



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

February 2007 No.403

File 2007 - 1

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7th February 2007, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The guest speakers will be David Marshall and Bruce Harris whose topic will be

Clarence Leonard Johnson

- why they called him "Kelly" and how he changed aviation history by inventing the "Skunk Works". This will be a words and picture presentation about one of the foremost aviation designers of the 20th century.

David Marshall and Bruce Harris were the co-authors of the excellent book, *Dreamers, Doers and Daredevils - Celebrating 100 Years of Aviation*, which was published in 2003. This time they have teamed together to research the life and times of "Kelly" Johnson, who was the driving force behind the Lockheed "Skunk Works" which produced such aircraft as the U-2, YF-12A, A-12 and SR-71.

Kelly Johnson was involved in the design of the Lockheed 10 Electra, made Fowler flaps work on the L-14 Super Electra and converted it at the request of the RAF to the Hudson, designed the P-38 Lightning and worked on the design of the Constellation and P-80 Shooting Star. This is just a glimpse of Kelly Johnson, and Bruce and David will discuss a much wider account of Johnson's life.

Committee Meeting

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

December Meeting

The December meeting was held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown and two topics were the subjects of discussion.

John Scott discussed the merits of Colin Defries' flight at Victoria Park in 1909 and whether this event should be promoted by the Society as a worthy item

for support in its coming centenary year. The general response from the meeting was in the affirmative and there was an indication from the meeting that we should seek opinions from like minded organizations such as the Royal Aeronautical Society, Sydney Branch, and the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators (GAPAN).

The notion of "first" to fly in Australia was discussed and the feats of George Augustine Taylor, Harry Houdini, Fred Custance, John Duigan as well as Colin Defries were covered. John Scott believes that the parochialism of South Australians and Victorians should not be underestimated in the debate. Notwithstanding, he indicated that all the above could still be credited with a "first" in some aspect of flight.

The Committee will report to members early this year as to what strategy will be taken by the Society in regard to this matter.

The second half of the meeting was devoted to the operation of Boeing B707s by Qantas, and in particular with reference to the (then) imminent arrival in Australia of the first B707-138B delivered to Qantas as VH-EBA, which is destined for the Qantas Founders Outback Museum at Longreach. The aircraft, now registered as VH-XBA arrived in Sydney on 16th December 2006.

Warwick Bigsworth provided data about the particular aircraft along with some general statistics about Qantas B707s in service and their fates. An excellent selection of slides of Qantas B707s, especially at Sydney Airport, as well as other B707s that have graced Australian airports over the past four decades was provided by Eric Favelle, Ian Debenham and Warwick Bigsworth.

RAAF Memorial

Dudley Reynolds has recently provided a brochure on the unveiling of the RAAF Memorial at the old Bradfield Park site at West Lindfield NSW.

The Memorial was unveiled on 29th October 2006 and was attended by the Mayor of Kur-ring-gai, Councillor Nick Ebbeck along with Chief of Air Force, Air Marshall Geoff Shepherd AO, and Minister of Defence, The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson.

The RAAF Station at Bradfield Park was established at West Lindfield on 27th May 1940. "Bradfield", one of the largest RAAF bases in Australia and a major element of the Empire Air Training Scheme, had a staff totalling over 3,000 and housed and trained 240,000 RAAF and WAAAF personnel. 15,694 aircrew received instruction at the Station's No.2 and No.6 Initial Training Schools. Its No.2 Embarkation Depot was the final posting for thousands of RAAF and WAAAF personnel.

Request for Information

Through Al Bovelt, well known aviation historian and writer Ben Dannecker has requested if any members can help him with some research on the Bristol Freighter, VH-AAH which was involved in aerial top dressing at Cootamundra during August – September 1958. Ben is writing an article on the aircraft and would like any photographs, articles or newspaper reports on the subject. He can be contacted on tel. (02) 4423 1925 or via email berlintram@yahoo.com.au.

Calendar of Events

17–18 February 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

24 February 2007 Wings over Illawarra, HARS and SAAA Open Day and Fly-in. Albion Park NSW

25 February 2007 Goolwa Classic Air Show, Goolwa SA

7 March 2007 AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly Meeting and AGM, Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW

18 March 2007 6th Annual Antique and Classic aircraft Fly-in. Parafield SA

20–25 March 2007 Australian International Air Show, Avalon Vic

13–16 April 2007 NATFLY National Ultralight Fly-in. Narromine NSW

21 April 2007 Wings, Wheels and Wine Airshow, Mudgee NSW

Contributions and Contacts

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

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

Thanks

Thanks to Al Bovelt, Graeme Henderson, Dudley Reynolds and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now due for 2007. Please complete the enclosed subscription form and return as soon as practicable.

Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc will be held at the Powerhouse Museum, Harris Street Ultimo on Wednesday 7th March 2007 commencing at 7:45pm.

Business

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

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

Fly like a bird.

Part 1

THE DICKENSON WING STORY.

By Graeme Henderson.

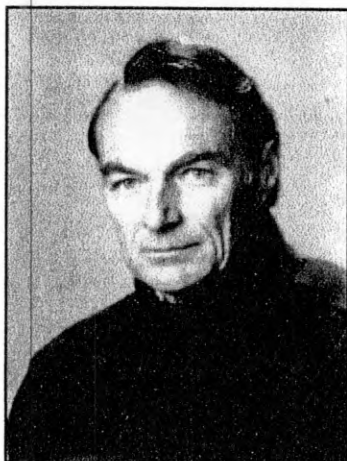


Photo 1. John Dickenson aged 44.

Eclipsed by the size of the sport that he founded, John Dickenson's story has remained a mystery in spite of the many efforts over the years to highlight his eminent role. Myths abound, credit has gone to people who have no true claim to it, and Australia's greatest contribution to global aviation has continually been overlooked. As the absolute founder of the sport John Dickenson deserves better than this.

In the spring of 1963 an Australian, Mr John Dickenson, built the aircraft that evolved into the modern Hang Gliders built today. Often mistakenly called 'The Rogallo Wing', it should correctly be called 'The Dickenson Wing'. It is important to note that Dr Francis M. Rogallo played only a small part in the building of this aircraft, no more than say Otto Lilienthal, or The Wright Brothers,

or even Leonardo Da Vinci.

As a young boy growing up on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, John had been fascinated by flying things. He often watched seagulls soar at Flat Rock, he built and flew model aircraft, and he was particularly attracted to minimum structured flying machines.

This early study of aviation, although informal, was a vital ingredient in the quite amazing development of 'The Dickenson Wing': This story is testimony to the old saying that success happens when preparation meets opportunity.

John became an Electronics dip. Engineer. In 1955 he married Amy Holmes-Prinold and they moved to Grafton in 1960. He began playing around with Auto Gyros, even designing parts of the spar for his rotor blades. These were machined by Mr Pat Crowe. Pat will appear again as the boat driver when we get to the first flight story.



Photo 3. John Dickenson flying his Auto Gyro.

In early 1963 one of the members of the Grafton Water Ski Club who had been towing John along the beach in the Auto Gyro, mentioned this back at the club. John was a water skier

and a club member. Water Ski Kites had been around for a while, and since John was obviously not afraid of flying the club asked him to build and to fly, a Water Ski Kite as part of the club's contribution to the Jacaranda Festival. John agreed to give it a go and set about building models. He had no plans, only descriptions of ski kites to go on. John tried a few kite designs and all of them seemed to be fine until he suspended a weight beneath them, at which point they all developed a strong propensity for locking into a screaming dive that only the ground could stop.



Photo 2. A modern, 2006, Dickenson Wing.



Photo 4. A water ski kite. Although John couldn't get one to work many others did.

As John worked on this, he started to hear the stories of the attempts by people to fly these kites at previous festivals, 'The Kite Stunt', it seemed, was a real crowd puller. John learned that some of the previous attempts had resulted in stunning crashes, the impact of which was dampened somewhat by the water, but were none the less severe. Not wanting to be yet another casualty, John set out to build a glider based on the wing of the Flying Foxes - large fruit eating bats with a wing span of about 1.3 metres - that are abundant in the Northern Rivers of N.S.W.

John built models and they flew really well with a good glide angle. The problems were the complexity and the expense involved to build one, and also, he had no control system! It was while working on these problems that a member of the water ski club showed John a photo of the Flexible Gliding Parachute, designed for N.A.S.A. by Dr

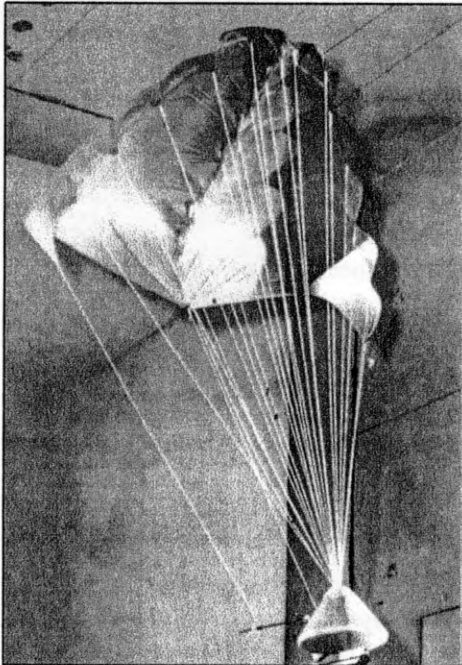


Photo 6. The photo of the Rogallo wing shown to John Dickenson.

F.M.Rogallo. Dr Rogallo was interested in flexible wings and self-inflating pneumatic structures. Borrowing on sail designs, he had removed the mast and spars, and using two triangular sails he built a 'Rogallo Wing'.

John took the two triangular sails and put the mast (crossbar) and spars, (leading edges and keel) back in. He built a model based on the photo and to his surprise its glide angle was just as good as the much more complex 'Bat Wing' models. At this point in time John's motivation was to keep his word to the club members and to fly something at the Jacaranda Festival. Hopefully something safer than the kites he had already built.

The simplicity of the Triangular sails consigned the 'Bat Wings' to history. But John still had a problem as did the others around the country and around the world, who unbeknown to John, were working with similar

wings. In particular were two blokes in Sydney, Dick

Swinbourne and Mike Burns, whose company Aerostructures had begun designing weight shift control "Skiplanes" in 1962. They were a Delta Wing on floats that used a mechanical weight shift system controlled by a 'joy stick'. Dick and Mike had obtained information from N.A.S.A, and were qualified Aeronautical Engineers. They will join the story again later.

Apart from Aerostructures, everyone else's problem was this: how do you control these aircraft? Hanging by ones armpits between two parallel bars and swinging ones legs about was a common practice, but it was inefficient from a control point of view, and inherently dangerous. The rule was simple: 'Don't fly higher than you are prepared to fall'.

One afternoon John took his daughter to a nearby park and while swinging his daughter on the swing, his mind continued to churn on the problem of controlling the wing. It had to be simple, time was slipping by, and a nasty dive into the Clarence River on a kite was looming.

"Swing me sideways Daddy", said Helen, "Swing me sideways".

"Uh, what?" says her not so attentive father.

"Swing me sideways!"

(To be continued next month)

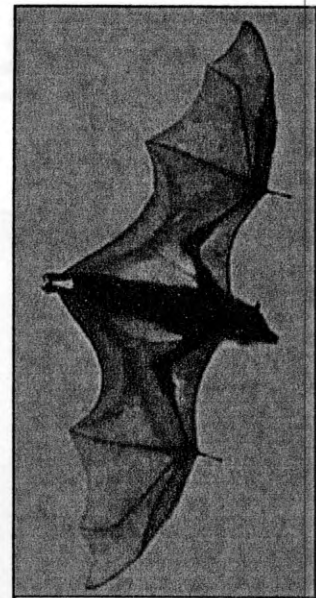


Photo 5. bottom view of flying fox.

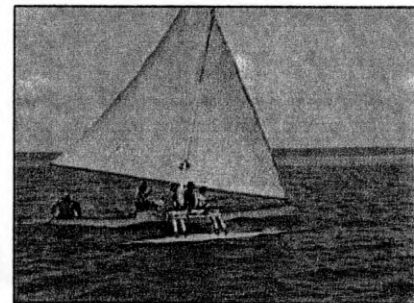


Photo 7. A vertical wing is a sail. A horizontal sail is a wing.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 4.

Writing in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on August 7, 1960, Jack Percival lamented: "No special celebration is planned to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first flight in a powered aeroplane in Australia... the experts can't agree to whom the the honour should be given for the first *true* flight." Is Australia now to be deprived of a centenary celebration of its first powered flight for the same reason?

A contemporary opinion expressed by the aviation correspondent to the Melbourne newspaper *The Leader* on April 10, 1910, wrote: "There promises to be some controversy as to who made the first flight in Australia. A correspondent claims that distinction for Colin Defries. However, no one as yet has claimed that distinction, and Mr Colin Defries, if he does claim it is not likely to be disputed. The question who made the first successful flight is a *bird* of another colour, and Houdini's claim is indisputable." However, by April, 1910, Colin Defries had left Australia disenchanted, and with a decreasing interest in aviation. It was left to George Augustine Taylor to deny that Defries had ever left the ground.

The most recent informed opinion on the subject that I could find is expressed by David Craddock in his book, *Feeling The Air*, published in 1999. "It may be reasonable to apply the definition adopted by the Royal Aero Club, for acknowledging these flights. 'Free flight in an aeroplane occurs when the machine, having left the ground, is maintained in the air by its own power on a level or upward path for a distance beyond that over which gravity and air resistance would sustain it.' The simple definition, however, made no allowance for demonstrating lateral control. If an additional demonstration of an ability to return to the point of take off, was required, Houdini's flight would have been the first to so qualify. Otherwise, Defries' uncertain hops in December, 1909 should be accepted as the first powered flight in Australia."

It seems to me that there is not much difference between the opinion of *The Leader* aviation correspondent and David Craddock, even though separated by nearly nine decades. Could we not now accept that on December 9, 1909, Colin Defries achieved the first powered, controlled and sustained flight in Australia, and that on March 18, 1910, Harry Houdini achieved the first powered, controlled, sustained and circling flight in Australia?

George Augustine Taylor drowned in his bath at his flat at 20 Loftus Street, Sydney on January 20, 1928. Shortly before he died his strongly held views about aviation history were recorded through his contribution to Australia's then most authoritative reference work, the revised first edition of *The Australian Encyclopaedia*. After a long dissertation about the *Aerial League* and his own achievements at Narrabeen Beach on December 5, 1909, he wrote: " In the same month the first imported aeroplane reached Australia; this a Wright machine, was exhibited in the various states, but no flights were undertaken." The name Colin Defries was not mentioned, and was thus written out of our history, as recorded by the encyclopaedia, until he was reinstated as a participant by Stanley Brogden in the 1965 edition. However, Brogden recorded March 17, 1910, as the date of the first powered flight in Australia, when Fred Custance flew at Bolivar, near Adelaide. This opinion was supported by the first president of AHSA NSW Branch, Ron Gibson, in his contribution to the 1977 edition of the encyclopaedia. In the current edition, the contribution by Keith Isaacs gives no credibility to the Custance flight, acknowledges Defries' short flight on December 9, 1909, but then awards the first controlled, powered flight to Houdini for his achievements on March 18, 1910. The web link www.atmitchell.com/journeys/history/aviation gives the prize to Houdini, but is highly confused about Defries, providing similar information to that on the infamous plaque at Victoria Park.

In the Epilogue to *Feeling The Air*, David Craddock wrote: "George Taylor translated Lawrence Hargrave's dreams into reality. he successfully dabbled in the science of aeronautics and wireless, and was brilliant at marketing his exploits. Taylor's ardent nationalism and his conviction to a cause, however, sometimes led him to overstep the mark. One of these causes was the glorification of

Hargrave, through Taylor's lectures and writings over a number of years. Certainly Hargrave was Australia's foremost aeronautical researcher, but Taylor went further, often overstating Hargrave's input to the achievement of flight. He often claimed Hargrave discovered the secret of flight, and had freely offered that secret to the world. In attempts to garner public support, Taylor claimed that foreign aviators stole the work of Hargrave, without proper acknowledgement. Such broad and unsubstantiated claims have since hindered the work of accurately apportioning Hargrave's contribution to the achievement of human flight."

George Augustine Taylor was an early member of the 'anti-Wright faction', because he believed that the Wright Brothers refused to acknowledge the work of Hargrave in their success. When he called a meeting for April 28, 1909, at the Hotel Australia in Sydney, to "discuss the future of aeronautics within the context of the new nation," he asked Lawrence Hargrave to take the chair. The meeting inaugurated *The Aerial League of Australia*. Taylor threw his considerable energy into forming branches of *The Aerial League* in Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland. *The Aerial League* soon had Vice-Regal patronage and its membership included a Who's Who of Australia's scientific and military establishments. It was largely through the efforts of Taylor that the Commonwealth Government offered a prize of £5000 on September 8, 1909, for the design of a *Flying Machine For Military Purposes*. He then opened an aeroplane factory at 6 - 8 Brumby Street, Surry Hills, and set about building, with design collaboration from Hargrave, an aeroplane to compete for the prize. His dream was that he would be the first to build and fly a powered aeroplane in Australia, and at the same time vindicate Hargrave's position as the father of flight. He also built a glider for the purpose of experimentation and pilot training. It must have been an intense irritation for Taylor, in the early months of 1909, when he learnt of plans to import, of all aeroplanes, a Wright biplane to Australia. He considered it a "slur upon Australian initiative if the Wright aeroplane should be the first to fly in Australia." To complicate matters, a strong personal dislike developed between Taylor and Defries.

The train of events leading to the importation of a Wright aeroplane commenced in a London court in July 1908, when the Commissioner of Police obtained judgement against a 24 year old Colin Defries, for driving his motor car at excessive speed on Bromley Road, Catford. It wasn't the first time that the young man had been fined for speeding. His considerable reputation as a racing car driver proved no defence. The judge fined him, and disqualified him from holding a driver's licence for 12 months. Defries gave his address as 32 Rossetti Garden Mansions, in the fashionable London Borough of Chelsea. No doubt there was a family conference about his continuing involvement with automobiles. A possible solution, spending a year in Australia as a sales rep for UK and European car manufacturers, may have been discussed. Just as Colin Defries was considering his options, the sensational news of Wilbur Wright's flying demonstration on August 8, at a small racecourse near Le Mans, France, reached London. A desire to get involved in the new and exciting sport of aviation may also have influenced Colin Defries at this time, particularly since the law had stopped him driving.

Colin Defries travelled to Melbourne in late 1908, in company with Mr C. B. Kellow, a partner of Kellow - Faulkner, the Rolls-Royce agent in Melbourne. There was some talk by Mr Kellow about the possible importation of an aeroplane to Australia. Colin Defries was made a member of the Royal Automobile Club, and soon would have met Lawrence Adamson, the headmaster of Wesley College, who was fascinated by motor cars, and, more recently, by aeroplanes.

On May 29, 1909, the Melbourne newspaper, *The Leader*, carried a report on Defries' future employment in Australia: "The business of the Melbourne Motor Garage will not in future be confined to Victoria, but will extend throughout Australasia. Fresh capital (from Lawrence Adamson?) has been put into the business. Mr Colin Defries who is shortly returning from England and the Continent will, on the conclusion of his engagement with messrs J & N Tait in connection with the Wright aeroplane, take up the position of general manager for Australasia. New agencies have been secured, including the Wilbur Wright aeroplane, the show rights only being held by Messrs J & N Tait."

Early in 1909 Defries had been sent back to Europe, with instructions to purchase a Wright aeroplane, and to undertake flying lessons. He was on the threshold of experiencing first hand, a momentous year in the history of aviation, at its epicentre - France - and later in Australia. **John Scott.**



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March 2007 No.404

March Meeting

Annual General Meeting

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This meeting will be the **Annual General Meeting** and will include the President's Report, the Honorary Treasurer's Report and elect the following Office Bearers for the current year:

- (a) President
- (b) Vice President
- (c) Honorary Treasurer
- (d) Honorary Secretary
- (e) Committee

Following the AGM, the video, Flight of the Phoenix – the flight of the HARS Catalina from Portugal to Australia – will be shown.

February Meeting

The guest speakers were David Marshall and Bruce Harris who presented the first part of the story of Clarence Leonard (Kelly) Johnson.

The presentation started with the image of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, who was about to test fly the Lockheed Altair along with "Kelly" Johnson as a test engineer, to ascertain the fuel consumption, endurance and airspeed of the aircraft in preparation for its entry in the MacRobertson England – Australia Air Race of 1934.

While attending grade school, Johnson was chided by some classmates for his name; Clarence. The other boys started calling him "Clara". One morning while waiting in line to get into a classroom, one boy named Cecil started with the normal routine of calling him "Clara". He then tripped the boy so hard it broke his leg and the other boys then decided that he wasn't a "Clara" and looking for a new nickname started calling him "Kelly". The nickname came from the popular song at the time: "*Kelly with the Green Neck Tie*". From that time forward it would always be "Kelly Johnson".

Kelly Johnson had always had the desire to build aircraft and at the age of 12 he won second prize in the design of a model aircraft competition. He attended Michigan University at Flint MI where he gained a Bachelor of Engineering degree and where he became involved with wind tunnel tests under the tutelage of Professor Edward Stalker. After initially being rejected for a job with Lockheed in California, he returned to Flint and attained a Masters degree in Aeronautical Engineering.

Johnson returned to Lockheed and became involved with the Lockheed 10 Electra with which he resolved its stability problems by incorporating two vertical tailplanes – a feature that was adopted in a series of later Lockheed designs. Johnson proved to have an extraordinary capacity for work; he was requested to present the Lockheed 14 as an option to the British as an anti-submarine patrol bomber. The British representative "Bomber" Harris requested a number of design changes, which Johnson was able to complete overnight, and later when shown to the RAF in England, was able to incorporate numerous changes over the Whitsun weekend. His changes resulted in an order for 250 Lockheed Hudsons for the RAF.

In 1937, Johnson was involved with the design of the XP-38, which subsequently became the P-38 Lightning. The range of the aircraft became an issue in the Pacific and Charles Lindberg demonstrated to the squadron members of USAAC the techniques of extending the endurance from about 5-6 hours to 9-10 hours.

In 1942, the Luftwaffe's Me262s began having a disastrous effect on B.17 operations. Kelly Johnson was requested to design a jet fighter, which he claimed he could do in 180 days. Lockheed could not undertake such an effort because of other manufacturing commitments, so gave the task to Johnson to set up and manufacture the XP-80 with his own offices and laboratory, (which became known as the "Skunk Works"), and staff. The aircraft was designed and built in just 143 days and subsequently became known as the F-80 Shooting Star.

Bruce and David will return later in the year to present the second half of the Kelly Johnson story.

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Request for Information

Aviation historian and writer Ben Dannecker is still looking for any material concerning the Bristol Freighter, VH-AAH which was involved in aerial top dressing at Cootamundra during August – September 1958. Ben is writing an article on the aircraft and would like any photographs, articles or newspaper reports on the subject. He can be contacted via email at berlintram@yahoo.com.au or on amended telephone no. (02) 4423 1719.

On the Internet

Monsieurstyle's Photos

(<http://flickr.com/photos/monsieurstyle>)

This is part of the Flickr online photo management website. Monsieurstyle has an album containing 205 excellent images of vintage and historic aircraft. Examples include CAC Woomera, Wirraway, Boomerang, Avro Vulcan, DH Sea Vixen and many civil types. Well worth a look.

Warbird Registry

(www.warbirdregistry.org)

This provides an online database of all military aircraft that have entered civilian hands from WWII to present. The site is under constant construction, but already features data on fighters, attack aircraft, bombers, seaplanes, observation aircraft, Russian and Luftwaffe aircraft to name but few. Data on where the aircraft are located, their condition and in many cases images is provided.

Warbird Research Group

(www.warbirdresearchgroup.org)

This site provides access to the warbird registry, Luftwaffe, British Aviation, Imperial Japanese and USAAF Resource Centres, as well as modelling and book and multi-media reviews. As above, it is always under construction.

Peter Dunn's Australia at War

(www.ozatwar.com)

This comprehensive site features a vast amount of information, with pages dedicated to Military aircraft crashes in Australia during WWII; Military airfields in Australia and Western Pacific; Allied Signal Intelligence Units; Japanese and other Axis Powers Intelligence Units; RAAF in Australia; RAF

in Australia; 5th Air Force USAAF in Australia; Japanese reconnaissance flights over Australia and much, much more.

Calendar of Events

3 March 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

18 March 2007 6th Annual Antique and Classic aircraft Fly-in. Parafield SA

20–25 March 2007 Australian International Air Show, Avalon Vic

4 April 2007 AHSA (NSW) Inc annual aviation trivia and aircraft recognition competitions. Powerhouse Museum, Ultimo NSW.

7-8 April 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

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14 April 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

21 April 2007 Wings, Wheels and Wine Air Show, Mudgee NSW

21-22 April 2007 AAAA National Fly-in and Air Show. Echuca Vic

5 May 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

6 May 2007 Fleet Air Arm Museum Air Show. Nowra NSW

Coming Up

The AHSA (NSW) meeting on 4 July 2007 will feature the popular short talks by members. Any member willing to speak about his or her special interest in aviation is encouraged to participate, and advise Committee Members John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth as soon as possible.

Contributions and Contacts

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LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 5.

The Australian aviation history wars got off to an early start. Neither of the two following paragraphs, written a month after the event, represents an accurate record of what happened at Victoria Park Racecourse during December, 1909. This kind of discrepancy has made it difficult, over the course of the last century, for those attempting to write an accurate history of Australia's introduction to powered flight.

The Australian monthly magazine *Building*, edited by George Augustine Taylor, was throughout 1909 an informative source on the progress of aviation in Australia and overseas. On January 12, 1910, it carried an article by Taylor, *AERIAL ENGINEERING*, which stated in part: "The Wright aeroplane, which was on view in Sydney during the past month, cannot be said to have achieved any success, inasmuch as it did not rise from the ground. Many reasons were given for this insuccess (sic), but its inability to fly was undoubtedly due to the new method attempted of starting from wheels, like the French machine."

On January 29, 1910, the authoritative London aviation weekly, *Flight*, carried a report under the heading, *FIRST FLIGHT IN AUSTRALIA*. "On December 9th, at Victoria Park Racecourse Sydney, NSW, Colin Defries, as we recorded at the time, accomplished the first flight ever made on an aeroplane in Australia, although a heavy S.W. gale was blowing at the time. Further particulars and photographs are now to hand from Mr D.C. Defries the young aviator's - he is twenty five years of age - father. The aeroplane - a Wilbur Wright - ...rose to a height of about 35 ft and covered about a mile in 11/4 mins... On the following day another short flight was accomplished when Mr Defries took up as a passenger Mr C.S. Magennis, a well known Australian mining engineer."

Colin Defries was the eldest son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist living in London. His father, Daniel, hoped that Colin would follow him into engineering, and enter the family business. His mother, Florence, was an influential society hostess who frequently entertained leading artists and musicians at her *salon* in the large Defries family home at 53 Redcliffe Square, Earl's Court. This explains Colin's love of the piano because, as a youngster, he received lessons from a house guest, the renowned Vladimir de Pachmann. His education commenced at St Paul's College, London. Later, his father enrolled him in the engineering faculty at Darmstadt University in Germany. However, the young Defries showed early signs of independence. Uncomfortable with his Jewish identity, probably as a result of discrimination as a student, he adopted Colin instead of his given name Coleman. Much to his father's disappointment he dropped out of university, and took to the dangerous sport of racing cars. After his visit to Australia in 1908, and his involvement with the Melbourne Motor Garage, he was instructed to travel back to Europe in early 1909 - first to Paris for negotiations to purchase a Wright aeroplane - and then to Cannes, on the French Riviera, where he was to undergo flying training.

During 1908, the Wright Brothers signed an agreement, with a French syndicate, to construct and market under licence, their Wright Model A, in factories located at Dunkirk and Billancourt. Part of the agreement was for Wilbur to give flying lessons to three nominated individuals. For this purpose flying operations were moved, in January, 1909, to the milder winter conditions at Pau, near the Spanish border. Wilbur's first student was a 43 year old aristocrat, Charles comte de Lambert. The comte commenced his flying training on February 15, and, after 23 lessons totalling 5hrs and 23 mins, was allowed to solo on March 18. Comte de Lambert then proceeded to establish his own flying school at Cannes. It was there that Colin Defries reported in late March.

Back in Sydney, George Augustine Taylor was aware of the formation of *The Aerial League of the British Empire*, in London, during January, 1909. In March, he dedicated eleven pages of his magazine, *Building*, to a series of three articles written by himself titled, *THE AIRSHIP AGE, AUSTRALIA AND THE AEROPLANE* and *AUSTRALIAN AERIAL ENGINEERING RESEARCH*. In the latter he wrote of Hargrave and his research: "Think of it brother Australians! Here with us is a patient

plodder, solving in his spare time, problems that will, ere long, change the face of the world, kept back from vaulting to supreme success by the threatening finger of grim necessity, while the men who monopolise the limelight and his discoveries, are millionaires, with time and money to burn!" Early in April, just as Taylor was mobilising his fellow Australians, with "a plea for national self respect" to urgently engage with aviation, news came of the plan to import a Wright aeroplane. By the end of April, *The Aerial League of Australia* had been launched.

On arrival in France, Defries' first appointment was with M. Clemenceau, the head of Societe Ariel, with offices at 152, Avenue des Champs Elysees, Paris. At the time of their meeting M. Clemenceau's father, Georges, was premier of France. Societe Ariel also held the 'monopole exclusif de vente des aeroplanes Wright' in France and the French Colonies. This licence was said to have been extended to the British Colonies, including Australia, although Australian states had replaced colonies since Federation, on January 1, 1901. Defries made arrangements for the shipment of a Wright Model A, timed to coincide with his anticipated return to Australia in about June. In the meantime he travelled down to Cannes to learn to fly.

In later interviews, Defries describes his high living on the Riviera - spending time at the roulette tables in Cannes, and privately entertaining the Romanov Grand Dukes, Michael and Cyril. After his return to Australia, *The Argus*, of June 15, reports him saying: "I learnt in the aerial school at Cannes in France. Comte de Lambert taught me. I bought an aeroplane from the company which is making Wilbur Wright machines.... Prince Radziwill is one of the directors, and when my machine came down to Cannes, five of the directors and their wives came with their motor cars and watched its first flight. None of them has ever been up in an aeroplane. They all have wives. I was five weeks learning. During that time I spent four or five hours in the air." Earlier in *The Argus* interview he said: "It is a single man's game. If I were married I'd never go up in an aeroplane again - unless I was unhappily married." These comments suggest that Defries had been unnerved by the dangers revealed to him during his flying training. At the time of the interview he was single - a status that he was soon to lose.

Defries returned to Australia on board the *R.M.S. Macedonia*, which berthed at Fremantle on June 8, 1909. In an interview for *The West Australian* of June 9, he was pessimistic about aeroplanes being of any future commercial value, because passengers would be too frightened to go up in them - but for use in war: "Its effects will be deadly, and in the hands of a couple of men of a devil-may-care temperament, who will take all risks with their bombs, regardless of life and limb, will be an important factor in times of war." These opinions were not entirely in harmony with the more balanced views of *The Aerial League*, which was conducting a membership drive in Australia at the time. Lawrence Hargrave was prompted to write a letter, published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on June 14, stating that: "Many may be deterred from joining *The Aerial League of Australia* by the prominence that is made of flying machine work as an aid to the safe and speedy slaughter of our fellow-creatures.....Let reason sway, be cheered on the thorny track by the thought that, although the almost universal view of the flying machine is that it is to compel the subservience of others of our race, the real goal is the acquisition of that knowledge of our neighbours that dispels the dark clouds of selfish prejudice."

The original plan of J & N Tait was for the flying exhibitions to commence in Melbourne. However, the venue hoped for, the racecourse at either Caulfield or Flemington, was not available. This problem caused Defries to travel to Sydney by train, arriving on June 23, to check the suitability of Victoria Park Racecourse as an alternative for the first flying exhibition in Australia. This forced change of plan was just the start of the problems that were to face Defries. He had not received confirmation that his Wright aeroplane had been shipped on the date promised. In an interview in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of June 24, he said: "The worst thing about the Paris factory is they are slow in delivering. Mine was to have been shipped a month ago, but I have got no notice of its shipping yet. If it is not ready shortly I shall go back and bring it out myself."

A few days later, Defries was again at sea, on his way back to France. On July 25, Louis Bleriot made the first crossing of the English Channel by air. This epochal event prompted Defries' Australian connections to expand their programme. A cable was sent to Defries, advising him to negotiate with M. Bleriot for delivery to Australia of the latest aeronautical marvel, a Bleriot XI..... **John Scott.**

John swung Helen sideways and ‘Eureka!’ it was so simple! Hang on a swinging seat beneath the wing, and have something to swing against. The rest was simple mathematics and experimentation.

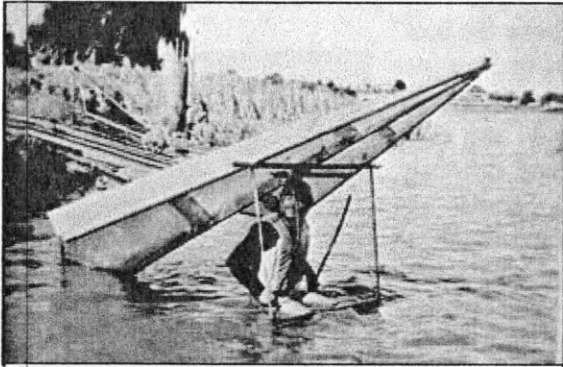


Photo 8. John Dickenson about to test the half scale model. 1963.

Starting with small models, John made some basic calculations to work out the wings optimum size and then, through physical testing and more calculations he set about building a half size model. This was towed behind a boat and it allowed John to test his control system. With the control system apparently working John set about getting the materials to build the full sized Glider. His budget was tiny. In the end the materials cost a mere twelve pounds - twenty four dollars. The chosen and tested membrane was a length of blue plastic tube that when cut to lengths was normally used to cover bunches of Bananas to protect them from birds

and sun damage. John cut the tubes open and laying them out with some overlap, he fixed both sides with ½ inch blue plastic electrical tape. The keel and leading edges were one and a half inch square, clear, Oregon, i.e., straight grained, with no knots, or flaws. The wood was carefully selected with two lengths of equal weight chosen for the leading edges, and the next best one for the keel.

The cross bar was a length of T.V. antenna aluminium, with a length of turned wood jammed into it to give it the required strength. If you look closely at the first glider, the cross bar is well forward of the pilot. This was due to its length



Photo 9. Rod Fuller lands the Mark I. 1963.

restrictions - in later models the cross bar went back to the centre of gravity.

The plastic wrapped around the leading edges and was attached with a length of ‘D Section’ wood and nails. Clothesline wire cable was used for the bracing wires, and seat belt webbing was used to make the seat.

All was ready and on Sept 8th 1963 the crew assembled at the Grafton Water Ski Club to give it a go. John went first but between centre of gravity issues and inexperience, he was unable to get off the water. Exhausted he handed the task to Norm Stanford, who also was unable to get into the air. The next brave soul, Bob Clements, went up briefly, came down quickly and never tried again. Next came a man not to be trifled with - Rod Fuller, club water ski champ and dare devil, he would go

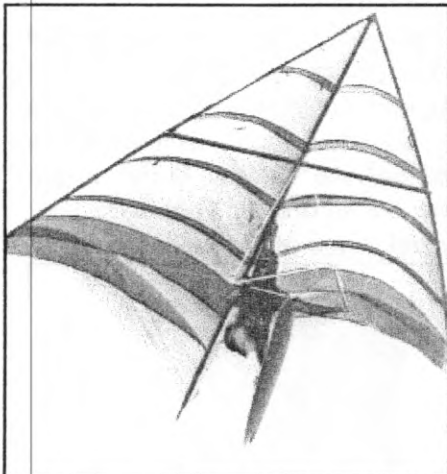


Photo 10. Rod Fuller looks down from the Mark I.

on to be a founding member of the Grafton Gliding Club and become a respected member of the Gliding Fraternity. On this day Rod got to hold every hang gliding record in the book, and he became the first person to experience the feeling of flying a Dickenson Wing.

Pat Crowe was driving the boat; He and Rod had agreed on their signals- if Rod nodded his head Pat was to go faster; if Rod shook his head Pat was to slow the boat. The wind was from the

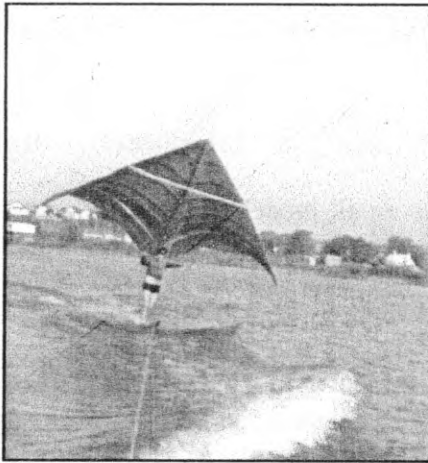


Photo 11. Rod Fuller skiing with the Mark I.

drop off 'the plane' and virtually stop dead in the water. Pat had great concerns for his mate as no-one knew what would happen if he just stopped. Pat was worried that Rod would overfly the boat and be slammed into the water ahead of him.

Rod was still getting over his initial terror. The centre of gravity was a little far back, and while going up was easy he had no way to get down. After a few seconds, Rod calmed down enough to

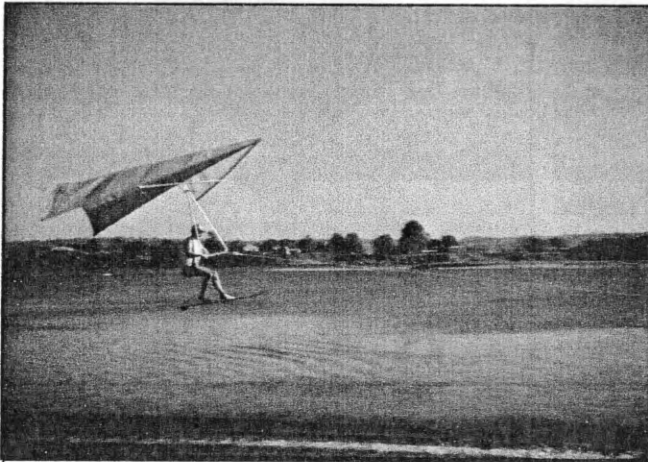


Photo 13. John Dickenson flying the Mark III, Grafton 1965.

seeing if the wing would fly and having discovered that it would, some of the inadequacies of their briefing became apparent. There had been no thought given to this stage of the affair and Pat was alone and worried. Rod was much higher than the bridge so Pat began a long, gentle turn using every inch of the river. At the top of the rope Rod was right over the bridge, and as Pat just skimmed the far bank, Rod was flying over the buildings on the bank.

Now that they were travelling with the wind, the wing began to lose airspeed and altitude. Rod returned to the water and skied back towards the clubhouse before being upended into the river by the tail wind. The ultimate flying machine had been built, and flown!

South, about 45 degrees to the river bank, so they had decided to head out into the river and then to turn into the wind before they would have a go at flying. Once they were headed into the wind Rod nodded his head, Pat opened the throttle, Rod lifted the nose slightly and shot straight to the top of the rope, 140 feet off the water and nearly right above the boat!

These blokes had no idea about wind gradients. Pat looked up to see Rod shaking his head furiously. Pat however could not slow the boat too much, as at 18 mph the boat would

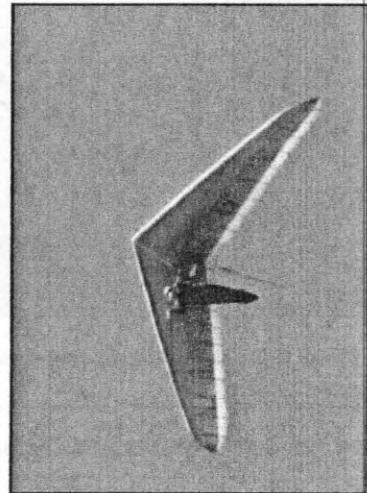


Photo 12. This 2006 model, competition Hang glider is a direct descendant of the Mark I Dickenson Wing.

start taking in the view

and then he looked up at the Banana Plastic and electrical tape sail. There was only the slightest ripple and no obvious strain on the plastic. He quickly gained confidence in the controls, there was plenty of feedback and he had plenty of roll control.

All was going well and they would have kept going down the river until they figured out how to get Rod down safely, but when Pat looked ahead he realised that the Grafton bridge meant that was not an option. They were only



Photo 14. The Aerostructures Skiplane.

(To be continued next month)



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

April 2007 No.405

April Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 4th April 2007, 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 business for the meeting will be

Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz and Aircraft Recognition Competition

The 24th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz will be hosted this year by Eric Favelle, who will present the prestigious Slipstream Trophy to the winner.

Following the Trivia Quiz, Anthony Coleiro and Ken Garland will each provide a number of images for the 39th annual aircraft recognition competition. Participants will compete for the impressive Brian White Memorial Trophy, whilst the person achieving the closest to average score will be awarded the President's Trophy.

In addition to the treasured trophies, winners will also receive a book prize. There will be a small entry charge to cover the cost of prizes.

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

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

March Meeting – Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was comprised of the President's Report, Treasurer's Report and election of office bearers for 2007.

AHSA (NSW) President's Report 2007

2006 was, in my opinion, another good year for the Society with a variety of speakers and aviation topics to interest members, always followed by supper and the camaraderie. 2007 will also be a year of interest with a program that is coming together well. I was not able to attend the visit to Albion Park due to family circumstances but I understand that the

visit to Ken Garland's hangar and HARS was well attended and very enjoyable. Hopefully, Ken will allow us another visit this year to see progress with his business and progress with the HARS facility.

It should be noted that the Committee has been taking care of business very well on behalf of the members and there is no increase in membership fees for the foreseeable future.

The Society must, however, face two issues that are not that pressing but require monitoring. The first is the requirement of the Powerhouse Museum to maximise its income from other than the State Government. This has meant that, when our usual meeting venue is required by a paying customer, the Society must make alternate arrangements. Also the Target Theatre is no longer free to the Society and, although the cost is heavily discounted, the amount is beyond the Society to afford. Fortunately we are in a position of finding alternative locations within the Powerhouse or finding alternate dates for our meetings, whichever is considered by the Committee most convenient. The second issue is the ageing membership of the Society. While we are still young and spry, we should be considering the future of the Society and developing strategies for its continuation.

In 2009 it is important to remember that the centenary of Australian aviation will be celebrated and we should be in the forefront of those celebrations. The Society has already written to the Royal Aeronautical Society to begin a dialogue with them about recognising the first powered flight in Australia as there is, as you are aware, no established agreement about who should take honours and what role should then be recognised for the other claimants. John Scott continues to research this topic so we can be reliably informed of the historic merits of each flight.

That having been said, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the committee members for their support; Warwick Bigsworth, our extremely competent secretary and newsletter editor, John Scott for his ever interesting and well researched "*Loops and Landings*" and John Swanson for his handling of

the Society's funds.

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

Ian Debenham

Treasurer's Report

John Swanson presented his financial report for the 2006 year. The Society funds still remain healthy, with income for the year \$1,693.44 and expenditure of \$1,629.41. The Society's net assets as at 31st December 2006 were \$6,162.77.

Election of Office Bearers

The annual election of office bearers was then carried out, with the following results:

President:	Ian Debenham
Honorary Secretary:	Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Treasurer:	John Swanson
Photo Archivist:	David Eyre
Committee:	Barry Collins, Ian Dolstra, Bill Holswich, Jack Powell, John Scott, Keith White.

Following the AGM, the video, *Flight of the Felix*, the flight of the HARS Catalina from Portugal to Australia, was shown.

Book Sale

Author Derrick Rolland is offering two excellent books for sale at specially reduced prices.

Aerial Agriculture in Australia, published 1996

This well-researched book tells the story of the role aircraft have played in agriculture and forestry over a period of more than 60 years. It provides an historical overview of the industry followed by details of the early companies and their aircraft. Industry associations, training and legislation are also included in the comprehensive first part of the book. The following three parts detail the applications of aerial activity, including pasture improvement, aerial mustering, forestry applications, aerial fire patrols, firebombing, rainmaking and aerial control of pests.

A number of anecdotes and recollections of those involved in the industry are included to add to the human side of aerial agricultural operations.

There are 138 black and white and 60 colour photographs of a wide range of aircraft and operators; Beavers, Tiger Moths, Avro Cadets, Austers, Bristol 170, various Cessnas and the purpose built Air Tractors, Dromaders, Cropmasters, Airtruks, Ayres Thrush, Pawnees, Callairs and a variety of helicopters are included.

Derrick took 12 years of research to produce this book, and the quality of the contents and hard-

covered book itself bear testament to that. Well recommended!

Airmen I Have Met – Their Stories, published 1999

This is a collection of 16 biographies written by, or about, some airmen with whom Derrick has come in contact over the years.

Here is an absolutely fascinating book about a wide cross section of aviators who have such interesting stories to tell. They include Derrick's brother Jock, who was a navigator on Sunderlands during WWII; Hal Harding who, among other things, was base commander of RAAF Tocumwal; Harold Rowell, who flew Bostons in WWII and later flew with MacRobertson Miller Airlines; Kenneth Robertson, RAAF, who tested the Cotton Aerodynamic Anti-G suit; "Laddie" Hindley who flew with the RAAF and Jayrow Helicopters; Joe Drage of museum fame; Jim Darbyshire of aerial agriculture fame and Chief Pilot of Southern Airlines, to name just some of the personalities.

There are some 85 black and white and 12 colour photographs in this most interesting hard-back book.

Both books are available from Derrick Rolland for \$38.00 each, which includes postage and packaging.

Orders can be made direct to Derrick at 6 Alpine View Avenue, Bright Vic. 3741. ph (03) 5755 2053.

Papua New Guinea Find

The National, the Papua New Guinea on-line news, reported the following interesting piece in its 5th March 2007 issue:

"Personal effects and human bones of American soldiers who died in the Second World War were found by the United States Marine's Recovery Teams at three separate excavation sites in the Saruwaga Mountains of Nawaeb district in Morobe province last week.

Three recovery teams from the joint Prisoners of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command have been in the country for the last two months, excavating possible sites of three American war planes that crashed into the mountains between 1940 and 1944. Each team was made up of a forensic anthropologist, communications officer, explosive disposal officer, medical person, team sergeant, security personnel and an officer from the National Museum.

The recovery teams' operations boss Major Albert Tabarez told a media team that was flown to the site last Friday that the teams were in separate sites doing excavations to find remains of more than 14 soldiers who died in three separate plane crashes at the Saruwaga Mountains.

The planes were identified as a C-46 that crashed with 12 crew on board, an A-20 Havoc and a P-38.

“Recovery team one and recovery team three have been successful in their findings so far and recovery team two has a wide area to cover”, Major Tabarez said. “By next week, we will be combining team three and team two to work together.”

Major Tabarez said the excavation was one of the second hardest operations in the country because of the rough and difficult terrains. He said teams one and three had recovered some personal effects and human bones and teeth at the crash sites but it was yet to be verified by forensic scientists at their laboratories in Hawaii to confirm the individuals lost in WWII.

“Our primary mission is to find the missing American soldiers. We are here to find every bone, teeth, personal effects and bring them back to their families – everything we find is evidence in our mission,” he said.

Team three leader Capt George Murphy showed some personal effects they had recovered to media personnel at the site, saying this was one of their successful missions and they were happy to bring back some memories to the family members. “We have found these glass frames, some dollars, parachutes, helmets, watch buckle, boot and jacket buttons, key-ring and headset radio but we are yet to verify the owner,” Capt Murphy said.

Assistant Director for Science and Research for the National Museum Senea Greh said the Americans had employed more than 40 local villagers in team three, 50 in team two and 10 with team one. The Mission is under a Memorandum of Agreement signed between the PNG and US governments.

It is understood that the hosting Sakalang village will have solar powered lights, a classroom and a health centre from the US government as a compliment for their assistance.”

Obituary

Alex Henshaw

Thanks to Nancy Bird who has kindly forwarded the obituary recently published in the *Telegraph* in London. The following is an abridged version.

Alex Henshaw, who died on February 24 2007 at the age of 94, was an outstanding test pilot whose name will forever be associated with the Second World War’s most famous aircraft, the Spitfire. Between 1940 and 1945, he test flew some 2,360 individual Spitfires and Seafires, amounting to more than 10% of the total built.

By 1939 Henshaw was already celebrated as a pilot, having won the King’s Cup Air Race and broken the record for a flight to Cape Town and back. When war broke out he volunteered for service with

the RAF but, while waiting for his application to be processed, was invited instead to join Vickers at Weybridge as a test pilot.

At first he was put into Wellingtons and the Walrus and later moved to the Vickers Armstrong (Supermarine) factory at Castle Bromwich where he was soon appointed chief production test pilot for Spitfires and Lancasters.

Castle Bromwich was not ideally suited to have an aerodrome; it was often blanketed in fog and a heavy industrial haze, closing the airfield for routine flying. With 320 Spitfires being produced each month, however, test flying had to continue and Henshaw developed his own technique for landing: as he made his approach he would use the columns of condensation rising from the four cooling towers at nearby Hemshall to locate the airfield and align him with the runway. No other pilot was authorised to fly in these conditions, and Henshaw sometimes tested 20 aircraft in a day.

Only on one occasion was he forced to bale out, when the engine of his Spitfire exploded. Henshaw was thrown out of the aircraft by the blast and became entangled in his parachute, which was badly torn and held together by a single thread on its perimeter; the thread held and he landed safely.

Once he was asked to put on a show for the Lord Mayor of Birmingham’s Spitfire Fund by flying at high speed above the city’s main street. The civic dignitaries were furious when he inverted the aircraft, flying upside down below the top of the Council House.

Henshaw also tested other aircraft, including more than 300 Lancasters – he once famously barrel-rolled the big bomber, the only pilot to have pulled off this feat.

He learnt to fly in 1932 and the following year he entered the King’s Cup Air Race as one of the youngest ever competitors. In 1934 Henshaw was invited to take part in his Miles Hawk Major. His prototype engine failed as he crossed the Irish Sea and he was forced to ditch.

In 1937 he won the inaugural London to Isle of Man air race in atrocious weather. Finally, in 1938, flying a Percival Mew Gull, he won the King’s Cup at the age of 25, setting an average speed of 236.25mph, a record that stands almost 70 years later.

Early in 1939 Henshaw made his record-breaking solo flight from England to Cape Town and back. On February 5 1939 he took off in the Mew Gull from Gravesend to fly down the western side of Africa. The aircraft had 9 hours’ endurance, and his first stop was at Oran, in Algeria, before a 1,300 mile leg across the Sahara. Without navigation or radio aids, he made further stops in the Belgian Congo and

Angola before reaching Cape Town, having flown 6,030 miles in just under 40 hours, a record.

After 28 hours in Cape Town, Henshaw set off on the return journey, following a similar route. On February 9 he landed at Gravesend, 4 days, 10 hours and 16 minutes after his departure. He had broken the homeward record, established in a twin engine aircraft flown by two pilots, by 7 hours, and the out-and-return time by almost 31 hours. Henshaw's epic flight was, however, overshadowed by the imminence of war and, unlike those pioneers who preceded him by a few years, he received no public recognition.

Henshaw was awarded the MBE for his services during the war, and in 2003 he was invested as a Companion of the Air League by Prince Philip. The Royal Aeronautical Society elected him as an Honorary Fellow in 2003.

He wrote three books about his experiences: *The Flight of the Mew Gull*; *Sigh for a Merlin*; and *Wings over the Great Divide*.

Forty Seven Years Ago

The AHSA Journal was first published in 1960. The following are excerpts from Vol 1 of the Journal:

- January 1960 - The Yeoman Aviation YA-1 made its first flight at Bankstown on Friday 15th January. The YA-1 is a single seat agricultural aircraft with a Lycoming engine which has been developed from the K.S.A.S. Cropmaster.
- January 1960 - Pan American World Airways inaugurated their jet service to Australia when the Boeing 707-321 Intercontinental N716PA arrived at Sydney Airport on 18th December 1959.
- January 1960 - Qantas inaugurated their Sydney – Tokyo service with Electra VH-ECA on 21st December 1959
- February 1960 - The City Council of Newcastle NSW is investigating possible heliport sites. Australian Aircraft Sales of Sydney has announced plans for a Sydney-Newcastle service commencing in August 1960, with three Sikorsky S-58s operating from, possibly, Rose Bay Flying Boat Base, Sydney.
- March 1960 - On 17th March 1960, the Minister for Civil Aviation, Senator Paltridge, announced in a prepared statement that Cabinet had authorised design work for a new airport at Tullamarine, near Melbourne, but had not decided yet whether the new airport should be developed to “big jet” standard. The announcement followed several weeks of strong pressure from Sydney to defer development of the Tullamarine site in favour of extension of Sydney Airport's runway system for big jets, and equally strong pressure from Melbourne to press on with the Tullamarine development.

Calendar of Events

7-8 April 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

14 April 2007 Coffs Harbour Air Spectacular, Coffs Harbour NSW

13-16 April 2007 NATFLY National Ultralight Fly-in, Narromine NSW

14 April 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

21 April 2007 Wings, Wheels and Wine Air Show, Mudgee NSW

21-22 April 2007 AAAA National Fly-in and Air Show, Echuca Vic

5 May 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

6 May 2007 Fleet Air Arm Museum Air Show, Nowra NSW

19-20 May 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

25-26 May 2007 Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia Splash-in, Tiona Park, Wallis Lake NSW.

Coming Up

The AHSA (NSW) meeting on 4th July 2007 will feature the popular short talks by members. Any member willing to speak about his or her special interest in aviation, or perhaps their service or work experiences in aviation is encouraged to participate, and advise Committee Members John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth as soon as possible.

Contributions and Contacts

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

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

Thanks

Thanks to Nancy Bird, Graeme Henderson, Bill Holswich and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now overdue for 2007. A subscription renewal form is enclosed for those members from whom we have not received a returned form. This will be the last issue of *Southern Skies* sent to those who have not re-subscribed prior to the distribution of the May issue.

After some fine-tuning, John was the next to fly, and he was amazed at the effectiveness of the control system and the feeling of security that the wing gave, in spite of its flimsy appearance. John had built the wing for a stunt; it was intended to do some practice runs and to be flown for the Jacaranda Festival then to be thrown away. Flying his wing for the first time, John started to see that what he had built was a lot more significant than a one-stunt toy. That wing flew at the festival and for many months afterwards before the wood was broken up to fuel a barbeque on Australia Day. By then of course Mark II was



Photo 15. John Dickenson glides in for a landing, note the tow rope dragging in the river.

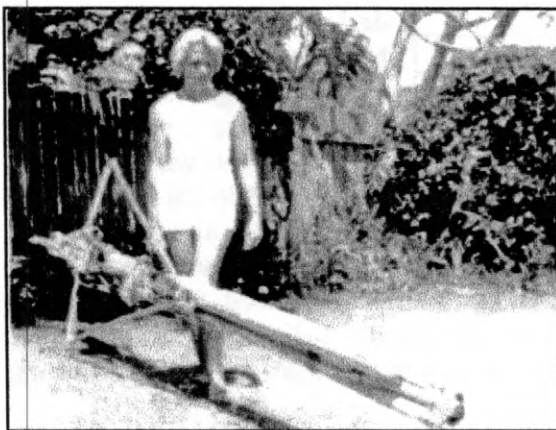


Photo 16. Amy Dickenson carries a folded Mark IV in one hand, 1965.

built, and found to have problems with durability. It had an all aluminium frame, and John had stuck the sail to the leading edge with contact adhesive. After a couple of flights the material started to delaminate from the tubing. Instantly the Mark II glider was abandoned.

Amy sewed the yellow nylon sail for the second Mark III, (the first Mark III had banana plastic). This glider had an all aluminium frame, battens and a scalloped cut to reduce sail flutter at the trailing edge.

Mark IV followed, Duraluminium frame, Terylene sail, stainless steel bolts and cables, and easily foldable for transporting.

Rod and John flew often for the next two years until John moved back to Sydney, where he

eventually met Mike Burns. Mike's company, Aerostructures began making Gliders using John's design in a deal with John. Aerostructures took John Dickenson's backyard project, and applied professional aircraft standards to it. This put the future of the aircraft type, hang gliding and micro-

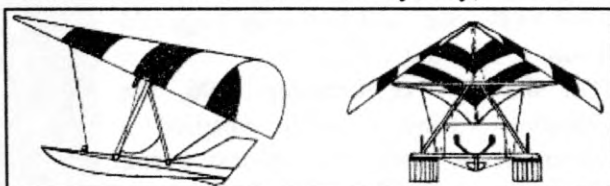


Figure 1. The Aero Structures Skiplane.



Photo 17. John Dickenson lands after breaking the endurance record. 1969.

lighting, on a sound footing. There was a 100% safety record with all of these wings up until this time.

The next major breakthrough for the sport was when Bill Moyes and Bill Bennett were taught to fly the glider by John and Mike. They bought gliders from Aerostructures, and took John's wing to the world. John continued to collaborate with Bill Moyes for the next few years, helping Bill in his quest to improve the performance of the wing. The rest, as they say, is history. In a modern hang glider you will find many

refinements but you can still see the basic features John Dickenson built in Grafton.

In September 1963, a whole new type of aircraft was invented - its simplicity is beautiful. John Dickenson invented it, and built it with only the simplest of tools. Rod Fuller - strong, quiet, champion water skier, and pilot at heart - flew it and proved its worth. Pat Crowe kept his head and dealt with the problem of; 'What do we do if it works?'

Times have changed; Health and Safety issues have removed the swings from the park where Helen inspired her father. It required the right place, the right man, and the right time. It took all of these people mentioned, plus the generosity of the other members of the water ski club. They

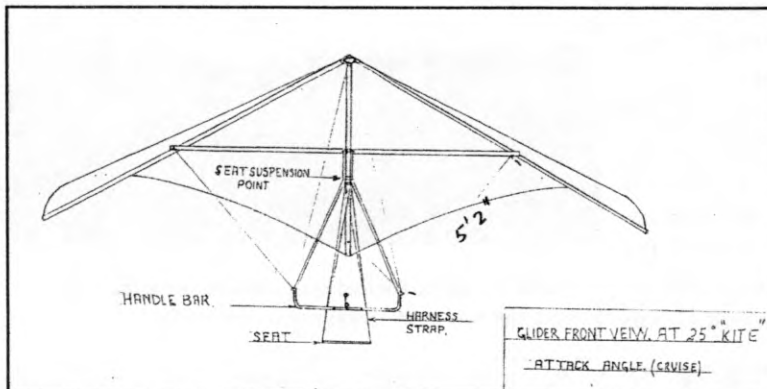


Figure 2. One of the Drawings sent by John Dickenson to Dr F.M.Rogallo, after Dr Rogallo wrote to John Dickenson asking for details about Johns' glider. 24th November 1964.

didn't have to let these bird men fly and take up precious water skiing time. It took the mighty Clarence River, wide enough to allow them to avoid wrapping Rod around the bridge. There was no release for the first attempts, and the two 70 foot long ski ropes had no weak link.

If you were to take John's design back in time, it could have been built 5000 years or more ago, light linen or silk, would make perfect sail material, light weight timbers

were available or Bamboo, strong ropes would have done the rest. Leonardo Da Vinci could have built a 'Dickenson Wing' as could Otto Lilienthal. This simplest of all aircraft remained hidden from all but one man. His basic maths and lack of formal training allowed him to think outside the box. His experience with flexible bat wings and his childhood fascination with building minimum structured model aircraft, plus a photo of Rogallo's gliding parachute and his daughter's request to be swung sideways, was all it took. Not much... just preparation meeting opportunity.

Grafton and John Dickenson's gift to the world is one of the purest forms of flying machine known to man, a wing by itself, not the poor relation of the other types of aircraft. 'The Dickenson Wing' has evolved into the ultimate flying machine, today's slick, fast and safe hang gliders. The way to appreciate that is to learn to fly one, and live man's age old dream to soar like a bird.

On the 28th of October 2006, the Clarence Valley Council unveiled a Memorial to mark this historic event. For assistance with accommodation or information about Grafton visit: www.clarencetourism.com. For more historical information about the Dickenson Wing email Graeme at flyingfree@aapt.net.au.

Note: Regretfully Amy Dickenson passed away in January 2002, after a long battle with breast cancer.



LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 6.

A few days ago I experienced a strong sense of place. At the time, I was visiting Jill Cook, of Torii Tours, in her office at No 74 Pitt Street, Sydney. Torii Tours has put many Australians in touch with the heritage of flight, through organised tours of aviation museums and air shows in New Zealand and America, including the "World's Greatest Aviation Celebration" - Oshkosh. Although it was modernised internally during the year 2000, the old Colonial Mutual Fire Insurance building, at No 74 Pitt Street, retains its original sandstone facade. It was here that George Augustine Taylor, back in 1909, edited *Building* magazine, and planned the creation of *The Aerial League of Australia*.

The first public meeting of the *Aerial League* was held in St James Hall, Sydney, on July 23, 1909. The meeting was preceded by the first aeronautical exhibition in Australia, with models displayed by Lawrence Hargrave, and other Australian inventors. The meeting, later that evening, was a tribute to the energy and organising skills of George Augustine Taylor. He also gave a lecture entitled, "*The Conquest of the Air*". About 600 Sydney citizens attended, including Lord Chelmsford, Governor of NSW, and Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Poore, Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Naval Station. Taylor concluded his address by advising, "every Australian to become a member of the *League* so as to encourage aerial defence". A point reinforced when Louis Bleriot crossed the English Channel by air two days later.

When Colin Defries arrived back in France, in early August, he found everyone involved with aviation engaged in frantic preparations for *la Grand Semaine d'Aviation de la Champagne*, to be held from August 22 to 29, on the plain of Betheny near Rheims. The *Great Aviation Week* was organised by a group of investors, with some of the prominent champagne vintners, and an expatriate American, James Gordon Bennett, putting up the prize money. Societe Ariel was preparing three French built Wright Model As for the contest while Bleriot had entered four aircraft, two XIs, one XII and the very latest XIII. Its preoccupation with the Rheims meeting was one of the reasons why Societe Ariel was late with the delivery of Defries' Model A. Defries probably also had difficulty with the Bleriot factory at Sureness, where his order for a Bleriot XI was just one of many others, triggered by the enormous publicity of the Channel flight.

Colin Defries was soon swept up in the excitement of the aviation scene he encountered in France, in the late summer of 1909. There exists an intriguing letter of introduction, dated August 5, written by M. Clemenceau of Societe Ariel to Lord Northcliffe, that suggests Colin Defries was looking for a sponsor to become a participant in the world's first international aviation competition. Lord Northcliffe had deep pockets when it came to aviation. Through his newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, he had donated the prize of £1000 won by Bleriot for his Channel flight. A translation of the letter, written by hand on Societe Ariel letterhead, reads: "*My Lord, Please allow me to particularly recommend to you the bearer of this letter, Mr Colin Defries, who wishes to discuss with you a matter of great mutual interest concerning aviation. In thanking you in advance for receiving him, please accept the assurances of my highest consideration. M. Clemenceau.*"

Defries and Lord Northcliffe both attended the Rheims meeting, although financial support from the latter appears not to have been forthcoming. As it happened, Defries was free, as a spectator, to join the company of a glittering international set of dignitaries, military observers and members of high society, for whom the convenience of elaborate grandstands and well stocked restaurants had been provided. Defries could also parade amongst the group as a genuine member of a new and exciting elite - the daring young aviator. No doubt he caught the eye of many of the young women in attendance - perhaps one more so than the others.

George Augustine Taylor was a big picture man. During August 1909 it became clear that his ambition for *The Aerial League of Australia* was to achieve nothing less than an awakening of the new nation of Australia, by demonstrating to the world that the energy and genius of modern aeronautical

progress resided here in the antipodes. That month he wrote in *Building* magazine: "Will Australia retrieve her lost position? I think so. The same open minds that opened the mystery of the ages are still with us. The recognition of the Commonwealth Government has not come too late, and the coming year will undoubtedly see such Australian discovery in aerial navigation that will, I am sure, carry the world's attention to this part of the earth". On August 5, *The Sydney Morning Herald* carried an editorial under the heading, *The Aerial League*. In part it read: "There are several reasons why Australians are likely to take a lively interest in flying machines. In the first place there is a strain of reckless daring in the growing national character, born of the sun, and the wind, and the wide spaces of a great land. It is natural for men to take risks when the eyes are keen, the nerves steady, and the air and sky are clear. Young Australians should have all the needful elements of a successful aviator in himself, as well as every incentive in the natural conditions of his daily life". It is ironic that the Herald's description of the future Australian aviator also fits that of the iconic bronzed ANZAC, who did achieve the first awakening of the new nation of Australia, at Gallipoli in 1915. Further irony lies in the death of Lawrence Hargrave's only son Geoffrey, at Gallipoli, on May 25, 1915. Lawrence soon followed his son, dying on July 6, 1915, from peritonitis, following an appendectomy at Lister Private Hospital.

While in Paris, Colin Defries was a guest at the Elysee-Palace-Hotel, on the Champs-Elysees, not far from the office of Societe Ariel. His main concern was to hasten the delivery of his Wright Model A, and to take a few refresher flights in it from the company aerodrome - Port Aviation, at nearby Juvisy. Defries stated that he, "gave five flights with my machine at Juvisy, generally in the early morning, but I did not stay up longer than seven minutes at a time." Societe Ariel had by then employed, as chief pilot, a brilliant young aviator named Eugene Lefebvre. Lefebvre was the crowd favourite at the Rheims meeting, demonstrating his Wright Model A with daring and skill. On September 7, Lefebvre was back at Port Aviation testing production Model As. Colin Defries described what happened on that day: "The brazing of the rod connecting the elevator to the lever gave way. When the machine hit, the forepart of it went about four feet into the ground. Then it turned over on him, and the motor struck him, killing him instantly." This was the first recorded death of a pilot, as a result of an accident involving a powered aeroplane. Defries was shaken by the event, and immediately sent a letter of condolence to M. Clemenceau of Societe Ariel. He received a reply dated September 9: "*My dear friend, I would like to thank you sincerely for your letter of condolence, as well as for the proposals you made us. As before, we still have the same intention to work with you, under a mutual agreement, and we are always available to you in this respect. Please accept, my dear friend, my best wishes. M. Clemenceau.*" Once again we are left to speculate about Defries proposals to work with Societe Ariel under a mutual agreement.

Colin Defries was deeply affected by the sudden and violent death of Eugene Lefebvre. Furthermore, Lefebvre's death had been caused by the failure of a vital part of the same type of aircraft he, Defries, was soon to demonstrate in Australia. It was also close to the anniversary of another mid-air failure of a Wright Model A, which had caused the only other death associated with powered flight. Lt Selfridge was a passenger, when he lost his life at Fort Myer on September 17, 1908. Defries' contemporary, J.T.C. Moore-Brabazon, gave up flying immediately, after witnessing the death of his friend Charles Rolls at Bournemouth on July 12, 1910, when his Model A also failed in mid-air. A similar urge to walk away from aviation must have been experienced by Defries. However, by now the Australian connections had invested a considerable sum, which could produce a dividend only by a series of successful exhibitions in Australian capital cities. Defries faced a serious dilemma - how to satisfy his obligations to the Melbourne Motor Garage, and J. & N. Tait, while at the same time protecting himself from serious injury - or even sudden death?

When Colin Defries embarked on the *R.M.S. Orontes*, late in September, to return to Australia, he was in company with a beautiful young woman, the daughter of a wealthy American textile merchant. On September 24, 1909, as soon as *Orontes* was safely at sea, and perhaps beyond any restraint from family influences, the happy couple were married. The bride's maiden name was Stella McNair. On October 1, they were joined on the high seas by a Wright Model A, as cargo on board *R. M. S. Otranto*, also bound for Australia. That Wright Model A was named - *The Stella*.....**John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

May 2007 No.406

May Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2nd May 2007, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The guest speaker for the meeting will be Society member, Bruce Hall, whose topic will be:

460 Squadron RAAF and the Loss of Lancaster ED711

This presentation will provide a brief introductory outline of the situation with Australian bomber command aircrews during the early stages of the formation of bomber command squadrons and a background to 460 Squadron and its aircraft and early missions.

The body of the presentation will focus on an account of the missions flown by and eventual loss of ED711 and its crew, one of which was Bruce's father-in-law, F/Sgt Frank Ward. Bruce will provide an insight into the typical young Australian who volunteered for service with the RAAF, the training these men received and the traumatic life they lived as bomber crew in one of the darkest periods of WWII.

The presentation provides a description of the raid on the Skoda works at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia in April 1943 in which Frank's aircraft (ED711) was lost and concludes with a surprising postscript that emerged only recently on the actual circumstances of the loss of ED711.

April Meeting

The April meeting featured our annual quiz night. Eric Favelle hosted the 24th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz, and provided an excellent set of curly questions, some of which are provided below for the benefit of members unable to attend. Winner of the prestigious Slipstream Trophy was Ian Debenham.

Last year's co-winner of the Aircraft Recognition competition, Anthony Coleiro provided a full complement of aircraft images for the 39th Annual Aircraft Recognition competition. Anthony

provided photographs of helicopters, airline, general aviation, ultralight, glider and military aircraft, including Mil Mi26, Cierva autogyro, Piasecki H-31, DH114 Heron, B777, C152 Texas Taildragger, Dornier Skyservant, RANS Courier, Hughes Lightwing, Pilatus B-4, Grumman S-2E Tracker and Consolidated B-24 Liberator. Winner of the Brian White Memorial Trophy was Warwick Bigsworth, whilst runner-up was Eric Favelle. The winner of the President's Trophy was Roger Kennedy, who attained the best average score.

Following a suggestion made by Allen Clarke at the 2007 AGM, next year's competitions will consist of half the questions or photographs being supplied by the winner of this year's competitions and half by other members of the Society.

Committee Meeting

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

On the Internet

Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association – Italy
(www.aopa.it/googlemaps-apt.asp)

The Italian A.O.P.A. has placed aerodrome maps of 283 countries on the web at this site. When you the "countries" list, you will find 297 aerodromes in Australia; 41 in New Zealand and 19 in Papua New Guinea.

Collectair – Cessna
(<http://collectair.com/cessna.html>)

This site features comprehensive information on the Cessna T-37 jet trainer and the Cessna CH-1 helicopter, later known as the Skyhook. It details how each aircraft was developed along with the very successful and the not-so-successful results. It also describes the development of other American light helicopters, with plenty of diagrams and photographs.

Superwombat.com
(www.superwombats.com/Airports.htm)

This site contains hundreds of aviation images from around the world. Many of these are not on sites such as Airliners.com or Jetphotos.com. There

are a number of Australian and New Zealand airports included, with many images of non-scheduled operators and business aircraft taken at Sydney.

Aviation Trivia Quiz

Here are just a few of the questions posed at the quiz night at the April meeting:

1. What was the original name given to the DH-100 Vampire?
2. The first Tiger Moth imported into Australia on 28th May 1935 was sold to?
3. What was the first type of helicopter purchased by the RAAF?
4. Who was the first woman to travel by air from England to Australia?
5. What was the first pressurised aircraft to be registered and operated in Australia?

Answers next month.

Obituary

Wing Commander Robert Henry Maxwell (Bobby) Gibbes DSO, DFC and Bar, OAM

"Bobby" Gibbes was born in Young on 6 May 1916 and grew up on a series of family owned sheep stations before their move to Manly. Bobby had flown as a passenger in a number of aircraft as a child and in his autobiography stated that prior to the flight "... was terribly nervous... but after becoming airborne my fear evaporated and I found the experience both exciting and full of interest". This was the start of his lifelong love of flying.

With war looming in Europe, Bobby started private flying lessons and after enlistment reported to No.4 Elementary Flying Training School RAAF at Mascot on 5 February 1940 as an Air Cadet. He soloed on 13 February and on completion of his Primary Training was posted to 22 SQN at Richmond, NSW, for Intermediate Training on the CAC Wirraway. This completed, and to his horror, he was transferred to Point Cook, Victoria for Advanced Training on the Avro Anson. He had set his sights on fighters and protested to be transferred to a fighter unit. His efforts succeeded and he was posted to 23 SQN at Archerfield, which was equipped with Wirraways and Hudson bombers. Here he honed his skills and was assessed as an "Above average fighter and fighter bomber pilot".

He was posted to Williamtown to become Adjutant of the newly created 450 SQN with the rank of Flying Officer. After an intense period establishing the unit's command and support structure, Bobby and the Unit embarked for Egypt where it arrived in May 1941. Three days later Gibbes was posted to 3 SQN RAAF at Lydda, which was being re-equipped with P-40 Tomahawks and had been highly successful in its operations against

the Germans and Italians with a score of over 60 combat victories.

On 9 June 1941, with a total of 6 hours flying Tomahawks, Gibbes participated in the squadron's opening engagement of the Syrian campaign in an attack against the Vichy French Air Force Base at Rayak. His first combat victory took place on 10 July 1941 when he downed a Vichy Dewoitine D.502 fighter, one of five that had attacked a formation of RAF Blenheim bombers. This was the start of his long and eventful air combat career that spanned two years with 3 SQN in the see-sawing battles for the control of the North African desert.

Bobby's honest and simply written combat reports over this period are well described in his autobiography "*You Live But Once*". Here the tactics, the loss of friends, the frustration and fears of his air combat operations are clearly evident. Air to air combat with Luftwaffe Ace Hans-Joachim Marseille, the "Star of Africa", a dogfight between 3, 112 Squadrons and Messerschmitt 109s that lasted over an hour, his bail out after being shot down by a Ju88, his later landing in a single seat P-40 190 miles behind enemy lines in December 1942 to rescue a downed fellow pilot, being shot down again and walking 70 miles back through enemy lines all attest to the mettle of Bobby Gibbes.

He rose to command 3 SQN and finished his North Africa tour with 10 1/4 aircraft destroyed in air to air combat, 5 probably destroyed, 16 damaged and 2 destroyed on the ground.

With the North African campaign over and after a short sojourn in the UK where he tried unsuccessfully to be posted to a de Havilland Mosquito squadron, he returned to Australia where he was posted to 2 OTU in January 1944. A quick operational mission to New Britain with 77 SQN was followed by the busy and sometimes hair-raising task of operational training on P-40s, Spitfires, Boomerangs and Wirraways.

Transferred to 80 Wing flying Spitfire VIIIs from Darwin and now a Wing Commander, his aircraft suffered an engine failure that resulted in both a crash landing in which he suffered burns and meeting his future wife Jean who tended his injuries. In early 1945 Gibbes led 79 SQN to Morotai in the Halmahera Islands. Here 79 SQN joined with 452 and 457 Squadrons on straffing attacks on enemy troop and transport concentrations in what had become a virtual backwater of the war. Gibbes completed 44 operational missions from Morotai.

From the book "*Sepik Pilot*" (James Sinclair) Chapter 9, Court Martial,

"On 19th April 1945, at Headquarters, First Tactical Air Force, RAAF, Morotai, W/C R. H. Gibbes (No 260714) DSO, DFC and Bar, was

charged by court martial with being guilty of conduct to the prejudice of good order and Air Force discipline. He was accused of three offences under section 40 of the Air Force Act, of having in the months of February, March and April, 1945, at Morotai, attempted to sell, otherwise than in the course of his duty, a total of four bottles of gin, wine and whiskey. Although the date of the first offence alleged was clearly wrong - Gibbes was not even at Morotai in February- Gibbes pleaded guilty to the charges (foolishly, in the opinion of an experienced legal man who reached Morotai just after the conclusion of the hearing). He was convicted of all charges. The sentence of the Court was that Wing Commander Gibbes be reduced in rank to Flight Lieutenant. The sentence was varied by the Air Officer Commanding 1st TAF so as to read 'to be reduced to the rank of Squadron Leader'. This was confirmed to the accused on 23 April 1945."

In July 1945 he was attached to RAAF Headquarters, Melbourne and remained there until his discharge in January 1946.

Maintaining his love of aviation and following a short period as a flying Stock and Station Agent in NSW, Gibbes went to New Guinea for what would be a long and eventful business and civil aviation career. In 1947, he pioneered scheduled air transport as Gibbes Sepik Airways flying a varied fleet of civil and ex-military machines that included the Noorduyn Norseman and ex-Luftwaffe JU.52 that he had flown from Sweden to Australia. He sold out to Mandated Airlines in 1958 but continued to trade as GSA until absorbed into Mandated in 1960.

Bobby and Jean also ventured into the operation of a coffee plantation (Tremarne) and built a number of hotels, including the famous Bird of Paradise Hotel in Goroka, in a pioneering New Guinea tourism venture.

He was an accomplished sailor and after the sale of their New Guinea interests he purchased and sailed a 42 foot catamaran "Billabong" from the UK through the Mediterranean and eventually to Australia arriving in July 1979. At age 65 he commenced construction of a twin engined homebuilt aircraft, the "Cri-cri" in his home completing the task some ten years later. On 20 May 1990, at age 74, he test flew the aircraft at Narromine, NSW. He flew it for a number of years as test pilot and continued to maintain his love of aviation throughout his later years.

Bobby Gibbes is survived by his wife Jean without whom he stated "...he could never have lived such a fulfilling and happy life as a civilian" and their daughters Julie and Robyn.

The Temora Aviation Museum, which has had a long association with Bobby, painted its Spitfire VIII

in his personal markings in 2001. As a final tribute to Bobby's service to the RAAF, to Australia and to aviation, the Museum undertook a rare fly-past over his service at St Thomas' Anglican Church at North Sydney on Tuesday 17th April. This was a rare event for the Museum as its aircraft are not flown over built up areas. However, in this one-off instance the Spitfire provided a final tribute to this great Australian who continually risked his life in the skies over North Africa and the Pacific.

The RAAF supplied four F/A-18 Hornets in its tribute to Bobby with a fly-past over his funeral, including a "missing man" formation.

Book Sale

Author Derrick Rolland still has copies of his books for sale at specially reduced prices: *Aerial Agriculture in Australia*, published 1996, and *Airmen I Have Met - Their Stories*, published 1999.

Both books are available for \$38.00 each, inc. P&P. Orders can be made direct to Derrick at 6 Alpine View Avenue, Bright Vic. 3741. ph (03) 5755 2053.

Forty Seven Years Ago

The AHSA Journal was first published in 1960. The following are excerpts from Vol 1 of the Journal:

April 1960. Ansett Transport Industries has made a take-over offer to the Directors of East-West Airlines because of A.T.I. concerns at overlapping of services provided by Airlines of N.S.W. and East-West Airlines. The directors recommended to shareholders that the offer be declined.

April 1960. On 19 April, the CSIRO issued a statement that it could increase rainfall by about 15% in some areas by its rainmaking techniques and said that rain in the Snowy Mountains had been increased to this extent. On 28 April the Minister for Development, Senator Spooner, said that the Snowy Mountains Authority would not agree with the claims and could not let them pass unchallenged, but he gave no figures in support.

May 1960. Following Ansett-ANA's take-over bid for East-West Airlines, the NSW Government was approached by the latter company for help to combat the move. After Cabinet consideration, the Premier stated that the Government would be prepared to negotiate with East-West for an extension of franchise to ensure a balanced development of the company in giving service to country areas, subject to satisfactory assurances that the company would prevent trafficking in shares which would place control in the hands of a monopoly. On 24 May 1960, shareholders of East-West Airlines rejected Ansett-ANA's offer.

May 1960. On 22 May at Lae, New Guinea, Mr R.M. Ansett announced that Ansett-ANA had ordered six Max Holste MH250 Super Broussards for delivery within two years at a cost of about £100,000 each. The company was interested in the tourist industry in Papua and New Guinea and would use DC-3s for internal work for the first 18 months and then replace them with Super Broussards. The Minister for Civil Aviation said that no application had been made for permission to import the aircraft; and that although TAA and Ansett-ANA had been given permission to operate between Australia and New Guinea, the franchise for operation of internal services in New Guinea was in the hands of TAA.

May 1960. Construction of a new airstrip at Pelican, about 15 miles from Newcastle is at an advanced stage and at least one aircraft has used it. The airstrip is part of the Pelican Air-a-Motel which is claimed to be the only one of its kind in the world. A heliport will also be constructed and an application has been made for part of Lake Macquarie to be designated as a landing area for seaplanes.

Boeing 737 – Some interesting facts

Overall, the entire 737 family is the best-selling commercial jet in history, winning orders for more than 6,000 airframes.

On February 13, 2006, Boeing delivered the 5,000th 737 to Southwest Airlines. Guinness World Records acknowledged the 737 as the most produced large commercial jet aircraft in aviation history. More than 541 operators fly 737s into more than 1,200 cities in 190 countries.

With more than 4,100 aircraft in service, the 737 represents more than a quarter of the total worldwide fleet of large commercial jets flying today.

On average, about 1,250 737s are in the air at all times; one takes off or lands every 4.6 seconds.

The 737 fleet has carried more than 12 billion passengers. Since its commercial revenue service history began in 1968, the 737 fleet has flown more than 75 billion miles - equivalent to approximately 403 round trips from the Earth to the sun.

The 737 fleet has produced more than 296 million hours of revenue service for its operators - equivalent to about 33,789 years of continuous service.

The 737 fleet has made more than 232 million flights.

Of the more than 16,173 Boeing/Douglas commercial jets ordered, approximately 34 percent have been 737 family members.

Airlines ordered 737 models of the Next-Generation 737 before the first aircraft was delivered on December 17, 1997.

Within five years of entering service, the worldwide fleet of Next-Generation 737s surpassed 10 million flight hours, a feat equal to one aircraft flying more than 1,141 years non-stop. The Next-Generation 737 is the first and only commercial jetliner to reach this milestone so quickly.

Boeing made history again when it delivered the 1,500th Next-Generation 737 in six years, sooner than any other commercial aircraft model. The previous record holder was the family of Classic 737-300s, -400s and -500s, which reached the milestone in 10 years. The competing A320 family reached that mark in 13 years.

Typically, about 50 gallons of paint are used to paint an average 737. Once the paint is dry, it will weigh approximately 250 pounds per aircraft, depending on the paint scheme.

There are approximately 36.6 miles of wire on the Next-Generation 737-600/-700/-800/-900 models four miles less than the 737-300/-400/-500 models.

On average, there are approximately 367,000 parts on a Next-Generation 737 aircraft.

Calendar of Events

5 May 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

6 May 2007 Fleet Air Arm Museum Air Show. Nowra NSW

19-20 May 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

25-26 May 2007 Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia Splash-in, Tiona Park, Wallis Lake NSW.

2 June 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW.

30 June – 1 July 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW.

Coming Up

The AHSA (NSW) meeting on 4th July 2007 will feature the popular short talks by members. Any member willing to speak about his or her special interest in aviation, or perhaps their service or work experiences in aviation is encouraged to participate, and advise Committee Members John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth as soon as possible.

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).

Thanks

Thanks to Allen Clarke and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 7.

The original J.&N. Tait plan, for the first exhibition of powered flight in Australia, envisaged the event to take place in late June, 1909, at a racecourse in Melbourne. It is interesting to speculate whether, if this programme had been successfully carried out on schedule, the wings of *The Aerial League of Australia* would have been prematurely clipped. If powered flight in Australia had been accomplished in June, would George Augustine Taylor have persevered with the construction of his own powered aeroplane and glider? As it happened, the delayed arrival of the Wright Model A provided time for Taylor, through *The Aerial League*, to maintain the focus of Australians on aviation developments within their own country. He commented: "There is every likelihood of Australia having her own flying machines before the Wright aeroplane brought out by Messrs J.&N. Tait has a chance to fly." In Taylor's mind there was a sense of urgency to get an Australian built aeroplane into the air before Colin Defries arrived back in the country with his Wright Model A.

Even without his involvement with aeronautics and wireless telegraphy, the year 1909 was going to be challenging for George Augustine Taylor. In the April edition of *Building*, one of the publications he edited, he announced that the first Australasian exhibition of accessories to building and engineering construction would be held from October 20 at the Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park. The exhibition was conceived by Taylor, and it would fall to him to organise it. Dealing with applications for space from a multitude of exhibitors, on top of his normal busy workload, seemed likely to consume any spare time he had. But it was also in April that *The Aerial League of Australia* came into being, and as Honorary Secretary he gave his time unstintingly to its causes.

In June 1909, Alfred Deakin became Prime Minister for the third time, heading a government in which his coalition partner, Joseph Cook, was the new Minister for Defence. With exquisite timing, and armed with a letter of introduction from the Member for Wentworth, W.H. Kelly, Taylor was in Melbourne on June 18, for a meeting with Joseph Cook. Taylor, on behalf of *The Aerial League*, was seeking government financial support for Australian aeronautical inventors. While in Melbourne, he also met with members of *The Automobile Club of Victoria*, who had already offered their assistance in forming a Victorian Branch of *The Aerial League*. Lawrence Adamson, whose money was instrumental in bringing the Wright aeroplane to Australia, became a member of the Victorian Branch committee.

Such were the persuasive powers of George Augustine Taylor that, soon after returning to Sydney, he received a response from Joseph Cook. "This government will offer a prize of £5000 conditionally on its being supplemented by another £5000 from private sources on conditions to be hereafter set out. Best wishes to your League and all others doing useful work for defence." When Taylor tabled this letter at the next committee meeting of *The Aerial League* he said: "I have also to report that I have had several conferences with the Minister regarding conditions of trials of machines and have received his promise that the conditions will be submitted to this Council prior to gazettal." It was now suggested by Joseph Cook that *The Aerial League* should, as soon as possible, get on with the fund raising necessary to match the Commonwealth offer.

The Aerial League chose one of Sydney's most lavish and ornate interiors, the Vestibule of the Sydney Town Hall, to hold the launch of its fund raising campaign. Extraordinary interest was shown by the public, who turned up in such numbers on the evening of August 28, that, when the large carved and panelled entry doors to the Vestibule were closed, before the start of the meeting, many were left outside. The Lord Mayor welcomed those in attendance, and he was followed by a succession of speeches from eminent military and political personalities. It was left finally to George Augustine Taylor to submit the resolution that a fund be set up, to receive public subscriptions, to be called *The Australian Aerial Navigation Fund*. In his speech he said: "The ridicule cast upon Hargrave was a black spot on the history of Australia until we achieved something to wipe it out. Hargrave

invented the box-kite. It was shown to the Wright Brothers in America. They made friends with the air with it and they now put a motor behind it and were flying. An Australian had opened the portal in this great discovery. Was Australia still to sleep on the doorstep?" Amid cheers, the resolution was carried unanimously. It was further resolved that the secretary and treasurer of *The Aerial League* should also be secretary and treasurer of the Fund. It was also resolved that, once the Fund had received £5000, any surplus should be apportioned to the state branches of *The Aerial League*. On September 4, Taylor sent out letters to 250 wealthy Australian individuals and companies asking for subscriptions.

With the significant sum of £10,000 now in prospect for the designer of a flying machine, which met the conditions set down by the Commonwealth Government, Taylor became a member of a team competing for the prize. There seemed to be no discomfort, on his part, regarding the ethics of avoiding a conflict of interests. After all, he had lobbied the government to put up the prize money, had played a major role in setting the conditions for the competition, seemed likely to be called on for advice about the merits of the various competitors, and was himself the secretary of the private fund which would provide half the prize money.

Early in September Taylor opened his aeroplane factory in Surry Hills and commenced work on several projects, the most challenging being a powered aeroplane. At the same time he announced that his *Building and Engineering Exhibition*, which was scheduled to open on October 20, would also include several aeronautical exhibits. In addition, for a fortnight from October 26, a *Great Display of Aviation* would be held at Prince Alfred Park. Taylor promised daily flights, including weight lifting kites, balloons and flying models. Further attractions would include fireworks, a unique cinematograph show, and a sensational *Fighting the Flames* display.

Working to a schedule clearly aimed at achieving the first flight in a powered aeroplane in Australia during the *Great Display of Aviation*, the Surry Hills factory had completed an airframe by the end of September - a surprisingly short construction time of about three weeks. A report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of October 2, states: "A frame of a full-sized aeroplane is only waiting its engine from Melbourne before being tested with other war kites at the aviation display to be held later this month." Taylor's aeroplane was described as a Bleriot-like monoplane with a tail similar to that of a fantail pigeon. It was constructed of drawn steel tubing, with a wing span of 26ft and an overall length of 25ft. The undercarriage consisted of ball-bearing mounted wheels with pneumatic tyres. Taylor's engineer friend, Francis Stowe, designed the propeller, which was 6ft in diameter, and was made of aluminium. The construction of a biplane glider was also in progress at the Surry Hills factory. It was intended to use this glider for training, before attempting to fly the powered monoplane.

It is probable that Lawrence Hargrave was engaged as a consultant for Taylor's airframes. Taylor said of his monoplane: "I am indebted to Lawrence Hargrave's paper on aviation, read by him before the Royal Society on July 1, 1891, which shows a type almost a facsimile of that used by Bleriot in his flight across the Channel." Despite the risk, Taylor seemed determined to fly the aircraft himself commenting: "If I succeed in making the first flight in Australia, I will be doing something to vindicate the underhand work of the foreign aviator who stole the result of Lawrence Hargrave's brains." However, the aeroplane engine, expected from Melbourne, failed to materialise.

George Augustine Taylor's faith in the philanthropy of Australia's private citizens, when it came to aeronautical engineering, was, it seems, misplaced. During October, he reported to a committee meeting of *The Aerial League* that he had received a negligible response from the 250 recipients of his mail-out, seeking subscriptions to *The Australian Aerial Navigation Fund*. Furthermore, despite the glittering and enthusiastic meeting at the Sydney Town Hall, the total of subscriptions to the Fund was only £56, of which a Mr Watson of Melbourne had donated £40, and Taylor, himself, had donated £10. The prospect of the *Fund* reaching the target of £5000 seemed remote indeed!

Time was now running out for Taylor's search for a suitable engine for his monoplane. Finally, all depended on a 21 year old engineering student, Percy Middleton, who assured Taylor that he could provide an engine by October 27, for the start of the *Great Display of Aviation*. Colin Defries arrived in Melbourne on October 26, blissfully unaware of the anxiety his presence back in Australia was creating in Sydney. Percy Middleton had not yet produced the promised engine.....**John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

June 2007 No.407

June Meeting

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6th June 2007, 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 of the meeting will be:

Flying boats and seaplanes

and dedicated to Bryan Monkton, whose biography was released for sale late last year.

Flying boats have played a crucial role in the development of military and civil aviation in the South Pacific and Australia has had a significant number of pioneering seaplane and flying boat operators, including Qantas, Trans Oceanic Airways, Barrier Reef Airways, Ansett Flying Boat Services and of course the RAAF. Perhaps Australia's three most notable flying boat commanders have been Bryan Monkton, P.G. Taylor and Stewart Middlemiss, all of whom contributed greatly to flying boat operations.

Members are invited to bring in their photographs, slides and any flying boat or seaplane memorabilia; the showing of any videos or DVDs will be subject to time limitations.

May Meeting

The guest speaker for the meeting was Bruce Hall, who spoke about 460 Squadron RAAF, and in particular the loss of Lancaster ED711 which carried among the crew, his late father-in-law, F/Sgt Frank Ward.

Bruce introduced the talk with a background of 460 Squadron, and described the RAF bomber fleet of the 1930s, including the Handley Page Heyford, which was which was already obsolete by the time war broke out, and the Avro Manchester. The latter, which was powered by twin X-type Rolls Royce Vulture engines, proved to be inadequate in service and was retired from operations in 1942.

The Squadron subsequently used the Vickers Wellington and Handley Page Halifax, before receiving its first Avro Lancasters in October 1942.

Bruce discussed the difference between the models of the Lancaster which had the Packard Merlin engines rather than the Rolls Royce made version, and noted that the Packard Merlin developed more power and was considered more reliable.

Frank Ward went through the usual RAAF recruitment process via Bradfield Park and undertook further training at Narromine, before proceeding to EFTS in Canada and then on to the United Kingdom. Frank initially trained on Manchesters and later converted to Lancasters when they came on line.

Frank's sorties included a task to St Nazaire U-boat station, where the aircraft was attacked by a JU-88 and suffered severe damage. One bomb was hung up, and through the efforts of Frank, was eventually released; both the pilot and Frank were awarded the DFM for their actions.

Frank's final mission was a raid on the Skoda works at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia in April 1943. His aircraft was reported as being shot down, probably by a night-fighter, and crashing near Boeblingen, Germany. But following his research and dialogue with other historians, Bruce discovered that there was a young witness to the shooting down of the aircraft by ack-ack guns from the town. The young lad "liberated" a number of documents from the aircraft, but unfortunately these were lost later in the war. The reason as to why the aircraft was so far off course was not determined; however the discovery of the real fate of the aircraft was able to provide closure for Frank's family.

During the question time following Bruce's presentation, fellow AHSA member, Ron Houghton, provided an insight into his time in Bomber Command as a Halifax pilot.

News from Papua New Guinea

Bill Holswich has kindly provided the following from the *Post-Courier On-line*:

"The National Museum and Art Gallery has called on the Government to quickly decide on the Swamp Ghost as corrosion is slowly eating into the war relic. The director of the national Museum, Simon Potraituk, has expressed concern about recent media reports the Swamp Ghost was taken out of the

country. He said these reports were false as the war relic was presently housed at the National Forest Product yard at Voco Point in Lae.

However, due to its present location, the Swamp Ghost was exposed to the sea breeze and the rate of corrosion taking place was hard to contain, he said. It has been about nine months since the war relic was moved from the Northern Province to Lae. Mr Potraituk said the longer the Government took to make a decision, the more corrosion would eat into the relic. He said he carried out a physical inspection with Culture and Tourism Minister Nick Kuman following reports the relic had been taken away. Yesterday he assured the public the Swamp Ghost was safe in PNG."

B-17E 41-2446, was one of a number of aircraft that took off from Garbutt Airfield, late on the night February 22 1942 to bomb shipping in Simpson Harbour at Rabaul at dawn the next morning, and return via Port Moresby's 7-Mile to refuel before returning to Townsville. Only five bombers made it to Rabaul, the others aborting. This particular aircraft was damaged over Rabaul and forced landed on the north coast of New Guinea. The wreck was discovered in 1972 and nick-named the Swamp Ghost. For some excellent reading on this aircraft, see the website www.pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/b-17/41-2446.htm or several others which you can find through Google.

Aviation Trivia Quiz

The answers to the questions posed at the quiz night at the April meeting are:

1. What was the original name given to the DH-100 Vampire?
A. The Spidercrab
2. The first Tiger Moth imported into Australia on 28th May 1935 was sold to?
A. Royal Newcastle Aero Club
3. What was the first type of helicopter purchased by the RAAF?
A. Sikorsky S-51
4. Who was the first woman to travel by air from England to Australia?
A. "Chubby" Miller
5. What was the first pressurised aircraft to be registered and operated in Australia?
A. Lockheed L-749 Constellation

Forty Seven Years Ago

From the pages of the AHSA Journal

Vol.1 No.6. In TAA's first accident in which passengers have lost their lives, Fokker Friendship VH-TFB "Abel Tasman" crashed at Mackay, Queensland on 10.06.60. The first Friendship of TAA's fleet, it was flown from Holland by a TAA crew and arrived in Melbourne on 16th April 1959. The RAN survey ship "Warrego" has been engaged

in raising the wreckage from the sea bed and the pieces are being reassembled on a wooden frame on the Mackay Harbour Board shed.

Vol.1 No.6. On 4 June 1960, at Bankstown, the first De Havilland DHA3 Drover 3 VH-FDA, "The Inlander" (c/n 5019) was accepted on behalf of the NSW Section of the RFDS by the Governor General, Viscount Dunrossil, patron of the Federal Council of the RFDS of Australia. Modification of the second Drover of the NSW Section (VH-DRA, c/n 5004) has commenced and should be completed by November. The Drover 3 has three Lycoming engines which give an increase in cruising speed of about 25mph, provide a better one-engine-out and hot day performance, and increase the ceiling and range.

Vol.1 No.6 Qantas Lockheed L1049G Super Constellations are being converted to L1049H standard for use as freighters. The aircraft are flown to the Lockheed plant at Ontario, California, where the large doors and metal floor are fitted. On return, they are fitted with a galley in the forward fuselage, quickly detachable hat racks, and a bulk-head and door to separate the forward and aft sections in the cabin. The door has been added to reduce animal smells when monkeys for polio vaccine culture are being carried and provision has been made for hat racks because the Super Constellations can then be sold as passenger-freight aircraft.

Calendar of Events

1-3 June 2007 AvOZ AOPA AGM and fly-in, Narromine NSW

2 June 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW.

9-11 June 2007 Old Raglan Station Fly-in and Air Show, Old Raglan Qld.

22-24 June 2007 Recreational Flying Fly-in, Camden Haven NSW

30 June – 1 July 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW.

3-5 August 2007 Wide Bay International Air Show, Bundaberg Qld.

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).

Thanks

Thanks to Eric Favelle, Bill Holswich and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

TRANS-AIR

STOP PRESS
A non-stop service linking Melbourne and Perth was introduced by TAA on October 28. It will augment the daily services. The non-stop service leaves Melbourne at 11 p.m. each Saturday, and on return, Perth at 9 a.m. on Sunday.

Non-Stop Service Links Melbourne and Brisbane

FIRST
"ROCKET"
FLIGHT

RECORD FLIGHT 3 h. 15 m.

One of the most important progressive developments in Australian commercial aviation since World War II is the introduction of the non-stop Convair-Liner passenger service linking Brisbane and Melbourne.

The service has been very aptly named the "Rocket" service.

Passengers who have travelled on this new non-stop service realise what a major forward step in commercial aviation the new service means to Australia.

South-bound

It has brought Brisbane to within 3 hours 50 minutes of Melbourne under normal flying conditions, despite the distance of 926 miles.

On the inaugural flight to Brisbane, however, record time was established — 3 hours 15 minutes. On the return trip from Brisbane next day, the scheduled travelling time of 4 hours 10 minutes was also exceeded, the flying time being 3 hours 48 minutes.

Passengers out of Brisbane on the first flight included Mr. Reg Vickers, editor of the Brisbane "Telegraph," and Mrs. Vickers; Mr. McLuckie, of the Brisbane Chamber of Manufacturers; Mr. Tom Martin, aviation writer for the "Courier Mail"; Mr. Wallace, assistant manager in Brisbane of the A.B.C.; Mr. Burton, aviation writer of the A.B.C.; and Mr. Beioley, of 4KQ.

North-bound

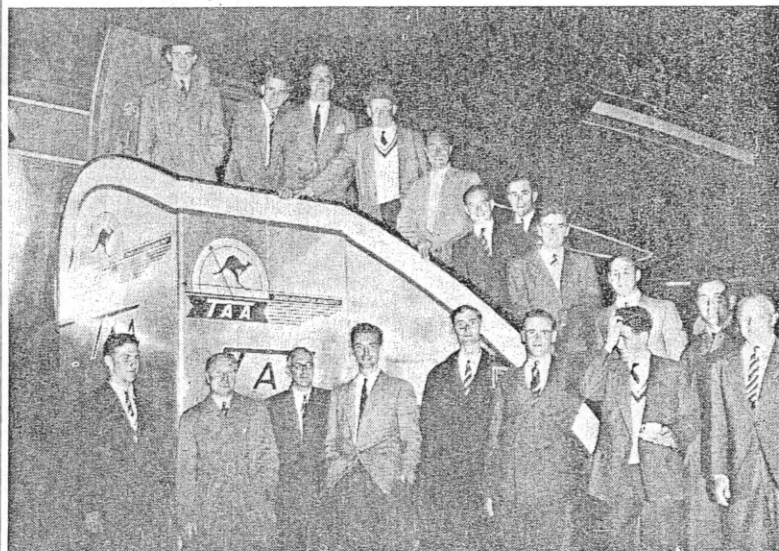
On the northbound first flight the passengers included the Lord Mayor of Melbourne (Cr. J. S. Disney), Cr. G. F. Pedersen, of Melbourne; Mrs. T. J. Ryan, Queensland Government representative in Melbourne; Mr. J. Grigsby, of the "Age"; Miss C. Strachan, of the "Argus"; Mr. R. Stevens, the well-known "Argus" columnist; Miss A. Anderson, of the A.B.C.; and the popular radio news-commentator, Mr. Stan Hughes, of 3AW.

(Continued page 3)



Some of the passengers who were linked with Australian commercial aviation history when they flew on the inaugural non-stop Convair-Liner "Rocket" service from Melbourne to Brisbane on October 23. From the left is Cr. G. F. Pedersen, of Melbourne; Mr. J. Barrie, of C.O.R.; the General Manager of Trans-Australia Airlines, Mr. L. J. Brain; the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Cr. J. S. Disney; Mr. Harry Hodges, a textile authority; Miss Ann Anderson, of the A.B.C. news staff; Miss Cynthia Strachan, Melbourne "Argus" news staff; Mr. J. Grigsby, Melbourne "Age" news staff; Mr. Ron Stevens, co-editor of "What Goes On," "Argus" news column; Mr. Tom Martin, aviation writer for the Brisbane "Courier Mail"; Mrs. T. J. Ryan, Queensland Government representative in Melbourne with the Queensland Tourist Bureau; Mrs. Reg Vickers, wife of the editor of the Brisbane "Telegraph"; Mr. McLuckie, of the Brisbane Chamber of Manufacturers.

English Cricket Team Flies By TAA



• When the English test cricketers (photographed on left) flew from Perth to Adelaide it was the first time in the long history of touring teams that the visitors as a team made the journey by air.

• It was also the first air trip enjoyed by many of the players.

• The fact that it was the first night flight by the Englishmen is of further historical interest.

• They made the flight of 1415 miles in a TAA Skymaster (DC-4).—(See story on back page.)

Portrait of a Pilot



CAPTAIN R. R. RAYE

PEOPLE who have seen that outstanding Australian aviation film "Flight Plan" may remember Captain R. R. "Bob" Raye. Bob was the pilot chosen for the key role—to approach the control officer in the film to obtain the flight plan which formed the basis of the story.

It was not a difficult role for Bob, who has done the same thing hundreds of times before in the same serious efficient style.

His enthusiasm for flying inspired Bob to join the South Australian Aero Club as a young man and at Parafield, he gained his certificate as an airman.

IN 1939, soon after the outbreak of World War II, he joined up with the R.A.A.F.

His flying experience meant that the R.A.A.F. authorities immediately picked him out for the job of an instructor which was a vital role in those serious days when we were lamentably short of pilots.

He served as an instructor for three years. He was then drafted to Guinea Airways and his job as a pilot took him to New Guinea on war charter work.

WHEN TAA was established, Captain Raye immediately joined this organisation and was one of TAA's original Skymaster (DC-4) captains.

His ability and experience as a commercial pilot was no doubt responsible for his choice as one of the senior pilots to be sent by TAA to America to accept delivery of the Convair-Liner fleet.

THE delivery of the Convair-Liners was a spectacular achievement in itself as the aircraft were flown from San Diego (California) round the North Atlantic route and then by way of the Empire Air Route to Melbourne, a distance of 17,729 statute miles. It was the world's longest delivery flight.

Captain Raye piloted the "James Cook" which made the long trip with the "Thomas Mitchell" in about a fortnight.

THE "James Cook" made history on the London-Australia section of the delivery flight as it was the first aircraft to complete the trip from London to Melbourne with a passenger list comprised entirely of British migrants assisted by the Commonwealth Government. The flying distance from London to Melbourne, 11,664 statute miles, was completed in 59 hours 58 minutes flying time.

Captain Raye in his spare time is a devotee of golf at which he admits he is a poor hand.

WHITE TOPS COOL AIRCRAFT

Innovation Reflects Sun's Rays

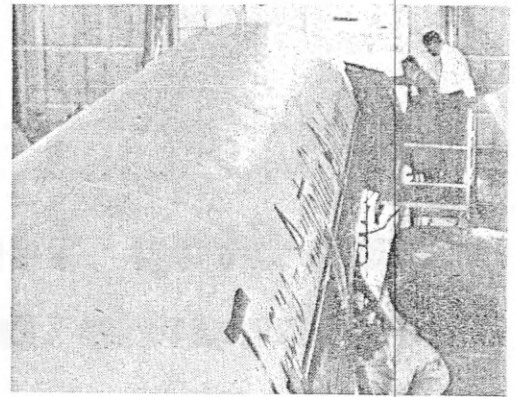
TAA is the first Australian commercial operator to adopt the policy of reducing aircraft temperatures by painting white the tops of fuselages of its aircraft.

This innovation would decrease the temperatures in DC-4's and DC-3's standing on the tarmac in the sunlight during summer months.

Experiments carried out demonstrated that aircraft painted white on the top of fuselages were up to 15 degrees cooler than those with aluminium polished surfaces.

This was because the reflecting power of polished aluminium surfaces is inferior to that of a glossy white painted surface.

The Convair-Liner, because of its more modern cooling system, being pressurised, did not need this white paint treatment.



Workmen in TAA's Maintenance Section at Essendon engaged on the job of painting the roof white of one of TAA's aircraft.



Attractive "Miss Australia" Quest candidates wearing TAA overalls at the "Miss Australia" Air Pageant held at Moorabbin Airport, Melbourne. The candidates are Misses Marjorie Crees, Mavis Lunt, Margaret O'Neill, Peggy Mears, Shirley James and Isa Allison.

NON-STOP BRISBANE-MELBOURNE LINK

(Continued from page 1)

Writing in the Brisbane "Courier Mail," Mr. Martin pointed out that in the record breaking flight from Melbourne to Brisbane, the Convair-Liner averaged 290 miles an hour for the journey and flew at an altitude of more than three miles while conditions in the pressurised cabin were equivalent to a normal flight at 7,000 feet.

He emphasised that he was able to leave Brisbane in the morning at 8 a.m., keep a luncheon appointment in Melbourne at 1 p.m., and then spend a further three hours in the city before catching the return "Rocket" service at 5.45 p.m., arriving in Brisbane at 9 p.m.

He commented that the new service meant, in terms of surface transport, that Melbourne is now as close to Brisbane as Warwick (Qld.). The Lord Mayor of Melbourne, a former Flying Corps airman, told the "Age" that the new service represented another milestone in trans-continental air travel.

The Queensland Government representative, Mrs. T. J. Ryan, was enthusiastic over what she considered the service would mean to Queensland. She thought that the speedy trip to Brisbane would be appreciated by people bound for northern coastal tourist attractions including the Great Barrier Reef, as well as by business men and women.

FASTEST
to North America

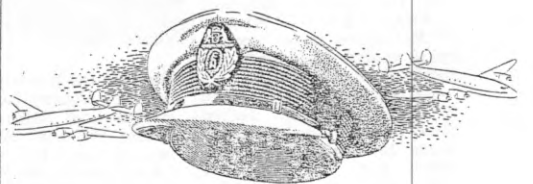
Only 27 flying hours to San Francisco via the "Southern Cross" route. You enjoy the luxurious comfort of the DC-4—the only free sleeper service between Australia and North America.

British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines Ltd.

53 MARTIN PLACE, SYDNEY. BW 2741

REMY MARTIN
V.S.O.P. COGNAC BRANDY

Is the finest Brandy from the Champagne area of Cognac, France. The hostess has supplies of miniature bottles.



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Q.E.A

QANTAS EMPIRE AIRWAYS

AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL AIRLINE

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 8.

When Colin Defries arrived back in Australia late in October, 1909, he may have expected to find himself, once again, the centre of attention as the only person in the country with actual experience as a pilot of an aeroplane. However, when he was briefed by his Melbourne associates he soon realised that the focus had shifted away from him during his absence, and was now on George Augustine Taylor in Sydney. Taylor was about to launch his *Great Display of Aviation* at Prince Alfred Park, under the distinguished patronage of Their Excellencies Earl Dudley & Lord Chelmsford, the Premier and the Lord Mayor. At his first press conference in Melbourne, Colin Defries attempted to reinstate his position. He dismissed the Commonwealth Government's competition for an Australian flying machine by stating that, "those who framed the conditions could not have been aware of the principle of the aeroplane." There was an even darker shadow cast by Defries' return. The Wright Brothers had been adopting aggressive legal action to protect their patents in both the USA and Europe. It was feared by Taylor that their Australian agent would also demand royalties, on their behalf, from Australian inventors, particularly where wing warping or ailerons were involved. This would be the ultimate insult for Taylor, who believed that Hargrave's generosity in not applying for patents should make Australian inventors immune from any patent related legal threat.

The *Great Display of Aviation* got off to an early start. On Friday October 22, a large Cody type war kite was demonstrated at Prince Alfred Park, witnessed by a crowd of about 2,500. George Taylor directed proceedings and enlisted about 250 people from the crowd to assist. Before the kite was damaged by crowd handling, it was flown to a height of about 120ft. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported the event under a headline: "Flights in Prince Alfred Park - Sensational Incidents - Kite Slightly Damaged." Further drama occurred when 'Captain Penfold', (George Taylor's younger brother, Vincent Patrick), lost his balloon when it caught fire during inflation on October 29. The blazing balloon drifted towards Redfern where it damaged two houses in Regent Street when it came to earth. 'Captain Penfold' again caused anxiety on November 5, when he took-off on a balloon race against 'Professor Holloway', and narrowly escaped electrocution when he struck power lines. Finally on November 6, Sydney's Town Clerk, Mr Nesbitt, ordered the police to bring an end to the aviation exuberance in Prince Alfred Park. Nevertheless, in retrospect, the *Great Display of Aviation* had been an outstanding success with the public. They had pulled on the cable of the great war kite, witnessed dramatic spectacle and near tragedy, and had even been partisan in George Taylor's confrontation with the law. Taylor's monoplane was also on display, with the promise that it would be the first to fly in Australia, as soon as an engine could be fitted. Meanwhile, George Taylor extended young Percy Middleton's deadline for the supply of its engine to December 1.

On the day before the *Great Display of Aviation* ended, Colin Defries arrived in Sydney. He was interviewed by a reporter from *The Sydney Morning Herald*. His unguarded comments to the press, both in Sydney and Melbourne, when asked about his proposed flying demonstrations, are revealing. In summary he said; "There is nothing that can be assured when you are about to take a fly in an aeroplane. There is a lot of luck about it. You're in the hands of fate... Aeroplaning, to be sure, is not a married man's game, and, believe me, one is thankful when the flight is finished... You'll never get women to go up in them. Its not safe enough... During the Rheims meet they had a height competition. Would you believe it, they couldn't get anyone to go in for it. And I don't blame them. What's the good? One little mishap and you've a return ticket that you can't use... No good object is gained by flying high. It is easy to rise like a lark, but I shall keep about 20ft above the ground."

It was clear that Defries was wrestling with several conflicting issues. There was his responsibility to the investors in the project to bring powered flight to Australia, a project which had been recently expanded to include New Zealand. There was his responsibility to his new wife, Stella, and their future together. Finally, his confidence in the safety of flying had been severely shaken by

his own experiences in France, which included the tragic death of Eugene Lefebvre. He believed that a cautious approach to flying would be essential, if he was to get through the demanding programme ahead without serious damage to himself or his aeroplane. For Defries, common sense dictated that his flights would be restricted to dead calm conditions. They would also be short, flown in a straight line, and at a height of no more than 20ft.

The Stella arrived in Sydney on board *R.M.S. Otranto*, on November 15, and was put on show at the Sydney Town Hall for three days from November 18th to the 20th. Although J.&N. Tait advertised aggressively, Colin Defries was surprised and hurt by the apparent apathy shown towards the aeronautical marvel, for which he had devoted so much time to bring to Australia. Initially, entry charges were set at 3/- for the afternoon session and 2/- for the evening session. Attendance at the Town Hall was so poor that, by Saturday, the charge for entry to both sessions was reduced to 2/-. Perhaps, after their recent experience of the *Great Display of Aviation* at Prince Alfred Park, the citizens of Sydney could have been forgiven for thinking that the static display of an aeroplane in the Town Hall would be rather tame by comparison. Besides, they had already seen Taylor's powered monoplane, which they were told was soon to be the first to fly in Australia. The frequent, and emotive comments, made by George Augustine Taylor, about foreigners stealing Lawrence Hargrave's inventions, may also have influenced attitudes in Sydney towards Colin Defries and *The Stella*. If Defries wanted further explanation, he could have read Taylor's condescending article in *The Motor in Australia* issue of November 25, titled, *The Wright Machine, a Chapter of Mistakes*.

From the Sydney Town Hall, *The Stella* was taken to Victoria Park Racecourse to prepare it for the *Flying Fortnight*, due to commence on December 4. However, before the start of the *Flying Fortnight*, he returned to Melbourne to fulfil a promise he had made to Lawrence Adamson. With his typical enthusiasm, Adamson had introduced aviation to his students at Wesley College. Even the Minister for Defence, Joseph Cook, commented: "I notice in the press that the Wesley College boys have produced 18 model aeroplanes and 17 gliders. I am glad to find there is at least one place where these things can be turned out by the gross." As Headmaster of Wesley, Lawrence Adamson invited the parents, relatives and friends of the student community to an exhibition of the models, on Monday, November 29. Colin Defries was invited to be the judge for the model competition, and afterwards to address the gathering on the subject of the science of aviation.

Colin Defries spent some time preparing his address to the students. The five foolscap pages of closely typed text have been preserved by his son David. The first four and a half pages are devoted to the students, and are full of useful technical information and inspirational anecdotes. However, at the end of his speech, he had the following to say.

"Whilst talking to you I would like to let forth on my opinion of the *Sydney Aerial League*, or whatever this body like to call themselves. I heard such a lot about them before I came to Australia, that I thought perhaps before I gave any flight and possibly broke my machine up, I would give these gentlemen an opportunity of seeing it at rest, which if the *Aerial* part of their brains is developed, as they would lead people to think it is, would have been of the greatest interest; quite apart from the fact, that for the first time in any part of the world, the public were to to be admitted to watch an aeroplane being built up. Would you believe that out of the 500 odd thousand population, not more than a thousand, if that, took the opportunity, and I cannot but think that the *Sydney Aerial League* is a big fluke, and was formed for somebody's benefit...whose at present I cannot say. However, I can tell these gentlemen that if they desire any concessions to view the flights they will not get them, in fact, if I have my way I shall not let them in at all, as the fact that they are anxious to see a flight, but yet did not trouble to come and see the machine that I took the trouble to place before them, proves that their interest in aviation merely consists in watching other peoples' exploits for their own excitement."

It is hard to tell how the biblical allusion, *neither cast ye your pearls before swine*, was received by Lawrence Adamson, and the members of Melbourne's Methodist establishment present. But it is certain that Defries did himself no favours in Sydney, where he was scheduled to open the *Flying Fortnight* on December 4. Meanwhile, Percy Middleton failed to meet the deadline of December 1, for the completion of his seven cylinder radial engine to be fitted to Taylor's monoplane.....**John Scott**.