



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

July 2006 No.397

file 2006 - 2

### **July Meeting – please note change of venue.**

The July meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Mary Ann Street end of the Museum's Harwood Building. 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 Tim Smith, whose topic will be

### ***Submerged aircraft wrecks off the NSW coast***

NSW has the largest concentrations of historic shipwrecks in Australia. With some 2000 wreck events, new sites continue to be located every year. However also hidden beneath our State waters is another type of cultural relic - historic aircraft wrecks. Certainly less numerous, but equally evocative, the fragile archaeological sites are largely unknown, unrecorded, and when found, often damaged.

To try and tackle the identification and management of these sites, the Heritage Office, Department of Planning, undertook a desk-top study to determine the approximate numbers of aircraft likely to lie on the seabed of NSW. What became obvious was the lack of reliable archival records and the reliance on anecdotal reports from people who witnessed crashes or mass dumpings of aircraft after World War Two. Of even more concern was the lack of appropriate legislation to protect such sites and the ad hoc nature of such reportings.

This talk will look at the evidence, the sites, and the management framework, to examine better ways of preserving and interpreting this unique archaeological heritage. Recent discoveries will be examined in line with potential large area mapping opportunities. The work of interstate heritage agencies will also be examined.

Tim Smith is a Senior Heritage Officer, and a State Government Maritime Archaeologist, with the Heritage Office, NSW Department of Planning (Sydney, Australia). With a Graduate Diploma in Maritime Archaeology and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Archaeology from the University of Sydney, Tim

has surveyed numerous shipwreck sites in NSW and interstate since joining the Office in 1991.

He has worked on a range of archaeological sites in the Middle East, Greece and Italy over the past 16 years. Major sites include Pella in Jordan; *I Fani* in Southern Italy; and *Torone* - a Classical Athenian town in northern Greece where he undertook the survey of the ancient harbour.

Tim participated in the 1997 and 1998 Australian expeditions that documented the historic *AE2* submarine wreck site in Turkey, and served as archaeological technical advisor to the joint Australian-Turkish technical workshops held in Istanbul in 2002 and 2004. Tim is currently Director - Maritime Archaeology, for the proposed 2006 archaeological expedition coordinated by the Submarine Institute of Australia (SIA), and has published widely on the work.

He is closely involved in the identification, mapping and heritage assessment of key naval historic shipwreck sites. Tim successfully led the search for the Dutch (ex-RAN) submarine *K-IX* wreck site near Seal Rocks, NSW in 1999, has been involved in several searches for the missing Japanese (1942) midget submarine near Sydney, and assisted Heritage Victoria in their survey of the *J-3* submarine wreck site near Melbourne. He is currently coordinating heritage projects aimed at documenting the important World War One-era wreck sites, HMAS *Australia* (1) and HMAS *Parramatta* (1).

He is a past Vice President and Secretary of the *Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology* (AIMA), and current State Councillor.

At the Heritage Office, Tim develops publications and community based-projects to promote sound management of the State's underwater heritage. He also coordinates State Government compliance with their heritage management responsibilities under the NSW *Heritage Act* 1977.

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

## Committee Meeting

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

## June Meeting

Guest speaker at the June meeting was Kerrie Dougherty, who provided an excellent presentation on Professor Frank Cotton to whom American pressure suit research owes a great, if indirect debt.

Kerrie spoke about the realisation by pilots in the 1920s of the hazards now being encountered through aircraft flying higher and faster. Lack of oxygen at high altitude and blackouts caused by high speed turns and steep dives were two particular occurrences that identified the need for protective clothing to counteract these problems.

Research and experimentation aimed at developing both pressure suits and anti-g suits began in the early 1930s. Because physiological problems connected with lower atmospheric pressure in the stratosphere were reasonably well understood and could be studied in pressure chambers, the first successful fully pressurised flying suit was developed in the USA by Wiley Post and Russell Colley as early as 1934.

During 1940, Australian physiological researcher, Dr Frank Cotton (later Professor) noticed a small item in a London newspaper article concerning blackouts and their effect on aerial combat. He later recalled that within just one minute he could see the solution of combining applied dynamics and physiology. Cotton fixed upon the idea that the best way to counteract blackout was to maintain an adequate supply of blood to the head.

In co-operation with the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Sydney, Professor Harold Dew, and the RAAF, the No.2 Flying Personnel Research Unit was established at the university for the purpose of conducting research into a range of aero-medical problems, including those of blackout and the development of the anti-g garment.

Following Cotton's initial research, he proposed a "pressure suit", known variously as a pneumatic, pneumodynamic or aerodynamic suit, which would consist of a series of air sacs inside a garment with an inextensible outer skin and means of automatically inflating each of the sacs to the optimum pressure required to maintain blood flow.

At the same time, a Canadian, Dr Wilbur Franks was also developing a suit with trousers containing water filled bladders. Cotton shared his research findings with the Americans and the British, and the Americans were particularly impressed with the pressure gradient concept, which was soon incorporated into its anti-g suit development.

In 1942 Cotton returned to Sydney and began flight trials of the anti-g suit in Sydney in March 1942, with operational trials occurring at Mildura later that year. At the completion of the trials, the anti-g suit was recommended for service use and Cotton handed all rights to the design, together with plans and twenty completed suits, to the RAAF "to dispose of as it sees fit". The suit was now officially designated the Cotton Aerodynamic Anti-g (CAAG) suit, Mark 1.

In the USA a pneumatic suit based on Cotton's principles was developed. By 1944, US Navy pilots were issued with a pneumatic anti-g suit that was worn in major engagements from Palau to the Philippines.

It was a standard US pneumatic anti-g suit, derived from Cotton's work, that Dr James Paget Henry subsequently modified to form the first US partial pressure suit, thus linking the Australian physiologist's original research to the origins of the US pressure suit, and, ultimately, the space suit.

## Bookshops

Jack's Medals & Militaria

7 Lawndale Avenue, North Rocks NSW 2151

(02) 9871 8015. Email: [jplangley@bigpond.com](mailto:jplangley@bigpond.com)

Jack Langley operates this shop that specialises in militaria and military books. He has a wide range of new and second-hand books with a good aviation selection from WWI through to the present. Jack also has a reference library which includes such items as lists of medal and award recipients.

## 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.

## For Sale and Information Wanted

Frank Walters has the following magazines for sale.

1. *Aeroplane Monthly*: from Vol No.1 May 1973 to March 1994, complete.....\$500
2. *Australian Aviation*: from No.1, 1977 to June 2006, complete.....\$500
3. *Wings / Airpower*: from Vol 2 No.2 April 1972 to Feb 2001.....\$350

Frank will not separate out individual issues, and the means of delivery and cost will be the buyer's responsibility. For Frank's contact details see below.

Frank is also seeking information about the eight RAAF DH86 aircraft, A31-1 / 8, and the three DH86

aircraft with RAF serials, AK829, AX672 and HK843, that saw service with RAAF No1 and No2 Air Ambulance Units.

Anyone who can help please contact Frank at Phone (02) 6559 6229 or at Villa 2, No 4 St Albans Way, Westhaven, NSW 2443

### **For Sale - Ansett DVD**

Fred Niven has done another excellent job producing the DVD Airlines & Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 – 2002. See attachment for more details.

### **Vale**

#### **Dr Keith Noel Everal (Bill) Bradfield**

Passed away on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006. A service for him was held at St Johns Church, Gordon NSW on 19th June. Dudley Reynolds recalls that he met Bill Bradfield about 3 years ago when he collected his boxes of papers to send to Melbourne. These personal papers are now held by the Civil Aviation Historical Society at the Airways Museum, Essendon Airport.

Keith Noel Everal 'Bill' Bradfield was born at Gordon, NSW, on 25 December 1910. The son of Dr J.J.C. Bradfield, designer of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Storey Bridge (Brisbane), he was educated at Sydney Church of England Grammar School.

On leaving school Bill Bradfield attended Sydney University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1932. In 1934, he also graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering with First Class Honours.

Selected as the NSW Rhodes Scholar for 1935, Bradfield travelled to the United Kingdom where he studied Engineering Science at New College, Oxford University, under Professor R.V. Southwell, completing a doctoral thesis on methods of stress analysis in mathematically indeterminate frameworks, such as occur in aircraft structures. Whilst at Oxford, Bradfield joined the Oxford University Air Squadron (a branch of the RAF) where he learned to fly on Avro Tutors, and later Hawker Harts.

Wishing to enter a different field of engineering than his father and convinced of the future of aviation, Bradfield's plan had been to complete a final year of study at Berkeley in California, where the only course in airport design at that time was being taught. However, the onset of tension in Europe led the Rhodes trustees to ask him to remain in England. The upshot was that he completed his scholarship working for Norman and Dawbarn of London, the first English firm of consultant engineers and architects to specialise in airport planning and design.

Returning to Australia in 1939, Dr Bradfield joined the Department of Civil Aviation. When war broke out, there was a 'mad rush' to develop aerodromes throughout Australia. Quickly promoted to Superintendent of Ground Operations in 1941, he

held that position until the Department was re-organised in 1945 when he was appointed Chief Airport Engineer. In 1957 he was promoted to Asst Director-General (Ground Facilities), and in 1964 became First Asst D-G (Ground Facilities).

Dr Bradfield was personally responsible for the principal design work on the expansion of the airports at Mascot, Essendon and Tullamarine.

In 1947 another angle to Dr Bradfield's career began when he was appointed the Australian representative on the first International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Council. Quickly establishing himself as a leader in the international arena, Dr Bradfield was elected Vice-President of the Council in 1949/50 and served on the Air Navigation Commission from 1949 to 1952, and numerous other Committees and Commissions. This was an important period in the development of world-wide civil aviation as the foundations were laid for international standards and agreements for safety, navigation and communications in civil aviation.

Dr Bradfield returned to ICAO for another term on the Council from 1968 to 1972. During that period he was involved in formulating ICAO provisions on aircraft noise, planning for the introduction of new types of aircraft such as the B747 and Concorde, and establishing criteria for ICAO's approach to the question of unlawful interference with civil aircraft.

In addition to his work with ICAO, Dr Bradfield served as a member and Chairman of the South Pacific Air Transport Council (SPATCO). In 1960, he was a member of the West Indies Civil Aviation Commission, established to advise the West Indies Government on the question of civil aviation in the West Indies, British Guiana and British Honduras.

In 1972 Dr Bradfield retired from DCA after 33 years service, however from 1973 to 1976 he was the Civil Aviation Advisor to the Government of Papua New Guinea, its Controller of Civil Aviation and a founding member of the National Airlines Commission and Air Niugini. Since then, Dr Bradfield has consulted widely on airport development throughout Australia, the South Pacific and elsewhere.

In keeping with such an illustrious career, Bill Bradfield received many awards and honours including the Award of Merit of the Commonwealth Professional Officers' Association (1963), the Order of the British Empire (1966) and the Medal of the Civil Aviation Council of Arab States (1971). In 1991 Dr Bradfield became the twenty-fifth recipient of the prestigious ICAO Edward Warner Medal, the highest award in civil aviation.

*Biography courtesy of The Civil Aviation Historical Society's website. ([www.airwaysmuseum.com](http://www.airwaysmuseum.com)).*

## From our Northern Correspondent

Roy Fordham has sent us this little gem:

Having received regular items of interest from an ex-service friend in the U.K., I felt this recent update might be of interest to our members.

RAF station Waddington, Lincolnshire, was one of many airfields in Bomber Command, and when the Lancaster came into service during WWII, several squadrons were equipped with the type. Australian squadrons were much in evidence, two of which, 467 and 463, were very active throughout Lincolnshire, at various airfields in the 'Fens' county.

In this recent update, I received news of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, which operates from their Lincolnshire base HQ, preparing for this year's annual flying displays.

It so happens, that an ex-Lancaster crew member, now lives relatively close to one of the training flight areas, and flew from Waddington with one of the Australian squadrons, but who sadly is terminally ill, and not expected to live much longer. Just as a matter of interest, a good friend and fellow member of the RAAF Assn. here in Cairns, actually flew with the RAAF from bases in England on ops' with this fellow.

My friend in the UK contacted the station commander at Waddington, with the news and history of this ex Lancaster crew member, and asked if it might be possible to have the flight routed over the village where he is now confined to bed. The response was a slow fly by, overhead this sick man's residence with the Dakota taking the place of the Lancaster, my guess being saving valuable air hours of the Lancaster, but to my mind, a lovely response and tribute to this veteran of WWII.

My response, and that of many I hope ---- Bravo" and well done BBMF, the stuff that warms the cockles of the heart.

*And just 24 hours later followed up by:*

Hi Roy, Had an interesting Sunday afternoon. Got a call at 2pm from the Lancaster pilot giving me an ETA of 15.50 for a flypast over George's house, all three, Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane. Seems the Dakota flypast yesterday was a recce. A flurry of phone calls and an hour later loads of people were assembling at George's house. His family had got him up and awake, in his wheelchair on the terrace.

Bang on time the Hurricane appeared and did a figure of 8 and gunned it off to the north. George was amazed. Then we waited for the others. An hour later, no sign of the Lancaster, and as people were drifting away the Spit appeared and did its stuff in salute.

Still no Lancaster; got another call at 20.30 from Sqn Ldr Reid, apologising for not appearing. The Lancaster had been grounded at Manston with technical trouble and he was travelling back by road.

The Spit had played up too, wouldn't start apparently, so it was late in the air and just transiting home to Coningsby via Georges house! Sqn Ldr Reid sounded really positive, and he hopes to be able to do the tribute as soon as possible, which could be this Wednesday, but first they've got to fix the ol' girl in Manston and get her back. I fear that today was the last realistic slot for George; he's in a lot of pain now and sleeps a lot.

I'm just so glad he looked up and saw the Hurricane, there were a few moist eyes at that moment, I can tell you. Typically, when I told him the BBMF was coming for him, he asked why? Why me? It gave me a lot of pleasure to say to him "because you deserve it, you're worth it". I hope he has enough strength to last a few more days so he can see 'his' beloved Lancaster.

When the Lancaster comes to Colsterworth, it won't be the first time. In 1944, George's skipper did a low pass over the village on ops., and George had a grandstand view from the rear turret. That alone deserves remembering, in my book, and what better way than a visit from the Lancaster. I have to say I can't really believe all this is happening. The RAF have been brilliant and answered a call to honour one of their own; an ordinary air gunner from the ranks.

I do so hope that time is on George's side, but then, by his own reckoning he's lived a lucky life and got this far, so I hope it holds out. His chance of survival over the next couple of weeks is no better than it was in 1944, but then he's used to that.

God bless him, I hope he makes it. Roy Fordham

## Calendar of Events

**01 July 2006** Lunch with the Tigers, Luskintyre NSW

**05 Aug 2006** Lunch with the Tigers Luskintyre NSW

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

**25-27 Aug 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](mailto:wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au)).

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

## Thanks

Thanks to Roy Fordham, Dudley Reynolds John Scott and the Civil Aviation Historical Society for contributions to this newsletter.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### A Piece of Maritime Ephemera.

On New Year's Day, 1955, an editorial appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* under the heading *More Millions On The Skyways*. The opening paragraph stated that: "Since almost every day the ordinary citizen is given some new reason for remembering that this is an Air Age, one naturally expects to find that more people are travelling by plane. Even so, the figures released by the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Air Transport Association are impressive. This year nearly 58 million passengers have been carried on international air routes, and 1954 will go down in aviation history as the first year in which planes carried more people across the oceans than were transported by sea." Nevertheless, when I decided to travel abroad for the first time just 50 years ago, I found it cheaper to go by sea than by air. I sailed out of Sydney Harbour on March 9, 1956, aboard the Orient Line steamer *S.S. Orsova*, bound for London. I still have the ephemera of that first trip: passenger ticket, menus, post cards, baggage labels, a certificate from Neptunus Rex and the passenger list, all rich ephemera of sea travel.

If 1954 represents a victory for airlines over shipping lines in the battle for passengers on trans-ocean routes, then 1934 marked an opening skirmish of that battle, at least as far as Australia was concerned. On January 18, 1934, Q.A.N.T.A.S and Imperial Airways Limited formed Qantas Empire Airways to submit tenders for the England-Australia airmail contracts, which closed on January 31. Demonstrating the practicality of long, over-water flights, Kingsford Smith flew the *Southern Cross* on its third visit to New Zealand, returning in March. In February, Charles Ulm, in the *Faith in Australia*, flew the first official airmail from New Zealand to Australia, and in April flew the first official airmail from Australia to New Zealand. He then flew back to New Zealand on a goodwill flight in May. The MacRobertson Air Race in October 1934, provided world exposure for the companies Douglas and Boeing, that would produce the long range, passenger aircraft of the future. In November, Kingsford Smith and P.G.Taylor completed the first north bound Australia-USA crossing of the Pacific in the *Lady Southern Cross*. In December, Charles Ulm, Littlejohn and Skilling, were lost in the *Stella Australis* on an attempted southbound crossing. Finally, the QEA-Imperial Airways airmail service from Australia to England was inaugurated on December 10.

At a collectors' fair last February I found a piece of maritime ephemera that reminded me of my own experience of travel by ocean liner. It was the Souvenir Passenger List for the thirteenth voyage of the Matson Oceanic Line's *S.S. Monterey*, sailing from Sydney to Los Angeles and San Francisco via Auckland, Suva, Pago Pago and Honolulu at 11am on May 2, 1934. There were some passengers on this voyage who were associated with the pioneering of Australian airlines and world airline routes. It is fascinating to speculate how these individuals, who were necessarily confined together on board for a period of a couple of weeks, related to one another. Let me introduce these passengers, who were all sailing First Class, in alphabetical order.

First there was Mr Richard Archbold, a young millionaire born in New York City in 1907, and heir to the early fortunes of the Standard Oil Company. He had already established a distinguished reputation as an explorer and scientist. He was also a competent aviator. Returning with him to the USA were 19,700 specimens of flora and fauna collected during his first New Guinea expedition, which he led and financed on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History. He was no stranger to the Matson Line, having sailed for Australia at the start of his expedition on the maiden voyage of the *S.S. Lurline* in January, 1933. He returned to New Guinea for a second expedition in March 1936, and brought with him a Fairchild Model 91 Amphibian, *Kono*. Archbold's third and final expedition was to Dutch New Guinea. This time he crossed the Pacific in his Consolidated PBY Catalina, *Guba 2*, departing San Diego on June 2, 1938, and arriving at Hollandia, via Honolulu and Wake Island on June 10. In 1939, The *Guba 2* was chartered by the Australian Government to enable P.G. Taylor to

navigate the first aerial crossing of the Indian Ocean.

Major Norman Brearley and his wife Violet were also on board. He learned on April 19, 1934, that his tender with Charles Ulm, for the England-Australia air mail contracts had been unsuccessful, and also that his company, West Australian Airways, had lost its Perth-Katherine service to the MacRobertson Miller Aviation Company. To compound his problems, the subsidy on WAA's Perth-Adelaide service had expired on April 1. On this voyage abroad he planned to meet with overseas associates and aircraft manufacturers to plan the future survival of his company.

Adding some gravitas to the passenger list was the Rt Hon Stanley Melbourne Bruce, CH, MC, and his wife Ethel. Travelling with him was his private secretary Mr Robert Maxwell. Bruce had been Prime Minister of Australia and Minister of External Affairs from 1923 to 1929, an important period for the development of Australian aviation. He was the Prime Minister who greeted Smithy with a cheque for £5000 after the first east - west crossing of the Pacific by air in 1928. Currently he was the High Commissioner for Australia in Great Britain and had no doubt been lobbied strenuously by Imperial Airways Limited in connection with the airmail contracts. He had returned to Australia for a few weeks, and was here when the successful airmail tenderers were announced.

Sir Samuel Hordern and his wife Charlotte graced the passenger list. Sir Samuel's youngest brother Lebbeus Hordern had been a significant participant in Australian aviation affairs until his untimely death in 1928. Lebbeus had also been a benefactor of another knight of the realm, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, who was on board with his wife Mary. Smithy was travelling to the USA in search of an aircraft to compete in the MacRobertson Air Race. In February 1924, Norman Brearley sacked Smithy from Western Australian Airways. In the following ten years, Smithy had become a national hero, the husband of a young woman of high social standing, and had received a knighthood. During the same period Brearley had worked hard to create a safe, reliable, scheduled airline with an interstate service, the existence of which was now under threat. If the Brearleys and the Kingsford Smiths socialised during the voyage there would have been a lot to talk about. After arriving in Los Angeles Smithy negotiated with Lockheed for the purchase of an Altair. The Altair made its first Pacific crossing stowed on the tennis deck of *Monterey's* sister ship, *S.S. Mariposa*. Smithy and Mary arrived back in Sydney on the *Mariposa* with the Altair on July 16.

The parents of Smithy's wife Mary, Arthur and Floss Powell, were fellow travellers. This was the second time that the four had crossed the Pacific together on an ocean liner. The first time was on the *R.M.S. Aorangi*, sailing for Sydney from Vancouver in late 1929. Smithy was accompanied by his twenty five year old niece Beris on this voyage. Mary Powell, who was not yet nineteen, was also on board travelling with her parents. By the time the ship had reached mid Pacific, Smithy had proposed marriage to Mary and had been accepted. It took until the *Aorangi* docked in Sydney for Smithy to win over Mary's parents, who nevertheless requested that the announcement of engagement be delayed for one year. Now, in 1934, Arthur Powell was financially supporting Smithy's bid to compete in the MacRobertson Air Race. It seemed a wonderful opportunity for the Powells to enjoy the company of their daughter and son-in-law on this trip to the USA to find a suitable aircraft for the air race.

Following the Powells on the list was Dr Austen L. Rand, the loyal lieutenant of Richard Archbold. Dr Rand was a key figure in the planning and execution of all three Archbold expeditions to New Guinea. With Richard Archbold, he was to have future contact concerning the *Catalina, Guba 1*, with the next important passenger, who joined the *Monterey* in Auckland - Sir Hubert Wilkins. Wilkins was returning to America after managing the first of Lincoln Ellsworth's Antarctic expeditions. Smithy and Wilkins would also have had a lot to catch up on. If it had not been for Hubert Wilkins there would have been no *Southern Cross*, and Smithy's story of achievement may well have been very different.

Under 'W' there was one last passenger of note - a quiet young man listed as Mr Charles F. Walton. On another Pacific crossing of *Monterey*, just before WWII, when Charles was again a passenger, there was also on board a young woman who later wrote of him in her autobiography: "With constant attention from this charming, attractive and gentle man the glorious days on the ocean ended each night dancing to music of the American band....by the time the ship reached Australia we were deeply in love and became engaged." That young woman was our very own Nancy Bird. **John Scott.**



## AIRLINES & AIRCRAFT OF THE ANSETT GROUP 1921-2002

(Completely updated end-May 2006)

**NEW** **\$AU35** (including Aust. P&P) \*

Available mid-June, 2006, a brand-new DVD, contents nearly 2GB (covering the airlines & aircraft of the Ansett group of airlines. Produced by Fred Niven, who spent over 37 years at Ansett, during many of which he acted as an unofficial company aviation historian.

This DVD (viewable on both PCs & Macs) covers the entire Ansett group of airlines in Australia, PNG & New Zealand 1921-2002 (including ALL aircraft disposals up to end-May 2006).

Its extremely comprehensive coverage includes Ansett Airways to Ansett Australia, A.N.A. & Airlines of Australia & all their predecessors, Aeropelican, Hazelton, Kendell, Skywest (& all its predecessors) & ALL the other subsidiaries of A.T.I. (& their predecessors) & their aircraft, since Western Australian Airways operated Australia's 1<sup>st</sup> scheduled air service in 1921.

Its 3,200 A4 pages (not including the PowerPoint presentations) include :

- Full details of each aircraft operated by any Ansett-related airline 1921-2002; including their previous & subsequent histories, **up to end-May 2006**; indexed by both registration & airline.
- **Over 7,400 photos/charts/maps** of Ansett-related aircraft & personalities, since 1921.
- A detailed history for each airline, including its fleet, history, points served & logos.
- 'Milestones' of Ansett Group airline-related aviation events; by airline & for the group.
- **Route-maps, timetable covers & lots of other memorabilia** & some 'What might have beens'.
- Flight Crew lists for all Ansett Group airlines 1921-2002 (over 160 pages).
- **Separate sections on A320s, BAe 146s, 727s, 737s, 747s, 767s, Convair CV-340/CV-440s, Fokker F.27s, F.28s & 50s, DC-2s, DC-3s, DC-4s, DC-5s, DC-6 & DC-6Bs, DC-9s, Lockheed 188 Electras, Short S.25 Flying Boats & Vickers Viscounts; including around 7,000 photos.**
- Details of all known Ansett Group-related aircraft accidents/incidents.
- Flight Attendant & other uniforms from the 1940s onwards.
- 4 great PowerPoint presentations by ex-Ansett staffer Geoff Wilkes (with software to view them).

Please post money orders/cheques, made out to Fred Niven, or cash, to :

Fred Niven

27 Alfred Grove, OAKLEIGH EAST, Vic., Australia 3166

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\* Check with Fred for foreign orders.





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## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

August 2006 No.398

### August Meeting

The August meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 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 theme for this meeting will be a Members' Night, where two of our members will present a short talk on their particular interests in aviation, plus a special video from another member.

The first speaker for the night will be Bruce Hall, whose topic is the barnstorming flights undertaken by his father in a Westland Widgeon in 1929. Bruce has kept his father's notes of the time and from these he will also talk about the flying conditions in the 1920s.

Also speaking will be Daniel Cox, who has carried out further research on the anti-G suits designed by Professor Frank Cotton, and the subject of Kerrie Dougherty's earlier talk in June. Daniel will discuss some of the operational uses made of the anti-G suit.

Roger Kennedy will present a video on Heathrow Airport, featuring airlines and aircraft of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s.

A raffle, or maybe two, will be held with prizes being made available due to generous donations from Allen Clark, Eric Favelle and Jim Hutchison. Prizes include the books: *Qantas Rising*, *Flying Matilda* and *An Illustrated Directory of Fighting Aircraft from WWII*, and a CASA DVD/CD set from an Ex-military Aircraft Safety Seminar.

### July Meeting

Guest speaker was Tim Smith, a marine archaeologist who discussed submerged aircraft wrecks off the NSW coast.

Tim introduced his talk by providing some of the background about marine archaeology and the ships that had been discovered. One of the particularly noteworthy ships was the HMAS Australia, which was scuttled off Sydney in 1924. This ship had an aviation connection as its guns were used to support a ramp, which in turn was used to launch aircraft.

The State's most significant wreck site is arguably that of the Yokosuka E.14Y1 ("Glen") floatplane which was used to spot fleet dispositions prior to the Japanese midget submarine raid on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1942. The still unlocated aircraft capsized after returning from its mission and was later scuttled. However, Tim believes that the remains that were the subject of Phil Dulhunty's talk at the 2004 Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture were in fact those of a Wirraway, which crashed much closer to shore than the "Glen".

Tim went on to describe how aircraft tend to be discovered and the continuing heritage issues that ensue. The NSW Heritage Office would prefer the wrecks to be identified, the position accurately recorded and then left where they lie. Many commercial fishermen would prefer the wrecks removed because they damage nets.

Divers regularly visit the wrecks, often at depths far greater than previously thought possible. Dives to 135 metres have been made, allowing divers to inspect vessels and aircraft not previously recorded.

Many aircraft crashed off the coast, mainly in training accidents. Records of many Kittyhawks, as well as Beauforts, Beaufighters and Fairey Battles now exist. There were however many aircraft dumped off the coast after World War II.

Amongst the types of large numbers of aircraft dumped were Corsairs, Hellcats and Avengers. There have been many reports of mass dumpings of aircraft along the east coast of Australia – typically "over the 100 fathom line", where Sydney and Greencape were the popular spots in NSW. Whilst the general areas are known, precise sites were not recorded due to lack of sophisticated navigation aids like GPS or more often, aircraft were dumped when out of site of land, rather than the designated site.

Tim accompanied his talk with an excellent Powerpoint presentation, which also provided many images of aircraft and ship wrecks.

### Information Wanted Sydney Nelson Staff

David Eyre is enquiring whether any of our readers has any information on Sydney Nelson Staff,

who has been reported as building an aircraft in 1914. Anyone with information for David can contact him at david\_eyre@bigpond.com.au or on (02) 4655 3634.

### From our Northern Correspondent

Roy Fordham's contribution about George Howitt and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight in the July issue of *Southern Skies* received many heartening comments. But the finale of the story was both predictable and sad. Roy has sent this follow up:

George died on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, and sadly, his beloved Lancaster went unserviceable with rear landing gear problems at Manston, an old WWII airfield, on the day it was due to do the flyover at George's village, Woolesthorpe, near Waddington, Lincolnshire.

The lifting gear for the rear end of the Lanc' was understandably not readily available, so the aircraft had to remain at Manston, thereby missing the flyover opportunity. The Spitfire and the Hurricane did however appear, and it seems George was unable to take in why they were circling above his home, unassuming to the end, as he was it seems, throughout his many ventured life. Roy Fordham.

The local newspaper, *Grantham Today* published the following article prior to George's passing:

"George Howitt was 19 when he flew on the first of his 26 bombing operations over Germany on December 6 1944. The target was Glessen.

George, the rear gunner, based at Waddington with 463 (Australian) Squadron, and the other six of his crew got back safely after a wearying seven-hour trip in their Lancaster. Other flights were more daunting.

He said: 'The worst raid I went on was to Lutzendorf in March 1945. In the rear turret I couldn't see where we were going, only where we'd been. But I could turn my turret round and look along the left-hand side of the aircraft. I remember doing that and seeing a great wall of flak and searchlights ahead. I thought we'd never get out of that alive.

When you get there you discover that it's not really a wall. We were looking at the flak as if it was a picture but in fact it was spread out over a mile. The worst thing then was flying over the target where we had to maintain a straight and level course for the bomb aimer to line up the target with instructions to the pilot.

It was always hectic with other bombers milling around, shells bursting and searchlights waving. It was a bit frightening when a searchlight got onto us.

We saw other bombers going down in flames. Some blew up; others had bombs dropped on them by our own aircraft.

When the bomb aimer pressed the button, I could hear the 'clunk-clunk-clunk' of the bombs dropping off the aircraft. We then had to continue going

straight and level until our automatic camera had taken a series of pictures of our bombs landing.'

Ever since the war ended arguments continue about the effect of Allied bombing against Germany.

George had no doubt about the importance of Bomber Command: 'It was a job we had to do. We were fighting a war. Most of Europe had been overrun. It was left to us to look after ourselves and help other countries regain their freedom.

The rear turret was cramped and I had to wear an awful lot of clothes because the temperature could fall to -40°F. The cold was made worse because a sheet of Perspex had been removed from each rear turret. It was said that this improved the gunner's visibility by 20%. But the freezing wind screamed through the hole. I wore a very protective electrically-heated flying suit, but sometimes one press-stud came out on one side and I would get very hot on the other and had to turn off the power.' *Grantham Today*

### Calendar of Events

**05 August 2006** Lunch with the Tigers Luskintyre NSW

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

**25-27 Aug 2006** Festival of Flight, Watts Bridge Qld.

**16-17 September 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**29 September – 2 October 2006** Narromine Aero Club Air Pageant and Expo. Narromine NSW

**30 September – 1 October 2006** Antique Aeroplane Assn of Australia Auster Rally, Wangaratta Vic

**30 September – 2 October 2006** Old Bar Festival celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of granting aerodrome status to Old Bar Airfield, NSW

**7 October 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**21-22 October 2006** Australian Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Richmond NSW

**27-29 October 2006** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National convention. Wagga Wagga NSW

### Contributions and Contacts

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

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

### Thanks

Special thanks to Honorary Life Member, Frank Walters, who has made another generous monetary donation the Society. Thanks also to Roy Fordham and John Scott for contributions to this newsletter.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Back To Bathurst Month.

On July 4, 1944, congratulations poured into Bathurst for local pilots Mr & Mrs Alan Morse, after the announcement of their victory in the International Air Race from Australia to Switzerland. A telegram from Lady Wakehurst, wife of the Governor of NSW, read: "Warmest congratulations on your splendid and successful journey." Another from Lady Hilda Owen, Director of the NSW Branch of the Australian Red Cross: "Delighted to hear of Bathurst's success in air race, warmest congratulations." Other telegrams were received from all parts of the state. There had been strong competition during the race. For example Sydney was represented by Sir Donald Cameron, Chairman of the NSW Recruiting Drive Committee for the RAAF, and his co-pilot Mrs Walton. But in the end the Bathurst crew triumphed, Dr Geoffrey Hunter from Moree came in second and Sir Donald Cameron and Mrs Walton were placed third. All place getters received beautiful silver trophies and certificates signed by Lady Gowrie, wife of the Governor General, and Lady Wakehurst.

The *Red Cross International Air Race to Geneva* was a virtual air race in which real aircraft played no part. The speed of the competing 'planes', each supported by a NSW regional community, was one mile per shilling raised. The combined target from all competitors was £50000, and this amount was substantially exceeded by the end of the race. The wartime innovation of the air race and the success of Bathurst was due in no small part to the hard work of local pharmacist Percy Moodie. Alan Morse, who was the Mayor of Bathurst in 1944, was also Percy Moodie's son-in-law. During a recent visit to Bathurst I was invited to view the collection of photographs given to the Bathurst Aero Club by Percy Moodie at the dedication of the club's first hangar in 1956. I was again reminded of the contribution of this remarkable man to the progress of aviation in the Bathurst District. In what must be a record for local government in NSW, he served as an alderman on Bathurst Council continuously from 1922 to 1962, as mayor in 1930 and 1941, and as deputy mayor in many of the intervening years.

Percy Moodie experienced flight for the first time at Bathurst on Saturday August 9, 1919, in the *Aerial Co Ltd* DH6 piloted by Clem Ryrie, who was giving joy-rides at the time. This seems to have been a pivotal experience in his life. He was then almost forty years old, with a wife and three children, and later never considered learning to fly himself. But from that time on he was driven to stake a claim for Bathurst's involvement in the emerging business of civil aviation. When Lt Frank Roberts was giving joy-rides at Bathurst in April, 1920, Moodie chartered his Avro 504K for a flight from Bathurst to Orange, thus becoming the first commercial passenger to fly out of Bathurst to another town. The following month he became an investor and later a director in Charles Ulm's *Aviation Services Company*. He then became the first passenger to fly into Bathurst from Melbourne, arriving on July 16, 1920, in the *Aviation Services Company's* Sopwith Dove. Moodie founded the *Western Aero Company* in February 1929. There was then the embarrassing contretemps with Archdeacon Oakes of Holy Trinity Church Kelso, following the christening of the *Western Aero Company's* Avian, (see L&L June 2003). He was appointed Company Commander of the *Bathurst Branch of the Australian Air League* on its formation in November 1934. With Wilfrid Kingsford Smith in 1935, he was an early investor in and a director of *Western and Southern Provincial Airlines Ltd*. In September, 1935, he was devastated when Shute's Paddock became unavailable for Bathurst's first official aerodrome, (see L&L November 2003). In December, 1938, the *Bathurst Aero Club* was formed with Percy Moodie elected president.

During the two decades preceeding WWII, Percy Moodie agitated tirelessly for an official aerodrome to service Bathurst - but with no success. With the advent of war in September, 1939, he renewed his efforts to convince the Federal Government to locate an aerodrome at Bathurst. There were now the added defence imperatives of providing protection for the Lithgow small arms factory, the shale oil refineries at Glen Davis and the new military camp under construction at Bathurst.

Successive wartime Ministers for Air in the United Australia Party - Country Party coalition, Arthur Fadden and John McEwen, showed no enthusiasm for Bathurst's case. However, on October 7, 1941, John Curtin became Prime Minister at the head of a Labor Government with Ben Chifley as Treasurer. Following the entry of Japan into the war on December 7, Ben Chifley ensured that Bathurst's aerodrome received priority. Following the selection of a site at Raglan, the Federal Allied Works Council started construction in 1942. The aerodrome was completed that year.

In the meantime Percy Moodie threw himself into the war effort. On August 1, 1940, as Bathurst's representative he stood with Sir Keith Smith, *Vicker's* appointee to the Board of *Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Co*, at the launch of a new corvette, *HMAS Bathurst*. He convened a meeting on March 19, 1941, to inaugurate *The Bathurst District Spitfire Fund*, and was elected its president. In September he became chairman of *The Bathurst RAAF Selection Board*. Then on November 26, 1941, he organised a meeting to initiate the establishment of a *Bathurst Squadron of The Air Training Corps*. The first parade of the squadron took place in Bathurst on January 21, 1942. During December 1943 he gave a series of broadcasts from radio station 2BS entitled, *The Part of RAAF Air Crew in the Greatest Air Offensive in History*.

The first reference to flying at Bathurst Aerodrome that I could find describes the activities of a RAAF detachment giving air experience to members of *41 Squadron Air Training Corps* on May 20, 1944. Four Tiger Moths, supported by a mobile unit of ground personnel with maintenance and supply trucks, operated for most of the day. There were no buildings on the aerodrome until after the war. The first opportunity for Bathurstians to officially witness flying at the aerodrome came when an air pageant was held there on Saturday, September 30, 1944, in support of the Second Victory Loan. This was also my own first experience of an air show. The advertisements promised Beauforts and Mosquitoes in attendance, with the spectacle of paratroops descending in a simulated aerial invasion of the aerodrome. What actually happened was the arrival of three Beaufighters and three Mosquitoes which all landed, with the exception of one Mosquito. There was an undercarriage problem with the Mosquito necessitating its return to Williamtown for an emergency landing. The two remaining Mosquitoes gave an exhibition of dog fighting during the afternoon, and one Beaufighter gave a low level *Whispering Death* style beat-up on departure for Williamtown at the end of the air show. However, there were no paratroopers and no simulated aerial invasion of the aerodrome. The five visiting aircraft provided a static display for most of the afternoon.

I am deeply grateful to Percy Moodie for my own first experience of flight. Immediately after the war he rallied past members of the aero club to reform and he was again elected president. He invited the Royal Aero Club of NSW to stage an air display and give joy-rides at Bathurst on the weekend of August 10-11, 1946. The RACNSW flew seven aircraft to Bathurst: five Tiger Moths, one Moth Minor and a Hornet Moth. On August 10, I will celebrate the 60th anniversary of my first flight. Because it more resembled a Spitfire than any other aeroplane present I chose to fly in Moth Minor VH-ACR, which was piloted by Sam Dodd. The following day I went up in a Tiger Moth, VH-APE.

It must have given Percy Moodie deep satisfaction when Bathurst was opened as a civil aerodrome on Saturday December 14, 1946, and Butler Air Transport commenced its first regular service on the following Monday. He continued to support the aero club as its patron and was present on March 28, 1956, for the air carnival and celebrations associated with the completion of the club's first hangar, which was named after him. He was finally honoured for his services to local government by the award of an O.B.E. in the 1963 New Year's Honours List.

At about 1.30pm on Friday December 27, 1963, dark clouds rolled in towards Bathurst Aerodrome from the west, accompanied by vivid lightning, thunder and high winds. The P. J. Moodie Memorial Hangar was no match for its strength and was completely destroyed. During that weekend Percy Moodie lay seriously ill in Bathurst's St Vincent's Hospital. On Sunday morning, in his 83rd year, Percival James Moodie OBE slipped quietly away. His funeral service was held at All Saints Cathedral, but he had chosen to be buried in the graveyard of Holy Trinity Church at Kelso. There he completed a triumvirate with Archdeacon Oakes, buried in 1932, and William John Shute, buried in 1951. Today, the entrance to Bathurst Aerodrome is reached via the P. J. Moodie Memorial Drive.....**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

September 2006 No.399

### **September Meeting**

The September meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 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.

The guest speaker will be Daniel Cox, whose subject will be

#### *Pioneer Pursuits*

#### *The life of George Augustine Taylor*

"Pioneer Pursuits" is the fascinating story of an innovative Australian Pioneer who founded the first aircraft factory in Australia and brought Lawrence Hargraves' vision to fruition, when he became the first in Australia to successfully achieve heavier than air flight. A founding member of the Aerial League of Australia and intensely nationalistic he championed the development of air power in Australia. George Augustine Taylor however, was more than just a pioneer in aviation.

Taylor's epilepsy robbed him of life prematurely, but from Bagasse Plaster to Proto-Television, he was a tireless innovator who relentlessly pursued many disciplines successfully. By trade a builder, Taylor was also a journalist, cartoonist, inventor, Australian Intelligence Corps Officer, drinking partner to Henry Lawson and successful publisher.

Taylor's varied interests would lead him to write science fiction, promote Modernism as well as preservation in Town Planning. He would support Militarism and later promote Pacifism as well as controversially warn of the threat of Japanese expansionism. Sometimes a decade in advance of European efforts, Taylor would pioneer the use of Wireless Signalling in the Australian Army.

George Augustine Taylor was indeed an Artist, Writer, Inventor, and Aviation Pioneer.

Daniel Cox is a descendant of a prominent early Australian pioneer family, and lives and works in Sydney as an Illustrator/Artist with a special interest in portraying aviation and military subjects.

Previously working in the media for a number of years, he also served in the Australian Army as both a

Regular and Reserve soldier from 1989 to 2004.

Daniel appreciates being given the opportunity to share the story of George Augustine Taylor.

### **Committee Meeting**

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

### **August Meeting**

The theme for this meeting was a Members' Night, where three of our members presented a facet of their particular interests in aviation.

The first speaker was Bruce Hall, who gave a fascinating presentation on his father's involvement in barnstorming in the late 1920s. Vic Hall, who was an Honorary Life member of AHSA before he passed away, was the manager of Eastern Air Services. In 1928, Vic and his pilot Colin Ferguson ventured to Bowral in a Westland Widgeon III, landing on the old Bong Bong racecourse near Burradoo. In December that year, they flew from Mascot Aerodrome via Newcastle to Quirindi, where they carried out some 73 flights over two days, carrying passengers at 10/- for the privilege. In January 1929 they flew to Taree and landed on the beach at Old Bar, becoming what Bruce believes was the first landing at that location.

Vic had recorded his experiences in a notebook, titled "My Adventures in the Air", which described these early flights, as well as many illustrations. Bruce also supplied technical data on the Westland Widgeon, and enlarged extracts from Vic's notebook.

Daniel Cox provided another very informative presentation on the operational testing carried out on the anti-G suits designed by Professor Frank Cotton. The aircraft used in the operational tests was a Hawker Hurricane Mk 1, V7476, flown by two RAAF pilots, Alfred Barrett and Kenneth Robertson, who tested the anti-G suit. Daniel provided a detailed handout on the aircraft and images of the pilots attired in the anti-G suits.

Roger Kennedy presented a shortened version of the video on Heathrow Airport, featuring airliners of the 1960s and early 1970s. There were plenty of images of defunct airlines such as Pan Am, TWA,

Manx, National Airlines, Fred Olsen, as well as many aircraft types including B707s, DC-8s, VC-10s, TU-154s and early models of the B747 and DC-10. For the prop fans, there were Viscounts, Heralds, Electras and the Belfast.

As one member remarked, the material presented at our Members' night was again of a very high standard. Thanks to our presenters for a most entertaining evening.

### Vale Frank Walters

Esteemed Honorary Life Member, Frank Walters passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2006. Frank was instrumental in establishing a NSW Branch of AHSA in 1964, and served as its first secretary /treasurer and later as Vice-President and President.

Frank was a generous benefactor of the Society and continued aviation research up until his passing. John Scott has dedicated this month's *Loops and Landings* to Frank.

### First Flights

Eric Cunningham was one of many members who empathised with John Scott's *Loops & Landings* column in our August issue. Eric wrote to John and an extract from his letter is reproduced below with kind permission:

"As always, I enjoyed your latest *Loops and Landings* and was particularly interested in the history of the establishment of Bathurst aerodrome, even though I have never been there. But Bathurst has always been a bit special to me – mainly because of its association with motor racing.

I see you will be celebrating your first flight on 10<sup>th</sup> August; and I have recently mentioned to a friend of mine that my first flight was with Sid Marshall in his Short Scion (probably VH-UUP, *Ed*) as a member of the Ryde branch of the Australian Air League. It was probably in 1939 and the small group of AAL members I was with went up in this aircraft after the weather cleared at a windswept Mascot aerodrome.

I mentioned to the late Harold Thomas that my memory of this occasion was that the Short Scion had an in-line engine under its port wing and a Pobjoy radial engine under the starboard one and that the years must have distorted my memory. Harold replied to the effect that it was likely Sid had replaced the left side Pobjoy with a Cirrus or some similar 6 cylinder in-line engine while he had the radial engine pulled down for an overhaul. When I protested that such action probably would have incurred the wrath of the Dept. of Civil Aviation, Harold chortled and said that if that was the case, it would have been an incentive for Sid to do it as an act of defiance of the authority.

The next flight was a few months later in a DH Leopard Moth which I think Sid also owned, but it

was flown by another fellow whose name I have forgotten. It was also at Mascot aerodrome.

You have mentioned that your second flight was in a Tiger Moth registered as VH-APE and I was immediately reminded that I flew this aircraft from Mascot to Bankstown and back again on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1946. No radio, only an Aldis lamp pointed at me to give me the "all clear for take-off", and off I went across Sydney's suburbs – picking out which ones I was flying over as I went. That was the last time I flew solo and in a DH82a." *Eric Cunningham.*

### DC-2 Restoration

Bill Holswich has kindly provided an extract from *The Border Mail* concerning the restoration of the DC-2 "*Uiver*". The following provides information from *The Border Mail* with additional input from the Editor.

A purpose-built hangar will be constructed at Albury Airport to undertake the restoration of the DC-2 "PH-AJU" *Uiver* (really ex A30-11). The aircraft is identical to the real KLM DC-2 PH-AJU which landed at Albury during the 1934 London–Melbourne air race.

The aircraft will be refurbished to display condition and ultimately housed in the planned extension of the passenger terminal. Restoration is expected to take up to three years, with a target date of October 2009, which will coincide with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original *Uiver's* landing.

The aircraft had been removed from display poles at the airport in 2002 due to safety reasons, and since then has been exposed to the elements and facing an uncertain future.

Whilst the aircraft is not the original *Uiver*, it does have a significant history in itself. It was delivered to the RAAF in 1941 after having served with Eastern Airlines from 1935. In 1979, the Albury West Rotary Club bought and restored the former RAAF aircraft as a memorial to the original *Uiver*.

### Information Wanted

Contributor to Stewart Wilson's *Aero Australia* Magazine, Peter Finlay, is researching information about, and photographs of, the aeroplanes and replicas which stood in the vineyard at Penfolds Minchinbury Winery on the Great Western Highway from circa 1920 through to recent times.

Peter is aware of a DH.60 Gipsy Moth, a possible replica or working aircraft donated by J.C.Carpenter, the Wackett Codock, a Miles Gemini (need the registration or serial number if possible please) and the "Sabre" model built by 2AD at RAAF Richmond. This now stands on a pole at the intersection of Minchinbury Drive and the Great Western Highway.

Part of this story also concerns W.E.Hart and

Peter has already had tremendous support from members of the Hart family and several aviation historians, including Society member Keith White. Any photographs or records of Hart's personal writings or newspaper interviews would also be gratefully accepted.

Peter may be contacted on 02 9873 1773 or email [peter@finlays.com.au](mailto:peter@finlays.com.au)

### On the Internet

Defence Air Show RAAF Base Richmond  
([www.defence.gov.au/raaf/airshow/index.htm](http://www.defence.gov.au/raaf/airshow/index.htm))

This site provides all the information you need to know about the forthcoming air show to be held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2006.

Smiliner BAe146 / Avro RJ Web Site  
([www.smiliner.com](http://www.smiliner.com))

For all those with affection for the BAe146 series aircraft, this will be of great interest. The site contains plenty of current and archive news, photographs, registration and serial number index, current status and many images.

Australian Airliners  
([www.aussieairliners.net](http://www.aussieairliners.net))

This site contains some great images of many of the older airline aircraft flown by TAA, Qantas, Butler Air Transport, ANA, Ansett and many more. There are plenty of props, both reciprocating and turbine, and many images of the early jets in their initial liveries.

### An Upcoming Event

The Museum of Sydney has been given approval to mount an exhibition between April and August 2008 on Rose Bay and its flying boat base.

The Building Manager at the Museum of Sydney is seeking input from interested parties about items that could be put on show for the exhibition. If you have any photos or objects that you consider might be suitable for display, contact Matthew Holle, Building Manager, Museum of Sydney, 37 Phillip St Sydney 2000, or telephone 9251 5988.

Further details on the exhibition will be provided over the next 18 months.

### Important Changes to Calendar Events

#### October Monthly meeting

The AHSA (NSW) monthly meeting for October will be held at Albion Park Airport on **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2006**. Ken Garland has generously offered to be host, with a barbeque lunch at his hangar, as with last year. The guest speaker will discuss aircraft wrecks on the NSW south coast, along with a short field visit for those more adventurous types. A visit to

the HARS facility will also be available for the usual HARS admission cost of \$10. Full details will appear in the next issue of *Southern Skies*.

### Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture – November

The Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture will be held at the Target Theatre in the Powerhouse Museum on **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006, i.e. the second Wednesday** of November, due to the unavailability of museum facilities on our normal night. Guest Speaker will be Roy Fox, owner of two Comper Swifts, a British Klemm Eagle, a Klemm Swallow and a DH-89 Dragon Rapide.

Roy will discuss the virtues or vices of the Comper Swift, which is significant during the month of November because it coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Arthur Butler's record breaking flight from England to Australia in his Comper Swift.

### Calendar of Events

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**29 September – 2 October 2006** Narromine Aero Club Air Pageant and Expo. Narromine NSW

**30 September – 1 October 2006** Antique Aeroplane Assn of Australia Auster Rally, Wangaratta Vic

**30 September – 2 October 2006** Old Bar Festival celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of granting aerodrome status to Old Bar Airfield, NSW

**7 October 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Albion Park Aerodrome NSW

**7 October 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**21-22 October 2006** Australian Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Richmond NSW

**27-29 October 2006** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National convention. Wagga Wagga NSW

**8 November 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

**6 December 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

### Contributions and Contacts

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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 Eric Cunningham, Bill Holswich, Bruce Hall & John Scott for contributions to this newsletter.

### Westland Widgeon Mk.III

Bruce Hall also provided a chapter from Brian Creer's 1964 publication "*Last of the Breed*". An extract relating to a Westland Widgeon similar to that operated by Vic Hall is reproduced below:

Australia's oldest airworthy aeroplane is also the only known surviving Westland Widgeon two-place monoplane of the mid-Twenties. Being a Mk.III. Widgeon dates VH-UHU as one of the 1926-28 series manufactured by Westland.

The Widgeon series first saw the light of day as a small parasol monoplane designed for the 1924 Lympe trials. In its 1924 form the Widgeon was powered by a 35hp Blackburne Thrush three cylinder radial. Visibility for both occupants was assisted by the planform of the mainplane, which tapered sharply towards the roots. The fuselage was of normal girder-type construction internally braced with piano wire, and the mainplane featured full-span aileron/flap surfaces. It first flew in September 1924 and returned a maximum speed of 72 mph and a landing speed of 32 mph. However, five days after its initial test flight the prototype side-slipped into the ground and was wrecked.

The remains were painstakingly rebuilt and re-engined with a 60hp Armstrong Siddeley Genet I radial engine and re-designated Widgeon Mk.II. Late in 1926 it was decided that the Mk.II merited production in a modified form, and design changes included switching to a constant chord wing, new fuselage profile, moving the cockpits aft, and bolting on an oleo undercart. In short, a new aeroplane, still known as the Widgeon, but now Widgeon Mk.III.

The first Widgeon Mk.IIIs were powered by ADC Cirrus II engines of 80hp although later production aircraft mounted a variety of water-cooled power plants. Some reverted to the Genet radial of the Widgeon II, some fitted the new DH Gipsy I in-line, or its contemporary the ADC Cirrus "Hermes" upright four in-line. One experimental variant was powered by an ABC 80hp flat four.

Although there was one seaplane version, a number of metal fuselage versions (fabric over metal frame), and about 10 split axle variants of the basic Widgeon III, only one cabin Widgeon was constructed before Westland suspended production of the type in order to concentrate on lucrative Service orders for their Wapiti.

In all, Westland built 30 Widgeons, and the Australian aircraft VH-UHU is the last survivor of the breed. UHU was assembled at Mascot on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 1928, and made its first flight on July 13<sup>th</sup> of the same year. First owner was Milton Kent, of Sydney, who flew the Widgeon extensively throughout the eastern states during the late 1920s and 1930s. In his hands UHU attended the third Victorian Aerial Derby, in

May 1929, and later the same year Kent took second place and Fastest Time in the Amateur Pilots' race at the Queensland Air Pageant at Eagle Farm.

Sporting flying was a popular business in Australia in the early Thirties and the Widgeon was an entrant at many eastern states meetings. In December 1930, UHU won the Cirrus Trophy race for standard light planes. The race was held at Hargrave Air Park and conducted by the Aero Club of New South Wales.

VH-UHU's present owner has flown her for the past 11 years and is still enthusiastic about his ageing sportplane as he was the day he bought her at Wagga Wagga in 1953. Her all-wood fuselage is constructed of spruce and covered with 1mm ply before a final finish surface of fabric and dope. Mainplane construction uses conventional truss-style wooden ribs over twin box spars and a ply-covered leading edge.

The airframe of UHU has logged a total of 1100 hours since new and her ADC Cirrus III engine still purrs sweetly. At time of writing the aircraft has just been re-issued with a Certificate of Airworthiness until 1966, which is sufficient comment on her present condition. UHU's owner reports that the flight characteristics of his Widgeon are excellent and the machine is both comfortable and docile. In cool conditions the take-off performance is remarkable, enabling unstuck from rest in 80yds two-up and about 60yds solo. Hot weather, however, makes a crushing change to the Widgeon's performance figures. Take-off distance is increased to about 200yds and the rate of climb drops to such a degree that, above 1000 feet, it almost ceases to exist.

These figures are of course during the height of Australia's blistering summers. In more normal operating conditions the Widgeon has an initial climb rate of approximately 560 ft/min. Idiosyncrasies such as the varying rate of climb are challenges to the vintage enthusiast. He must get to know his aeroplane well to operate it safely, in spite of its foibles.

With ten years of operating the Widgeon behind him, UHU's owner still maintains that it is completely satisfactory, and he has repeatedly refused tempting offers to sell.

### Specifications

Span:	36ft 4½ inches
Length	23ft 5¼ inches
Empty weight	825 lbs
AUW	1400 lbs
Maximum speed	100 mph
Cruise	85 mph
Climb (initial)	560 ft/min
Landing speed	42 mph

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Frank Walters and AHSA (NSW) Inc.

I received the news of the death of Frank Walters, which occurred on Sunday July 30, from his daughter Linda, while I was in Queensland. Sadly, I was unable to get back to Sydney in time to attend his funeral service. Frank was a close personal friend for many years, and I dedicate this edition of *Loops and Landings* to his memory. Members will know that he was an Honorary Life Member of AHSA (NSW) Inc and will have noted his recent request, through *Southern Skies*, for assistance in his ongoing research, as well as the generosity of his donations to the society from time to time. His seminal role in the formation of the NSW Branch of AHSA is best explained by the following paragraph which appeared in the AHSA Journal of January 1965.

*In September 1964, member Frank Walters contacted other AHSA members in the Sydney area with a view to forming a local Branch of the Society. A meeting was held on 24 September 1964 at Qantas House (a venue which was arranged with the aid of member Ron Gibson of Qantas). At this meeting, attended by 18 people, it was decided to proceed with the formation of a Branch in Sydney, and Mr Gibson and Mr Walters were elected as chairman and secretary/treasurer of the organising committee. Further meetings have been held (including an arranged visit to the Hawker De Havilland grounds near Bankstown Airport to see, among other things, the Avro Lancaster WU-15). The first business meeting was held on 21 January 1965 to consider a Branch Constitution which had been drafted by a sub-committee of members. The next meeting was scheduled for 18 February 1965 for the formal election of Branch office - bearers.*

Frank continued to serve the Branch he founded, as Vice President from 1975 to '76, and as President from 1977 to '81. In 1982 he accepted Honorary Life Membership of AHSA NSW Branch. His special area of historical research was the pre WWII section of the Australian Civil Aircraft Register. He gave unselfishly of his research, in collaboration with fellow Branch members David Sparrow and Tony Arbon, leading to a special acknowledgement by Bert Cookson, the author of that most valuable publication, *The Historic Civil Aircraft Register of Australia*, published in 1996. Frank received a similar acknowledgement from Bruce Winley in his book *Aussie Moths*, published in 1997. The last letter I received from Frank, with a reference to our society, was dated June 14, 2006.

Frank Birdwood Walters was born on January 11, 1917, in the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe, which then looked east to the Cooks River, the cultivated *Chinaman's Gardens*, the open ground of a bullock paddock, and beyond to Ascot Racecourse. The bullock paddock was officially opened as an aerodrome by the Australian Aircraft and Engineering Co Ltd when Frank was just three years old. In that year his mother died and he, an only child, was sent to live with his grandparents at Peakhurst. When he was old enough to ride a push bike he was often at Mascot Aerodrome where he became a captive of the new, exciting world of aviation. In his teenage years his attachment to Mascot was strengthened through his relationship with the redoubtable Goya Henry, whom he regarded as a second father. We have a glimpse of the teenage Walters through a letter he wrote to the American magazine *Sky Birds*, which was published in the September, 1934, issue.

*Dear C.O.,*

*Reporting for duty, but I've only done 8hrs dual on DH 60s and Avro Avians. I have no intention of praising your mag. There's no need to do it, but, in passing, I will say it is absolutely "IT". How about some pen pals? Do any of the American ladies of 16 and 17 want a Kangaroo to write them, all business strictly aeronautical? Well, I guess I'll be taking off now on a one month's flight.*

*So long,*

*Frank B. Walters (17),*

*Belmore Rd, Peakhurst, Sydney, Australia.*

It was Goya Henry who taught Frank to fly, and also to drive a car. At the time, Goya himself was becoming embroiled with the Civil Aviation Branch for repeated breaches of the air navigation

regulations. He was fined, and suffered periodic suspensions of his licence which he famously, and successfully, challenged in the High Court. Meanwhile, in 1935, his father, Dr Thomas Henry, purchased Genairco VH-UOG, which Goya named *Jolly Roger*, and painted a skull and cross bones on the rudder. This he used for joy riding at Mascot while Frank used Goya's car to scout for passengers. There must have been a dossier inches thick, maintained by the civil aviation authorities on the activities of Henry and Walters. In letters to the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald in March 1938, first Goya complains about the inadequate lighting of the wind indicators for night operations at Mascot Aerodrome. This sets things up for a tongue in cheek reply from Frank the following week along the lines: *Sir, Mr Goya Henry, when questioning the Government neglect in lighting the wind indicators at Sydney's great Kingsford Smith airport, seems to forget that the cost of the electricity that would be consumed, during say twelve months, would be sufficient to pay one of those noble gentlemen who stand at the airport gates at week-ends for the purpose of keeping the public off the ultra-dangerous tarmac...*and so the letter continues, in similar provocative vein. As WWII engulfed the world, Goya was a declared bankrupt, and Frank had started his own hire car business in Hurstville. As for Goya, he was turned down for service in the RAAF because of his artificial leg, age, and, I suspect, his attitude to authority. In 1943, he joined the U.S. Army in the Small Ships Unit and sailed a work boat around the coast of New Guinea until the end of the war.

When Frank joined the RAAF, with aircrew service number 412207, he was married to Edna. His son Les was born in 1942. Wartime separation caused the failure of Frank's first marriage, and he was reluctant to talk much about his war years. We know that his early training took him through Bradfield Park, Narromine and Amberley, and that by 1942 he was flying Ansons at Cootamundra as a Sergeant Pilot with No1 Air Observers School. He was later posted to a USAAF Bombardment Squadron flying in Liberators from the Darwin area. In post war years his service reunions tended to be in the USA, where he maintained contacts. In 1994, after a lapse of fifty years, he flew again in a Liberator - CAF's B24 *Diamond Lil*. He was also a long time *Friend* of the U.S. Air Force Museum at the Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio. He corresponded frequently with the curatorial staff there, and last visited the museum just prior to the centenary of powered flight in 2003.

After the war Frank married Norma and they had two daughters, Lesley and Linda. He returned to his business, *Studebaker Hire Cars* at Hurstville, concentrating on the wedding trade. He was then attracted to the sport of motor racing and joined The NSW Light Car Club. I can remember Frank powering around the Mt Panorama circuit, during Easter at Bathurst in the early fifties, in a white *So Cal Special* built by local Bathurst identity George Reed. George used a Ford engine fitted to a lightweight body and the result wasn't pretty, but in Frank's hands it was very competitive, winning events there in 1955 and 1961. He drove Fords thereafter, but was forced to abandon the sport in 1973 after company teams entered the field. In the meantime he had joined *John Fairfax Ltd* as a finance officer, and then for the whole period of his involvement with AHSA, until his retirement in 1982, he was an accountant with the advertising agent *Hanson Rubens Mc Cann Erickson*.

During the time I knew him, Frank was a devout member of the congregation of the Croydon Park Uniting Church. He travelled to the Philippines on a number of occasions in support of church missionary work, and would invariably return with a list of exotic aircraft he had spotted at the various airports he visited.

After he hung up his racing gloves and helmet, Frank returned to flying. He qualified for his unrestricted private pilot's licence with Laurie McIver at Hoxton Park, and then went on to an aerobatic endorsement in a *Decathlon* with instructor Graham White. Once, when recovering from a 6g manoeuvre, Graham blacked out briefly. When he came to, Frank was still flying the *Decathlon* quite happily. I received a letter from Frank after he visited various museums and air shows in the USA in October 1995. He wrote: *I attended a Fighter Pilots' School located on Hooks Airport which is about 20 miles north of Houston. I flew a Beech T34 Mentor against another '34 - we two students were accompanied by instructors - safety pilots. Later on I was one of a formation of three which flew Hooks - Ellington. The one and a half hours of combat was the most satisfying since I finished racing cars in 1973. Attending a Fighter Pilots' School in his 79th year - that had to be Frank Walters...John Scott.*



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

**October 2006 No.400**

### **October Meeting – Albion Park Airport**

The October meeting will be held at Ken Garland's Aero-V hangar at **Albion Park Airport on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October**. The facility is at Hangar 4, just off Airport Road, Albion Park Airport and between the Australian Aerial Patrol hangar and the Aerial Patrol Flying School.

Ken has again generously offered to set up the barbeque, which will be ready by about 1.00pm. Society members and guests are invited arrive at about 12.30pm and to bring their own food for lunch, during which members and their guests will be able to dine amidst such wonders as Vampires, Pitts Specials, RVs, Mustang IIs, trikes and gyroplanes.

Following lunch, there will be a guest speaker, Jose (Pep) Cordoba, Aviation Archaeologist, who will talk about aircraft wrecks in the Illawarra and environs. The list of wrecks includes both military and civil aircraft ranging from Beaufighters to Bristol Freighters. Pep will give a brief history of some of the incidents and accidents as well as a detailed report on the crash of Fairey Battle R4006 which crashed near Moss Vale whilst being ferried from Laverton to Richmond by Flt. Lt Hector Ross. At the conclusion, members and guests are invited to join Pep to visit the crash site before returning home via the Hume Highway/M5.

For those not able to join in the inspection of the crash site, a visit to the HARS hangar will be available for standard charge of \$10 per person.

### **September Meeting**

Due to a late change in arrangements, Daniel Cox was unable to attend the meeting to deliver his talk on George Augustine Taylor.

We were most fortunate though, to have John Scott pick up the George Augustine Taylor theme and he gave an excellent impromptu talk on Taylor and his influence on how history has portrayed the flights of Colin Defries, Fred Custance and Harry Houdini. John provided a wealth of information on the exploits of these three airmen, and posed the question on whether Defries should be credited with the first powered flight in Australia; whilst others acknowledge that Defries actually got airborne, they

argue that it was not controlled flight.

In some circles it is believed that Custance in his Bleriot was the first powered flight in Australia, but there is doubt about the credibility of the so-called observers. It was Custance's first flight ever, yet it has been claimed that he flew for some five minutes. Experts on the Bleriot consider that because the Bleriot was so difficult to control, let alone actually fly, there is great doubt about the validity of the Custance supporter's claims.

Harry Houdini, who is credited with the first powered heavier than air flight in Australia, had flown before and had the necessary observers and witnesses of this flight. John posed the question of whether Colin Defries should be given greater credit to being the first to fly a powered heavier than air aircraft in Australia than he currently enjoys.

John's current *Loops & Landings* supplement reveals more on the subject. As the centenary of powered flight in Australia is just 3 years away, the Society will explore what celebrations should be considered to commemorate this important occasion and whether all the credit should stay with Houdini.

We were also fortunate in having David Eyre present, and equipped with a set of slides taken at the Festival of Flight which was held at Watts Bridge, Queensland in August. The well attended, although dusty aerodrome featured another feast of interesting aircraft including the newly restored Genairco VH-UOD, Percival Gull VH-CCM, Ryan St-M VH-AGW, DH-84 Dragon VH-UXG, DH-60M VH-ULP, as well as a host of Yaks, Tiger Moths, and warbirds amongst the many more in attendance.

### **An Alternative View**

A summary of Tim Smith's talk to the Society at our July meeting was included in the August issue of *Southern Skies*. Phil Dulhunty OAM, Chairman of the Seaplane Pilots Association Australia, and guest speaker at the Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture in 2004 has written to us to express a different opinion on the aircraft engine found off Pelican Point NSW. Phil's letter is re-produced below and he has also provided a copy of the article that was published in the AOPA magazine in June 1994.

“Dear Sir,

I must comment on the suggestion made at a recent meeting of the Society that the aircraft engine that Richard Swansborough and I resuscitated off Pelican Point was more likely to have been a Wirraway rather than Ito's Glen floatplane.

Wirraway A20-341 from 4 OTU at Williamtown crashed into the sea 7 miles north of the mouth of the Hunter River at 0945 on 1 April 1943. Pilot Sgt H.G. Graham and Flt Sgt W.D. George were both killed.

George Davies of New Lambton, together with local historian Cliff Callen, first discovered the remains of an aircraft close inshore to the reef at Pelican Point – some 67 km south of the Wirraway crash site.

George knew it was NOT a Wirraway because he had become very familiar with Wirraways where many had been disposed of at the north end of Stockton Beach near Morna Point. They were being used by the RAAF after the war as strafing target practice.

George and his spear fishing mates were scavenging many parts for making spear guns and became very familiar with Wirraways and all their components. George says the aircraft wreck off Pelican Point was definitely NOT a Wirraway – much smaller and nothing like it. It was for this reason they sent parts to Williamtown for identification – without success.

Ito's Glen floatplane had a TEMPU radial engine of 340HP while the Wirraway had the P&W 600HP Wasp engine, about twice the size.

During my discussions with Ito, we plotted the course of his flight from Sydney Heads and it ended not far south-east of Pelican Point. The reef where we located the remains was close inshore and it is obvious that it did not crash there. Ito suggested, however, that they had difficulty sinking it alongside the submarine and had to leave it in a semi-submerged state. It would not have gone straight to the bottom but in the southerly winds and north-bound eddy current, it would have drifted to where we found it.

As all yachtsmen know the southerly ocean current beyond the shelf creates north bound eddies inshore, so that all vessels heading north hug the coastline whilst those heading south keep well out.

I asked Ito whether he had ever noticed Norah Head lighthouse which was relatively close to the submarine's position, but he replied that he could never remember a lighthouse being there.

Investigations with the Lighthouse authorities reveal that as Norah Head was a carbide powered light, they could not readily switch it on and off; instead they used special blinds which were opened only when known shipping was in the area.

Phil Dulhunty OAM”

## Perth Event - Red Bull Air Race

For those following the Red Bull Air Race series, the Perth, Western Australia event is scheduled for November 19, 2006. The following press release explains:

Excitement, adrenaline and supreme skill - there's a new high performance motor sport sweeping the globe and now it's headed for Australia! Referred to as the 'Formula One of the sky,' the global phenomenon that is the Red Bull Air Race will be held for the first time in Australia on 19th November, 2006.

Hundreds of thousands of people from all around Australia and the globe are anticipated to attend the thrilling finale of the 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series in Perth above the picturesque South Foreshore. In celebration of the Red Bull Air Race World Series coming to Australia, Perth will host an air festival running from Friday 17th November to Sunday 19th November including spectacular aircraft displays both on the ground and in the air.

The actual Red Bull Air Race will take place at Sir James Mitchell Park above the Swan River on Sunday 19th November, commencing at 12pm (Western Australia time)

As the world's second largest spectator sport, the Red Bull Air Race is a thrilling new aviation event that was launched in 2003 and puts the world's most talented pilots up against each other in a race based on speed, precision and skill. The race features a dynamic new discipline of flying, where the objective is to navigate a challenging obstacle course in the sky in the fastest possible time.

What makes it so exciting and interesting for spectators is the proximity of the contest to the crowds. Low level flying on a relatively compact course means that people can really experience all the action up-close.

During each Red Bull Air Race event, the pilots are required to fly individually against the clock and complete tight turns through a slalom style course consisting of specially designed 60ft high pylons, known as 'air gates.' They use some of the lightest and agile planes that exist but it is the pilot's stamina and skill that determines the true champion. There is no margin for error either; only the best of the best can take part and these guys are at the top of their game.

The first race of the 2006 World Series took place on the 18 March, along the famous 'Corniche' stretch in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The second Air Race was held in Barcelona with around 1 million spectators turning up to watch the world-class pilots fly in spectacular twists and turns through the specially created race track on the beautiful waters of Bogatell Beach. The other races in the 2006 Red Bull Air Race World Series were Istanbul, Turkey (29

July), Budapest, Hungary (20 August), Longleat, UK (2 September), and still to come are San Francisco, USA (7 October) and Perth, Australia (19 November).

Keep watching the skies.

### On the Internet

Airshow Action Photo Gallery  
([www.steehouwer.com/](http://www.steehouwer.com/))

This excellent airshow site includes all the action from Royal International Air Tattoo 2006 at RAF Fairford, Biggin Hill 2006, ILA Berlin Schönefeld 2006, Czech International Air Fest 2006, Sanicole Airshow 2006 (Belgium) and many more from around the world during the past few years.

### Aircraft Stories

(<http://aircraftstories.free.fr/>)

Although this site is initially in French, there is a translation selection which provides the stories in English. There are many excellent tales about a variety of aircraft and events including the Mirage 4000, North American XB-70 Valkyrie, the Northrop YF-23 and the Winnie Mae.

### Wings Across the World

(<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/barry.clay1/id32.htm>)

This is another excellent photo site with hundreds of images from sections such as piston aircraft of yesteryear, DH Dragon/Rapide series, flying boats and seaplanes and aero modelling.

### Harry Houdini

([www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/houdini\\_bio.html](http://www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/houdini_bio.html))

From the excellent Hargrave web site, there is a comprehensive biography of Harry Houdini's aviation feats (see story above and *Loops and Landings*). The site includes text, plenty of images and you can download movies of Houdini's flying events.

The Hargrave web site also provides a wealth of information on Fred Custance, Colin Defries and George Augustine Taylor.

### Reminder

#### Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture – November

The Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture will be held at the Target Theatre in the Powerhouse Museum on **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006, i.e. the second Wednesday** of November, due to the unavailability of museum facilities on our normal night. Guest Speaker will be Roy Fox, owner of two Comper Swifts; one with a Pobjoy radial engine (VH-UVC) and the other with a Gypsy in-line engine (VH-ACG). He also owns a British Klemm Eagle (VH-UTI), a Klemm L25 (VH-UUR), and a DH-89 Dragon Rapide (VH-UTV), all of which are airworthy. Under restoration, Roy has Short Scion (VH-UTV) and Genairco (VH-

UOG).

Roy will discuss the virtues or vices of the Comper Swift, which is significant during the month of November because it coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Arthur Butler's record breaking flight from England to Australia in his Comper Swift.

### Calendar of Events

**30 September – 2 October 2006** Old Bar Festival, 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of granting "aerodrome" status to the Old Bar airfield.

**7 October 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**21-22 October 2006** Australian Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Richmond NSW

**21-22 October 2006** Luskintyre Aviation Flying Museum 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the Tiger Moth Hangar Party

**27-29 October 2006** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National convention. Wagga Wagga NSW

**4 November 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**4-5 November 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**5 November 2006** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day, Wedderburn NSW

**8 November 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

**2-3 December 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**6 December 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

**29 Dec 2006 - 1 Jan 2007** Great Eastern Fly-in, Evans Head NSW

### Anniversary

The first flight of the DH-82 Tiger Moth took place on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1931.

### Contributions and Contacts

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

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

### Thanks

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



## SEAPLANE PILOTS ASSN AUSTRALIA

6 Bay Street Greenwich NSW 2065 Phone: (02) 438 2720

By Phil Dulhunty - President

***Members may recall previous articles published in AOPA magazine concerning the amazing experiences of Ito Susumu and Fujita Nobuo, two Japanese spy plane pilots who flew Yokosuka "GLEN" floatplanes all over our Australia and New Zealand cities in 1942 at the height of the Pacific War.***

**ITO** Susumu flew a reconnaissance at 500ft over and around Sydney Harbour on the morning of Saturday, 30 May 1942 which provided all the information for the midget submarine attack (see AOPA June/July 1992, March 1993).

When he flew out over the Heads, he had difficulty locating the mother submarine from which he had been catapulted. He flew back towards the Heads and flashed his landing light. The submarine responded with a light signal and he landed in the sea alongside - unfortunately for him the sou'easter had created a fairly rough sea, and his plane flipped over. Ito and his sketch artist observer were rescued but their attempts to sink the aircraft were only partly successful. In the end it required hammer blows to put holes in the floats so they would submerge sufficiently to hide the plane from detection.

Any attempt to locate the "Glen" floatplane after fifty one years would be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. As Ito is still hale and hearty in his old age I have been corresponding with him regularly and together I think we have found it - almost.

Originally I imagined the plane was somewhere out there off the Heads, but when you plot the direction and distance given from Ito's vivid memory of the occasion you end up half way to Newcastle, at Pelican Point precisely.

To explain in greater detail I am attaching a copy of my latest letter to Ito Susumu.

*Dear Ito San,*

*I am sorry I have not written to you for such a long time, but we have been working slowly down here to try and find your old plane or what's left of it.*

*After all this time I think I can tell you your Yokosuka "Glen" seaplane has been found - and lost- and found - and lost again. But we are trying to locate it finally before getting you too excited.*

*The wreckage was found originally in the 1950s by a keen amateur spear fisherman by the name of*

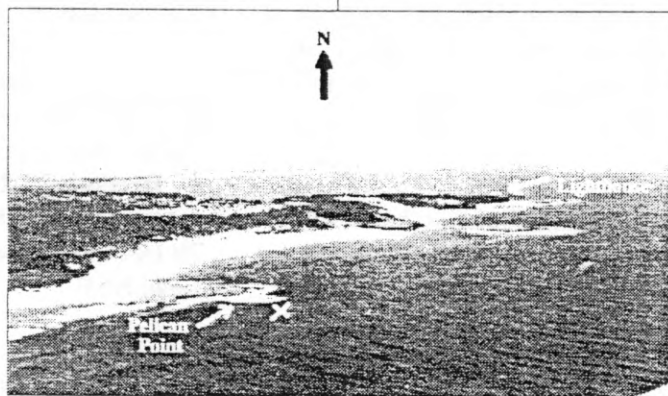
*George Davies who used to go diving for jewfish off a coastal reef near Norah Head lighthouse. In a deep gutter close in to the shore at Pelican Point, George came across what was obviously the wreckage of an aeroplane of some sort. He observed lots of tangled stainless steel cables and wires.*

*The position of the wreckage was well marked because it served as a marker for locating his favourite jewfish hole not far away. Although he saw it many times, there were occasions over the ensuing years when it disappeared altogether, only to reappear again at a later time.*

*George ascribed the disappearance to sand drifts which came in heavy seas and almost completely filled in the gutter between the rocks.*

*The aircraft wreckage was always there during the 1960 years but the last time George Davies went fishing there was in the early years of 1970. He went spearfishing in countries all over the world and became the world champion.*

*He forgot about the aeroplane wreck until he read*



Suggested wreck area.



my story about Ito Susumu in a magazine. It had always been a great mystery to him and some of his friends even sent parts off to the Air Force to try and have it identified, without success. George was convinced that the obvious solution to his mystery was the missing Yokosuka E14Y1 floatplane - thus solving our mystery as well as his.

Several significant features are in favour of George being right. For one thing the stainless steel cables. Most aircraft are fitted with special high tensile control cables and usually it's only seaplanes which employ stainless steel. George is certain the

cables were stainless steel because they were always bright and shiny and he often thought to bring something along to cut a length off to use in his spear fishing tackle. Stainless steel was quite scarce in those days and it was very necessary for undersea work.

One other thing that reinforces our confidence that this wreck must be your aircraft is the fact that although there have been rumours that other aircraft crashed in this area, an Australian "Wirraway" and an "Avro Anson" for instance, official records reveal no evidence of any other

aircraft at all ever having come down in the area.

George Davies was not the only one to have seen this aircraft. Many of his friends and acquaintances have collaborated his story such as John Gillies, Ken Jones, Roy Somersby and others ...and they all independently put its location at exactly the same place. Close by the remains of an engine were often seen. This was described as a radial engine which were common on most early war planes including the Yokosuka E14Y1. This one had nine cylinders, two of which had become corroded and were missing.

Probably the most compelling reason to believe the aircraft was yours was its location. Pelican Point, close to Norah Head is just about 35 nautical miles from Sydney's North Head on a bearing of 25° Magnetic. It's just inshore or west of the position you have given of submarine I-21's location. At this distance every extra ten degrees of bearing would place the point 5 nautical miles to seaward, so that if you flew on a magnetic bearing of 35° you would have been five miles off Pelican Point. At 40° you would have been 7.5 miles to sea.

My understanding from your previous letter was that after flying about 35 minutes or 40 nautical miles on a bearing of 40° from Sydney Heads, you could not locate your submarine so turned and flew on a reciprocal heading for an estimated five miles before ditching in the sea alongside I-21 ... According to my estimate this puts you in a position due East of Pelican Point.

During the war, from 1942 onwards the normal coastal lighthouses were extinguished, or blacked out with shielding so they could be quickly brought into service for short periods of time on demand by friendly shipping. In those days the lights were operated with acetylene and it took some time to light them and get them operating at the right temperature. Norah Head lighthouse, normally visible for 18 miles and flashing every 15 seconds, is exactly opposite where you landed, but at that time may have been extinguished or reduced to a signal station, receiving and transmitting night signals by morse code. It probably would have been shown on the normal Admiralty charts and I wonder if you were aware of its existence. It would have been an ideal landmark for locating your mother submarine. Even without the light it is quite a prominent headland standing 150 feet (45 metres) above sea level.

Norah Head is only about one mile north of Pelican Point where George Davies found the wreckage, so it is now a prominent landmark for our

search and salvage operations.

So you might well ask how did this wreckage come to be found in a gutter so close into shore?

There are several feasible explanations for this. You will remember that the aircraft was very difficult to sink and eventually you had to attack it with hammers before it would submerge. Under these circumstances it is quite likely that the wreckage did not go straight to the bottom but took some time to do so. Most objects floating or half floating in the sea end up on the beach, and in a south easterly sea as there was at that time, the waves would very quickly drive an object towards the shore. Over a greater length of time even a loose object on the floor of the ocean would be pushed toward the shore.

When it finally reached the rocks it would have broken up much more - and released any remaining air trapped in the watertight compartments of the floats. There, trapped between the rocks, it would have remained covered by sand in what we call a gutter, for an indefinite length of time.

We plan to organise a large search party using metal detectors and sand dredges over the next few weeks but it would help us now if you confirm whether you think we are on the right track.

Could you also confirm some details of your aircraft and advise if there is any positive way for us to identify it, if we should locate some wreckage. Did in fact the E14Y1 have stainless steel control cables? We have presumed the floats' "pontoons" would have been aluminium but what about the fuselage and wings - were they also aluminium or fabric covered steel or wood?

If we can positively locate the wreckage our next plan would be to invite you to come out here to witness and help us raise it to the surface.

Best regards,

Philip Dulhunty ■

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- C182 or RG 77-82
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417

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 1.

Prime Minister Howard has long been a critic of the way Australian history is taught in our high schools. It was largely due to his initiative that an Australian History Summit, attended by 23 academics and other community leaders, was held in Canberra, on August 17, to discuss plans for a national history curriculum in schools. A five-member panel was formed at the summit, to write a model curriculum for consideration by the Federal Minister for Education, Julie Bishop. It is known that the Prime Minister favours a chronological approach to the teaching of Australian history, with an emphasis on pivotal dates and events. Maybe the exciting narrative of aviation in Australia will be woven into the new curriculum. When I went to school, the story of Australian aviation was perhaps too recent to be considered history. However, by 1960 AHSA had produced its first Journal, and Stanley Brogden had published his *History of Australian Aviation*.

This year Brazil is celebrating the centenary of Santos Dumont's flights, in his 14-bis, near Paris, leading up to his flight on October 23, 1906, when he won the Ernest Archdeacon Cup, and again on November 12, 1906, when his flight was ratified, by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, as the first by a powered, heavier-than-air machine. If you think John Howard has a strong opinion about history, take note of what the Brazilian President, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva had to say about aviation history, when he launched *Santos Dumont Year* last January: "There were already attempts by others who wanted to have the primacy of having invented the airplane, trying to deny Santos Dumont's extraordinary feats. We will dedicate a whole year to commemorate Dumont so that we can show not only to Brazilians, but to the whole world, who in fact is Aviation's Father. It is a Brazilian called Santos Dumont, and the rest is just insolence." All we need now is a bit of Latin American passion injected into our own aviation historians, and then to climb on board the Santos Dumont band wagon. This would clarify the perspective of Lawrence Hargrave's work, because if Dumont is indeed the Father of Aviation as we know it today, then surely Hargrave is the Grandfather.

The statements of the Brazilian President are not as heretical as they seem at first sight. I have been reading Richard P. Hallion's, *Taking Flight*, Oxford University Press, 2003, and am encouraged by what he has written: "They, (the Wright Brothers), developed the the world's first successful airplane capable of a powered, sustained, and controlled flight, but the design they chose differed radically from the mainstream path that world aircraft design would follow after 1905. There were elements of Greek tragedy about the Wrights, for though they knew how to make - and did make - the first airplane, they did not know how to make its successors.... The Europeans and other American pioneers examined the Wright's approach, recognised the importance of controllability in roll, adopted simplified joystick or control-wheel design approaches, and most significantly, (and here is where Hargrave comes to the fore), wisely chose the inherently stable philosophy for their own indigenous aircraft, which subsequently dominated world aviation by 1911." These comments reinforce the importance of Lawrence Hargrave and the accuracy of the wording on his memorial on Bald Hill at Stanwell Park. The memorial plaque states: "LAWRENCE HARGRAVE 1850 - 1915, whose pioneering research in aeronautics with engines, monoplanes and box-kites, much of which was carried out at Stanwell Park, played a vital part in the development of the aeroplane."

During 1909 there were significant achievements in the progress of aviation in Europe. In July, Louis Bleriot crossed the English channel in his Bleriot XI. In October, Orville Wright reached an altitude of 1600 ft at Potsdam, Germany, and in November, Henri Farman was airborne for 4hr 17min 53 sec, while covering a distance of 150 miles at Camp de Chalons, France. The state of the art of world aviation, by the end of 1909, should be borne in mind when considering our own centenaries of flight, which arrive in about three years time. In this regard it will be the milestones reached, by Australians flying Australian designed and built aircraft, that should be the main focus.

Thus on December 5, 2009, the George Augustine Taylor Memorial at Narrabeen will be a gathering place to celebrate his gliding flights. The memorial inscription reads in part: "This memorial commemorates the first flight in Australia in a heavier-than-air flying machine by George Augustine Taylor at Narrabeen Heads on 5th December 1909." The next site at which to gather will be the John Duigan Memorial Pylon at Mia Mia, Victoria, on October 7, 2010, to celebrate his powered flights. Anniversaries for John Duigan have tended to be held on October 7, because it was on this date in 1910 that he said he carried out his first successful controlled flight, although previous flights had been conducted without complete control. However, the plaque on the bluestone pylon commemorating Duigan's flights reads: "This pylon commemorates the first flight of an aeroplane built and flown by an Australian about 1 mile east of this spot on 16th July 1910. John Robertson Duigan first flew the aeroplane which he and his brother Reginald built on their father's property, Spring Plains."

The awkward dates in the chronology of events, telling the story of the first faltering steps in Australia to become airborne in powered aircraft, fall between December 5, 1909, and July 16, 1910. These dates are: December 9, 1909, when Colin Defries flew a Wright Model A at Victoria Park racecourse, Sydney; March 17, 1910, when Fred Custance flew a Bleriot XI at Bolivar near Adelaide and March 18, 1910, when Harry Houdini flew a Voisin biplane at Diggers Rest near Melbourne. These dates are awkward because, nearly one hundred years after the events there is still argument about which flight should be regarded as the first by a powered aeroplane in Australia. All three aircraft involved were imported, proven types capable of flights far in excess of those actually performed by each of the pilots involved. In particular the flights of Colin Defries, although chronologically the first by over three months, have been almost written out of our aviation history by claims that he either did not leave the ground at all, or that his flights were no more than uncontrolled hops. Much of the contemporary criticism of Defries emanated from George Augustine Taylor, who was an influential, skilled, self-publicist and who, at the time, harboured his own ambitions to be the first to fly a powered aeroplane. Consequently the debate, even today, about who was the first, is largely between the supporters of Houdini and Custance. The latter had never flown an aircraft before his attempt on March 17, 1910. By March, 1910, Taylor had abandoned his own plans to construct a powered aeroplane, and was supporting Houdini with the Voisin. There is a suggestion that Taylor's eye to history resulted in the date, 16 March 1910, being inscribed on the Aerial League of Australia Trophy, which was awarded to Houdini for, *The First Aerial Flight in Australia*. And so the last became the first.

We must now come to the plaque unveiled in recent years by Landcom who promised, in the pre development heritage assessment of the Victoria Park Residential Estate, to recognise the use of the racecourse by early aviators. The plaque is titled, *Daring Acts 1908 - 1909*, because it shares information about motor racing said to have been staged at the racecourse in its early years. The text concerns only one aviator, Colin Defries, and it reads: "In 1909 a huge crowd was drawn to the Victoria Park racecourse on two occasions to witness one of the earliest aeroplane flights in Australia. Colin Defries made two attempts to fly his planes with the first a Wright flier biplane, failing when he crashed after hitting several sleepers buried in the ground. His second attempt, in a Bleriot monoplane was more successful as he made a hop across the racecourse, lasting 5.5 seconds over a distance of 115 yards at an average height of 15 ft. Unfortunately he crashed again when his favourite hat blew off and he tried to grab it. Defries Avenue is a testament to this historic event." On the plaque there is a faithful engraving of a Bleriot XI. There is also a photo-engraving of a Bleriot with a pilot looking suspiciously like Maurice Guillaux taken during his flying exhibition at Victoria Park racecourse in May, 1914. Next month I will explain the errors and omissions associated with this plaque and why I believe that it should be replaced by a new plaque, which records our aviation history more accurately.

In the meantime Colin Defries came into sharp focus earlier this year when his granddaughter, Zaniah, arrived in Australia from England and made contact with our secretary Warwick Bigsworth. Zaniah came with a request from her father, David, to check local memorials and historic records relating to the flights of Colin Defries in Australia almost a century ago. This provides an opportunity to look at the role of Defries objectively, despite the danger of new aviation history wars.....**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

November 2006 No.401

### **November Meeting— Second Wednesday of the Month – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture**

The November meeting will be held on **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008** at the Target Theatre, Powerhouse Museum at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the Target Theatre is just past the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member.

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

This is the Society's 24<sup>th</sup> annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture, and we are privileged to have as our Guest Speaker, Mr Roy Fox, whose topic will be

#### *“The Joys and Difficulties of Operating a 1930s aircraft in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”*

Roy Fox has been an enthusiastic collector of vintage aircraft for many years and has a special affection for those fitted with a Pobjoy engine. He has acquired a number of historically important aircraft, including two Comper Swifts, one with a Gypsy engine and the other with a Pobjoy, both of which are under restoration. The collection also includes a Klemm L25, a Klemm Eagle, a Tiger Moth and a Dragon Rapide, all in flying condition, whilst under restoration are a Short Scion and a Genairco.

As part of his talk, Mr Fox will refer to the significance of the epic flight from England to Australia made by Arthur Butler in a Comper Swift 75 years ago. Accompanying Roy will be Mr Stan Pobjoy (a distant relative of the founders of the original company), who is an aircraft engine restorer.

Roy Fox grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where his father worked at the Short Bros. factory. From a young age Roy was interested in aircraft models, from the basic Airfix plastic variety through to balsa and later radio controlled models. As a keen rower, he learnt to work with spruce and fabric, thus sowing the seeds for a life-long interest in 1930s aircraft – that were made of wood and fabric.

He immigrated to Australia where he learnt to fly, and he continued his interest in vintage aircraft. He acquired a Short Scion from the disposal of

Chewing Gum Field assets, and as a result of seeking a Pobjoy engine he acquired the Klemm L.25 VH-UUR from Alex Oliver.

Please join us for the highlight of the year's meetings.

### **October Meeting**

The October meeting was held at Ken Garland's Aero-V hangar at Albion Park Airport. Ken again generously set up the barbeque, and members and guests were able to peruse a variety of light aircraft in the hangar, as well as the manufacturing facilities for the Sadler Vampire.

Guest speaker was Jose (Pep) Cordoba, an aviation archaeologist, who spoke about aircraft wrecks in the Illawarra and environs. Pep described the locations of, and circumstances surrounding a number of aircraft accidents in the area. Of particular interest was his research on the crews involved in the accidents and his efforts in finding relatives of those who died in such accidents. Pep's main interest has been in regard to military aircraft, although he also spoke about Lionel Van Praag's crash of the Bristol 170 Freighter VH-AAH in December 1961. Pep gave a more detailed report on the accident involving Fairey Battle R4006 which crashed near Moss Vale whilst being ferried from Laverton to Richmond by Flt. Lt Hector Ross. Following Pep's talk, several members accompanied him to the crash site of that aircraft.

A group also visited the very busy hangar of HARS, where a number of volunteers were preparing the Catalina and a Neptune for the RAAF Richmond Air Show which was held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of October.

The outing to Albion Park was a most enjoyable day, primarily due to the time and effort afforded by Ken Garland. Many thanks Ken for your generous hospitality and support.

### **An Alternative View – The Saga Continues**

Further to Phil Dulhunty's most interesting letter concerning the aircraft engine found off Pelican Point NSW, he has provided additional evidence from George Davies BEM, Secretary of the Newcastle Neptunes Underwater Club Inc about this particular

wreckage. An extract of George's letter to Phil appears below:

"..... Back in those early forties my brother, Trevor, and I were keenly interested in skin-diving and with no commercially available equipment we had no alternative than to manufacture our own from recycled materials. During these years we invented the "Aquamatic Speargun" after some years of experimenting with all forms of propulsion from rubber bands, springs, carbon dioxide and eventually compressed air. The "Aquamatic" was indeed the first self contained pneumatic speargun in the world.

The manufacture of these guns posed numerous problems and many of these were solved when we located the graveyard of war weary Wirraway aircraft that had been assembled on Morna Point Beach and used as targets for strafing exercise by the RAAF stationed at Williamtown. Initially we made up a complete set of tools for dismantling the Wirraways and spent many long weekends working on the planes. The propellers and cowlings were rendered into duralumin ingots for moulding speargun bodies while the hydraulic landing gear became major components of presses we manufactured to produce numerous rubber and bakelite parts for the weapons and later some of Australia's first prototype aqualungs based on the Cousteau-Gagnan principles invented earlier in the forties that we manufactured in 1950.

We were obviously very familiar with the Wirraway aircraft in those early years and would have identified the plane we first discovered at Pelican Point during the Christmas holiday period in 1949-50 when, although damaged, it was clearly visible. Certainly it was much smaller than the Wirraway aircraft we had spent so much time working on at Morna Point prior to the discovery. Enquiries at the time failed to reveal any aircraft at all missing.

We had always presumed it to be a small private plane but the mystery remained with us over the years until all the details of Ito Susumu's missing Glen plane came to light and with all the documented evidence in Ito's diary detailing the circumstances relating to the drama of it flipping over in the rough seas, followed by the rescue and futile attempts to sink the plane in the early light of dawn adjacent to Norah Head lighthouse together with prevailing currents would have, with little doubt, placed it in the vicinity of Pelican Point. The Glen plane had a duralumin body and floats that were not part of the Wirraway.

Many parts from Wirraways were utilised in our air compressor that serviced the "lung" divers of the Hunter, until Trevor's untimely death on New Years Eve in 1960.

Yours sincerely, George Davies BEM"

## On the Internet

VH-JET#1 and her Sisters  
([www.707.adastron.com/qfm/qfm/htm](http://www.707.adastron.com/qfm/qfm/htm))

Although mentioned previously, this site now incorporates the latest news on the acquisition, restoration and delivery of B707-138B VH-XBA, the former Qantas VH-EBA. The aircraft is expected to arrive in Sydney in November before flying via Brisbane to its new home at the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, Longreach.

FAA Aircraft History  
([www.aerovintage.com/faa.htm](http://www.aerovintage.com/faa.htm))

This site is part of the Aero Vintage Books site, and traces the history of all aircraft operated by the FAA and its predecessor organizations. All told, these government agencies have owned and/or operated approximately 1,050 aircraft of about 150 types, ranging from DH-4s of 1927 through to Lear 60s of today. Some of the more unusual types: Boeing F4Bs, North American B-25 Mitchells, Martin B-57s, Lockheed F-80s, Boeing KC-135s and a Convair 880.

A Pictorial History of WWI Aviation  
([www.wwiaviation.com](http://www.wwiaviation.com))

This comprehensive site includes a large amount of information and images about many facets of World War I aviation. The aircraft, the pilots and the battles are all recorded in detail. No doubt you'll find more detail in many text books on the subject, but this site is well worth perusing.

## Calendar of Events

**27-29 October 2006** Wings over Wagga, SAAA National convention. Wagga Wagga NSW

**4 November 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

**4-5 November 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**5 November 2006** NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day, Wedderburn NSW

**2-3 December 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**6 December 2006** AHSA (NSW) Inc monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

## Contributions and Contacts

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

## Thanks

Thanks to Phil Dulhunty and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 2.

I hope that members of the panel, formed to write a model national history curriculum for Australian schools, read Prime Minister Howard's speech made at the Temora Aviation Museum on September 16. He was officiating at a ceremony to mark the museum's first five year's achievements and to open the new 05/23 runway. Here is just part of his speech: "We are, all of us, very proud of the aviation history of this country. We remember aviation's critical role in war, but we also remember how important civil aviation, and anything to do with aviation, has been to the history, the navigation, and the opening up of the vast expanses of Australia. There is something very evocative about a gathering in a regional country town on a beautiful Saturday morning in which we principally pay tribute to the heritage of the airmen of Australia."

I have in my collection a souvenir booklet produced by J & N Tait in 1909 entitled, *The History of Aviation*. The booklet was intended for sale during the Australian tour by Colin Defries and the imported Wright and Bleriot aeroplanes. The history content was written by the journalist, and author, Ambrose Pratt. In relation to John Howard's comments above, about aviation opening up vast expanses of Australia, it is interesting to compare Ambrose Pratt's prophecies back in 1909. Pratt wrote: "An important national goal looms before the eager eyes of our mechanical inventors should they succeed in perfecting an aeroplane capable of speedy, safe and constant flights across long distances - the Dead Heart of Australia will be quickened on instant into vigorous and active life. Isolated loneliness - that terrible and almost insurmountable obstacle in the settlement and development of Australia's vast and empty inland spaces - will be instantaneously destroyed." The booklet not only contains Pratt's prescient history of aviation but also has *An Interview With Mr Colin Defries*, and *Descriptions of the Wilbur Wright and Bleriot Aeroplanes*. There is no mention of the man who was behind the importation of these two aeroplanes, and whose plan to introduce the most recent innovations in aviation to Australians ended in minor farce and tragedy.

In 1909 Lawrence Adamson was in his fiftieth year. He was wealthy, unmarried and had been Headmaster of Wesley College in Melbourne since 1902. He was born on the Isle of Man, and later educated at Rugby School and at Oxford. As a young barrister of the Inner Temple, London, he decided, in 1885, to migrate to Australia for health reasons, settling in Sydney at first, and then in Melbourne. His path from the Law took him via private coaching to teaching English and History, and finally to the position of Headmaster at Wesley, where he remained until his death in 1932. He had many interests, but was fascinated by motor cars and, from about the time of Wilbur Wright's spectacular flights at Le Mans in August, 1908, by aeroplanes. There is no doubt that his motives in importing aeroplanes to Australia were altruistic. However, he appears to have placed the organisation of the import and demonstration of his aeroplanes in the hands of J & N Tait, which company was founded in 1902 for the purpose of concert promotion. Because he was the Head of a prestigious private school, and perhaps also possessing a lawyer's intuition of the risks associated with the public demonstration of aeroplanes, Adamson decided to keep at arm's length from the show business activities of the promoters.

Preparations for the first public demonstration of powered flight in Australia commenced early in 1909. On April 8, *The Age* reported that J & N Tait had secured the Australasian rights for Wright aeroplanes, and that Colin Defries had been engaged to give flying exhibitions in Australian capital cities. I will defer my comments about the plaque describing events at Victoria Park Racecourse during December, 1909, until next month. In the meantime I have been getting to know Colin Defries.

Colin Defries was born in London, in 1884, of English parents although his surname derives from Dutch ancestry. There is evidence of some family wealth, enabling him to engage in Grand Prix motor racing in Europe in his early twenties. A contemporary of Defries, J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, also

born in 1884, was a fellow competitor on the Grand Prix circuit. During the race for the Kaiser Cup in 1907, in which Moore-Brabazon was also a competitor, Defries' car overturned, killing his mechanic. Both Moore-Brabazon and Defries turned to aviation the following year. While Moore-Brabazon became the first Englishman to fly, in a Voisin biplane in France in late 1908, it seems that Defries had only limited flying training, even by the time of his engagement with J & N Tait in early 1909.

Colin Defries arrived in Australia on board RMS *Macedonia* in June, 1909, for discussions concerning the flying exhibitions to be held later in the year, and to inspect possible demonstration sites. In the local press he was described as: "A quiet moving man of powerful build, not inactive, but sturdy and lithe....An athletic young man with the stamp of determination on his face." He returned to Europe to make final arrangements for shipment of a French-built, Wright Model 'A' to Australia. It is probable that, at this time also, Defries was instructed to purchase a Bleriot XI aeroplane. Louis Bleriot had caused a sensation by his cross-Channel flight on July 25, 1909. Defries returned to Australia on board RMS *Orontes* in October, followed by the Wright aeroplane, which arrived in Sydney in November on board RMS *Otranto*. The Bleriot XI came later to Melbourne, in January 1910.

In early 1910, Defries parted company with J & N Tait and returned to England. He had devoted a whole year to the Australian adventure, which had promised so much, but in the end had delivered so little. In the meantime his contemporary, Moore-Brabazon, had embarked on a distinguished career in aviation, culminating in his being created a peer in 1942, taking the title Lord Brabazon of Tara. In 1914 Moore-Brabazon and Defries became officers in the Royal Flying Corps, because of their pre-war association with aviation. Both men rose to the rank of Lieut. Colonel by the end of the war, with Defries having been made a Station Commander.

Following WWI, Colin Defries studied for a degree in engineering and successfully launched his own business, manufacturing small parts for aircraft and Rolls-Royce. He was a great friend of the pianist, Benno Moiseiwitsch, who for two years was a guest in his parent's London house. Defries himself was a passionate, amateur pianist. He was also married four times. The marriage that led him back to Australia was to the internationally acclaimed pianist, Moura Lympany. They were secretly married in 1944, when she was a famous, glamorous, twenty eight year old virtuoso, and he was, as Moura described him, "a charming man", although more than twice her age. In their home, at Oxshott in Surrey, there were two grand pianos. Moura would practice four hours a day, often accompanied by Colin on the second piano, interpreting the relevant orchestration. On July 2, 1948, during Moura Lympany's concert tour of Australia, Colin Defries sat in the Sydney Town Hall listening to his wife play Beethoven's third piano concerto, with Bernard Heinze conducting. Did Colin Defries reflect on the time when he, himself, performed for the public in the Sydney Town Hall, almost forty years earlier, by supervising the assembly of *The Wilbur Wright Aeroplane* there?

On September 6, 1948, the Sydney Morning Herald carried the grim front page news that the wreck of the missing ANA airliner *Lutana*, had been found near Nundle, NSW, and all 13 people on board had been killed. It was possible to squeeze just a few lines onto the front page to inform readers that, on the previous day, a take-off accident had occurred, involving a Qantas flying boat at Sourabaya, resulting in the total loss of the aircraft, but that all 14 passengers and seven crew members had escaped injury. The report gave a list of passengers, who boarded at Rose Bay, which included Colonel C. Defries and Mrs M. Defries. Thus Qantas public relations had glossed over a very serious accident, which could have taken the life of the world famous pianist, Moura Lympany. In a letter to ABC management, a very indignant Colin Defries complained that all on board were lucky to be alive. He concluded: "You can imagine all our annoyance to read such a short report, saying there had been a slight mishap and the plane would proceed later to Singapore. As I said, we were all darn lucky to get out alive, and I'll bet Moura is about the only concert artist who spent about 20 minutes on the extremity of the wing of a sinking flying boat." In 1950, Colin and Moura attended a function at the Royal Aero Club at which she was made an honorary member, because of the many miles she had flown during her concert tours. The President of the club at the time was Lord Brabazon of Tara. Colin and Moura were divorced shortly afterwards. In 1951 Colin Defries married Elizabeth, and their son David was born in 1952. Zaniah, who was in Australia recently, is David's daughter..... **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

**December 2006 No.402**

### **December Meeting – Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown**

The December meeting will be held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2008 at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown at 7.45pm. Enter via Starkie Drive, near the Milperra Road end of Bankstown Airport. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

There will be two themes for the meeting:

#### **2009 - The centenary of powered flight in Australia, and**

#### **The Boeing B707 in Australia.**

Readers will have read with interest John Scott's past two *Loops and Landings* supplements along with the third part of the story which is attached to this newsletter. John has raised a number of issues in regard to who should be credited with the first powered flight in Australia. How should powered flight be defined? Was it Defries, or Custance or Houdini who should be acknowledged as the first? What role did George Augustine Taylor play? John will further discuss the following questions at the meeting:

Should Colin Defries be accorded greater recognition for his powered flight at Victoria Park in inner Sydney?

How should AHSA commemorate or contribute to other celebrations in regard to the centenary of powered flight in Australia in 2009?

By the time you read this newsletter Qantas's first Boeing B707-138B is expected to have returned to Australia to be exhibited at the Qantas Founders Outback Museum at Longreach. The aircraft, originally registered VH-EBA, and now VH-XBA, was expected to depart Southend Airport, England by the end of November and fly via Halifax, Canada to Seattle, Washington, USA where a commemorative roll-out with John Travolta's ex-Qantas B707-138B would be held. VH-XBA was then planned to fly via Honolulu and Nadi to Sydney, before proceeding to Brisbane and eventually Longreach.

In commemoration of this significant acquisition by the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, members are invited to bring in memorabilia, photographs or some of their favourite slides of Boeing B707s in service or operating in Australia.

At the meeting, Bryan Monkton's book, *The Boats I Flew* will also be for sale at the special, once only price of \$27.00. (see item below) Those unable to attend the meeting can otherwise purchase the book through the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown at the normal rrp of \$39.95. Our thanks to the Museum Curator, Trevor Dean, (who was primarily responsible for having this book published), for providing this book to AHSA members at this excellent discount price.

### **November Meeting**

The Society's 24<sup>th</sup> annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture was presented at the November meeting by Mr Roy Fox, whose topic was: "*The Joys and Difficulties of Operating a 1930s aircraft in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*"

Almost 50 members and visitors attended the lecture as well as having the opportunity to see and hear a Pobjoy engine, which Roy ran in the car park after the meeting.

Roy told of his early life as a growing lad in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he observed the comings and goings at the Short Bros. factory, and was an avid model aircraft builder. After migrating to Australia, his passion for actually owning a Short Bros. product came to fruition when he acquired a Short Scion from the Chewing Gum Field collection of vintage aircraft. His subsequent search for information and parts for the aircraft's Pobjoy engine led him to Berwick, Victoria, and eventual contact with Alex Oliver, owner of the Klemm L.25 VH-UUR, which Roy later acquired.

Roy went on to discuss the development of the Pobjoy series of engines: the Pobjoy P, Pobjoy R, the Cataract and the Niagara. Roy noted that today, we still cannot construct a radial engine with the same power to weight ratio as the Pobjoy some 75 years after it was designed! Roy also spoke about his Comper Swifts and a brief history of the design and engines of the aircraft. Swifts were powered by

either the Pobjoy radial or Gypsy in-line engine and made some extraordinary flights; Arthur Butler's feat of flying a Pobjoy powered model from England to Australia in 1931, as well as Alex Henshaw's flight from England to South Africa, flights over the Andes and a flight from Spain to the Philippines, thus demonstrating the reliability of the aircraft.

He expressed some concern at the loss of skills required to maintain the wooden airframes of vintage aircraft, yet noted the paradox that these skills are resurfacing in the home built or light sport aircraft branch of aviation. The use of composites is the basis of the burgeoning experimental or light sport aircraft industry. He compared the regulatory requirements imposed on many vintage aircraft, which, because of their weight, incur extraordinary costs and scrutiny and compared this to the less demanding requirements for very sophisticated, high powered light aircraft that do not attract similar attention from CASA, even though these might be flown by relatively inexperienced pilots.

One current issue revealed is that the regulatory authority is keen to drill through the box spar to check on the state of the aircraft glue. Such action would of course destroy the integrity of the wing and render the aircraft permanently unairworthy. Roy described new technologies for inspecting such parts without damaging the wing.

A number of video clips were also shown, including a Stearman taking off and shortly thereafter losing power along with the subsequent recovery, as well as a heavy landing in his DH-89A Dragon Rapide which demonstrated the robustness of that aircraft.

Roy provided a number of drawings and documents relating to his aircraft for members and guests to peruse. Following a lively question time, Roy was presented with framed pictures of the Comper Swift and the Short Scion, generously donated by David Marshall for the occasion.

Prior to Roy's lecture, Nancy Bird was invited to talk briefly about Arthur Butler. Of particular importance was Nancy's revelation that the township of Cootamundra had no memorials, streets or buildings named after Arthur Butler. The good news is, however, that with perseverance from members of AWPA and some of the local community, it is expected that the Cootamundra Airport will be re-named in honour of Arthur Butler.

Following Roy's talk, Arthur Butler's grandson, Mark Pitts spoke about his visit to the aviation museum at Hooton Park airfield in Cheshire, UK which is in search of a Comper Swift. Nick, as grandson of Arthur Butler was warmly received, and he was able to identify where examples were located in the UK. Nick's sisters and mother were also very welcome guests at the meeting.

## Book Release

### **"The Boats I Flew" by Bryan Monkton**

Bryan Monkton served his country well during WWII, flying first as a Flight Instructor, then a Fighter Pilot (Hurricanes) and finally, flying dangerous mine laying missions in Catalinas (RAAF 43 "Black Cat" Squadron) over various parts of the Pacific. After the war, Bryan founded Trans Oceanic Airways with five war surplus Sunderland Flying Boats and started commercial flights to Lord Howe Island, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and New Caledonia operating from Rose Bay.

Battling fierce and underhanded competition from a rival airline, raging storms, engine failures mid-ocean due to contaminated fuel, navigation over thousands of miles using little more than a sextant, as well as destructive petty jealousy, Bryan was forced to become a fighter in every sense of the word. TOA was sold to Ansett Flying Boat Services and Bryan then flew to the USA to found South Pacific Air Lines, using Short Solent aircraft, despite fierce opposition from Pan American Airways.

Those fans of Indiana Jones may not be aware that one of Bryan's aircraft, a Short Solent was featured in the film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, with Harrison Ford as a passenger! When the Solents were eventually sold to the infamous Howard Hughes, Bryan looked for new adventures as a freelance Airline Captain for a number of European Airlines. He flew DC-4s during the Congo conflict and had an aircraft shot up and bombed from under him, resulting in a back full of shrapnel.

Bryan flew all types of flying boats in the US Virgin Islands for Antilles Air Boats, owned by US aviator Charles Blair and his wife, Hollywood actress Maureen O'Hara. When Charles Blair was killed in a flying boat accident, Bryan delivered new aircraft from the USA to Australia, flying a wide variety of single and twin engine aircraft. He also flew the first epic Flying Boat journey from the US Virgin Islands to London, using only a sextant and radio for navigation.

He will remain the only pilot ever to launch, takeoff, land and moor a huge Sunderland flying boat entirely on his own - an almost impossible task. Bryan Monkton sadly passed away on 29 May 2003 and is at rest beside his devoted wife Monica at Moss Vale. His book, *"The Boats I Flew"*, details Bryan Monkton's amazing adventures on sea, land and air in a way that will make it difficult to put aside.

Before his untimely passing from a brain tumour Bryan agreed to allow all proceeds from the sale of his wonderful book to be in favour of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, a non-profit, totally volunteer operated organisation based at Bankstown Airport.

## **Australian Defence Force Air Show – Richmond**

The following aircraft were recorded at the ADF Air Show, which was held in overcast weather at Richmond over the weekend of 22 and 23 October 2006.

### **RAAF**

B-707: A20-623, -629 plus -627 derelict.  
B-737 BBJ: A36-002  
Beech 350: A32-339  
C-130E: A97-167, -168, -190 all non operational training airframes.  
C-130H: A97-002, -003, -008, -009 on the apron plus -004, -007, -012 in maintenance hangar.  
C-130J: A97-440, -442, -450, -467.  
F-111: A8-129, -271, -274, plus the crew capsule of -141.  
Hawk:  
PC-9: A27-03, -20, -26.  
A23-020 (FAC machine), A23-039, -051, -058, -059, -064 (all Roulettes).  
F-18A: A21-2, -3, -7, -31, -46, -51,  
F-18B: A21-105, -109  
AP-3C: A9-664 (flying) A9-658 (static).  
Caribou: A4-140, -152, (operational) plus -164, -179 (non operational training airframes), plus -264 fuselage section in a compound near the Richmond Gliding Club hangar.

### **ARMY**

Blackhawk: A25-101, -102, 107, -108, -203.  
Kiowa: A17-040.  
Iroquois: A2-773.

### **RAN**

Seahawk: N24-004 '73', -008 '77'.  
Squirrel: N22-020, -021, -022.

### **USAF**

C-17: 05-5152 'HH'.

### **Singapore Army**

Super Puma (AS-332M1) 273, 275.

### **Historic ex military:**

Neptune: VH-IOY depicted as A89-273  
C-47: VH-EAF depicted as A65-94.  
Meteor: VH-MBX depicted as "A77-851" (actually it is ex-RAF VZ467).  
Canberra: VH-ZSQ depicted as "A84-234" (actually ex RAF WJ680).  
Vampire: VH-VAM (depicted as A79-617).  
Spitfire: VH-HET (not genuine past markings)

Mustang: VH-SVU (not genuine past markings)

Tiger Moth: VH-AWA depicted as A17-692. (colour scheme not genuine reproduction).

### **Other General Aviation aircraft:**

VH-SYS DHC-2 Beaver; VH-YCH, -YCY CT-4Bs; VH-LHN S-76 'CHC' 'RAAF Rescue'; VH-PIP Edge 540; VH-IHC, -SHK, -SWI all Bell 206s; VH-BUK AS-350B; VH-MAW Cessna 152; VH-JKC RV-6; T2-2419 Edge trike; VH-GQB, -IKP, -KYN gliders; G-211 Gyroplane; VH-HTK, -JUZ PA-28s; VH-LCX PA-38; VH-RDJ Cessna A150K; VH-MEP PA-34. VH-MPL Callair plus -CYC wreck VH-...GD glider.

### **Calendar of Events**

**2 December 2006** Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre, NSW

**2-3 December 2006** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**7 February 2007** AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

**17-18 February 2007** Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

**25 February 2007** Goolwa Classic Air Show, Goolwa SA

**20-25 March 2007** Australian International Air Show, Avalon Vic

### **Contributions and Contacts**

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

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

### **Thanks**

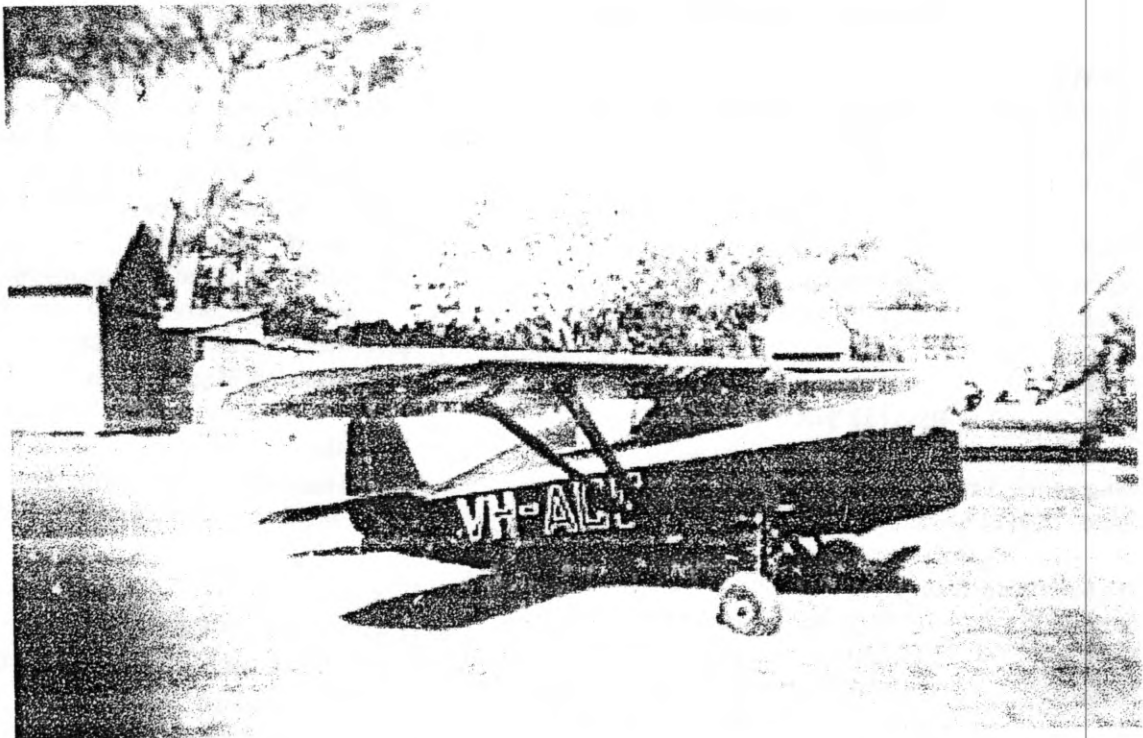
Thanks to Trevor Dean, Phil Dulhunty and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

### **Seasons Greetings**

The Committee wishes all members and other readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.



VH-XBA (at one time VH-EBA) former Qantas B707-138B prior to its departure from Southend bound eventually for the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, Longreach Qld.



VH-ACG Comper CLA7 Swift at Camden in the 1930s. This aircraft is now in Roy Fox's collection.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 3.

From Thursday November 18, to Saturday November 20, 1909, the first powered aeroplane to be imported into Australia was on show at the Sydney Town Hall. It was a Wright Model A named *The Stella*, and Sydneysiders paid to watch as a team of mechanics assembled it under the personal supervision of Colin Defries. Patrons were further entertained by moving pictures, taken at the International Aviation Tournament at Rheims, and at Juvisy aerodrome. On the last evening of the exhibition, flights of model aeroplanes were staged inside the Town Hall.

*The Stella* was then moved to Victoria Park Racecourse, where it was housed in a large tent. There it was modified by the attachment of a wheeled undercarriage and subjected to thorough airframe inspections and engine checks. The promoters, J & N Tait, advertised that a *Flying Fortnight* would be conducted at the racecourse from Saturday December 4, to Saturday December 18. The ad also declared that Defries had already made a number of successful flights in *The Stella* at Juvisy, prior to its shipment to Australia. It carried the assurance that no flight would be attempted before the opening day of the *Flying Fortnight* to ensure that patrons would have the opportunity of witnessing the first flight in the southern hemisphere of a heavier-than-air machine. Flying was scheduled to start at 3pm. Expectations were high as the crowd built up at the racecourse on December 4, although the ad had also cautioned that, "the aviator gives no absolute assurance of a flight on any particular day."

At 3pm there was a stiff southerly wind sweeping across the racecourse. By then Colin Defries had decided that any attempt at flight would be foolhardy. At 3:30pm the waiting crowd was becoming restive. The Daily Telegraph described what happened next. "A tow line was attached to Wilbur Wright's wonder, and the other end being attached to a motor car she was towed up and down in front of the lawn. The marvel of the air thus appeared in a rather undignified role, but the spectators were pleased to see the flying machine move in any manner until the performance became monotonous." By 4pm the wind had grown stronger than ever. It was then decided to start *The Stella's* engine, and to carry out a few fast taxi runs around the course. Finally she collided with some sleepers lying on the track, resulting in damage to the undercarriage, and the termination of the day's performance.

On Monday December 6, the Sydney Morning Herald reported the events of the preceding Saturday under the heading: "Aerial Flight in Sydney-Wilbur Wright Machine on Trial- No Flights Made- Machine Slightly Damaged." On the same day the Daily Telegraph reported: "Aeroplane Trials-Flight Not Achieved." The attendance at the racecourse was reported by the Herald as in the thousands, and by the Telegraph as a few hundred persons. Because Defries declined any serious attempt at flight on the opening day, the general public, and the Daily Telegraph reporter, thereafter appears to have lost interest in *The Stella*, and Colin Defries. There were many disenchanted witnesses who would testify to their dying day that *The Stella* never left the ground.

Following repairs to *The Stella*, and a further wait for calm conditions, Colin Defries made his successful, sustained and controlled flight on Thursday, December 9, witnessed by a small number of spectators. The Herald reporter described the flight: "When travelling at about 35 miles an hour, and handling the machine alone, Mr Defries suddenly raised his elevating planes, and at once rose into the air. As he left the ground there was an involuntary cry from about 150 spectators, 'He's up!', and he was up. As the machine rushed forward it kept in the air, and rose quickly from 3ft to fully 15ft or 20ft, and then tapered down again to earth, after covering about 115 yards. According to the time taken over the measured distance, the aeronaut covered 100 yards in 5 seconds, which will give some idea of his rate of travelling."

As a result of this successful flight, on the following day J & N Tait renewed their efforts to revive the *Flying Fortnight* - confidently predicting that the 'First Public Flight' of *The Stella* would take place on Saturday December 11, between 4pm and 6pm. In small print, their ad carried the

qualification: "weather and other circumstances permitting." On Saturday morning, the ad carried additional information: " Important- should no flight take place through adverse weather conditions, the public will receive a coupon admitting to subsequent advertised flight." On Saturday afternoon, a strong north easterly caused Colin Defries to again cancel any attempt at flight. To placate those stalwart spectators in attendance, he again gave a demonstration of taxiing under power during which a wire leading to the rudder got entangled in the left propeller, causing damage to the propeller and the rudder itself. On the following Monday, there was a short negative report in the Herald about the Aerial Trials, nothing in the Telegraph, and a further group of disillusioned spectators had been created. Quite simply, the two main public days of the *Flying Fortnight* had been a public relations disaster, notwithstanding the fact that Defries had conducted the first successful flight, of a powered aeroplane, in the southern hemisphere, on December 9.

Strong winds in Sydney were a feature of the second week of the *Flying Fortnight*. Saturday, December 18, was the last day possible for flying at Victoria Park Racecourse before *The Stella* was due to leave Sydney to fulfil its Melbourne programme. Colin Defries was determined to make one last attempt at flight before its departure. To maximise the possibility of calm conditions, he went to the racecourse early on the Saturday morning, and was in position on *The Stella* at 4:30am, in the presence of about 50 devoted enthusiasts, including the Herald reporter. The reporter described the flight as follows: "At the first attempt the aeroplane got away. Careering at a great rate for about 200 yards, the machine must have been travelling at about 35 miles an hour when Mr Defries tilted the elevator. Instantly the biplane rose for about 3ft and touched the ground again 20ft ahead. Then the aviator again lifted his elevator to an angle of 45 degrees and the machine jumped into the air, dipping towards the earth and rising alternatively until it had covered about 300 yards. At that stage Mr Defries, who was dressed in ordinary attire, and not in his aeronautical outfit, lost his hat." The reporter then describes the aviator's distraction, which resulted in a hard landing followed by a ground loop that caused significant damage to *The Stella*.

Although marred by the crash landing, this flight represents the second flight of a powered aeroplane in the southern hemisphere. Neither this flight, nor the flight on December 9, can be dismissed as an "uncontrolled hop." These flights were witnessed by 150 and 50 observers respectively, and were recorded in detail by an objective reporter. It was never intended that they would be other than straight line flights - similar to those first flights achieved in the USA (1903), France (1906), Great Britain (1908), Canada (Feb 1909), and even by our very own Colin - Colin Pay - when he flew a Wright Model A replica at Narromine on September 27, 2005. The third powered flight in an aeroplane in the southern hemisphere was in South Africa on January 1, 1910.

In view of the foregoing, what does the plaque at Victoria Park Racecourse tell us? The wording on the plaque is in bold - my comments are in brackets.

**DARING ACTS 1908-1909**. (No hint from the heading about the aviation historical significance of the site, although there are two images of Bleriot aircraft on the plaque. The year 1908 refers to car racing at Victoria Park which is also described). **In 1909 a huge crowd was drawn to the Victoria Park racecourse on two occasions to witness one of the earliest aeroplane flights in Australia.** ( Were there huge crowds? What were the dates? Were not these the first successful powered flights in Australia?) **Colin Defries made two attempts to fly his planes with the first a Wright Flier biplane, failing when he crashed after hitting several sleepers buried in the ground.** (Thus we are told that *The Stella* failed to fly.) **His second attempt, in a Bleriot monoplane, was more successful as he made a hop across the racecourse, lasting 5.5 seconds over a distance of 115 yards at an average height of 15ft. Unfortunately he crashed again when his favourite hat blew off and he tried to grab it.** (Astute readers of this edition of L&L will note that a Bleriot monoplane has mysteriously replaced *The Stella*, and that the significant flights of December 9, and December 18, have been rolled into one short hop for your reading convenience.) **Defries Avenue is a testament to this historic event.** (I knew there was an historic event in there somewhere.) Is this a plaque we can gather around to celebrate the centenary of powered flight in Australia? **John Scott.**