropy, it was *Old Gold* that provided the funds.

In 1926, Robertson spent nine months overseas in England, Europe and America, visiting confectioners' establishments and undertaking a vigorous tourist schedule. He witnessed the early development of the airline industry in the countries he visited, and ventured aloft as a passenger. Jill Robertson writes that "whenever he flew he recorded the particulars such as flight patterns, the size of the plane, its speed, wing span and a description of its interior". Not long after his return to Melbourne he had a serendipitous meeting with Horrie Miller. In his autobiography Horrie Miller wrote: "David Robertson had often told me that if ever I was in need of financial assistance I should consult him, and, whereas previously I had been confident of making out on my own, I now decided to fly to Melbourne to seek his advice. Within five minutes of hearing my story Dave had arranged an interview with his

brother, Macpherson Robertson. The big man, famed for his philanthropy, had so many requests from every public and private charity and enterprise imaginable that he did not seem at all surprised at the suggestion Dave put to him on my behalf. In fact it almost seemed he had been expecting something of the kind. "What sort of machine did you have in mind?" I told him I thought the ideal aircraft for the purpose was a DH61, an eight passenger enclosed cabin job with a 450 HP Bristol Jupiter engine - the first plane made specifically for commercial flying without use of wartime equipment. "How much?" "About £5,000." He asked a few questions and made some quick calculations on his blotter. "All right," he smiled, "we'll call it a partnership if you like, on one condition." I waited anxiously. "I'd like the machine to be named *Old Gold*." At this we all laughed and shook hands, *Old Gold* being, of course, MacRobertson's most famous brand of chocolates. We began operating as a company in 1927 but we were not formally registered until May 1928 when we became MacRobertson Miller Aviation Company Ltd, while reserving the right to continue operating under the old name of Commercial Aviation Company."

Thus began a harmonious relationship that lasted over 35 years with the aviation company in its formative years benefiting from the financial and management skills of the chocolate company. In July 1963, that great predator of Australian regional airlines, Ansett Transport Industries, acquired 71% of MMA's shares. In December 1968 ATI acquired the remaining shares, and by 1981 statutory reference to an airline associated with the names MacRobertson and Miller passed into history.

On August 24, 1936, the Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act 1933, came into force as part of Australian legislation. The Australian Antarctic Territory had been created on February 7, 1933, by a United Kingdom Order in Council as a result of the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions led by Douglas Mawson in 1929-30, and in the following season, 1930-31. Most of Mawson's exploration of the Antarctic continent, that enabled the drafting of the legislation, was carried out from the front cockpit of a DH60G, VH-ULD, which was on board the expedition vessel, *Discovery*. On Mawson's first flight over Antarctica on January 5, 1930, the area that he could see he named Mac-Robertson Land. On the wall above his desk in his cabin on *Discovery*, there was a photograph of his great benefactor, Macpherson Robertson.

Because of the parsimony of the the Australian government of the day, Mawson was forced to seek funds from private enterprise to properly equip BANZARE. The largest donation, £10,000, came after his approach to Macpherson Robertson in January, 1929. When Mawson returned to Antarctica the following season, 1930-31, to complete his work, he received a further £6,000 from Robertson. Initially it was planned to operate two DH60s from *Discovery*, but because of the tight budget only VH-ULD joined the expeditions as Mawson's 'tiny eye' in the sky. Robertson was appointed a member of the BANZARE committee based in Melbourne. He took a great interest in the adventures of VH-ULD and her crew, Flying Officer Stuart Campbell and Sergeant Pilot Eric Douglas, who were seconded from the RAAF. Both Campbell and Douglas later returned to Antarctica. Group Captain Campbell, on Mawson's recommendation, was in charge of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition from July 1947 to January 1949. Our society has a connection with Stuart Campbell's ANARE through the President's Trophy. The trophy consists of wing pieces of ANARE's Walrus I HD874, written off on Heard Island in December, 1947. Flight Lieutenant Eric Douglas led the six man RAAF party who sailed on *Discovery II* in December 1935 on the Ellsworth Relief Antarctic Expedition. His second in command was Flying Officer Alister Murdoch, later to become Chief of Air Staff in 1965-70. It was Douglas and Murdoch who located Ellsworth from the float equipped DH60G, A7-55, which was built by Lawrence Wackett at Cockatoo Island. The second aircraft on board, a Wapiti on floats (A5-37), was not used. *Discovery II* returned to Melbourne on February 16, 1936, with Ellsworth on board.

Macpherson Robertson was born at Ballarat on September 6, 1859, into a childhood of poverty. With virtually no formal schooling he found work in a confectionery factory at the age of twelve to help support his mother and his four younger siblings. By the time he shared the King's birthday honours list of 1932, with Charles Kingsford Smith among others, his journey had been long indeed. Henceforth he would be known as Sir Macpherson Robertson. His philanthropy continued unabated, and his major contribution to Australian aviation was still before him.... **John Scott.** (to be continued).



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

April 2006 No.394

April Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum, on Wednesday 5th April 2006, 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 main business for the night will be the

Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz and Aircraft Recognition Competition

The 23rd annual aviation trivia quiz will be hosted by Ian Dolstra, who will present the impressive Slipstream Trophy to this year's winner.

Following the trivia quiz, David Eyre will provide images from his vast selection of slides in the 38th annual aircraft recognition competition. Participants will compete for the coveted Brian White Memorial Trophy, whilst the person achieving the closest average score will receive the President's Trophy.

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

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

Please join us for this light-hearted and entertaining night in the Society's calendar.

March Meeting - Annual General Meeting

The meeting comprised the President's Report, Honorary Treasurer's Report and election of office bearers for 2006.

The President, Ian Debenham reported:

"With another year past, the offerings to members have remained at a good quality. The replacement of the October monthly meeting at the Powerhouse with the visit to Albion Park to enjoy Ken Garland's hospitality at his hangar was very well attended and enjoyed by all. Anthony Coleiro is to be

thanked for organising the visit to the coastal patrol as is John Martin of HARS for his conducted tour of the HARS facility.

These external visits may become more frequent as the Powerhouse Museum seeks to cost recover from the affiliated Societies. Increasingly they are exerting pressure on the affiliated societies by reducing the availability of meeting rooms and charging, albeit at a reduced rate, for the use of theatres. Hence, members will have to pay close attention to the advice in "*Southern Skies*" about meeting dates and locations as the loss of bookings means the Committee must seek alternatives.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the committee members for their support, Warwick Bigsworth, our extremely competent secretary and newsletter editor, John Scott for his ever interesting and well researched "*Loops and Landings*" and John Swanson for his handling of the Society's funds. Thanks also go to member Ron Houghton for his Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture.

The loyalty of the Society's members is greatly appreciated and I look forward to the camaraderie of the membership at subsequent meetings."

The Treasurer's Report was not able to be tabled because of the detection of a typographical error found during the preceding Committee meeting. The Treasurer, John Swanson, has undertaken to provide the correct at the April meeting.

The annual election of office bearers for 2006 was then carried out. The results were:

President: Ian Debenham

Hon. Secretary: Warwick Bigsworth

Treasurer: John Swanson

Photo Archivist: Jim Payens

General Committee: Barry Collins, Ian Dolstra, Bill Holswich, Jack Powell, John Scott, Keith White.

demanding that a tax of £42,000 be paid on the gift, which had been ruled a non charitable donation and therefore not tax free. Without protest Sir Macpherson paid the tax, thus preserving the original gift intact. His attitude to his tax obligations contrasts sharply with that of other Australian millionaires of recent memory.

The Centenary Celebrations Council, of which Sir Macpherson was a member, set about planning how his magnificent gift should be spent. The resulting four major projects are durable reminders today of the centenary. These are all in Melbourne: The MacRobertson Girls High School, The MacRobertson Bridge across the Yarra at Grange Road, a new National Herbarium for the Melbourne Botanic Gardens and a fountain erected at the corner of St Kilda and Domain roads. After the allocation of funds to these projects there was still money remaining for some further event to commemorate the centenary. Sir Macpherson accepted the recommendation of a fellow Centenary Celebrations Council member, Melbourne's Lord Mayor Sir Harold Gengoult Smith, that the remaining funds be allocated to what the Lord Mayor had conceived would be "the greatest air race the world has ever seen." And so the MacRobertson Air Race between England and Australia entered the detailed planning stage, with the Air Race Committee meeting for the first time on April 3, 1933.

The story of the MacRobertson Air Race has been told with varying accuracy by many authors. In her biography of Sir Macpherson Robertson, Jill Robertson devotes a chapter to the race. In it she relies substantially on what is probably still the definitive source - the record contained in *The Centenary Air Race, Volume 24, Nos 1&2, of Aviation Heritage, The Journal of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia*. While the assistance of members of the editorial committee and others is acknowledged, the work is predominantly that of Robert Veitch. It came as a great shock to learn of Robert's death a few months after completion of *The Centenary Air Race* issue. A *Vale* was written in *Volume 24, No 3*: "In the early hours of Wednesday, 18th December, 1985, Robert Veitch died suddenly. His unselfish and untiring efforts on behalf of AHSA will be sadly missed as his dual roles of AHSA Secretary and a member of the Editorial Committee were handled by him professionally and without complaint.....He did all these things and more because of his love of Australia's aviation history and worked unceasingly to see it recorded." I urge anyone with an interest in the MacRobertson Air Race to read Robert's informative issue of *Aviation Heritage*.

Robert Veitch reveals how Sir Macpherson's generosity was also a factor in the first Australia to America flight achieved by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and P. G. Taylor between October 20, and November 3, 1934, in the Lockheed Altair, VH-USB. Smithy wanted desperately to compete in the Centenary Air Race, but as usual his personal finances were stretched. Robert Veitch wrote that " a period of hesitation and doubt set in and Smithy's plans seemed to be remarkably vague so it was with some relief that on April 13, 1934, the Lord Mayor of Melbourne announced that an anonymous Melbourne businessman had made it possible for him to compete. The businessman was none other than Sir Macpherson Robertson, the race sponsor, who after obtaining several opinions, decided to offer Smithy £5000 with which to buy a racer of his choice." Sir Macpherson had a strong preference for Smithy to buy a British aircraft, but when this proved to be not practical he suggested that Smithy travel to America to look for a suitable racer there. Fate worked against Smithy and Taylor getting to Mildenhall in time to compete in the air race. Instead, on October 20, the day the Centenary Air Race started, they took off from Brisbane for San Francisco via Suva and Honolulu. Sir Macpherson was appalled at the risks facing Smithy and Taylor when they undertook this flight, and had urged them not to attempt it. However, when they succeeded, Sir Macpherson was credited with having financed not one, but two significant milestones in the world history of flight - the Centenary Air Race and the first flight from Australia to America..

I have an early WW II press clipping from an English newspaper showing an attractive young woman in her Red Cross uniform looking pensively at the air race trophy. The caption reads: "The famous Melbourne Centenary Air Race trophy, which was presented to the Red Cross for melting down by its owner, Mr A. O. Edwards, whose plane, piloted by Messrs. C.W.A. Scott and Campbell Black, won the race." Thankfully sanity prevailed, and the Hardy Bros. masterpiece in eighteen-carat gold is now part of the Royal Aero Club Collection of Memorabilia in Leicester, England.. **John Scott**.



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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

May 2006 No.395

May Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3rd May 2006, 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 Guest Speaker for the night will be Jack Hailey, a retired airline pilot, who will talk about the operations in Australia of:

The Airspeed Ambassador

Many who attended the December 2005 meeting at Bankstown will remember Jack, who spoke about some personal experiences flying the Fokker F.27 Friendship. We are delighted that Jack has agreed to return and discuss the Airspeed Ambassador, or Elizabethan as it was sometimes known, and its operation in Butler Air Transport service. Butler operated three examples of the type from 1957 to 1959 when they were returned to the United Kingdom after Butler's acquisition by Ansett.

Jack joined the RAAF in 1942, and after initial induction at Bradfield Park, went to EFTS at Temora, followed by AFTS at Point Cook where he flew Airspeed Oxfords. He was later posted as a staff pilot to Maryborough, where he flew the Wackett Trainer, then on to Bairnsdale and Sale. He converted to Beauforts and was initially posted to Pearce and later Finschafen, New Guinea. When World War II ended Jack went on to fly Beaufighters around the Pacific as cargo aircraft, as well as VIP transport.

After his war service, Jack joined Qantas flying DC-3s to New Guinea, but the offer to fly Lancastrians on the extended long hauls to Europe convinced him to stay closer to home. He joined Butler Air Transport, where he flew DC-3s, Convairs and the Airspeed Ambassador. Following the takeover by Ansett, Jack flew Fokker F.27 Friendships and later the F.28 Fellowship. On retirement, Jack had accumulated almost 30,000 flying hours.

Please join us for another entertaining meeting about a most interesting facet of Australia's aviation past.

Committee Meeting

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

April Meeting

The April meeting featured the Aviation Trivia quiz and the Aircraft Recognition competition. Winner of the trivia quiz and the Slipstream Trophy was Eric Favelle. Quizmaster, Ian Dolstra, provided an excellent series of questions, some easy and some frustrating for those whose memory is starting to fade.

The aircraft recognition competition resulted in a tie between Ken Garland and Anthony Coleiro, both of whom will now jointly hold the elegant Brian White Memorial Trophy. Winner of the President's Trophy was Roger Kennedy. David Eyre provided slides of a wide variety of aircraft – as he is well qualified to do – although the number of amateur built and RAA registered aircraft caught a lot of the erstwhile experts out. Ken and Anthony's close relationship to recreational aviation certainly paid off on this occasion.

David's variety of shots also included several wrecks, partly assembled aircraft along with more traditional types, many of which were taken at Avalon Air Shows, Wedderburn Open Days and Bankstown Air Shows.

Special Thanks

For many years the Society's photographic archives and the Reddall Collection of photographs have been stored by and cared for by Honorary Life Member, Jim Payens. David Eyre has now taken over the custodianship of the photographic collections to, amongst other things, assist in the compilation of his forthcoming book on Australian operated aircraft.

Many thanks, Jim, for your efforts in maintaining this important collection.

On the Internet

Rotorspot – The Complete Historical Civil Rotorcraft Register of Australia
(www.rotorspot.com/rotorspot/vh.html)

This site features the entire list of VH- registered rotorcraft with type, c/n and previous and post registration. The date of registration and owners/operators is not included, but the information provides an excellent guide to the types that have operated here.

Ed Coates Collection – Selections from the Ed Coates Civil Aircraft Photo Collection
(www.edcoatescollection.com)

Although this site has been mentioned before, it is worthwhile revisiting the site to see the number of additional aircraft listed and images revealed. Most of the photographs are accompanied by a short history of the aircraft in Australia and include examples taken in the 1930s, '40s and 50s.

Airhive – Museum of Commercial Aviation
(www.airhive.com)

This site provides an interesting insight into aviation memorabilia, museum and scrapped aircraft, route maps, timetables and much more. It also provides many links to related sites.

Super Spread Aviation
(www.superspread.com.au)

Super Spread is one of the oldest names in agricultural aviation in Australia. The site includes an excellent history of the company and many images of current and former agricultural aircraft.

British Airways Archives and Museum Collection
(www.bamuseum.com)

For those with an interest in this airline, they will find some excellent historical images and history of the company.

Books

In last month's newsletter, the availability of Bryan Monkton's book, *The Boats that Flew*, was mentioned. This information was provided in good faith, as the book had been advertised for sale in Sydney at Gleebooks and Abbey's Bookshop.

Following several enquires in regard to purchasing the book, Gleebooks and Abbey's admitted that they did not have the book, and the National Library of Australia issued the ISBN in anticipation of publication. The publisher is reported to have ceased business, and publication date is unknown.

Thanks to Chris O'Neill for his efforts in

following up the National Library of Australia and Abbey's Bookshop. Apologies to those readers who have suffered any inconvenience searching for this book.

Bookshops

Gleebooks

191 Glebe Point Road, Glebe for second hand books;
49 Glebe Point Road, Glebe for new books
(www.gleebooks.com.au)

Despite their lapse in advertising correctness, Gleebooks has a reasonable collection of second hand aviation books; some titles are certainly not the usual array.

Gould's Book Arcade

32 King Street Newtown

It is difficult to find words to describe this incredible bookshop. There are thousands of books just about any subject and it is an experience in just entering the shop. You will need assistance to find the aviation section, but the odd obscure edition is often found here.

Thanks

Thanks to Brian Southwell, one of our members with an extensive aviation book collection, who has provided the extract overleaf from a 1955 issue of *Flight* magazine. Although the extract is over 50 years old, the sentiments expressed are still quite valid.

Calendar of Events

29 April – 07 May 2006 Mustang rides in VH-BOB at Albion Park; contact HARS on (02) 4257 4333 during office hours, or www.mustangjoyflights.com for further details.

06 May 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, plus a fly-in by Schofields Flying Club, Luskintyre NSW

21 May 2006 DHC-1 Chipmunk 60th anniversary fly-in, Watts Bridge, Qld

03 June 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre, NSW

10-11 June 2006 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora 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).

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

Vale – Pierre Closterman

The following is a compilation of several obituaries that were written following the passing of Pierre Closterman on 22 March 2006 at the age of 85. He was the highest scoring French ace of World War II with 33 air victories.

Closterman was born on 28th February 1921 in Brazil where his father was a French diplomat. He got his pilot licence in 1937 and in 1941 joined the Free French Forces Squadron 341 "Alsace". In January 1943, he was assigned as a sergeant pilot flying the Supermarine Spitfire Mk IX fighter with the newly formed No. 341 "Alsace" Squadron at RAF Biggin Hill. He achieved his first air victories in late July by destroying two Focke-Wulf 190s over France. Later that year, he gained a commission and was posted to fly with the Royal Air Force. By July 1944, he had accumulated more than 300 combat missions, including fighter sweeps, bomber escorts, and ground attack sorties against airfields and V-1 rocket sites in Normandy.

After a brief rest from combat, Closterman returned to action and flew the Hawker Typhoon and new Tempest Mk V fighters. As a 23 year old flight commander assigned to various RAF squadrons in France and Holland, he often led large numbers of aircraft on fighter sweeps and armed reconnaissance missions. He flew 420 combat sorties during World War II and achieved 33 aerial victories, most of them in engagements with fighters. He again saw combat in 1956 as a Reserve officer in command of an F-84G squadron in the Suez war.

As a civilian, he served eight terms as a member of the French Parliament (National Assembly). He is also the author of several books, including his classic wartime autobiography, *The Big Show*. Closterman later became a Senior Vice President of Cessna Aircraft Company and a member of the Board of Trustees of the International Game Fish Association. His numerous decorations include the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and received an extra "bar" to his DFC in addition to Belgian and US awards. France awarded him the Grand Officer of the Legion d'Honneur and the Cross de Liberation,

France's highest awards for service and gallantry.

But Closterman's life was not without controversy:

Exactly one month after joining 341 Squadron, he fell under a cloud at "Alsace" due to his role in the death in action of 341 Squadron's leader, Commandant (Squadron Leader) René Mouchotte, one of Free France's most famous aviators. Because Closterman was Mouchotte's wingman that day and was as such tasked with covering his leader at all times, he was blamed by his wing commander, Battle of Britain hero Alan Deere, for losing contact with Mouchotte during the engagement in which he was shot down.

During the 1982 Falklands War between Argentina and the UK, Closterman apparently praised Argentine pilots for their courage, perhaps as a result of personal ties formed while Argentinian Air Force pilots were being trained in France in the 1970s.

As a result of this perceived "betrayal" of the RAF, Closterman attracted much Anglo-Saxon antipathy. He also attracted controversy in France for his vehement anti-war stance in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf War.

Number of completed missions: 293 offensive missions; 97 attack missions against ground targets; 42 defensive/ protection missions.

Confirmed victories in air combat: 19 Focke-Wulf 190; 7 Messerschmitt 109; 2 Dornier 24; 1 Fieseler 156; 1 Junkers 252; 1 Junkers 88; 1 Junkers 290; 1 Heinkel 111.

Aircraft destroyed or disabled during cannon raids on airbases: 7 Junkers 88 or 188; 6 Dornier 18; 4 Heinkel 177; 3 Arado 232; 2 Focke-Wulf 190; 1 Junkers 252; 1 Blohm & Voss 138.

Aircraft severely damaged or probably destroyed during air combat: 6 Focke-Wulf 190; 6 Messerschmitt 109.

Various confirmed ground and sea targets: 72 engines and a hundred trains attacked; 225 trucks and other road vehicles, among them some 30 fuel trucks; 5 tanks; 2 torpedo boats; 1 submarine in cooperation with other pilots.

Classics of Aviation Literature

A Collector's Recollections

By PETER W. BROOKS

BOOKS about flying have been a hobby of mine almost since I could read. Indeed, some of the books on my shelves have been in the family longer than that. They were acquired by my father when he was flying during the First World War.

Twenty years of rummaging in second-hand bookshops, limited only by the time and money I could afford, has filled my home with half a dozen bookcases of assorted aeronautical publications. Of the 25 or so shelves which these cases contain, one is devoted to my favourite books—to works which I find I most enjoy and which contain in special measure thoughts, impressions and facts about flying which seem to be more true to life and lasting than those in the rest. These books, no doubt, are amongst those which will one day become the classics of the new element.

Glancing along this privileged shelf, I think many would give pride of place to two masterpieces about the First World War: *Sagittarius Rising*, by Cecil Lewis, and *War Birds: The Diary of an Unknown Aviator*, compiled by Elliott White Springs from the rough diary of an American fighter pilot, John Grider, who flew and died with the Royal Flying Corps on the Western Front. *Sagittarius Rising* stands by itself as a true record of what a pilot feels and thinks when he is in touch with his element in the intimate way which was possible with the light-aeroplane Service types of those days. Lewis's more recent novel, *Pathfinders*, about flying in the Second World War, reveals again his power of descriptive writing at a poetic level; but it lacks the rare quality of his first book. Only one other writer, in my opinion, approaches Lewis's artistry in descriptions of the First War period. David Grinnell-Milne, in *Wind in the Wires* gives, particularly, an account of learning to fly and some of his early solo flights which has a special appeal. *War Birds* is in a different class. It lacks the beautiful descriptive passages of Lewis and Grinnell-Milne, but gives, like nothing yet written, a wonderful impression of the lives and attitude to life—and death—of the operational pilots of the First War.

White Springs followed *War Birds* with a series of books (*Above the Bright Blue Sky*, *Nocturne Militaire*, etc) which continued the same theme and which sold in large numbers between the wars; but they never quite achieve the stature of the original diary.

Flying-boats in 1914-18

Another book about the 1914-18 war earns a place. Snowden Gamble (who was Press officer for Imperial Airways in the 1930s) wrote *Story of a North Sea Air Station*, about the war record of the flying-boat base at Great Yarmouth. This again is quite different in style from the books already mentioned. It records history in a precise and authentic manner which rings true in every line but which remains eminently readable. The illustrations by Leonard Bridgman are an essential part of this book and link it with another in which the same artist excels himself. Oliver Stewart's *The Clouds Remember* draws the character in word and picture of many of the famous aeroplanes of the 1910 to 1920 period. No flying enthusiast reading it can fail to acquire some appreciation of the fascination of handling those early flying machines, so many of them with famous names now firmly interwoven with the traditions of the Air Service.

Leaving the First War, the private flying and record-breaking era of the 1920s and 1930s provided material for several books which have earned their niche. John Leeming's *Airdays* stands out as a uniquely humorous account of club flying in its early days; and with that relaxed book I would link the intense writings of John Llewelyn Rhys, who was to lose his life flying in the Second War. His *The Flying Shadow*, *The World Owes Me a Living* and *England is My Village* all contain much which has merit, and a sense of the air which few writers have captured in words either before or since. F. H. White's *England Have My Bones* also contains passages about private flying which are often overlooked but which deserve to be remembered.

David Garnett's *Rabbit in the Air* is another enjoyable description of learning to fly on Moths and Bluebirds by a well-known writer. Garnett also wrote *The Grasshoppers Come*, an unusual account of a fictitious—but so true-to-life—record flight of the type undertaken in the great days of Mollison, Scott and Kingsford-Smith. We do not have to go to fiction, however, to recapture the atmosphere of those adventurous people who flew small aeroplanes vast distances across the world in spite of a complete lack of ground facilities and navigational aids. Some of the best aviation writing in the English language is by Anne Morrow Lindbergh, wife of the famous American pilot, and

describes her experiences flying with her husband. Both *North to the Orient* and *Listen! The Wind* deal with long-distance flights by the Lindberghs in a Lockheed Altair floatplane. They contain passages which capture the atmosphere of flying and of sights of the Earth from the sky in a quite remarkable way. Mrs. Lindbergh also wrote a short novel *The Steep Ascent* which, although fiction, again reveals the same talent. Charles Lindbergh himself has recently published an account of his famous flight from New York to Paris in 1927. *Spirit of St. Louis* is actually the second book Lindbergh wrote about this flight but, unlike the first, it will undoubtedly qualify as a classic. Interspersed with his story of each stage of the great flight are glimpses—in the form of snatches of reminiscence—of his past career, and they give a colourful picture of the early days of civil flying in the United States.

Another famous pilot who has made his mark as a writer is Sir Gordon (Captain P. G.) Taylor, who started record flying as an associate of Kingsford-Smith. He has written five books *Pacific Flight*, *VH-UXX*, *Call to the Winds*, *Forgotten Island* and *Frigate Bird* which all qualify for my special shelf. They are all very much books by a pilot and they all breathe that sense of the air and of a pilot's viewpoint which can only come from long hours at the controls.

Francis Chichester's *Solo to Sydney*, *Seaplane Solo* and *Ride on the Wind* are also written by a man who flew light aeroplanes to distant parts of the world in the memorable 1920s and 1930s. *Seaplane Solo* describes a remarkable solo flight in a Moth floatplane across the Tasman in three stages, navigating entirely by "astro". It colourfully portrays that urge for personal triumph over the great open spaces and the uncharted elements which was the chief inspiration of those gallant men and women who, in small aircraft of barely a hundred horsepower, faced the unknowns of weather and distance on pioneering long distance flights.

Between the Wars

Four books by John Grierson, *Through Russia by Air*, *High Failure*, *Jet Flight* and *Air Whaler* bridge the period from between the wars to that of the past ten years of peace. The first two describe typical pioneering light aeroplane flights while the third is a classic about test flying during the war. *Air Whaler* is an account of flying experiences in an unusual field in more recent times: spotting whales in the Antarctic with a Walrus amphibian.

Service flying between 1918 and 1939 produced a number of notable books, of which Sir Roderick Hill's *The Bagdad Air Mail*, Frank Tredrey's *Pilot's Summer*, Robert Winston's *Dive Bomber* and Oloff de Wet's *Cardboard Crucifix* are particular favourites of mine.

We have not yet mentioned perhaps the greatest airman-writer of them all. The works of the Frenchman Antoine de St. Exupéry must have a place in any list of famous aeronautical books. Much has been said and written about "St. Ex." and I do not intend to pass judgment here on *Southern Mail*, *Night Flight*, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, and *Flight to Arras*. They all qualify, in their English editions, for inclusion in my list. If one can read French, the original texts in their author's native tongue are even more deserving.

Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy* must stand as a prime representative of air literature about the last war. There have, of course, been many air books about the 1939-45 conflict but few, in my opinion, really make the grade as lasting examples of the writer's art. Some, like *Enemy Coast Ahead* by Guy Gibson, V.C., *Not Peace but a Sword* by R. P. M. Gibbs and *God is My Copilot* by Robert Scott have something of the direct narrative quality of James McCudden's *Five Years in the Royal Flying Corps* written 25 years earlier; but none, I think, really does justice to its theme. Paul Brickhill's *The Dam Busters* and *Reach for the Sky* have done something since the war to fill the gap at second-hand—but that, after all, is not the same thing. Perhaps another Frenchman, Pierre Clostermann, with his *The Big Show* and *Flames in the Sky*, has come nearer than any other to what we are looking for.

I have nearly reached the end of my special shelf, but on it are still two books that claim attention. Terence Horsley's *Soaring Flight* combines description of gliding in the 1930s with flying experiences in aeroplanes during the Second War to give a picture of the new element—a picture of a kind which few have had the experience and skill to put into words. With his work, I couple Harold Penrose's *I Flew with the Birds*.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Da Vinci Codex And The Grave Of Bert Hinkler - Part 1.

Every month, in our meeting room at the Powerhouse Museum, I am reminded of Leonardo Da Vinci. This is because the walls of the room are decorated with the panels produced for the exhibition entitled *Leonardo Da Vinci - The Codex Leicester - Notebook of a Genius*, which was shown at the museum from September 6 to November 5, 2000, as part of the Sydney Olympic Arts Festival. The Codex Leicester, written in Leonardo's signature mirror handwriting between 1506 and 1510 in Florence, soon after he painted the Mona Lisa, is the most ambitious and systematic of his notebooks. It includes his ideas and sketches for the invention of the helicopter and his astronomical studies. The Codex Leicester is named after the Earls of Leicester in Britain who owned it for almost two centuries before it was sold to Bill and Melinda Gates. Codex simply means an ancient manuscript. The Codex Leicester has long since been returned to Bill and Melinda. The information panels remain in our meeting room as a reminder of the genius who is generally acknowledged by aviation historians as the first true aeronautical engineer. By 1513, Leonardo had left Florence for Rome seeking commissions from Pope Leo X. From there, in 1517, he accepted an invitation from the French King, Francis I, to the position of First Court Painter, Architect and Mechanician to the King. He was given the manor house of Clos-Luce, near Amboise, in which to live. It was there, on May 2, 1519, that he died. He was buried in the cloister of the church of San Fiorentino on the royal palace hill at Amboise. After the destruction of the church in 1808, his remains were transferred to the nearby Chapel of St Hubert.

Every day, in the suburb of Lane Cove where I live, I am reminded of Bert Hinkler. Our street is called Avian Crescent and there is an intersection with Avro Road a short distance from our house. The next street upslope from us is Hinkler Crescent. Bert Hinkler was a genius in his own way, in the practice of aviation, and the art of innovative engineering. His grave is in Florence where Leonardo Da Vinci grew up, received an education and was inspired to investigate the natural laws governing the flight of birds, and how these laws might be applied to enable man to fly.

In the January - March 2006 edition of *The Australian Aerophilatelist*, the Australian Airmail Society President, John Bodnar, wrote an editorial focusing on the inspirational achievements of Bert Hinkler. He ended his editorial with some personal reflections on the death of Hinkler on the Pratomagno, south east of Florence, on January 7, 1933. "The Italian Government gave Bert Hinkler a state funeral held with much pomp and ceremony as befitted such a heroic personage. His body was laid to rest in the cemetery in Florence. Near the spot where he crashed, the Italian Aero Club of Arezzo erected a fitting memorial. Unfortunately this memorial was blown up by misguided Italian partisans during WWII. In 1968 a sombre memorial was erected in its place. It is time that Bert Hinkler was brought back home where he belongs. It is sad to think that he must languish in a foreign soil forever. Our profound thanks are due to the Italian people for the benevolent and dignified manner they have looked after him in the past and are still looking after him today. Bring our Bundy Boy home to Australia where he belongs." Perhaps John Bodnar has in mind the 75th Anniversary of Hinkler's death, which will occur in 2008, as an appropriate time for his homecoming.

Bert Hinkler had not indicated to the public the purpose of his planned flight to Australia. His aircraft was the Canadian registered Puss Moth, CF-APK. Perhaps he intended an attempt on C.W.A.Scott's England-Australia record of April 1932, which stood at 8 days, 20 hours, 47 minutes. There was also speculation that after the England-Australia flight he planned to continue around the world. During his time in Australia it was thought that he might look for opportunities to relocate his aviation activities back to his homeland. His wife Nancy had already sailed for Australia and would be waiting for him at the Hinkler family home at Bundaberg. After many delays Hinkler finally took off from the Great Western Aerodrome, London, at 3.10 am, on January 7, 1933. A little over seven hours later he crashed on the Pratomagno. It was mid winter in Italy, and although the crash occurred at about

11.17 am local time on a Saturday morning, there were no witnesses. There was evidence that he survived the crash and was able to move some distance from the wreck before he died as a result of his injuries, and exposure to the extreme weather conditions. Soon, heavy snow covered all. It was not until spring, on Thursday April 27, that Gino Tocchioni, a 25 year old carbon collector, discovered the wreck, and Hinkler's body. The local *carabinieri* were notified later that day.

News reached Australia on Saturday April 29. On Sunday evening the Australian Prime Minister, Joe Lyons, announced that the Commonwealth Government would make all necessary arrangements for the transport of Hinkler's remains to Australia, for burial in his home state of Queensland. After Nancy Hinkler confirmed that it was her wish that her husband's body be returned to Australia, Prime Minister Lyons further announced that a state funeral would be held in Brisbane with full military honours. The Queensland premier, W. Forgan Smith, concurred at once with these arrangements. So why does Bert Hinkler still "languish in a foreign soil"? This question will be answered in Part 2.

I first became aware of the complications in Bert Hinkler's life after placing a request, "for any information giving an insight to Bert Hinkler's personality and his general social behaviour," in our August, 1991, Newsletter. The request was placed on behalf of Alfred Berg who was making a documentary film on the life of Bert Hinkler to mark the centenary of his birth, which would fall on December 8, 1992. Alfred and his assistant Linda Aronson subsequently spoke to us on the subject, *Bert Hinkler-The Enigma*, at our November 1991 meeting, and screened a preview of their film, *The Lonely Eagle*.

When I found myself in Florence in September 1997, I thought that I should seek out Bert Hinkler's grave, and spend a few quiet moments with him. I was directed to the English Cemetery in the Piazzale Donatello where some famous literary figures such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Fanny Trollope are buried. I found the graves of Beatrice Shakespeare and Claude Shakespeare Clench, the last descendants of William Shakespeare. Interesting though this cemetery was, it had been closed to burials since 1877. It became obvious that I would not find Bert Hinkler there.

Before leaving Sydney I had discussed our trip with fellow AHSA member Anthony Coleiro who was about to be married and had planned to honeymoon in Italy. By an amazing coincidence we found that we would be together at the Leon Bianco Hotel in San Gimignano on Sunday, September 28. Therefore, although disappointed at not finding Bert Hinkler, we were looking forward to our rendezvous with Anthony and his new wife Carol as we drove out of Florence on the Via Senese, on the way to San Gimignano. Then, by further happy coincidence, we came upon the Cimitero agli Allori, where protestants, who have died in Florence post 1877, are buried. An enquiry at the cemetery office produced the register with details of Bert Hinkler's burial. Surrounded by cypresses, and the elaborate and well cared for monuments of a Florentine cemetery, there stands a simple white marble cross on a small pedestal, in all about 1.5 metres high, which is inscribed as follows:

IN
LOVING MEMORY OF
SQUADRON LEADER
HERBERT JOHN LOUIS HINKLER
WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF 40
AT CASTEL S. NICCOLO
ON THE 7TH OF JANUARY 1933
WHILST ON A FLIGHT
FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA

Having paid our graveside respects, it was back on the road to San Gimignano and our memorable meeting with Anthony and Carol. This was probably the first time that a meeting of AHSA members was held in a medieval hill town in Tuscany. If coincidences seem to have multiplied in this edition of Loops and Landings just think of Dan Brown and *The Da Vinci Code*. Next month the chain of coincidences continues, compounded perhaps by the introduction of Ted Wixted's tale of murderous conspiracy in the book he published in 1992 entitled, *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler*.....**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

June 2006 No.396

June Meeting

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7th June 2006, 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 Guest Speaker for the night will be Kerrie Dougherty, whose talk will feature

“The great-grandfather of the spacesuit: Professor Frank Cotton and the Australian anti-G suit”.

During World War 2, the first successful pneumatic anti-G suit for pilots was developed in Australia by Prof. Frank Cotton, a physiologist at the University of Sydney. Using equipment largely designed by himself and constructed at the university (including one of the first human centrifuges in the world), Cotton developed and tested his suit and shared the results freely with the Allies, thus allowing the United States to develop its own suit from his concepts. The US suit would be the first step on the path to the development of the first American spacesuits.

Kerrie Dougherty has been Curator of Space Technology at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. With degrees in Archaeology and Archives Management, she combines an unusual background in heritage management with a personal and professional interest in space exploration and science fiction.

Kerrie is Australia's only museum-based space curator, historian and educator and brings to the ISU more than 20 years experience in these fields. Among her major projects have been the development of the Powerhouse's *Space-Beyond This World* exhibition, a world-first in bringing together examples of the space technology of the USA, the former-USSR and the People's Republic of China, and *Space Australia*, the first overview history of Australia's involvement in space activities. She has also curated record breaking exhibitions on popular culture such as *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* and was part of the team that developed the Dibner Award-winning IT exhibition, *Cyberworlds: Computers, Culture, Connections*.

Kerrie has experience as author, media commentator and lecturer in fields as diverse as communicating space to the public, space heritage, space and popular culture, the history of science fiction film and television, astrophilately and collecting space memorabilia. She is a member of the Education Committee of the International Astronautical Federation and part of the International Academy of Astronautics History Study Group.

She was the recipient of the Year 2000 Australian Space Pioneer Award from the National Space Society of Australia, for her work in space education and public awareness of space.

Please join us for another entertaining meeting about an interesting facet of Australia's aviation past.

May Meeting

Jack Hailey, a former Qantas, Butler, Airlines of NSW and Ansett pilot spoke about the operations of the Airspeed AS.57 Ambassador in Butler service.

The airline had three such aircraft, VH-BUI, VH-BUJ and VH-BUK, which were acquired from British European Airways in 1957 and returned to the United Kingdom in 1959 for re-sale. Jack became Flight Captain on the type and ferried the last one back to the U.K. after it was repaired following its accident at Canberra.

Jack gave a thorough account of this accident which occurred just after take-off when the undercarriage was retracted, but due to the downdraft, the aircraft failed to climb and contacted the ground. The aircraft suffered relatively little damage, but did not re-enter service prior to its departure to the U.K.

Jack also described many of the systems on the aircraft, particularly the Bristol Centaurus sleeve valve engines. Engine problems were initially encountered due to the oil being used here was different to the design specification. Water methanol was also used initially to boost take-off performance.

The aircraft was conceived in 1943 and first flew in 1947, however only 23 of the type were constructed. The aircraft underwent comprehensive testing to demonstrate its ability to operate with two

engines, rather than the four which were considered safer by the authorities at the time. In fact, during testing the aircraft took off from a standing start and completed a circuit and landing on just one engine!

Jack also related some aspects of the Battle of the Bismarck Sea and the repelling of the Japanese invasion forces – a subject that he had certainly had first hand knowledge.

It was yet another most entertaining evening.

On the Internet

Rotorspot – The Complete Historical Civil Rotorcraft Register of Australia

(www.geocities.com/rotorspot/vh.html)

Since I did the original check, this site has changed its address to the above, rather than that indicated in last month's *Southern Skies*.

AllFlying.com – Australia's On-line Aviation Magazine

(www.allflying.com/allflying/indexaf.html)

Here is an interesting Australian site featuring a wide range of news, employment, feature articles and plenty of links to other sites.

AddALL – Used and out of print book search

(www.used.addall.com)

This excellent site provides a means of finding those out of print books. You can search, compare and save at more than 40 bookstores, 20,000 dealers and millions of books.

Air Britain Pictures

(www.abpic.co.uk)

Air Britain hosts this site which displays thousands of images provided by Air Britain members. AHSA (NSW) member, Allen Clark has placed a large selection of his images on the site. Membership of Air Britain is not required to access the site.

Books

Trevor Dean, the Curator of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, has advised that Bryan Monkton's book, *The Boats that Flew*, will be available in the coming months. Trevor will advise me when orders can be taken.

Bookshops Online

Haymes and Sons

(www.haymes.com)

You will find a wide variety of books at this site, with a large component of aviation books. The books are catalogued by author, title or price with a short description of the book and its condition. The bookstore is located in Surry Hills, NSW.

Volunteers Wanted for August Meeting

It is intended that this meeting will be a Members' Night, with three of our members talking about their special interests in aviation. This format has proved extremely entertaining and informative; talks are usually about 15-30 minutes and can be on any aeronautical related subject. Any members who wish to participate are asked to contact John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth.

Vale

Harold Thomas

All readers will be sorry to hear of the passing of Harold Thomas on 13 April 2006. Harold was the founder of the Camden Museum of Aviation and the doyen of the Australian aviation preservation movement. His funeral, which was held on 20 April, was attended by several members of the Society.

Calendar of Events

03 June 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre, NSW

10-11 June 2006 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

24-25 June 2006 Piper Week-end Fly-in Evans Head NSW

01 July 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

05 July 2006 AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

05 August 2006 Lunch with the Tiger Moths Luskintyre NSW

05-06 August 2006 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

25-27 August 2006 Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld

21-22 October 2006 Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Richmond 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).

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

Thanks

Thanks to Allen Clark, Ian Debenham, Phil Dulhunty and John Scott for contributions to this newsletter.

75th Anniversary of Sir Francis Chichester's arrival at Lord Howe Island.

By Phil Dulhunty

On 3 April 1931, Francis Chichester arrived in his Gypsy Moth bi-plane (on floats) at Lord Howe Island, a small dot in the Pacific Ocean on the first solo crossing from New Zealand to Australia.

How he found such a small island in a large expanse of ocean is now history. He invented a system of navigation called The Theory of Deliberate Error. With this he purposely flew some 10° - 20° away from his direct track, so that he would end up X number of miles away from it and by taking a sun sight with his sextant until he was precisely on the correct Meridian of Longitude he turned to put the sun on his beam and flew up the Longitude until he finally arrived at the island.

He took a great risk to his life in doing this, as he had to be able to see the sun at the precise moment i.e. no cloud cover, and he had to get an accurate reading in an open cockpit which required him to tip the plane on its side and hold it steady with his knees while he shot the sun. If he missed the island, there was no Search and Rescue, no turning back and no second prize. As he himself said - As much by good luck as by good management he found the island and alighted on the Lagoon.

The next day, strong winds and a high tide brought waves and ocean swell into the Lagoon and sank his beloved "Miss Elijah". Thus started a lifelong connection with Lord Howe Island as he became a Lord Howe Islander, spending 3 months there with the wonderful aid and friendship of the locals re-building his aeroplane.

Chichester went on to complete his crossing of the Tasman Sea, flew his Gypsy Moth all the way to Japan - where again he came to grief by hitting a telephone line during his attempt to alight on the harbour at Katsuura.

Seventy five years later on 3rd April 2006, the Islanders organised a commemoration and a re-enactment of Chichester's arrival. Perry Taylor of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia organised a "Splash In" of some seven seaplanes to fly from Australia for the occasion. The islanders, all descendants of the original families organised a "Back to Lord Howe" week. This was attended by Giles Chichester, son of Sir Francis, who travelled all the way from London for the occasion. The Royal Australian Navy participated with the arrival of HMAS Brunei and the Air Force brought the Air Vice Marshall in a Hercules.

Since the airstrip was built on the island in 1974, Qantas has operated a daily service to the island and amphibious seaplanes chose the land strip rather than

risk the rough water of the Lagoon and do a "Chichester".

But there was one straight seaplane, a fifty year old Cessna floatplane which had to alight on the Lagoon. This was owned by "purist" Philip Dulhunty 82 years of age and Chairman of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia who felt it was incumbent on him to join the others BUT make a true water landing, but then only if Vice President, Graham White, (a good swimmer) would accompany him.

The logistics dictated that Dulhunty's Cessna VH-BNJ would have to take the shortest route - just about 320 nautical miles from Port Macquarie and even then would require extra fuel in the form of a ferry tank strapped to the rear seat. All the other members of the Seaplane Pilots Association had more modern aircraft and had sufficient range to make it with some reserve.

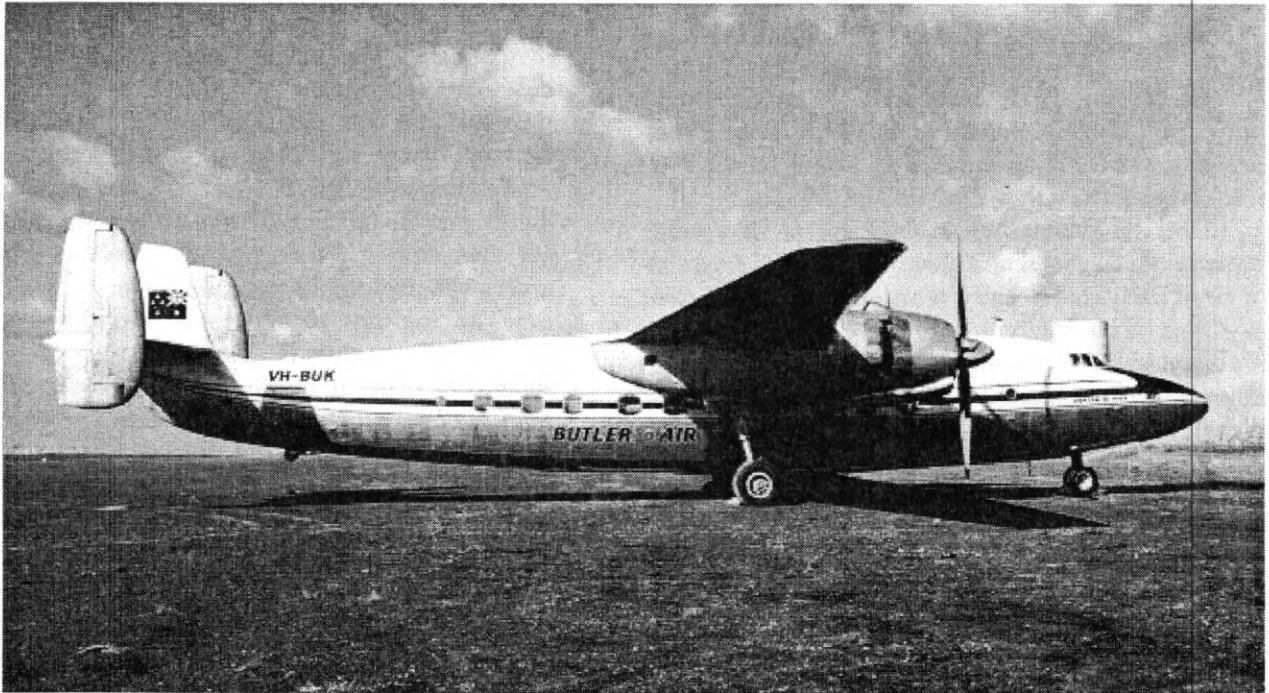
Finally on the appointed hour on the appointed day, five aircraft of various types took off from Port and headed due east - members came from as far away as Noosa and Melbourne.

One adventurous group Steve Macintyre, Bill Day, Diane and Cliff Marchant flew all the way from New Zealand in a Seawind Amphibian.

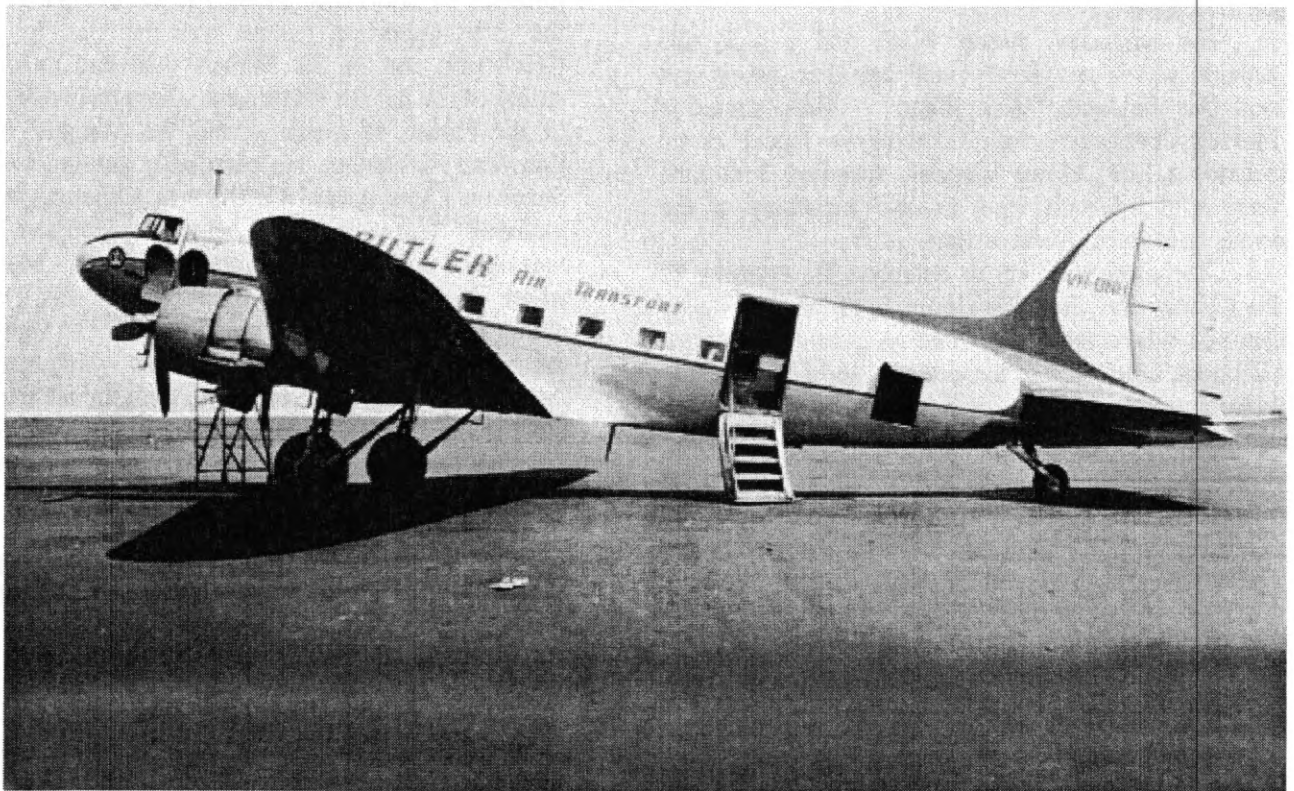
The Lord Howe islanders had organised a full program of anniversary celebrations but particularly the most important feature was the visit by Giles Chichester, son of Sir Francis who had to miss a sitting of the British Parliament where he is a Member of the House of Lords - and the Member of the European Parliament. He personally autographed our Seaplane Pilots Award Certificates. Other dignitaries included Warwick Hood, Naval Architect who redesigned and re-built Chichester's Gypsy Moth IV when he arrived in Sydney on his world circumnavigation. Bob Ansett was there to represent the Ansett Sandringham Flying Boats which operated the Lord Howe Island Service up until the airstrip was built in 1974 and of course the ubiquitous Dick Smith was there in his Grand Caravan with his grand family.

List of Seaplane Participants

John Daley/Jack Peters	Lake Buccaneer	VH-ETY
Harvey Prior/Greg Wright	Lake Buccaneer	VH-LAK
Greg Taylor	Lake Renegade	VH-WMW
Rhys & Mandy Richards	Lake Renegade	VH-LKA
Philip Dulhunty/Graham White	Cessna 180FP	VH-BNJ
Perry & Viv Taylor/Bob & Jose Ansett	Seawind	VH-VIV
Ben Hunter /Chad Boot	Sundowner wheels	VH-AIO
Ryan Taylor /Tony Kerr/Jo	Grady C182 wheels	VH-DSU
Dick Smith/Pip Smith	Caravan wheels	VH-SHW
Graham & Gail Henry/Orm Grace, Hal Griffith	C185 land	
Steve Macintyre/Bill Day/Diane &Cliff Marchant	Seawind	ZK-SWK



VH-BUK Airspeed AS.57 Ambassador "Elizabethan" Class operated by Butler Air Transport



VH-BNH DC-3 operated by Butler Air Transport, and one of many flown by Jack Hailey

LOOPS AND LANDINGS
Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith
The Da Vinci Codex And
The Grave Of Bert Hinkler - Final.

“Deep below the rubble of Tikrit, in a medieval fortress laid bare by the bombs of the Coalition of the Willing, Major Harry Carpenter, a wealthy New Yorker helping to indentify looted antiquities, is about to discover a centuries old secret far more explosive than any WMD he and his countrymen could possibly find: the carefully preserved remains of several members of an ancient Jewish family buried in a part of the world where they decidedly don't belong.

So begins *Every Best Gift: A Tale of the Ages*, an archeological thriller chock-a-block with the kind of forensic science, international intrigue, romantic betrayal and riveting conspiracy that make for utterly irresistable reading. The work, in the guise of literary fiction, demonstrates conclusively that the major doctrines of 'Trinity', 'Divinity' and 'Virginity' did not originate from New Testament writings but arose in subsequent centuries through various combinations of ignorance, credulity...and in some cases deception.”

The above quotation is from the promotional website of *Every Best Gift: A Tale of the Ages*, Gorgias Press, 2005. Before dismissing this work as just one of a wave of books exploiting the popularity of *The Da Vinci Code*, it should be noted that the challenge to Christian doctrines, contained in *Every Best Gift*, is outlined in a book authored by the late Ted Wixted in 1952, titled *The Race Is Run*. The author of *Every Best Gift* is Vynette Holliday, and she has also named her weblog, *The Race Is Run*. Her blog carries an attribution to the late Ted Wixted. Vynette is the researcher who assisted Ted in several of his publications - in particular *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler*, Vantage Press, New York, 1992.

On his web site, *The Lockheed File*, Ron Cuskelly has dedicated a section on the Lockheed Altair, VH-USB, to Ted Wixted, who died five years ago on May 17, 2001. Ted led an expedition to Aye Island off the Burmese coast in 1983, in an unsuccessful attempt to recover the Altair and the remains of her crew, Smithy and Tommy Pethybridge. Ron Cuskelly describes Ted as “a world authority on Smithy, Hinkler and their contemporaries with a sense of history, a sense of occasion and a passion for his chosen subject. He leaves behind a rich legacy of written works on the history of Australian aviation.”

I had the pleasure of meeting Ted Wixted only once. The meeting was at the Queensland Museum in the mid eighties when it was located in Fortitude Valley. Ted was the curator of aviation exhibits at the museum. I had come to purchase the aerophilatelic covers he produced as a fund raising exercise to finance his ongoing obsession to locate the Altair. When I explained that I was a member of AHSA, and had come from south of the Queensland border, I received a decidedly cool response, which gradually thawed during the course of our meeting. What I didn't realise, until much later, was that I had blundered in on him during a period of Aviation History Wars, then swirling around the Bert Hinkler story, and how it should be told and commemorated. Significant differences of opinion had developed between Ted Wixted and Canberra based Roy Bettiens. Roy had objected strongly to the entry for Bert Hinkler in the Australian Dictionary of Biography edition of 1983, authored by Ted Wixted - particularly an opinion expressed by Ted about a missing propeller blade. Roy set about putting the record straight in his limited edition book, *Hinkler and History, Hyperbole, Hypocrisy and Humbug versus Authenticity and Accuracy in Australian History*, self published in June, 1985.

Ted Wixted was certainly passionate about Australian aviation history, particularly that part of our history associated with Queensland and Queenslanders. Over the years I have collected his aviation related publications, starting with his *History and Technology Leaflet No 1*, produced for the Queensland Museum in 1968, entitled *Squadron Leader H.J.L. Hinkler, AFC, DSM*. I have found his *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler* a useful reference for facts and photographs, particularly those of the crashed Puss Moth on the Pratomagno. However, every reader will have to make up his or her own mind about some of the hypotheses drawn by the author from the comprehensive information

available to him, and the undoubted original research both he and his assistant carried out.

Perhaps not by coincidence, *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler* has all of the elements of *Every Best Gift*. For example there is romantic betrayal. Bert Hinkler met his future partner Nancy, who was a nurse and somewhat older than him, when he was training to be a pilot in Yorkshire in early 1918. At the end of WWI the couple planned marriage, and the banns were issued. However, there was a complication. Nancy had a young daughter from a previous marriage, which had not been properly dissolved. Nancy and Bert happily continued their union - without the legal formalities. But then Bert met another woman, Katherine Rome, in 1925 when he was sailing to the USA as a member of the British Schneider Cup team. Katherine was attractive and vivacious - and nine years younger than Bert. A relationship developed between the two during Bert's return visits to Canada and the USA in 1930-31 and 1932, ending with a legal, though clandestine, marriage in Connecticut on May 16, 1932. Nancy may have had her suspicions about Bert's philandering, but she knew nothing of this final act of betrayal. Ted Wixted introduces us to *The Bert Hinkler Code*, as it relates to the name *Karohi*, given by Hinkler to his Puss Moth: *Ka* for Katherine, *ro* for her maiden name Rome, and *hi* for Hinkler. Katherine was living in Glasgow when Bert departed on his final flight.

International intrigue surrounded the last years of Bert Hinkler and the days following his death. He was notoriously reticent about communicating his plans for record breaking flights, which in turn generated uninformed speculation in the international press. When he died he was carrying a Canadian passport, and was flying a Canadian registered aircraft. There were reports that he intended to fly an arctic circle route from Canada to Britain in 1932 and another, that after his planned flight to Australia in 1933, he intended flying on to Canada, thus completing a round the world flight in his Puss Moth. In a chapter headed Mussolini, Ted Wixted describes Il Duce's rapid appraisal of the stature of Hinkler as a pioneering international aviator. The opportunity provided to show the world how his fascist regime could stage a funeral befitting a fallen hero, was another reason why Hinkler was buried in Florence on May Day, 1933, before the wishes of the Hinkler family reached Italy.

Forensic science occupies a chapter of *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler*. Ted Wixted has presented detailed information, supported by photographs of the crash site and the destroyed Puss Moth. Contrary to contemporary accident investigation reports, he concludes that, just before the crash, one blade from the two-blade metal propeller assembly was lost, and the resulting fatal crash occurred during Hinkler's attempted forced landing.

Finally there is the most controversial part of the book which provides the element of riveting conspiracy. Ted Wixted gives weight to the hypothesis that the propeller assembly of the Puss Moth was tampered with on the eve of Hinkler's departure for Australia. By this means three people are alleged to have been involved in a conspiracy to murder Bert Hinkler. It is alleged that the principal conspirator was G.A. Lingham a fellow pilot, with Katherine and her solicitor L.V. Pearkes accessories before the fact. Personally, I found all of this most unconvincing. However, I do believe that Katherine and L.V. Pearkes conspired to facilitate the burial of Bert Hinkler in Florence against the express wishes of Nancy and the Hinkler family, who wanted his body returned to Australia. Katherine, through L.V. Pearkes, also ensured that Bert would remain buried in Florence. By September 1933, even Bert Hinkler's mother had come round to accepting that it was better to leave her son's body in Italy.

Hinkler has a unique association with Italy. In August 1918, shortly after his training as a pilot he was posted to No 28 Sqn RAF, then stationed at Istrana, north west of Venice. In his Sopwith Camel, he flew 50 sorties against the Austrians in defence of Italy. His first solo, long distance flight in his Avro Baby on May 31, 1920, terminated in Turin. In 1973, the Royal Queensland Aero Club and the Arezzo Aero Club entered into a gemellaggio (twin) relationship based on Hinkler. There soon followed a similar gemellaggio between the city of Brisbane and Arezzo.

There are two further clues from *The Bert Hinkler Code* that prove he was destined to have an eternal relationship with Italy. The first is Katherine's maiden name - *Rome*. The second is in the sheet music, *Hustling Hinkler*, published in Melbourne in 1928 by Allan & Co. The first three pages are devoted to *Hustling Hinkler*. The fourth and final page has the score of a popular song of the day, *Cheerie-Beerie-Be, every note to me, is like a rosary, from sunny Italy* - I rest my case.... **John Scott.**

BOOK OFFER

Clive Caldwell, Air Ace by *Kristen Alexander*

After four years of researching, Kristen Alexander's biography of Clive Caldwell, **Clive Caldwell, Air Ace** will be published by Allen & Unwin in July 2006.

Clive Caldwell was officially attributed with 27½ victories and became Australia's highest scoring fighter pilot in WWII. In addition, he became an Ace in both the Middle East and Pacific theatres – the only Australian to achieve this status. He served with 250 SQN RAF, 112 SQN RAF and 1 Fighter Wing RAAF and scored with all these formations. He commanded 80 Fighter Wing but was not able to increase his score.

Kristen has attempted to present a warts-and-all account of someone not necessarily liked, but certainly admired. She has portrayed a three dimensional character who bursts energetically from the pages; someone who is loyal to his friends, protective of his wife, and genuinely appreciative of the contributions of his pilots and ground staff. She tells of a highly skilled fighter pilot who is lauded and feted by the media and the RAAF, as well as a detailed account of Caldwell's involvement of the so-called "Morotai Mutiny" and of his liquor trading in the Islands. In describing these incidences, she has drawn from the original Inquiry and court documents.

No other researcher (including Caldwell's other biographer) has availed themselves of the vast array of public records relating to Caldwell, such as squadron, wing and other air force records – including the 2,000-odd page transcript of the Barry Report and exhibits and Caldwell's court-martial transcript. Kristen has also drawn from Caldwell's own testimony, interviews, published articles, letters and his record of squadron life when he took over as scribe for the 250 SQN RAF diary. In addition, she has had exclusive access to Caldwell's own papers still held by his wife, Mrs Jean Caldwell, as well as his private photo collection and the scrapbook Mrs Caldwell compiled over a sixty-year period.

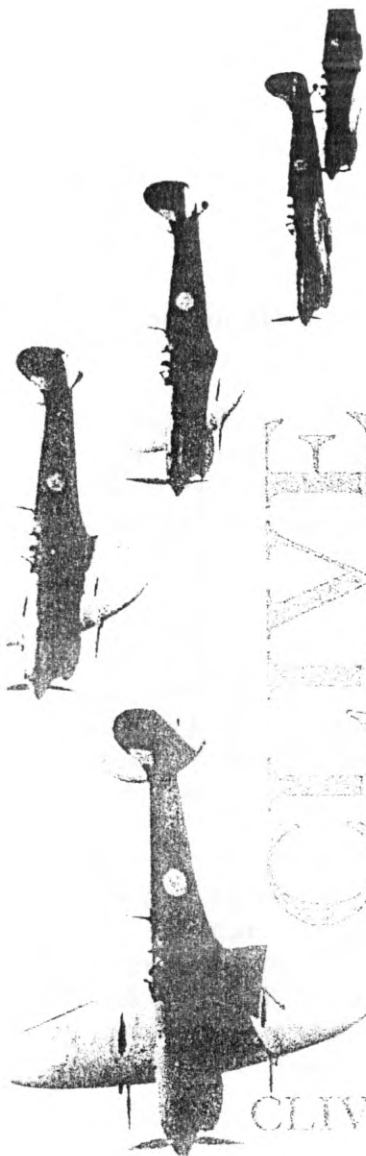
Clive Caldwell, Air Ace contains 288 pages, includes 2 maps and fifty-one black and white photographs ranging from Caldwell's schooldays and including rare photographs from his own albums such as him flying a Wirraway at 2 SFTS, the Hurricane he flew with 73 SQN, his damaged Tomahawk after the incident for which he was awarded the DFC, and many more.

Clive Caldwell, Air Ace, by *Kristen Alexander* Paperback
Publication Date: July 2006; RRP \$35.00 ISBN: 1741147050 Publisher: Allen & Unwin

If you would like to purchase the book through Kristen and husband David's company, Alexander Fax Booksellers, they are offering a 10% discount to AHSA members, and she will gladly sign your copy (or inscribe it if you prefer something a little more personal). With postage and packaging, the total cost would be \$40.50.

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CLIVE CALDWELL AIR ACE



CLIVE CALDWELL AIR ACE *Kristen Alexander*

'His courage, determination, skill and his undoubtedly outstanding ability as a leader are an inspiration to his wing and worthy of the highest praise.'

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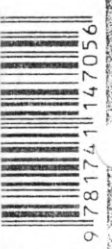
Clive Caldwell was officially attributed with 27½ victories and became Australia's highest scoring fighter pilot in World War II. In addition, he became an ace in both the Middle East and Pacific theatres — the only Australian pilot to attain this status.

Kristen Alexander has had unrivalled access to Caldwell's personal papers as well as official and privately held records. She vividly brings to life Caldwell's aerial exploits and presents a man driven to carry out his duty. Originally considered an individualist, Caldwell became a fine fighter pilot and a dedicated leader, much loved by those he commanded. But he did not wear the restrictions of the RAAF well and, despite his achievements, endured public inquiry over liquor trading and the so-called 'Morotai Mutiny'. Even so, he continued to be well-regarded and respected by the public.

This biography is a celebration of Caldwell's military achievements. It details his rise from a green fighter pilot to Wing leader and includes striking details of his air battles. It also includes unprecedented discussion of the Barry Inquiry and Caldwell's court-martial.

KRISTEN ALEXANDER lives in Canberra and, with her husband, owns a second-hand bookshop specialising in Australian military history. Kristen is currently Federal Secretary of the Military Historical Society of Australia.

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CLIVE CALDWELL: MAJOR Clive Caldwell standing in front of a Spitfire in the Middle East (1942)

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