



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

July 2007 No.408

file 2007-2

July Meeting – Temporary Change of Venue

The July meeting will be held in the building immediately south of the main Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 4th July 2007, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via the security gate at the Macarthur Street end and the entrance to meeting room is at the southern end of the car park. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will consist of short talks by three of our members. Barry Collins has often mentioned his interesting journeys on Air Cruising air tours around Australia in Fokker F.27 and DHC-8 aircraft, but prior to these he ventured around Australia in a pressurised Piper Navajo, operated by Milner Air Services. Barry will relate his adventures on this flight which he undertook in 1976.

Ian Dolstra's topic will be on aviation philately. This time he will discuss some of the special flights which have become the subject of first day covers.

Bill Holswich's talk will feature aeronautical maps and particularly their role in World War II aviation. He has special maps of Timor from World War II and will discuss the differences and uses of silk and rayon maps.

Please join us for another entertaining evening of aviation memorabilia.

Committee Meeting

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

June Meeting

The June meeting was dedicated to Bryan Monkton and featured memorabilia and stories about flying boats and seaplanes.

This was, as expected, a most entertaining evening with a collection of slides provided by Anthony Coliero and David Eyre. A vast number of different types of aircraft were shown, including Martin Mariner, DHC Beaver and Otter, a variety of Cessna and Piper floatplanes and amphibians, Nardi FN333 Riviera, Grumman Widgeon, Goose and Albatross, Maule floatplane, Lake Buccaneer and Renegade, and Colonial Skimmer. Of special interest were a number of images of Catalinas in various

guises of TAA, Ansett, Executive Air Services, Adastra, HARS and RAAF as well as museum exhibits. And of course there were more images of Sandringhams and Sunderlands.

Phil Dulhunty, well known member and also President of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia, spoke about his days with Bryan Monkton, particularly when operating the Port Macquarie Clipper. This service was operated by Bryan's Trans Oceanic Airways for Phil and his brother's airline to Port Macquarie. Bryan and PG Taylor usually crewed this service, which often featured such novelties as mannequin parades on board.

Phil also recalled his early days in aviation, which included being Australian agent for the Czechoslovakian manufacturer, Omnipol, and importing types such as the Blanik glider, Aero 145 and Meta-Sokol. He went on to own and operate a number of seaplanes including Piper Cubs, Helio Courier and Cessna 180. In the 75th anniversary commemoration flight in honour of Sir Francis Chichester to Lord Howe Island, Phil was awarded a Certificate of Merit, which he kindly brought in for the evening.

Trevor Dean, Curator of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown, was the driving force behind the publication of Bryan Monkton's autobiography, *The Boats I Flew*. (see below) We were most fortunate to welcome Trevor as a special guest, and he described much about the life of Bryan Monkton and about the trials and tribulations experienced in getting the book published. Trevor related a number of seaplane stories featuring Bryan after his attempt to operate South Pacific Air Lines, including his time at Antillies Air Boats, his voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in an ex-Ansett Sandringham, and some of his adventures in Africa.

John Scott provided a video of Oshkosh 1992, which featured the fly-past and arrival of the former VH-BRF, the Ansett converted Sunderland V, which is now owned by Kermit Weekes.

May Meeting - Clarification

In last month's summary of Bruce Hall's May talk about 460 Squadron, I included a comment that

the Packard Merlin developed more power and was considered more reliable than the Rolls Royce built Merlin. Bruce has kindly brought to my attention that as far as he knows, there was no difference in power output and reliability, except that the Packard engine had a more positive starting capacity due to the Stromberg pressure injection carburettor.

On The Internet

International Prefixes 1913 – 2007
<http://daveg4otu.tripod.com/pref.html>

Here is a website for all those interested in aircraft registrations and their origins. It gives a complete list of all the derivations of former, current and occasionally used registration prefixes.

The first systematic allocations of National call-sign letters took place in 1913 when The London International Radiotelegraphic Conference made a partial allotment of call-sign letters among nations which signed the convention and the International Bureau at Berne. These allocations were for use for all radio purposes - ground stations, ships, broadcast etc - aircraft not being a specific target at that time for radio equipment. In fact the use of the allocations for aircraft either as radio calls or registrations did not become widespread until the end of WWI in 1919.

The first list shows the original 1913 allocations, followed by the all-time list.

Book Offer

The Boats I Flew, by Bryan Monkton

This excellent autobiography is still available at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown. The book includes many of Bryan's experiences during WWII, his founding of two airlines and his times as a freelance pilot. Priced at \$39.95, copies are available through the AAMB bookshop, or call (02) 9791 3088.

Information Wanted

Lockheed Lodestars – Agricultural conversions

Aviation historian, Ben Dannecker is investigating another facet of the story of large cropdusting aircraft in Australia. In particular, Ben is seeking information on the four Lockheed Lodestar agricultural conversions done by Fairey Aviation at Bankstown, over the period from 1955 to 1958.

Ben is aware of several versions of the story including Fawcett Aviation doing the first conversion with Fairey Aviation's assistance, to Fairey Aviation doing all four conversions at its facilities. He also believes that designer Luigi Pellarni may have also been involved.

There are various versions of the crew list for the first conversion, ZK-BJM's ferry to NZ; Lionel Van Praag as captain is undisputed, and co-pilot was listed as Capt. Moss NAC by the AHSNZ Journal. But

other sources claim that Titus Oates was co-pilot on this flight in April 1955.

Ben is also seeking postcard-size (hard copy) prints of two New Zealand Lodestars, ZK-BYE and ZK-BMC (also pictures of any of the other four) as they appeared when in Kiwi agricultural service. Pictures of them here in Australia after conversion would especially be sought after.

In return Ben can offer anyone who comes up with the goods, the original A5 format, 64-page issue of Vol. 13 Nr. 1, AHSNZ Journal, 2nd February 1970, (dedicated solely to the history of all NZ Lodestars, military, airline, departmental and agricultural). Alternatively he will just pay the costs.

Any information and/or pictures of these events would be most appreciated. Ben can be contacted via email, berlintram@yahoo.com.au or (02) 4423 1719.

Vale – Al Bovelt

Members will be very saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Al Bovelt late last month. Full details are not available at the time of publication, however a comprehensive obituary will be published in next month's issue of *Southern Skies*.

Calendar of Events

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

7 July 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre.

4 August 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

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

11-12 August 2007 Luskintyre Aircraft Flying Museum Amateur Radio Remembrance Day Contest. Museum open each day. Luskintyre NSW

25-26 August 2007 Watts Bridge Festival of Flight. Watts Bridge Qld.

15-16 September 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

29-30 September 2007 Narromine Air Pageant and Festival, Narromine NSW

27-28 October 2007 Australian Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia.

Contributions and Contacts

News items, other contributions, advertisements or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSNA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth via Email (wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au). Warwick's new phone contact is (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

Thanks to Bruce Hall and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 9.

Harry Williams' acceptance of risk, when it came to flying, was at the opposite end of the scale when compared with Colin Defries. On December 19, 1908, Williams wrote to Lawrence Hargrave seeking employment: "...should you be making any flying experiments and need a man to go up I think that I would be the right party, as I do not value life and am willing to take a chance, and I might mention that I have already been smashed up three times in experiments, which I have done for the advancement of aeronautical science." Williams had 5 1/2 years of aeronautical experience in Europe, first with balloonists and then as an experimenter with flying models. He had no luck with Lawrence Hargrave, but he was just the man for George Augustine Taylor, who employed him as the supervisor for his aeroplane factory at Surry Hills. Williams brought with him knowledge of the French pioneers, and it was he who oversaw the building of Taylor's monoplane and glider, the latter being almost identical to Voisin's 1907 hang-glider.

After the police prematurely ended the *Great Display of Aviation* in Prince Alfred Park, on November 6, 1909, George Augustine Taylor maintained the momentum towards his goal of putting his monoplane into the air before Colin Defries could fly in the Wright Model A. Time was short - the Wright aeroplane was due in Sydney on November 15. In *The Motor in Australia*, dated December 2, 1909, Taylor describes his preparations for powered flight. "The other machine that is in the running is the monoplane which was shown at the recent *Building Australia Exhibition* by Hon. Secretary Taylor of *The Aerial League*. The whole affair has been constructed, and has been patiently waiting for two months for its engine to be completed. The engine is now ready for installation in the chassis of the monoplane, and flight will no doubt be attempted in the next fortnight. At present Mr Taylor is breaking in two of his mechanics by allowing them to practise gliding on his small aeroplane glider at Narrabeen Heads. It is a rather ingenious idea, practising air balancing on a glider before tackling the complete machine. Just as it is more profitable, when learning to ride a bicycle, to practise on a cheap jigger, so Taylor and his mechanics are doing aerial aerobatics on Narrabeen sands on an inexpensive glider, in preference to doing them on a valuable monoplane, with a 100lb engine for company."

In the above article, written well before December 5, 1909, the date inscribed on the monument at Narrabeen to commemorate, "the first flight in Australia in a heavier-than-air flying machine", Taylor seems to place no particular importance on the November flights in his "inexpensive glider". Indeed it would have been sensible for him to allow the fearless Harry Williams, or another mechanic from the factory, Edward Hallstrom, to conduct the first experimental flights, and Williams or Hallstrom may well have been the first to have successfully flown the glider. In any case experimentation with man-carrying kites and gliders in Australia had been going on since 1868, albeit with mixed success, and generally with the kite or glider either towed or tethered. Lawrence Hargrave was one such experimenter, as was Charles Lindsay Campbell, who claimed to have flown a glider in free flight at Perth, in June 1903, and had attached no particular importance to the feat. John Duigan had also commenced the construction of a Wright type glider in 1908, and had it ready for flight by March 1909. He used it as a tethered glider to gain experience for the real thing - powered flight. John Duigan claimed that, "in a real strong blow it would lift two people."

The day before Percy Middleton's December 1 deadline, he met with George Augustine Taylor at the works of Gibson and Son at Balmain, where his engine was being fabricated, and where Taylor's monoplane had been taken for its installation. There were problems with the engine. It would not run, and it never did run. News of this disaster was kept from the public. The impecunious student, Percy Middleton, felt the full wrath of George Augustine Taylor, and was later pursued by him in the Supreme Court of NSW. For the moment though, Taylor was left with another deadline, December 4, the opening day of *The Flying Fortnight*, when it now seemed certain that Colin Defries would win the race to be the first to fly a powered aeroplane in Australia.

During November Taylor had learnt something about the skills required to fly an aeroplane, and would have understood why Defries himself could never guarantee a flight at a given time on a particular day. Taylor knew that wind and weather conditions could very well interrupt Defries' programme. Taylor had also speculated in his article in *The Motor in Australia* of November 25: "The Wright machine is to obtain its lifting by means of cycle wheel runners, but as that is an innovation, it remains to be seen how far it will prove effective. There is a possibility of it failing at that point, as the Wright machine must have greater impetus than its propellers can give it, and it must be remembered that the Wright Brothers would hardly cling to their expensive starting derrick if running wheels were an efficient substitute. The experiments, however, should be worth watching, particularly as Defries has not been on the wing for some time, and has to feel his feet before he can really claim to be proficient. Will Defries 'find his feet' before an Australian invented machine 'takes the air'?"

George Augustine Taylor could not have written a better script, to keep his own ambitions alive, than the actual sequence of events that overtook Colin Defries on December 4, the much publicised opening day of *The Flying Fortnight*. When Taylor learned that *The Stella* had remained firmly on the ground throughout Saturday afternoon, he decided to give a demonstration of the success he was achieving with his own glider at Narrabeen to about 100 spectators. If Defries could not fly through the air on December 4, as promised by J. & N. Tait, then on December 5, Taylor, together with several other pilots including his wife Florence, would show that they certainly could. There were twenty-nine flights reported on the day, at least some of them untethered. On Monday 6, the Sydney papers carried the dismal news about Colin Defries' failure to fly and damage to *The Stella*. Then, on the following day, after the news about Defries had been digested by interested readers, the report of Taylor's success was published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, under the headline, GLIDING AT NARRABEEN, SENSATIONAL INCIDENTS, AN AUSTRALIAN-BUILT MACHINE. Taylor had regained the initiative, although he did not claim in the report that his glider flights on December 5 had the significance of being the first ever conducted in Australia. In fact, in the last paragraph of the *Herald* report, it is clear that he remained focused on his powered monoplane: "Mr Taylor's monoplane is now having its powerful engine fitted to it at Gibson and Son's motor works at Balmain, and he hopes to have it in the air during Christmas week. If the flights are successful as anticipated the machine will be placed at the disposal of the military authorities during the Kitchener camp and review."

By Wednesday, December 8, *The Stella* had been repaired, and was once again in operation at Victoria Park Racecourse. On that day the military authorities had been invited to inspect *The Stella*. Brigadier-General Gordon, Colonel Vernon and Major Waine attended with other military personnel. Colin Defries took Colonel Vernon for a spin around the track at just under flying speed. However, a strong breeze kept *The Stella* earthbound. The next day the wind had subsided, and Colin Defries at last judged conditions suitable for flight. It is worth repeating the description of the flight he made on December 9, 1909, as reported in *The Sydney Morning Herald*: "When Travelling at about 35 miles an hour, and handling the machine alone, Mr Defries suddenly raised his elevating planes, and at once rose into the air. As he left the ground there was an involuntary cry from about 150 spectators, "He's up!" and he was up. As the machine rushed forward it kept in the air, and rose quickly from 3ft to fully 15ft or 20ft, and then tapered down again to earth, after covering about 115 yards." Colin Defries had achieved a short, straight line flight, controlled at the height he intended, and had landed the aircraft safely without damage. The *Herald* report conveys the breathless excitement of the spectators, who had just witnessed the first powered flight in Australia. The following day the papers carried the headlines - AERIAL FLIGHT, SUCCESSFUL TRIAL AT VICTORIA PARK, and AVIATION, FIRST FLIGHT IN AUSTRALIA. The next weekly edition of *The Sydney Mail*, on December 15, displayed a beautiful full page photograph of *The Stella*, accompanied by the headline, AUSTRALIA'S FIRST AEROPLANE FLIGHT. It seemed that the remaining days of the *The Flying Fortnight* would simply consolidate Colin Defries' place in Australian aviation history.

The strong winds that prevented *The Stella* from flying at Victoria Park on Saturday, December 11, and throughout the following week, once again filled the sails of George Taylor. But he would need all his writing skills to ensure that posterity recorded *his* version of history....**John Scott.**

TRANS-AIR

Vol. 2, No. 5

Air Transport News

December, 1948.

AIRLINES EXPEDITE HOLDEN PROJECT

New Car Born On High Speed Services

Airline services played a major part in enabling production on schedule of the Holden, the new Australian car and the latest development in private road transport.

Planning and production was expedited by the tremendous time-saving factor in the use of aircraft services by executives of General Motors-Holden Ltd., and Australian firms supplying materials and parts.

It is one of the most interesting stories associated with this most progressive Australian step in the motor industry.

1,300,000 MILES BY AIR

Between January, 1947, and November 29, 1948, when the Holden was announced, executives of General Motors-Holden Ltd. travelled more than 1,300,000 miles by air.

Their aggregate air travel in the 21 months up to September, 1948, represented more than 3,000 separate interstate flights.

This high-speed travel was impelled by the urgent need to reduce to a minimum all time spent in travelling. Executives, engineers, and supply and manufacturing specialists, also by the extent of the distances required to be travelled.

Most flights were made between Melbourne—at Fishermen's Bend where all engines, transmissions and mechanical components of the Holden are being manufactured—and Adelaide where, at Woodville, all pressed metal parts and bodies are being made.

1,000 AIR FREIGHT TRIPS

In the same 21 months to September, General Motors-Holden Ltd. used air freight for more than 1,000 interstate trips, representing another 670,000 miles of air travel by Australian airliners.

Now, with the Holden on the market, it will not be long before it will be a familiar sight in the private car parks at all Australian airports.

CAR FOR AUSTRALIAN CONDITIONS

This car had its origin in January, 1945. In response to an invitation by the Commonwealth Government to the Automotive Industry, General Motors-Holden Ltd. undertook to manufacture a car in Australia, and drafted "commercial specifications" for a car exactly suited to Australian conditions yet able to be made here both economically and in requisite volume.

NEW HOLDEN CAR MEETS THE CONVAIR

The latest postwar developments in air and road transport are shown in the unique photograph below—the new Australian Holden car standing alongside TAA's new Convair-Liner "John Forrest." Incidentally, the "John Forrest" was the first Convair-Liner to land at an Australian airport.



LATEST LONG RANGE AIRCRAFT ARRIVES



ABOVE: Official welcome at Kingsford Smith airport to mark the arrival of the first of the Commonwealth Government's new Douglas DC6 airliners.

BELOW: The Minister of Air (Mr. A. S. Drakeford); Air Marshall R. Williams, Director-General of Civil Aviation; and Mr. A. W. Coles, Chairman of B.C.P.A. and T.A.A.



DC6 AIRCRAFT ASSET TO NATION

Australia has gained a valuable national asset in the purchase by the Commonwealth Government of four Douglas DC6 aircraft, the first of which reached Sydney on November 24.

These giant four-engined aircraft represent the latest postwar development in long range flying.

Like the Convair, the DC6 is pressurised for passenger comfort.

Offered for sale as the result of the amalgamation of two Scandinavian airlines, they were promptly snapped up by the Commonwealth Government at a cost of £1,000,000. The saving to Australia by this prompt deal is estimated at £250,000.

On the trip to Australia, the DC6 shattered the trans-Pacific commercial air record with five miles a minute speed and (because of its pressurisation system) flying at a height of 16,000 ft. It lowered the previous flying time record, 32 hours 42 minutes, by 3 hours 52 minutes.

Actual San Francisco to Sydney flying time was 28 hours 47 minutes.

LARGEST PASSENGER AIRCRAFT HERE

The DC6, which can seat 48 passengers, is the largest passenger plane to come to Australia.

Its seven passengers included the chairman of B.C.P.A. and TAA (Mr. A. W. Coles) who negotiated the purchase.

Welcoming passengers and crew at Kingsford Smith airport, the Minister for Air, Mr. A. S. Drakeford, said that the DC6's would be made available to British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines for their trans-Pacific service if they required them.

Detroit by General Motors engineers.

Since then—while more than £4 million has been expended on erection and equipping of manufacturing plants at Melbourne and Adelaide and on the enrolling and training of production staffs—road and laboratory tests of the prototypes, and of a few Australian-built test cars, have been carried out continuously.

Actually one of the test cars has completed 79,129 miles (equivalent to 316,516 miles of normal driving) and the team of test cars has completed an aggregate of 236,750 miles (equivalent to 947,000 miles of normal driving).

In all this testing the Holden has come through with flying colours and has proved itself a car exactly suited to our conditions and needs.



Refuelling Service
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THE COMMONWEALTH OIL REFINERIES LTD.  Cable: "AIRBEEPEE" All States

Fashion Parade During Flight



They Took To The A



LENORE GEMMELL, SHIRLEY NINESS, and MERYL JONES parading in swimsuits along the wing of the Sunderland flying-boat at Taree yesterday.

Flying Mannequins Showed Swim-suits In Sunderland

PARADING along the wings of a Sunderland flying-boat, three mannequins attracted crowds of nearly 2,000 people at Taree and Port Macquarie yesterday.

THE parades were held by the Port Macquarie Clipper Service, and showed new season swimsuits and resort cloths. Many spectators had not seen a mannequin parade before.

Saturday early morning shopping crowds lined the shores of the Manning River to welcome the flying-boat, which moored alongside the main street of Taree about 150 yards from shore.

Other enthusiastic spectators came out in small rowing, fishing, and sailing boats to obtain a closer view of the parade, which took place on the wings of the aircraft.

As the weekly service to Taree began only five weeks ago not only the parade

but the taking-off and landing of the aircraft were novelties to the residents.

At Port Macquarie, special buses, taxis, cars, and bicycles transported the people from the township to the pier, off which the Sunderland was moored about 150 yards away.

Many of the people waited under the hot midday sun for the flying-boat, which arrived half-an-hour behind schedule.

Almost "every second person," even the children, had a pair of binoculars.

The mannequins were Lenore Gemmell, Meryl Jones, and Shirley Ninness. They had risen

early and boarded the flying-boat at 8 a.m. complete with make-up kit.

LOCAL inhabitants rowed out in dinghies to have a better view of the clothes MISSES BEVERLEY SMITH, LOIS STEVENS and GWEN NEILSEN modelled on the wing of the Sunderland flying-boat when it landed at Port Macquarie yesterday on its first bi-weekly flight.

Men "At Sea" In The Air

WHILE women passengers took a fashion parade in mid-air in their stride yesterday, the 40 men who saw the same parade were literally and metaphorically at sea.

The parade was given during the inaugural flight of the bi-weekly Port Macquarie Clipper Service.

Embarrassed masculine smiles greeted Misses Beverley Smith, Lois Stevens, and Gwen Neilsen when they emerged

admiring the wrappings around a parcel, when they really don't matter."

At Port Macquarie the mannequins modelled the same clothes on the wings of the Sunderland while hundreds of spectators lined the foreshore and crowded in dinghies watch. The mannequins repeated the parade during their return trip.

The Bulletin PERJUNA

About the only supplies Kempsey and other towns thereabout received in recent floods arrived by Sunderland flying-boat—the Port Macquarie service run by a trio of young brothers of energetic intelligence who, having done their A.I.F. bit to get the Tokyo surrender signed, climbed back into civvies and looked around for something just as interesting to do. Heading the team Philip Dulhunty signed on at 18 and signed off with the B.C.O.F., after intelligence work in New Guinea. While in Japan, in between supervising elections and rounding up Koreans who had no desire to co-operate in MacArthur's repatriation order, he learned the lingo, and was struck by the possibilities of trading. Result, the Dulmison (Australia) Company, now trading nicely from Tokyo with Australia, Venezuela and, till lately, with Korea, mainly in insulators, of which the Japs are among the world's best makers. In Sydney on leave last Christmas, faced with the uninviting prospect of a train-trip to home-town Port Macquarie, he and his brothers lit on the bright idea of chartering an aircraft. Only one available was a Sunderland. They took it, advertised for fellow-passengers, and were checking-in the resultant rush so enthusiastically that they almost forgot to get themselves aboard. Now their clipper runs regularly from Sydney every week (P. G. Taylor being one of the pilots), and the trio have their speculative eye on Taree.



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

August 2007 No.409

August Meeting

The July meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1st August 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 meeting will be the second part of

Clarence Leonard Johnson

- 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 will present the second instalment of the fascinating life of "Kelly" Johnson. At the February meeting, David and Bruce related the early days of Kelly Johnson and his involvement in a number of aircraft, including the Lockheed twin series and particularly the Hudson, as well as the P-38 Lightning and Constellation. This second talk will feature Johnson's involvement in the F-80 Shooting Star, the U-2 and the series of aircraft which culminated in the development of the SR-71.

The U-2 was probably made most famous by the shooting down of one piloted by Francis Gary Powers over the USSR on 1st May 1960. The U-2 was operated by the CIA as well as the USAF and later models are still in service, albeit in a research role, with NASA. David and Bruce will also discuss the next operational secret spy aircraft from the Skunk Works - the A-12 Oxcart, which had a short operational life, followed by the SR-71 Blackbird, which can still be considered today as one of the most advanced aircraft ever constructed.

After years of research, David and Bruce have been able to collate an enormous amount of material about these extraordinary series of aircraft and their design team at Lockheed.

Don't miss this presentation by David and Bruce; it will reveal much about these Lockheed aircraft that has not been concisely published before.

July Meeting

The July meeting consisted of talks by three of our members on their own special interests in aviation.

Ian Dolstra presented another interesting talk on aviation philately, and in particular post cards and covers carried on early flights. Early air services were developed for the carriage of mail, rather than the carriage of passengers, and, before formal arrangements were made, many pilots saw the benefits of carrying letters for their own commercial gain. Ian showed a postcard carried on a flight of the German airship *Schwaben* in 1912 and described the development of mail services by airships.

Ian told the story of the crash of the Zeppelin LZ74, which occurred near Potters Bay, north of London, on 12 July 1916 and had on display a blotter frame that had been made from the metal remains of the airship's framework.

Another cover shown and discussed was one that had been carried on the Zeppelin ZR3 from Friedrichafen, Germany to Lakehurst, New Jersey USA in 81 hours, and arriving in New Jersey on 15 October 1924. The airship later became the USS Los Angeles.

Barry Collins recalled his 1976 journey through the outback in a pressurised Piper Navajo, VH-SGA. The aircraft, which had been originally imported into Australia for use by the Queensland Government (in fact, it was Premier Joe Bjelke-Petersen's personal transport), was now operated by Milner Air Services for corporate charter, and Barry and four of his friends embarked on a quick outback tour.

Barry described the planned route and some of the adventures of the flight, which departed from Bankstown for Broken Hill for the first overnight. From there, it was over a flooded Lake Eyre to Oodnadatta and Ayers Rock for another overnight. From Ayres Rock it was a short hop to Alice Springs, then Cairns and Dunk Island, before proceeding to Lindeman Island, Mackay, Brisbane and back to Sydney. And all this in just one week! Barry's more recent tours around Australia have been in the F.27s and DHC-8 operated by Aircruising Australia.

Bill Holswich's talk featured the development of aeronautical maps, and a display of many of his private collection of a wide range of aeronautical maps and charts.

His introduction recalled how most people look at the map of an intended air journey; when on-board they peruse the in-flight magazine and will always review the map section in the back. Bill's collection on display included a book and map supplement provided by KLM for its flights from Amsterdam to Batavia; niceties long gone from our airways.

He went on to discuss aeronautical maps, their various projections and their particular role in World War II aviation, and especially in regard to part of the survival package. He also showed several special wartime maps of Timor and the then Dutch East Indies and discussed the differences and uses of silk and rayon maps. Most fascinating material!

On The Internet

Aviation Historical Society of Australia

(www.ahsa.org.au)

This is the new address for the national body of AHSA. It contains information on publications, branches, contact details and some excellent links.

Book Offer

The Boats I Flew, by Bryan Monkton

This excellent autobiography is still available at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown. Priced at \$39.95, copies are available through the AAMB bookshop, or call (02) 9791 3088.

Information Wanted

Lockheed Lodestars – Agricultural conversions

Ben Dannecker is still seeking information on the Lockheed Lodestar agricultural conversions done by Fairey Aviation, Bankstown, during 1955 - 1958.

Any information and/or pictures about these aircraft would be most appreciated by Ben. He can be contacted via email, berlintram@yahoo.com.au or phone (02) 4423 1719.

Al Bovelt

Further to our reference in the July issue of *Southern Skies* of the sudden passing of Al Bovelt, some more news has come to light. Al died from natural causes on or about the 15th June 2007. Unfortunately, Al's next of kin has not been found as at the time of writing, hence no funeral or interment arrangements have yet been made.

Al was regarded as the doyen on all things about the DC-3/C-47 as well as other Douglas and Lockheed aircraft in Australasia. His research and knowledge on these aircraft has been acknowledged in a wide range of specialist publications, such as

those produced by Air-Britain, and authoritative Australian researchers have also made mention of Al's work in their web-sites and/or publications. Of particular note is the acknowledgement of Al's significant contributions covering PNG based aircraft by author James Sinclair in his books in the *Balus* series and *Sepik Pilot*. He noted that Al was an Historian with the Pacific Islands Aviation Society, New Zealand.

Originally from New Zealand, Al worked for New Zealand National Airways Corporation, and in the 1960s moved to (then) New Guinea where he flew as a First Officer on DC-3s for Ansett-MAL. Later, he operated his own business of Allan's Petroleum Engineering, which checked all Shell PNG aviation installations, particularly those on the Talair network.

Al joined AHSA (NSW) several years ago, and was a regular attendee at monthly meetings. He frequently contributed news items and background material on DC-3s in Australia, much of which has been published in *Southern Skies* and other material that he provided has been placed in our archives.

Al's contribution to Australasian aviation history has been significant and he will be sorely missed. The possibility of inserting an item in the internet encyclopaedia Wikipedia acknowledging this contribution is being investigated.

Calendar of Events

4 August 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

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

11-12 August 2007 Luskintyre Aircraft Flying Museum Amateur Radio Remembrance Day Contest. Museum open each day. Luskintyre NSW

25-26 August 2007 Watts Bridge Festival of Flight Watts Bridge Qld.

15-16 September 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

29-30 September 2007 Narromine Air Pageant and Festival, Narromine NSW

27-28 October 2007 Australian Defence Force Air Show, RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia.

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). Warwick's new phone contact is (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

Thanks to Trevor Boughton, Robin Mead and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

Supplement to *Southern Skies*
August 2007 No 409

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 10.

Just as George Augustine Taylor was, “breaking in two of his mechanics by allowing them to practice gliding on his small aeroplane glider at Narrabeen Heads,” during November, 1909, so too had Colin Defries planned to practice on *The Stella*, at Victoria Park, prior to the *Flying Fortnight*. *The Sydney Morning Herald* of Saturday, November 25, records: “The work of construction and testing of the machine will begin on Monday by a staff of expert mechanics, and as soon as this is completed, Mr Defries will commence his private tests preparatory to the flights. These are essential to make every degree of certainty when the first flight is announced a few days later. This procedure was carried out prior to every flight on the Continent.” As we know Colin Defries was in Melbourne on Monday, November 29, at the request of Lawrence Adamson. Did Colin Defries deny himself sufficient time to reacquaint himself with *The Stella*, because of his absence in Melbourne, and thereby endanger the success of the *Flying Fortnight*? Alternatively, if he did get back in time to conduct his private tests, there is the tantalising thought that he may have been airborne before December 4. J. & N. Tait would not have wanted any such private flight publicised, because of the promotional value of offering the public the opportunity to witness the authentic, first powered flight in Australia.

History records that the *Flying Fortnight* ended in Sydney on October 18, 1909, with Colin Defries losing his hat, control of *The Stella*, and in the minds of some, his credibility as a competent aviator. What had been heralded as an, “epoch in the history of aeronautics in Australia,” had achieved just two short flights totalling less than 30 seconds in the air. Colin Defries now faced the unenviable prospect of returning to Melbourne, with his team of expert mechanics, to explain the reasons for the substantial financial losses incurred by the *Flying Fortnight* in Sydney.

As if George Augustine Taylor had not been busy enough, during the last quarter of 1909, he had decided to apply for an honorary commission in the Australian Intelligence Corps. His application was recommended for approval on December 3, on the basis of his knowledge and experience of aviation and wireless telegraphy. In the future he would use his honorary title of lieutenant to add status to his pronouncements on Australian aviation.

With the departure of Defries, it was important for Taylor to reaffirm his reputation and credibility as *the* authority on Australian aviation. In his mind, Defries had failed in Sydney. However, the J. & N. Tait consortium were still committed to demonstrating the Wright aeroplane in the remaining capital cities of Australia. The company also had a Bleriot X1 on the water, heading for Melbourne. Therefore, as far as Taylor was concerned, the race to be the first to put a powered aeroplane in the air was still on. The Commonwealth prize of £5000 was also on offer for an Australian designed and built powered aeroplane.

As editor of *Building*, and a contributor to *The Motor in Australia*, George Augustine Taylor had been a powerful influence on Australian attitudes to aviation during 1909. From January 1910, this influence was further increased when he took control of a new section of *The Motor in Australia* under the heading *Aviation*. He lost no time indulging in some blatant obfuscation to clear the decks of Colin Defries, and his own failed monoplane. Easily understood words like monoplane, biplane and glider, were replaced by “heavier-than-air apparatus”. In the following extracts from *Building*, January 12, 1910, his much heralded powered monoplane appears to travel from the *Building Australia* exhibition to Narrabeen, where it transforms into a ‘heavier-than-air apparatus’, and goes on to achieve great success in the air. The reader is left confused as to whether powered flight was actually involved or not. However, any confusion about whether Colin Defries flew is definitely put to rest.

“Up to the opening of the recent *Building Australia* exhibition, Australians had not the pleasure of seeing an effective full size flying machine. At the exhibition in question the first Australian aeroplane was on view, one which has since won the distinction of being the first heavier-than-air apparatus to fly in the Commonwealth.....The Wright machine which was on display in Sydney during the past month,

cannot be said to have achieved any success, inasmuch as it did not leave the ground.” He later wrote: “Lieut. Taylor was the first to actually soar through Australian air. This feat he accomplished at Narrabeen Heads on December 5, 1909, when on an apparatus of his own design and construction he covered 110 yards.” The “apparatus of his own design and construction” was in fact his biplane glider, which was in turn almost identical to Voisin’s 1907 hang glider. Not everyone was convinced by Taylor’s obfuscation. Mr E. S. Smithurst, in a letter to the *Herald*, pointed out that: “In the language of aeronautics *flying* is understood to mean rising on a machine driven by an engine as distinguished from *gliding* on a plane floated from a higher to a lower level. Mr Taylor’s aeroplane not being fitted with an engine, his performance can rank only as *gliding*. But it is questionable whether he was the first in Australia to accomplish the feat as it is reported that Lawrence Hargrave, during experiments at Stanwell Park many years ago, succeeded in *gliding* on one of his planes.”

The legacy for Australian aviation history, left to us by Taylor’s tendency to self propagandise, has caused the telling and retelling of a confused story about the seminal events of December 1909. Typical of this phenomenon is a pamphlet published by the then *Aeronautical Research Laboratories* in Melbourne, titled, *A History of Aeronautical Research and Development in Australia*. It informed the reader that: “George Taylor, working with the Army Intelligence Corps in NSW, made a study of curved surfaces and built a glider which he flew in 1909. An engine built for the glider proved defective.” During 1909 Taylor had no time for original research in the field of aeronautics, and not even he contemplated putting an engine in his glider. His memorial at Narrabeen perpetuates the words, *heavier-than-air flying machine*, when *glider* would suffice, and be more informative to the public.

While Taylor was able to erase his first powered monoplane from public memory, (there being no photograph or illustration of it yet found), he was still anxious to remain in the race for the Commonwealth prize. His opportunity came when two engineer members of The Aerial League, Messrs F. Kolta and J. G. Newman began the construction of another Bleriot like monoplane in the front room of a Redfern terrace house on December 8, 1909. By March 1, 1910, Taylor seems to have taken over the project, referring to it as his third machine, and writing in *The Motor in Australia*: “the full size automatically stable aeroplane has now been completed by Mr George A. Taylor and his first flight is expected in a fortnight.” The aeroplane was named by Taylor, *The Building Australia*. Describing its innovative characteristics, Taylor wrote: “Australia is now about to show the world that her spirit of invention is still active, because the great question of automatic stability, which is being sought for by almost every aviator, has been solved, and all patent rights protected by an Australian.” Taylor even ran an advertisement in that edition of *The Motor in Australia* for his company, *Aeronautics Supply Co.*, offering to sell *The Building Australia* type, complete with engine and guaranteed to fly, for £300, promising public trials in March.

Almost one hundred years have passed, but the following description of an engine run on *The Building Australia*, written by George Augustine Taylor, creates a mental image as fresh as if it had occurred yesterday. There is a resonance with today’s enthusiastic home builders, like the late Bobby Gibbes, who built his *Cri Cri* in the lounge room of his home.

“When I entered the room with the two engineers, the great machine seemed to fill the room from wall to wall, and floor to ceiling. It stretched through another room and into a far passage.

“Surely you don’t work the engine in this room,” I said.

“Yes,” replied Mr Kolta, we tried her the other night, and the hurricane she made tore the paper off that wall,” and sure enough there was a big bare wall patch in proof. The propeller is 6ft 3in, of aluminium on a shaft of mountain ash, with 20in blade.

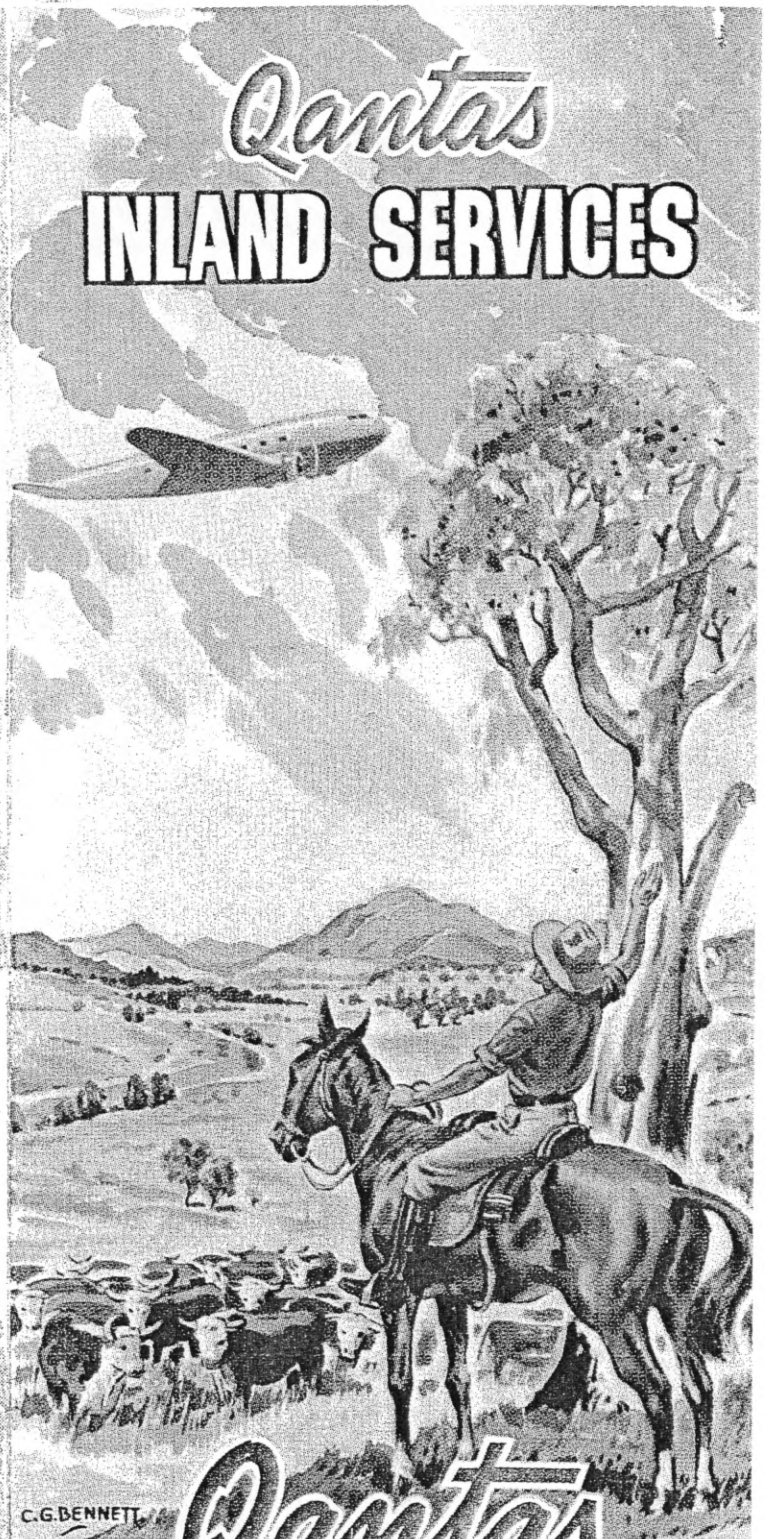
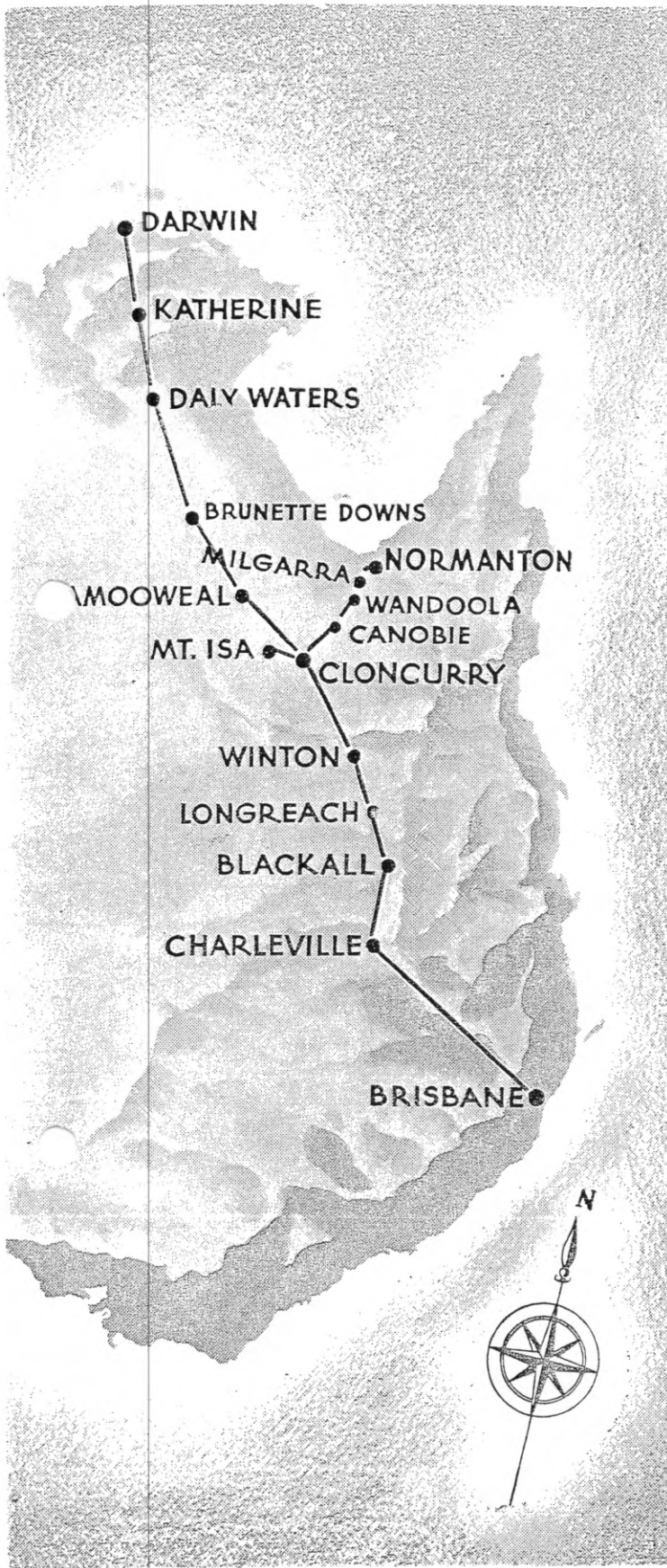
“You’ll trim those blades, I suppose, when you have her out,” I suggested.

“Yes,” said Mr Newman, who was busy arranging the carburettor.

“Are you ready? Let her go,” and no sooner was the switch put on than the great propeller rushed round to the accompaniment of a fusillade of reports from the barking cylinders. It was a lively five minutes in that room, the air was full of paper, engineers’ notes, a hat, and pieces of waste, one of the latter catching the cam gave the hint to engineer Kolta to shut off.”

The Building Australia was last seen trying to fly at the Randwick Rifle Range.....**John Scott.**

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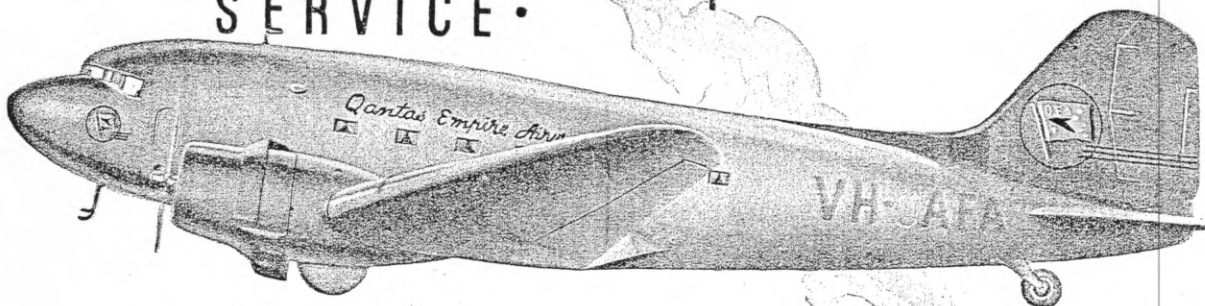


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AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

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PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

September 2007 No.410

September Meeting

The September meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5th September 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 meeting will feature guest speaker, David Craddock, whose topic will be

The life and times of George Augustine Taylor

David's talk will focus on the years of 1909 and 1910 and will include Taylor's experiments with gliders and his mixed fortunes with experiments concerning powered flight. Taylor was the founder of the Australian Aerial League and David will also discuss Taylor's background and his reasons behind the formation of the League.

It has been claimed that Taylor's criticism of Colin Defries resulted in the latter's first flight not being credited as the first powered flight in Australia. Readers will be aware of the conflict between Taylor and Defries which has been the theme of John Scott's series of *The Aviation History Wars* in the *Loops & Landings* supplement to this newsletter. John will also provide some comment on this conflict during the evening.

David Craddock is an aeronautical engineer who commenced his career with Hawker de Havilland in 1968. His early projects included work on the Wamira trainer designed for the RAAF and later he had engineering responsibility for several projects which were being undertaken by Hawker de Havilland for McDonnell Douglas, Boeing, Lockheed and Airbus Industrie. In 1987, he commenced work with the Department of Defence, where he now holds the position of Regional Manager for the Defence Quality Assurance (Air).

His particular interest in aviation history has been demonstrated through his writing and publication of a number of small books on the subject. He has also carried out the aerodynamic and structural design of replicas of Australia's first successful glider, which was designed by George

Augustine Taylor in 1909, as well as Lawrence Hargrave's kites and gliders.

Please join us for another element of the aviation history wars.

Committee Meeting

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

August Meeting

David Marshall and Bruce Harris presented the second instalment of the fascinating life of "Kelly" Johnson. After a re-cap of the February lecture involving Kelly Johnson's early days at Lockheed, David and Bruce described Johnson's involvement in the design of the F-80 Shooting Star and its role in the Korean War. Johnson went to Korea to find out what pilots wanted in a fighter aircraft; the answer was higher altitude plus top performance and speed at that altitude, because pilots were worried about MiGs at 50,000 feet.

So Kelly Johnson went about designing a fighter which could fly higher and faster. The Pentagon specifications demanded light weight, speed, performance and effective armament. The result was the F-104 Starfighter. However, its introduction was troubled; there were no wind tunnels to test the wing, engine intakes and tail. To facilitate testing, the Skunk Works was given some 400 5" rockets which were subsequently fitted with wings, tails and engine intakes. The first prototype of the F-104 flew one year and a day after the commissioning of the project.

The F-104 achieved many records, including an altitude record of reaching 119,000 feet during 1963; it had a maximum speed of Mach 2.2 and its initial rate of climb was 50,000 feet per minute. However it became renowned for its accident rate, particularly with the Luftwaffe. In fact, the high accident rate was later determined due to poor pilot training rather than any fault with the aircraft. Once a new training regime was introduced, the accident rate fell markedly.

In 1953 the Skunk Works was given a new task to design a "new era" aircraft. It would be required to

fly at 60,000 – 70,000 feet, have a range of at least 4,000 nautical miles and be a stable platform for photography. Johnson's initial proposal was rejected by the USAF, but he was summoned back to Washington DC at the behest of Allan Dulles, the then head of the CIA. The aircraft was called the U-2 and the order was signed by President Eisenhower and the project assigned to the CIA.

Johnson hired Ben Rich, a thermodynamics engineer to assist in the top secret project and he was also helped by Dr Edward Land, who designed the high definition camera for the U-2. Despite being injured in an accident in June 1955, Johnson was able to deliver the first aircraft on 15th July 1955. In early 1956, the first aircraft was flown to the United Kingdom and later to Wiesbaden Germany in preparation for flights over the USSR. The first flight over Moscow took place on 4th July 1956.

The U-2 was probably made most famous by the shooting down of one piloted by Francis Gary Powers over the USSR on 1st May 1960, and the subsequent collapse of the Paris Summit talks between the USA and the USSR. Later models of the U-2 are still in service today, and are expected to remain so until at least 2010.

Following the acknowledgement by the USA that the Soviets could shoot down the U-2, the CIA sought to obtain an aircraft that could fly at 85-90,000 feet at over Mach 3.0; out-maneuvre Soviet missiles; have global range; have low radar cross section; and be stable in flight for photography at 4 – 5 times the speed of the U-2. The Skunk Works solution was the A-12 Oxcart, which had a short operational life, and was followed by the SR-71 Blackbird.

Production was authorised in 1960, although delay was experienced in development of the Pratt & Whitney J-58 engine, which was required to operate at 80,000 feet. The aircraft was required to withstand 600°F on the outer skin and experience temperatures between -90°F and +650°F. The original plan to use stainless steel was dropped and titanium alloy was eventually used. Ironically, the CIA, through a front organization, arranged for the supply of titanium from the Soviet Union.

David and Bruce also detailed a number of events about the SR-71, including its operational bases and its many achievements and records.

Kelly Johnson received 50 honours and awards, including the Collier Medal twice and the US Medal of Freedom. He designed 40 aircraft and passed away on 22nd December 1990.

Afternote

Since the August meeting, David has kindly followed up on some questions that were posed after the talk. His responses are below:

Blackbird's Mini-Drone

One question was in connection with the reason behind the design of the Mini-Blackbird. I had forgotten, but I said, maybe it was something to do with testing the wing shape. Wrong. When I got home I looked it up again and here is the real story.

After the Gary Powers disaster the US pledged to carry out no more manned surveillance flights over the USSR. Unfazed, the CIA simply decided to take the man out of the equation and operate unmanned reconnaissance drones instead.

Kelly Johnson, a prescient thinker and believer that the future of military aviation lay with developing unmanned drones, set about designing the D 21, a remotely-piloted vehicle (RPV), in the greatest secrecy.

The ramjet-powered D21 emerged, looking like one of the engine pods of an SR71 set in an ogival delta wing. It was 43 ft long and the wingspan was a mere 17ft. It was very stealthy and 38 were built between 1964 and 1969. The idea was that the drones would be launched, carry out their mission and then either self-destruct or be retrieved from the ocean.

The D 21 was to be launched at Mach 3 by a modified SR 71 known as the M 12, "Mother Goose". The RPV was mounted on a simple pylon atop the M12 and was designed to be launched by a back-seater at Mach 3 (!) so that the ram-jet that powered the D 12 would be able to fire up and take the drone to Mach 4.

Pre-launch air tests were carried out with a streamlined fairing covering the D 21 engine air intake. The first actual launch was in July 1966 and was catastrophic. On launching, the D 21 failed to fly out of the SR 71 shockwave. Instead, it thumped down onto the back of "Mother Goose" and, not surprising at Mach 3, broke the Mother's back. The two crew ejected safely but the back seat operator drowned before he could be rescued from the sea. Kelly Johnson requested the idea be abandoned.

The remainder of the very expensive RPV drones were variously modified. Several were trialled, strapped in pairs under B52s. These tests were successful and a few operational flights were made but eventually the concept was abandoned due to film-retrieval problems.

In 1976 the remaining RPV were removed from storage but, as with its previous very secret life, what happened next is still classified.

Blackbird Air Show Display

Apropos of the air display story I told at the SR71 meeting. There was one other very important point about the "hammer head" stall manoeuvre executed by the SR 71 at an airshow.

The reason for the apprehension shown by some USAF people watching the steep climb of the SR71 was that they would have realised that the climb-out after a fast run over the airfield was so steep it upset the fuel balance, sending the C of G too far aft. This meant that the pilot had difficulty in reducing the angle of the ascent. The result was the dramatic hammerhead-type nose-over high in the sky that I described at the meeting. It was followed by the SR 71 disappearing vertically downwards, in a seemingly irretrievable dive behind a large cumulous cloud.

I don't know how they saved the situation but, somehow, they managed to pull out without hitting the ground. I cannot remember where I read about this event but it was along time ago and my memory isn't too good these days. So, if any one out there can tell the editor what the facts are, readers and I will be a little wiser.

Additional Information

For further information on the Blackbird and its drone, go to the following Internet sites:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SR-71_Blackbird, and
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_D-21/M-21.

Congratulations

Well known member Don Binskin is a proud father due to his son Air Vice-Marshall Mark Binskin recently being promoted to the role of Air Commander Australia. At an official ceremony and parade at RAAF Base, Glenbrook held on Thursday 26th July, the outgoing Air Commander Australia Air Vice-Marshall John Quaipe was farewelled by the RAAF with a tribute flypast of F/A-18, Hawk and F-111 aircraft.

In welcoming Mark to the role, Chief of the Air Force, Air Marshall Geoff Shepherd congratulated him on his new appointment and said "I am pleased to welcome Mark Binskin as Air Commander Australia and based on his administrative and operational experience I have no doubt he will be another exceptional leader."

Mark has a distinguished domestic and international career, including flying Mirage and F/A-18 Hornet aircraft. He recently had the role of Combined Force Air Component commander during the Talisman Saber 2007 exercise which was held in Queensland in May and June this year, and which involved over 230 aircraft from the RAAF, RAN and Australian Army as well as from the USAF, US Navy and US Marines.

Approximately 11,000 of the Air Force's 14,000 personnel are part of Air Command. The Air Commander is also responsible for more than 200 aircraft.

Catalina Flying Boat to return to Rathmines

Philip Dulhunty OAM, member of the Catalina Association and Chairman of the Seaplane Pilots Association, has located a wartime Catalina in Portugal and with the help of Neville and Gaby Kennard raised funds for its purchase and refurbishment for ferry-flight to Australia.

The main feature of the Catalina and why it is so different from all other war birds is its operation on and off the water. The Catalina was designed and built solely for waterborne operations and its take off and landing on the water is spectacular. In service it could use any waterway at all and often landed and took off in the open sea. Its water operations distinguish it from every other aircraft.

It is envisaged that it will become the centrepiece of the Rathmines Museum, and will operate off the waters of Lake Macquarie, as its sisters did 65 years ago.

Some generous supporters have already contributed a good sum to acquire the aircraft. Several volunteers have offered their services to service and fly the aircraft. Now more money is needed to make the aircraft ready and to ferry it home to Lake Macquarie. The fuel bill alone could be \$75,000.

To make the "Rathmines Catalina" a reality generous financial contributions are needed; already the Newcastle, Rathmines, Lake Macquarie community is showing great support and enthusiasm for this project. It will be unique in Australia, perhaps in the world – A Catalina housed and operating from a historic base on a waterway that is ideally suited for this purpose and in a community some of whom can still remember the sights and sounds and stories of the wartime Cats.

Donations are tax deductible. Catalina lovers and supporters should send their contributions to:

The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd
Building 2, 35 – 41 Waterloo Road
Macquarie Park NSW 2113

Sponsorships will be appreciated, and contributions in kind – airfares to Europe, accommodation, fuel, equipment, safety-gear, uniforms, products, expertise, time. We ask people to put up their hands, join us and be part of this exciting venture.

History of VH-DUL

Our PBY6A Catalina, now registered VH-DUL, started life as Serial No. 46665 on the New Orleans production line in 1945 as part of an order for the US Navy. It flew with that air arm as Bu46665 and briefly became N9555C when finally declared surplus to requirements in August, 1956. It had previously been in storage since the early-1950s.

The American registration was brief, as by 1957, it had been transferred to the Chilean civil register as CC-CNG. The registered owners were TRANSA who did not use CC-CNG and it remained in storage until 1959 when it too was bought by Roberto Parrague's ASPAR, becoming CC-CNP in the process.

On his visit to Easter Island PG Taylor noticed a derelict Catalina there called "*Manutara*" but did not realise the significance of this.

Some years previously, Commandante Roberto Parrague had attempted a South Pacific crossing in a Chilean military Catalina which he had named *Manutara* after the bird of the same name, which according to legend, flew to Easter Island laid one egg and died. The people of Easter Island shook their heads and warned that according to the legend, *Manutara* would never leave the island. During the take off for the return journey the rough conditions caused the wing to break and she did in fact die there. Her broken body was there, when PG Taylor arrived and when he saw her he was glad he had equipped Frigate Bird II with JATO (jet assisted take-off).

PG Taylor's Catalina which he flew to Chile, and is now in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, was called Frigate Bird II after his first crossing from Mexico to Australia via Tahiti in the Catalina "Frigate Bird".

PG Taylor, with so many ocean crossings under his belt, had the greatest respect for the Frigate birds, which inhabited the vast oceans of the world forever skimming the wave tops and seemingly never to rest.

For this pioneering flight from Sydney to Valparaiso all crewmembers were made honorary officers of the Chilean Air force and P G Taylor himself was awarded "Al Merito Bernardo O'Higgins" after the first president and founder of the Chilean Republic.

PG Taylor met and had many discussions in Valparaiso with Commandante Roberto Parrague where he learned that *Manutara* was the Chilean name for Frigate Bird! And that in honor of *Manutara* he had named CC-CNP "*Manutara II*".

In 1970 *Manutara II*, CC-CNP was ferried to Canada for conversion to a water bomber so that ASPAR could diversify into the forest fire fighting business. In this new role, CC-CNP was first given the tanker number '65' but later became '35'. CC-CNP flew to Spain in July, 1988, and remained there flying under charter to ICONA.

By the end of the decade, the Chilean registration CC-CNP had been restored and it was operating in Portugal, owned by Victor de Brito of Aerocondor but still with its name *Manutara II*. As a fire bomber its role was short lived as the more

efficient special purpose Canadian CL415 aircraft came on to the market and were awarded the contract.

CC-CNP (*Manutara II*) has been waiting ever since in the Sierra Mountains of Portugal for the Catalina Veterans of Rathmines Australia to save her from laying one egg and dieing. She will be returning to the role of a BLACK CAT to which she was originally born.

Philip Dulhunty OAM

Further information on the Catalina and its role in World War II will appear in next month's newsletter.

Camden Aerodrome History Hut

Historian for RAAF City of Sydney Squadron 22SQN, Dick Hutchinson has recently instigated the lease of the old barrack hut on Camden Aerodrome and the formation of the Camder Aerodrome History Hut Association, (CAHHA). The Association has been formed and a lease arranged with the airport management company.

Dick is also an officer with the Camden based Air Training Corps Squadron, and members of the squadron are hoping to display some of their models in the History Hut. Other historical organizations in the district have also supported the establishment of the Association and hope to make use of the hut for display purposes.

Anyone willing to assist Dick in his task can contact him on 9729 3312, mobile 0417 291 693, or via email at dixhis22@bigpond.net.au.

Calendar of Events

1 September 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

15-16 September 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

28-30 September 2007 Narromine Air Pageant and Festival, Narromine NSW

29 September 2007 Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia Splash-in. Rathmines 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). Warwick's new phone contact is (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

Thanks to Phil Dulhunty, Dick Hutchinson, David Marshall and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Final.

By the end of September, 1909, George Augustine Taylor had completed the airframe of his powered monoplane at the Surry Hills aeroplane factory. Coincidentally, a full page advertisement appeared in the widely circulated *Sydney Mail Annual*, of October 2, 1909. The advertising copy was in the patriotic style of George Augustine Taylor, strongly suggesting that he was the author. Under a headline, "The "O. T." Aeroplane Now in Course of Construction," the ad continued: "We have commissioned one of the Commonwealth's cleverest inventors to construct an Aeroplane which will, it is confidently anticipated, prove a worthy Australian rival to the Airships now being perfected in France, Germany, England and the United States. The work of constructing the "O. T." Aeroplane is already well advanced, and the first flight through the air will be made at an early date. The inventor is not sparing himself in the effort to overtake his rival inventors in the old world, and we are not sparing any expense to crown his work with success. For obvious reasons it is impossible to publish fuller details now, but further information regarding the progress made will be announced at the earliest possible moment."

"O. T." was a popular, non-alcoholic, hot-chilli punch sold in bottles at hotels throughout Australia. It was a product of the Melbourne factory of John Dixon & Co. John Dixon was an ardent motorist and yachtsman with an interest in powered flight. George Taylor had a particular skill in marketing advertising space in his own publications, and it would have been natural for him to sell the idea of an ad to John Dixon in order to finance his powered monoplane. The aeroplane illustrated in the ad was similar to the Voisin-Farman biplane with four side-curtains, which later became the standard production Voisin biplane. The illustration had the letters O. T. on the outboard side curtains and the company hot-chilli logo on the sides of the box-kite tail. With the word *Houdini* replacing the hot-chilli logo, the illustration would have been an accurate representation of the aeroplane that, just 5 1/2 months later, achieved the first circling, powered flight in Australia on March 18, 1910. In a further coincidence, John Dixon was present at Diggers Rest on March 21, when Houdini made his longest duration flight of 7 min 37 sec in his look alike "O. T" aeroplane.

If "one of the Commonwealth's cleverest inventors" was indeed Taylor, then the illustration bears no resemblance to the monoplane taking shape at the Surry Hills aeroplane factory at the time. On the other hand the designs resulting from the early co-operation of Gabriel Voisin and Henri Farman found great favour with Taylor because of the use made of Hargrave's box-kite invention. Taylor had decided to use Voisin's 1907 hang glider as a model for his own biplane glider.

While George Augustine Taylor always presented a positive patriotic image to the Australian public, the same cannot be said for the J. & N. Tait consortium managing the tour of the Wright aeroplane. The Tait's experience was with concert artists, where performances could be advertised with a high degree of certainty. Their style of promotion was not compatible with the practical limitations of early aviation. The selection of racecourses, because of the necessity to finance the exhibitions by charging for entry, also presented difficulties for Colin Defries in anything but dead calm conditions. From the outset he said that he would require a field ten miles in circumference for satisfactory trials. He also said that he would need at least three weeks practice before giving exhibition flights in public. Neither of these conditions were made available to him, and this, he argued when he returned to Melbourne, caused the financial failure in Sydney. He also advised that he was not prepared to continue with the programme as pilot if enclosed grounds were to be used. He offered to act as aviation consultant to assist in solving the immediate problem caused by his own resignation.

Ralph, (sometimes Rolf), H. Coningsby Banks was a mechanic with the Melbourne Motor Garage, located at the corner of Collins and Spencer Streets. Like Colin Defries, he was a Londoner and had been in Australia for a couple of years. One of the terms of Colin Defries' original engagement was to manage a planned Australasian expansion of the garage. In the meantime mechanics from the garage had provided engineering support for *The Stella*. Into the midst of the acrimonious

deliberations of the J. & N. Tait consortium, the long awaited Bleriot XI arrived, and was put on display at the Melbourne Motor Garage. With two aeroplanes now available for flying demonstrations, the absence of a pilot was an acute embarrassment. The problem was solved by Ralph Banks stepping forward to attempt to do, in a matter of a few weeks, what Colin Defries had failed to do after almost a year of preparation.

With Caulfield and Flemington denied him, Banks took *The Stella* to Moonee Valley Racecourse to commence his training as a pilot. It became clear that obstructions on the course would be a problem when Banks managed to straddle a hurdle with *The Stella*. A search wider afield found an ideal location for his purposes at Plumpton's paddock, Diggers Rest, just 20 miles north-west of Melbourne. During February, 1910, Banks took *The Stella* to Diggers Rest, housed it in a tent, and started preparations for his flying training. Houdini's Voisin Biplane arrived in Melbourne on February 22, and Houdini, hearing of the aviation activities at Diggers Rest, took his Voisin there to join Banks. If Colin Defries was still in Melbourne at this time, it is almost certain his name would have appeared in contemporary newspaper reports. It seems likely that, before the end of February, he had departed with his wife Stella on his way back to England. In the remaining few years before the outbreak of WWI, he found work as manager in the car sales department of the Fiat Garages at Brighton, England.

Ralph Banks succeeded in making several short straight line flights at Digger's Rest before the end of February. Then, on March 1, he attempted a longer flight against advice from Houdini's mechanic M. Brassac, who considered the wind conditions too dangerous. Banks became airborne and had flown for a distance of 300 yds at a height of about 15 ft, when the aircraft suddenly nosed into the ground. Banks was thrown from the aeroplane, and, although injured, was lucky to escape with his life. *The Stella* would never fly again. Back at the Melbourne Motor Garage, the Bleriot XI was quietly dismantled and placed back in its packing-case.

On March 11, an ad appeared in the *Argus*: "Aeroplane pilot desires situation. Experience with Bleriot, Farman and Wright machines. Address *Argus* 131." The only person in the country who had experience with all three aeroplanes, having assembled the Bleriot, observed Houdini's Voisin-Farman close up, and flown the Wright, was Ralph Banks. Despite his brush with death, he had apparently been bitten by the flying bug. Banks was back at Diggers Rest on March 18, to sign as a witness to, and congratulate Houdini for, the historic flights he had achieved on that day.

The saga of *The Stella*, and the recently imported Bleriot, might have ended after the crash at Diggers Rest. However, Lawrence Adamson stood to lose his investment in the two aeroplanes, said to be about £8000, and Ralph Banks was still keen to continue flying. Thus it was that, despite the failures in Sydney and Melbourne, Adamson agreed to exhibiting the aeroplanes in Adelaide. First a 'stage' name, appropriate for the pilot of a Bleriot, was invented for Ralph Banks. It was announced that, by arrangement with J.& N. Tait, the *First Public Aeroplane Flight* would be made by Monsieur H. C. L'Oste Rolfe, in his Bleriot Monoplane at Cheltenham Racecourse at 3:15 pm on Saturday, July 23, 1910. The sad remains of *The Stella* would also be on static display.

A crowd of about 3000, the largest yet gathered in Australia to witness an aeroplane flight, was at Cheltenham Racecourse presenting a problem for the four policemen on duty. Shortly after 3:15 pm a narrow take-off path was cleared, and a trial taxi run was carried out with the crowd closing in behind the Bleriot and running after it. The Bleriot was then wheeled back to the starting point and faced into wind. A spectator, Mr T. E. Fisher, described what happened next: "After about 70 ft she lifted but did not seem to take the wind fair. Then something happened. We saw the propeller flying to pieces. The machine canted to the right. The wing caught the ground and was badly buckled. Someone picked up a part of the propeller, and, handing it to me said, 'Why it has blood on it.' Lying nearby was a sixteen year old youth, Ewart Lock. He had been struck on the shoulder as the Bleriot swerved into the crowd, and a piece of the shattered propeller had severed his right hand at the wrist. He was rushed to the Adelaide Hospital for treatment and survived his injuries.

Lawrence Adamson was passionate about the welfare of his boys at Wesley. He would have been deeply affected by Ewart Lock's accident. The reason for the unceremonious dumping at sea, of the Wright and Bleriot aeroplanes, may not only have been his desire to recover duty....**John Scott.**

At 8 p.m.

In the presence of members of the Australian Aviation Historical Society

“An Evening with George Augustine Taylor”

At the PowerHouse Museum, Ultimo, Wednesday 5 September 2007

By David A. Craddock

His family

His interests

The Aerial League of Australia

Flying machines for military purposes

His aeroplane factory

The Building Australia Exhibition

Gliding at Narrabeen

Wireless experiments

Powered flight

Lawsuit

Military service

In the presence of His Excellency LORD CHELMSFORD.
His Excellency ADMIRAL POORE.
The Lord Mayor, ALLEN TAYLOR, etc.

"The Conquerors of the Air."

By GEORGE A. TAYLOR, Hon. Sec. Aerial League.

The Conquest of the Air—Ridicule for Pioneers—What Australia has to regret.

The beginning—Mongolfer and his hot air balloon—What a balloon ascent is like—There are various ways of coming down—Glashier and Coxwell—Seven miles up—The highest reached by man—Coxwell's heroism—Andre's last journey and his pathetic message.

The value of Aeronautics for photographic purposes—The Automobile engine and the balloon make the dirigible—Dumont and his ships—The French struggle for aerial mastery—The end of the Pathé—The Ville de Paris—Zeppelin and his successes.

The Balloon Aeroplane—Adding the planes—The Barton, the Malecot and the American.

The heavier than air machine—How it developed from the kite—A Chinese moral—How the world waited for Australia—Maxim, Lilienthal, and Langley. Dr. Chanute and the Dayton Bicycle Makers.

The Wrights' begin to glide—Making friends with the air—How they do it in France—A Tragedy and its sequel—Success at last.

The conquest of the air—Does it mean the end of war?—The Flying Man the Missioner of Peace—A plea for Australia.

Illustrated with 40 Lantern Slides and 7500 feet of Cinematograph Film.

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The Aerial League of Australia.

OFFICERS FOR 1909-10.

PATRON : His Excellency Earl Dudley, Governor-General of the Commonwealth.

STATE PATRON : His Excellency Lord Chelmsford, State Governor of N.S.W.

PRESIDENT : Allen Taylor, Esq., Lord Mayor of Sydney.

VICE-PRESIDENTS : Lieut. Col. W. Holmes, D.S.O., Commander F. H. C. Brownlow, J. W. Turner, George M. Mervale, Lawrence Hargrave.

COUNCIL : Colonel W. L. Vernon, Norman Selfe, M.I.M.E., M. Inst., C.E. Chas. L. Garland, J. M. Smal, M. Inst. C.E. Major Wilson, Thos. R. Roydhouse.

HON. TREASURER : Major Charles Rosenthat, Union Bank Chambers, Pitt-street, Sydney.

HON. SECRETARY : George A. Taylor, 74a Pitt-street, Sydney.

Telephone, 1187 Central.

The League is established for the purpose of giving a stronger impulse to the scientific study of Aerial Navigation; to promote the intercourse of those interested in the subject at home as well as in different parts of the British Empire and abroad; and to aid with advice and instruction those studying the subject.

Every Member (who has paid the subscription for the current year) is entitled to—

(a) Be present and vote at all General Meetings of the Society.
(b) Receive one copy of each report or publication issued by the League after he shall become a member.

(c) Admission with two friends to every ordinary meeting of the League, except on special occasions when the number of visitors may be limited.

(d) Consult any books or publications in the Library, but must bear any expense (such as postage) connected therewith.

Each Member shall, upon his election, pay the sum of 5s., and shall for each subsequent year pay 5s.

Every Australian should become a member of the Aerial League.

The subscription is but nominal, viz., five shillings per year. By joining the League you are encouraging the Aerial Defence of the Commonwealth. You are helping to develop the most important of human inventions and, thirdly, you are assisting in bringing nearer that flying age when the facilities for human destruction will be so great that universal peace must necessarily be assured.

What **COMMANDER BROWNLOW** of The Commonwealth Naval Forces says:—
Every Australian should put the question of Defence as the first problem for him to consider and in this respect Aerial Navigation occupies no mean position.

What **MAJOR ROSENTHAL**, Officer commanding the Commonwealth "Howitzer" Battery, says:

There is no question that Aerial Navigation must be seriously considered from the point of view of Commonwealth Defence, hence every Australian should support any movement tending to increase knowledge of Aerial Engineering. The work that the League is doing is national in its character and should have the support of every true Australian.

LORD-CHELMSFORD, writes wishing the League every success.

What **LAWRENCE HARGRAVE** says:—

It is good reading that an Aerial League should be formed in Australia, and much benefit will be derived from the spreading of Aerial Machine knowledge.

It is but a few months since any dared to speak of aerial matters without a sly wink and a tapping of the forehead. Let us try to efface the memory of that dark time by the energy we put into our crude efforts, repeated trial and failure, and by skilful design.

Be cheered in 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, its real goal is that knowledge of our neighbours that dispels the dark clouds of selfish prejudice.

GENERAL HOAD writes:

The League carries my best wishes for every success.

It may be a little out of your way but the care and Skilful Attention bestowed will prove it worth your while to visit

A. J. HAYNES,

— Gentlemen's Hairdresser —

AND

Importer of Toilet Requisites,

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At 3 p.m.

Exhibition of Models.

- No. 1. The Hargrave Box Kite.
LAW. HARGRAVE, Woollahra Point, Sydney.
- No. 2. Some early Flying Machine Models by LAW. HARGRAVE.
Exhibited by kind permission of SYDNEY TECHNICAL COLLEGE.
- No. 3. Model illustrating working parts of Garland's Aeromobile.
CHAS. L. GARLAND, Phillip Street, Sydney.
- No. 4. Aluminium Engine for Aerial Propulsion.
CHAS. WHITFELL, Petersham.
- No. 5. A Two-pair Helicopter. Scale, 1½ inches to foot.
H. E. GARTY, 6 Bent Street, Paddington.
- No. 6. One-pair Helicopter. Scale, 1 inch to foot.
H. E. GARTY, 6 Bent Street, Paddington.
- No. 7. Experimental Model. Scale, 1 inch to foot.
H. E. GARTY.
- No. 8. The Ewing Aerocar. Scale, ½ inch to foot.
S. EWING.
- No. 9. Combination Aeroplane and Dirigible.
C. F. WITTON, "Cromdale," Coree Road, Artarmon.
- No. 10. Model for Aerial or Marine Propeller.
F. ERNEST STOWE, C.E.
- No. 11. Model Floating Aeroplane.
G. W. GREEN, Woy Woy.
- No. 12. Flexible Propeller.
S. J. LAURENCE, 38 Castlereagh Street, Redfern.

The thanks are due to West Pictures for their courtesy in lending the excellent films showing the Wright Aeroplane in Italy and "Building an Aeroplane."

A Foreword to Inventors.



- IF** you wish to have an imperfect or incomplete invention worked out by competent Engineers,
- IF** you require to obtain particulars of any prior invention, so as to learn the extent of novelty contained in your own ideas,
- IF** you desire to have shop drawings made, and models or working apparatus constructed,
- IF** you require to procure a patent for your invention in any part of the World:—

CONSULT

HEPBURN & SPRUSSON,

CONSULTING ENGINEERS

AND

... PATENT ATTORNEYS ...

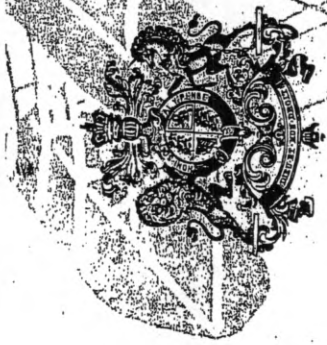
91 Elizabeth St. (Supreme Court Corner), Sydney.

We have been in practice in Sydney for 22 years, and during that time have developed hundreds of inventions, and procured nearly six thousand patents—Australasian, British, American and Foreign—for our Clients.

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THE AERIAL LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

PRESENTS

“ An Evening

with the

Conquerors of the Air ”

AND

The First Australasian Aeronautical Exhibition

ST. JAMES' HALL, SYDNEY
 FRIDAY, JULY 23RD, 1909

CHAS. ROSENBERG, Hon. Treas.
 GEORGE A. TAYLOR, Hon. Sec.



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

October 2007 No.411

October Meeting – Revised Meeting Venue

The October meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3rd October 2007, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via Macarthur Street and proceed to the meeting room at the southern end of the Administration Building. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will feature a slide night presented by David Eyre. David's slide collection now exceeds 100,000 items covering a very large number of aircraft types with examples taken in Australia and overseas. David and his wife recently travelled on the Torii Tours *Oshkosh and the USA 2007*, and hopefully he will also include material from that trip in this presentation.

Please join us for another fascination view on Australian aviation history.

September Meeting

Guest speaker was David Craddock who presented: *The life and times of George Augustine Taylor*. As an introduction, John Scott discussed some of the material on Colin Defries and George Augustine Taylor that he has been including in his recent Loops & Landings columns. John displayed a number of newspaper clippings and photographs that were published in 1909 detailing Colin Defries' flight and identified some of the reasons why George Augustine Taylor disregarded such activities.

David has carried out significant research into the life of George Augustine Taylor and his talk revealed much about the man and his achievements. Taylor was indeed a very patriotic and talented individual with interests in ballooning, wireless, publishing and art. He was born in Sydney in 1872 and trained as a builder, with one claim to fame of being the inventor of "bagasse" form of ornamental plaster. He worked as a cartoonist in the 1890s and was one of the founders of the Institute of Local Government Engineers of Australasia.

His family was also noteworthy; Taylor's wife, Florence was the first female architect and engineer in Australia and with George, she established several engineering journals. George's brother Vincent was

better known by his professional name of Captain Penfold, of ballooning fame.

In February 1910, Taylor established The Aerial League of Australia and its first meeting was held in April that year. Taylor urged the government to offer prize money for an Australian designed and built aircraft. He also argued that Lawrence Hargrave's design of the box-kite should have received greater recognition from the Wright Brothers, although it did receive due recognition from Octave Chanute.

At the Aerial League of Australia's "An Evening with the Conquerors of the Air" and Australasian Exhibition held in Sydney in July 1909, Taylor spoke about the history of ballooning, dirigibles and the heavier than air machines. Perhaps the statement in The Aerial League of Australia's brochure reflects the strong patriotism advocated by Taylor: "By joining the League you are encouraging the Aerial defence of the Commonwealth. You are helping to develop the most important of human inventions and, thirdly, you are assisting in bringing nearer that flying age when the facilities for human destruction will be so great that universal peace must necessarily be assured."

Taylor made the first heavier-than-air flight in Australia in his glider near Narrabeen Lagoon, NSW on 5th December 1909. His ambition was to be the pilot of the first powered flight in Australia. He thought it appropriate that an Australian should carry out this feat, and considered that he was the most likely candidate. It has been suggested that because of his patriotism and own ambition, he chose to discredit, and, in fact ignore the flight made by Colin Defries in the Wright Model A aircraft at Victoria Park, Sydney on the 9th December 1909.

Taylor's many other undertakings and achievements were discussed and David's thorough research and entertaining story-telling provided for a most interesting presentation.

Taylor died from epilepsy in 1928.

Catalina Information

In last month's issue of *Southern Skies*, Philip Dulhunty provided information and background about the newly acquired Catalina for the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd which is planned to be flown

to Australia from Portugal. Phil has kindly provided additional information about the role of Catalinas that operated from RAAF Rathmines.

RATHMINES - THE TOP SECRET CATALINA OPERATIONS

It is only now that many of the Catalina stories are being told. During the Pacific War our Catalina flying boats flew highly secret missions between April 1943 and March 1945, which was a critical period after Midway. Lost in history by the term 'Allied' these Australian (RAAF) Cats were the only aircraft engaged in some of the most arduous and dangerous long-range missions of World War II behind enemy lines, many of which were in excess of 20 hours.

They carried newly developed sophisticated mines into almost every Japanese held harbour of importance and by laying precision mines in the approaches, forced their transports out to become the prey of US submarines and easier targets for US bombers. In their job to block and neutralise the Japanese oil and mineral supplies needed to sustain the war, they were very successful. They were the only flying boats to do this task and were arguably the most efficient and successful RAAF squadrons in WWII.

The Catalina was slow and cumbersome and poorly armed. It had to rely upon stealth by arriving over its target at night in the dark and at a low altitude. That's why the aircraft were painted dull black and known as the Black Cats. Each aircraft dropped its mine load with a splash - no explosion, and tried to escape before enemy fighters could become airborne. It was no match for the Japanese Zeros! But by flying low and slow and in the hours of darkness, sometimes no higher than 200 feet, they avoided the detection of the enemy radar and fighters.

The mines they dropped were of a special design - shaped like torpedoes and were carried under the wings of the Catalina. They could be preset to explode after the passing of a number of ships; sometimes the first ship, sometimes the fourth or even seventh passing. Mostly the Japanese didn't know they were there or how they got there. The secrecy of their operations was paramount to their success; many of the mine-laying sorties were scary and best forgotten. A considerable number of Catalinas and their crews were lost (32 aircraft and 330 crew-members). It is only in the last few years that Robert Cleworth, brother of Reg Cleworth who was one of the heroes lost in the Catalina raids, has researched these operations and just now published his book, "The Fabulous Catalina", a sequel to his "Cats at War"

written in conjunction with Coral Gaunt whose brother was also lost in WWII.

Catalina flying boats were manufactured by Consolidated Aircraft Company, most US Navy operated Cats were amphibians, i.e. equipped with wheel landing gear retracting into their floating hulls. They also had heavy armour plating protecting the crew from fighter attack. Without modification they were not capable of making the long distance (18-24 hour) flights carrying such heavy loads as the Australian Catalinas. In order to gain the extra distances and endurance, the RAAF stripped its Cats of armour protection and the self sealing material from their fuel tanks to reduce weight and increase their fuel capacity. Lt Ivor Collins, USN mining officer attached to the RAAF, said 'the Australian airmen got more out of the Catalina than our boys ever imagined possible'. With the increased range obtained with these modifications the RAAF Catalinas were able to carry the mine loads and travel the distances to the Japanese harbours in the North Pacific and the China Sea.

Most of the work of removing all the armour plating and the retractable wheel undercarriages was carried out at the Rathmines Catalina base on Lake Macquarie or at Lake Boga near Swan Hill in Victoria. Rathmines, known as No 3 OTU (Operational Training Unit), was the main training base for all Catalina crews and the modified "castrated" aircraft flew from there to jumping off places further north where the mines were fitted.

Normal bombing raids by Liberators and Superfortresses, etc were well documented and publicised for morale purposes, but the part played by Rathmines and the Catalina flying boats is only now starting to be told. Because of the extreme secrecy during the war many of the experiences were never recorded and have been left untold.

The mines had to be dropped in very precise locations, measured in seconds of flying time from a specific datum and from a specified low height. If not perfectly done a mine could explode on contact with the water and one story is told of a mine drop, which went wrong and blew off all the fabric control surfaces of the wing. In spite of this, the crew were able to escape and the Catalina came back in a very bedraggled condition - (only to be licked into shape again by the Rathmines engineers).

Much has been written and told about the Dam Busters, whose Lancasters dropped bombs to breach the wall of the large dams in Germany, but the secret Rathmines Catalina operations were far more arduous and dangerous and numerous than these. It's time we knew more about them and paid

respect to these magnificent men in their flying machines.

The Aussie Catalina-laid mines did more damage to enemy shipping than all the aerial bombing and torpedoing and became a vital part of MacArthur's hop-stepping tactics all the way to Okinawa. Even if they didn't sink a ship they tied up whole fleets of vessels in ports for more than a week waiting for mine sweepers to clear the entrances.

Before General McArthur returned to Manila in December 1944 he organised 25 Australian Catalinas to mine the harbour which tied up the whole Japanese fleet, so he could safely step ashore.

Mine laying was not the only dangerous mission conducted by our Catalinas. Practically every operation was beyond and behind enemy lines and they didn't just fly over every installation and drop bombs from a great height. They also had to alight, drop off Commandos, rescue downed airmen, service the coast watchers – in all cases exposing themselves to air and surface attack like sitting ducks!

Without in any way detracting from the great work of the RAAF fighters and bombers, the Catalinas undoubtedly, did for Australia what the Spitfires did for England – but in great secrecy.

Phil Dulhunty.

RAAF Base Richmond

During August, the Minister for Defence, The Hon Brendan Nelson announced that the Federal Government would retain the RAAF Base Richmond.

The Prime Minister had previously announced in 1998 that the RAAF Base would be retained until 2010. Since then, the future of RAAF Base Richmond beyond 2010 has been considered with a number of other Defence bases and establishments under the Force Disposition Program.

A detailed study demonstrated that the balance of capability, economic and current community considerations weighs heavily in favour of retaining the base. This decision will ensure Defence's ongoing presence in the local community whilst ensuring that the critical capability provided by the RAAF's C-130 airlift fleet remains at RAAF Base Richmond.

Courtesy Department of Defence.

On the Internet

The Australian National Aviation Museum – Moorabbin Air Museum
(<http://aarg.com.au>)

This site has been considerably enhanced since last mentioned. It features Australian aviation

history, a virtual tour of the museum, museum news, restorations and the museum collection.

South Australian Aviation Museum
(www.saam.org.au)

This site details the opening of the new museum, with information on the museum objectives, aircraft displays, engine displays, restorations and Woomera heritage rocket collection.

Vickers Viscount Network
(www.vickersviscount.net)

This site is a virtual museum dedicated to the Vickers Viscount, with images of Viscounts from all over the world, news, updates and restorations, history and technical data. Well worth a look!

For the Diary – Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture

This year's Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture will be held on Wednesday 7th November and with Jeff Watson as the Guest Speaker. Jeff's lecture will feature the story of the return of the Qantas's first Boeing 707-138B from England to Australia.

Calendar of Events

28-30 September 2007 Narromine Air Pageant and Festival, Narromine NSW

29 September 2007 Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia Splash-in. Rathmines NSW

6 October 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

13-14 October 2007 AAAA Auster Rally and AGM. Wentworth NSW

19-20 October 2007 SAAA National Convention and Fly-in. Cowra NSW

27-28 October 2007 Australian Defence Force Air Show. Edinburgh SA

3 November 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

4 November 2007 NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day. Wedderburn NSW

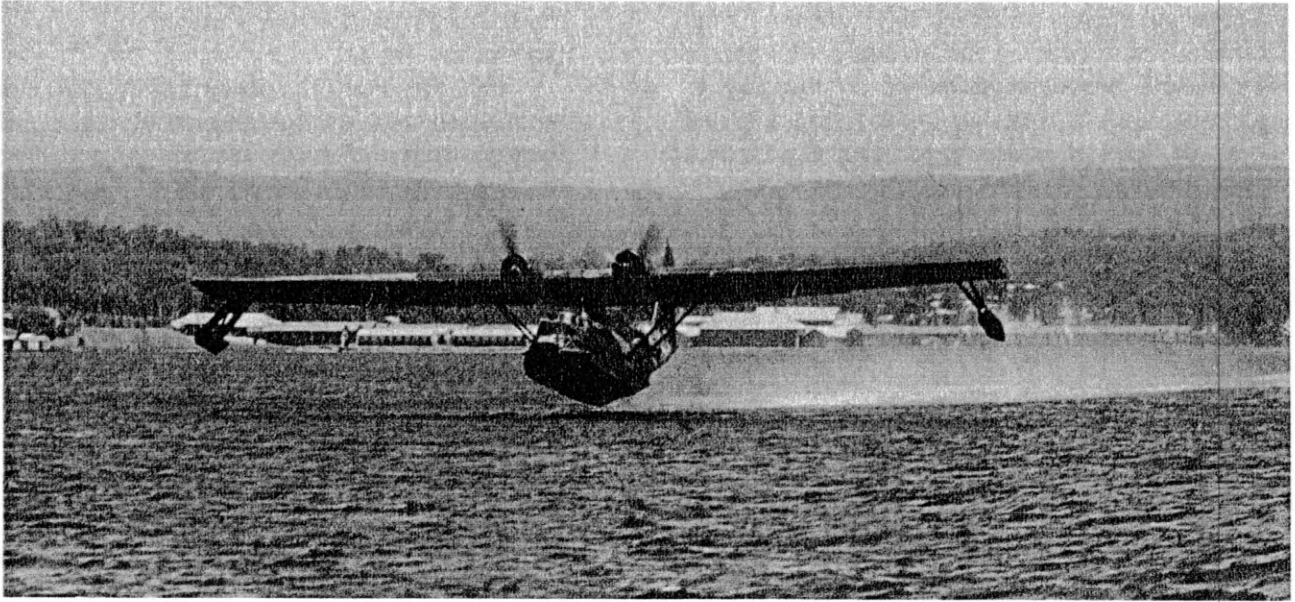
5 December 2007 AHSA (NSW) Monthly meeting Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

Contributions and Contacts

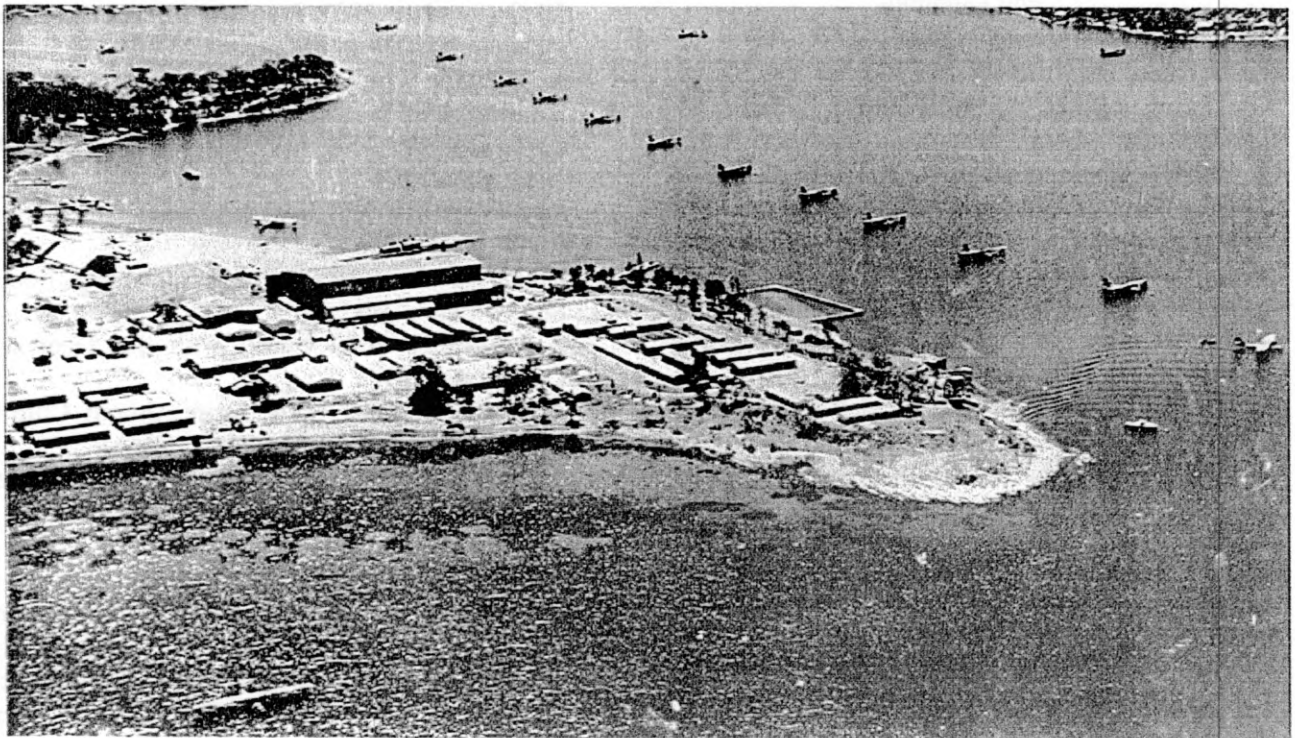
News items, other contributions, advertisements or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth via Email (wbigsworth@iprimus.com.au). Warwick's new phone contact is (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

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



Catalina taking off from RAAF Rathmines



3 OTU Rathmines showing Catalinas on line

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 1.

At our October meeting David Eyre will talk to us about his experience of the recent Torii Tours, *Oshkosh & the USA 2007*. I had the good fortune to share those wonderful two and a half weeks with David and his wife Eleonore. I would urge members not to miss what promises to be another of those magical AHSA (NSW) Inc meetings.

The approaching meeting caused me to reflect on another October, way back in 1958 when, with a friend, I was enjoying a clockwise circumnavigation of the USA by car. I still have my diary of the adventure. On the same day of the month as our October meeting, but forty nine years ago, we visited the Mount Rushmore National Monument and the Badlands of South Dakota. Our route then took us east into Minnesota, and across Wisconsin, to arrive at Milwaukee on the western shore of Lake Michigan. Without realising it, I had stumbled on part of the *Harry Houdini Trail*. In 1883, an impoverished Hungarian immigrant from Budapest, Samuel Weiss, moved his family to Milwaukee, including his nine year old son Ehrich. Young Ehrich was soon out on the street corners of the city, shining shoes and selling newspapers. The Weiss family slipped further into poverty during their stay in Milwaukee. By 1887 they had moved on to New York.

We continued our trip and spent some time in New York. Had I known, I could have paid my respects at Houdini's grave, which is located in the Machpelah Cemetery in Queens. Houdini died at Detroit, Michigan, of peritonitis, on October 31, 1926. Trust Houdini to die on Halloween, a night inhabited by ghosts, spirits and witches. We left New York and travelled on to Washington D. C., arriving there on October 23, 1958. The Smithsonian Institution Museums were high on our list of places to visit. The original Institution building, named the *Castle*, houses the crypt of James Smithson. For some background on the founder of the Smithsonian, I refer you to L&L, February 2004, *The Centenary of an Important Exhumation*. Another important exhumation is pending. In March this year, a relative called for the exhumation of Houdini's remains in order to resolve a mystery surrounding his death.

The Smithsonian started to accumulate its aeronautical collection at the time of the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition when the Chinese Imperial Commission presented it with a gift of twenty beautiful kites. The Smithsonian's growing aeronautical collection was displayed in the Arts and Industries building and, from 1920, in an adjoining temporary WWI structure known as the *Tin Shed*. In 1946 Congress officially established the National Air Museum as a bureau of the Smithsonian Institution. This was the situation at the time of our visit in 1958. The newest exhibits at the time were a Vanguard rocket and a replica of the Sputnik I. On the day after our meeting, October 4, it will be just 50 years since the flight of Sputnik 1, the earth's first satellite. Preservation of the heritage of space flight demanded a name change in 1966 to the National Air and Space Museum.

The year 1958 saw the first step towards the building of the existing National Air and Space Museum. A new site, about one block east of the Smithsonian *Castle*, was designated for the museum. (I recall that, a couple of decades ago, land was similarly designated for the National Air and Space Museum of Australia on Laverton airfield, with planning for the museum formally endorsed by the Victorian State Cabinet in February 1990, pending further consultation with the Federal Government - still waiting, waiting!) The new National Air and Space Museum opened on July 1, 1976, and is now the most visited museum in the world. In 1958 there was another important event that would lead to a future massive expansion of the museum's capacity. A group of Hungarian immigrants, including the Udvar-Hazy family, who were fleeing from Budapest after the 1956 Hungarian Rising, landed in New York. With them was a twelve year old boy named Steven.

On Friday July 20, 2007, our tour group arrived in Washington D. C. to be let loose on a weekend to explore the National Air and Space Museum, and the many other national monuments and institutions of the capital. On Monday, July 23, our itinerary demanded that we depart for Oshkosh. What an interesting day's travel that was. Perhaps, to ensure that we were not still half

asleep, our tour leader arranged an early morning scenic drive to Hain's Point, on East Potomac Park, to view a dramatic sculpture by J. Seward Johnson Jr. named *The Awakening*. At Hain's Point we were at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, close to the location where, on December 8, 1903, Samuel Pierpont Langley anchored a houseboat on which a catapult was mounted bearing his *Great Aerodrome*. Nearby, on the western bank of the Potomac in Arlington, activity at the Ronald Reagan National Airport bears witness to the progress of aviation since Langley's abortive attempts at manned flight.

We were then driven back past the entrance to Arlington Cemetery, and the adjoining historic Fort Myer, where the Wright Brothers conducted flight trials for the U.S. Army, with their Military Flyer, in 1908 and 1909. We stopped to view another dramatic sculpture, the Iwo Jima Memorial. This sculpture memorialises the raising of the American flag on the top of Mt Suribachi by five Marines and a Navy corpsman on February 23, 1945, during the invasion of Iwo Jima. Three of those soldiers were killed later in the battle. It was then off to Washington Dulles International Airport in Northern Virginia. But first there was time for a four hour acquaintance with the treasures of the Smithsonian's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, which is located in the grounds of the airport.

After members of the Udvar-Hazy family arrived in the USA in 1958, they moved to California. Young Steven settled into the American education system, and eventually commenced undergraduate studies in commerce at the University of California in Los Angeles. As a twenty year old undergraduate he formed *Airline Systems Research Consultants*, specialising in airline routes and fleet planning analysis. His first clients included Aer Lingus and Air New Zealand. By 1973 he and two partners became pioneers in aviation financing by creating *International Lease Finance Corporation*, which is now the largest owner of Boeing and Airbus jets in the USA, and which has propelled him onto the list of 100 richest men in the USA. Fortunately for the Smithsonian, Steve Hazy turned out to be a great philanthropist and, since he made his wealth in aviation, he consulted with the Smithsonian on how his gift of US\$65 million, to preserve the nation's aviation heritage, might be best spent. With an additional US\$35 million tipped in by the Northern Virginia State Government, a magnificent companion facility to the National Air and Space Museum, The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, is the result of his philanthropy. It was opened on December 15, 2003, two days before the centenary of the Wright Brothers' historic flights at Kitty Hawk.

The objective for our group was, at the end of the day, to be settled into our accommodation at the University of Wisconsin Campus at Oshkosh. Therefore, it was a reluctant departure from the Udvar-Hazy Center to catch our flight from Washington / Dulles to Chicago / O'Hare, and then on to, not Oshkosh directly, but the airport of a nearby town - Appleton. Once again I had stumbled onto the *Harry Houdini Trail*. Appleton held such affection in the mind of Houdini that he claimed, for the whole of his life, that he had been born there, and he always gave his date of birth in Appleton as April 6, 1874. For its part Appleton holds a similar affection for Houdini. There were pamphlets at the airport advertising the Outagamie County and Houdini Historical Center. There was also a machine in the airport lounge that enabled the conversion of a one cent coin. I now have a souvenir of Appleton with the head of Houdini replacing the previous obverse incumbent, Abraham Lincoln. Unfortunately our itinerary did not permit an opportunity to visit the Houdini Historical Center. However, I visited the EAA Boeing Aeronautical Library, attached to the Airventure Museum at Oshkosh. The library holds a file on Houdini, which includes information about his involvement with early aviation in Australia.

Records show that Ehrich Weiss, alias Houdini, was born in Budapest on March 24, 1874. His father, Samuel Weiss, was driven to leave Hungary by acts of anti-Semitism. He travelled in advance of his family to the USA, and proceeded to Appleton where a job awaited him as rabbi of the Zion Reform Jewish Congregation. His wife and five children, including Ehrich, followed in 1878. The Weisses moved on to Milwaukee in 1883 after Samuel lost his position as rabbi.

I took my first deliberate steps on the *Harry Houdini Trail* in 1998, following my attendance at the 9th National Conference on Engineering Heritage at Ballarat, Victoria. Since the conference ended on March 18, the 88th anniversary of Houdini's flights, and Diggers Rest was close by, I decided to visit his memorials, and the site of his achievements at Plumpton's paddock. **John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

November 2007 No.412

November Meeting

Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture

The November meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7th November 2007, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter via Macarthur Street and the meeting room at the southern end of the Administration Building. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will be the 25th Annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture. This year, we are very fortunate to have as guest speaker, Jeff Watson, whose subject will be

The Return to Australia of Qantas's first Boeing 707-138B

Jeff was one of the lucky ones to travel from the United Kingdom to Australia on the former Qantas B707-138B (VH-EBA) now registered as VH-XBA. He made a documentary film of the trip, shown on the Channel 7 Network, and the story was also published in *Australian Aviation* magazine. In this lecture, Jeff will reveal much more about the flight and the enormous number of issues that arose in trying to get the aircraft to airworthy status before departing on its epic return flight.

Jeff is a well-known journalist, author, film maker and raconteur who has had a life-long passion for aviation. He has written four books, with another being written, and subjects include the life of Clive Caldwell and Sidney Cotton. He has made some sixteen film documentaries on aviation related subjects.

He started his career as a newspaper reporter in England, moving to BBC radio and then television as a reporter and news presenter with ATV. Special reporting assignments included a stint in the Middle East during the Cyprus emergency, and Libya during the takeover by General Gaddafi.

Jeff moved to Australia in 1971 and has since contributed to such programs as *This Day Tonight*, *Four Corners*, *Towards 2000*, *Holiday*, *Sixty Minutes*, *Beyond 2000* and *Getaway*. In 2001, he became motoring and aviation editor of Channel 9's *Today* programme.

In 1980 Jeff set up his own production company which has specialised in making documentaries on aviation. Films include *Spitfire Over Australia*, *Curtis Kittyhawk*, *The Ansett Story*, *Qantas 50 Years of QF-1*, *Classic Aeroplanes in Australia*, the RAAF 70th Anniversary, the *Veterans Return* and *Ghost Squadron*. In 2000 he wrote, directed and presented the documentary drama *The Last Plane Out of Berlin* about the life of Sidney Cotton.

In 1991 Jeff was made a Chevalier of the Order of Merit by President Mitterrand of France, the civilian equivalent of the Legion d'Honneur or an OBE in the British system. This is a rare honour for an Australian, awarded for services to France and acknowledging the many films he has made on French developments in science and technology, in particular, aviation.

Jeff also served two years as a Trustee of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney and was an Australia Day Ambassador in 1995-6-7. He is a full member of the Spitfire Association and in 2003 he was made an honorary Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

As an aviator he has flown, or flown in more than fifty types of aircraft including the Harrier Jump-Jet, the F/A 18 Super Hornet, the English Electric Lightning and the Concorde and has kicked the tyres on the Space Shuttle Challenger.

Please join us for our premier night of the year.

Members are also requested to bring a small plate for supper afterwards.

October Meeting

Our Guest speaker was David Eyre who provided a visual presentation on his recent trip to the USA, which included visits to Oshkosh Airventure 2007, the Pima Air and Space Museum, AMARC at Davis Monthan, the United States Air Force Museum, the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum and the Boeing Factory. Very ably assisted by his wife Eleonore, who also went on the trip, David displayed a wide range of images from war-birds, vintage types, home-builts,

kit aircraft, seaplanes and transports at Oshkosh, to the hundreds of military aircraft at AMARC to the historically significant aircraft at The National Air and Space Museum.

David and Eleonore did not take slides on this trip, but rather digital stills and digital video. With a bit of help from the software, the display of the still images was greatly enhanced by the gradual zoom-in effect, which made for a most interesting presentation.

The number of different types was enormous, but anyone familiar with the variety of weird and innovative kit and sport aircraft that attend the Airventure Show will appreciate the possibilities.

Many thanks to David and Eleonore for providing such an interesting evening.

From Our Northern Correspondent

Our Northern Correspondent, Roy Fordham, has been quiet for a few months, but this latest piece provides the reason why:

NORTH to ALASKA

The journey begins departing Cairns for San Francisco, via Tokyo Narita. Narita airport lounge gave me my first real buzz of the trip, in that part of the area is replicated as an English pub, on the walls of which hang photographs and memorabilia, some of which I feel were originals.

The photographs, all of early aviation years, capturing scenes of London's first International Airport, circa the 1930s, namely, Croydon, and numerous aircraft of the era. Also, unbelievable, framed artefacts in perfect condition, such as an early flying helmet and goggles, and tins of various products available to the flying public of that time.

Of even greater interest to me personally, was advertising material offering pilot training at one of North London's flying schools in rural Hendon, the Hyde, London NW9. Names such as Grahame White and Farman, among many early aviation greats, featured together with many other names involved in aviation of the period. I should here name drop, names such as Airco, BTH, Desoutter, Armstrong Siddeley and de Havilland, all well known industries within the Hendon district, as I can well recall.

Hendon was the locale of my childhood and my youth, growing up there was a most pleasant time of my young life, and later to find me serving in the RAF there while it was still an active airfield, today of course the Royal Air Force Museum site. This experience bode well for the journey ahead, and it was to continue this way.

On arrival in San Francisco, I contacted one of my planned social catch-ups, to arrange a visit to Travis, the California air base museum. Mine host

here, a current Senior Captain with Alaska Air, and former USAF Pilot, then driving the C-141 Starlifter.

Travis is home to many static display aircraft, and most in very good condition, the un-mistakable vision of the C-47 Goony Bird is front row viewing, as is a Beechcraft, a Lodestar, Grumman Goose and a duo of Caribou. A B-52 sits menacingly beyond, and my host Keith points to a very bulbous machine with a history of being christened, "Old Shakey", in fact, the C-124 Globemaster II.

Keith and his wife Karen have become very close friends since our very first meeting in Cairns some years ago; he had seen and heard the Tiger from his hotel balcony and decided he had to experience flying a 'real' aeroplane. He is very much at home whilst guiding me around many more historical classics, having graduated and receiving his wings here at Travis.

This base is now home to a very active fleet, of which we observed continually, at high and low altitude, the huge C-5 Galaxy, and similarly large C-17 Globemaster III, and very impressive KC-10 Tanker, ever present and a delight to perceive daily.

This maybe a good time to pause and prepare another chapter, which hopefully will be of interest to you all. I assure you the next phase will appeal to your taste buds, at least to those of you who enjoy the Napa Valley wine taste.

Roy Fordham

Catalina Information

Phil Dulhunty has advised that the Catalina which has been acquired by the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd has now been registered as VH-CAT. For much more information on this project, see the Catalina Flying Memorial website at: (www.catalinaflying.org.au)

On the Internet

Following David and Eleonore Eyre's excellent presentation last meeting, members will be interested in the following three websites:

Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum

(www.nasm.si.edu)

Here is another comprehensive web site that details the history and collections of the museum in Washington DC along with links to the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles Airport and the Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration and Storage Facility.

EAA Airventure Oshkosh

(www.airventure.org)

This site features all the stories of the 2007 event plus multi-media highlights of the show and history

of the Association, guides of the show, planning for the show and visitors information.

Pima Air and Space Museum

(www.pimaair.org)

Details of the museum, visitor's information, the collections, restorations and visits to AMARC are all included on this website.

Crash of the B-24 Liberator near Burketown QLD (<http://home.st.net.au/~dunn/ozcrashes/qld206.htm>)

This site provides extensive information concerning the crash of 41-23762 "Little Eva" of the 321st 90th Bombardment Group based at Iron Range which was returning from a bombing mission on 2nd December 1942. On 14th December 1942, two survivors were rescued by the manager of Escott Station, 15km west of Burketown. Their discovery started a search for other survivors which lasted for almost 5 months.

Vale

George Spaulding Hale

George Hale passed away on 5 September 2007. He was born in Hobart, Tasmania on 30th October 1930 and grew up in the suburb of Claremont. From an early age he loved everything to do with aircraft and aviation.

On 26th February 1951 he joined the RAAF and undertook his flight training at No.1 Flying Training School at Point Cook, Vic. Here he trained on Tiger Moths and Wirraways and was highly successful being named Dux of the No.7 Post War Course.

He transferred to Williamtown RAAF base and converted to jets while assigned to No.4 OTU, where he flew the De Havilland Vampire Mk.30. He later noted that his conversion to jets involved no dual instruction, no mach meters and no ejection seats, something that would not be considered in today's modern fighter training programmes.

Having accumulated a total of 288 hours flight time and with the rank of Sergeant, he was assigned to No.77 Squadron and flew from Australia to Iwakuni, Japan where he converted to the Gloster Meteor F.8 fighter in 14 days finally completing his conversion on 12th December 1952. He flew from Iwakuni to Seoul, Korea on 13th December 1952 and joined 77 Squadron at their base at Kimpo (K.14).

He flew his first mission of the Korean War on 14th December 1952 on an Area Reconnaissance over the East Coast of North Korea. He later stated that on this mission they were flying close to MiG Alley and were told repeatedly to "Keep our heads up and locked". He named his first assigned Meteor "Halestorm and Snow" a partial reference to his elder brother who served with the army in Korea and had

flown with George in one of the squadron's two-seat Meteor trainers.

He was assigned a new Meteor F.8, A77-851, which he named "Halestorm". On 27th March 1953 while on armed road reconnaissance, Hale, with Sgt David Irlam saw two MiG.15 fighters which they immediately engaged but at the same time were attacked by two more MiGs. Irlam was hit and took no further part in the engagement. Hale engaged one of these MiGs scoring hits and observed the Soviet fighter roll over and dive emitting dense black smoke. He was attacked by two more MiGs which he also engaged, and then a third MiG pair attacked him from behind. He scored hits on the lead MiG of this third group which emitted dense white smoke or fuel vapour that almost completely obscured the aircraft. Both MiGs commenced a near vertical climb and Hale started to attack the lead's wingman when his cannons stopped firing, out of ammunition. The MiGs departed and Hale turned and headed for Kimpo at low level. Hale was credited with one MiG probably destroyed and one MiG damaged. Thus ended the last air to air combat operation in which the RAAF has been engaged to this date.

Hale continued on operations with 77 SQN in Korea until June 1953 at which time he left for Australia having flown 131 combat missions.

Back in Australia he was transferred to 11 SQN and converted to Neptune aircraft operating at Pearce, WA, attended the Australian Joint Anti-Submarine Warfare School at Nowra NSW and later qualified as a Neptune Captain. In 1954 he completed an Instructor's Course at East Sale and again was Dux of the course later instructing on Wirraways at Point Cook. He joined the staff at the CFS at East Sale and became an instructor and examiner on the Vampire, Dakota, Lincoln, Wirraway, Winjeel and Neptune thereafter flying both the Mustang and single seat Vampire at the RAAF's Air Armament School. He then was seconded to the De Havilland Company at Bankstown to check on the production of and to write the handling notes for the Vampire T.35A. He left the RAAF on 21 March 1958 with the rank of Flying Officer.

Hale joined QANTAS and flew Dakotas, Super Constellations, all models of the Boeing 707 and the Boeing 747 up to the 300 series. At QANTAS he was appointed Senior Check and Training Captain on both the 707 and 747 and finally retired on 28th February 1987. Despite his retirement he continued his association with QANTAS acting as a consultant for both pilot training and recruitment until 1992.

He shall be remembered as the RAAF's last air-to-air combat pilot, a consummate professional in all aspects of his flying career and a loving family man.

Courtesy Temora Aviation Museum

Special End of Year Offers

Australian Civil Aircraft Register on CD

Tony Arbon of AustAirData is offering copies of the Australian Civil Aircraft Register for the special price to AHSA members of \$30 for the first CD and \$25 for updates. (Normal RRP is \$70). Contact Tony at PO Box 1425, Caboolture, Qld 4510. The hard copy version is no longer in print, so ensure that you get your snapshot of the Australian Register on CD through Tony.

Books by Derrick Rolland

Derrick's two excellent books, *Airmen I Have Met – Their Stories* and *Aerial Agriculture in Australia* are available at the special reduced price of \$30 each, including P&P within Australia.

Derrick's address is: 6 Alpine View Avenue, Bright Vic 3741; phone (03) 5755 2053. Payment for the books can be either cheque or money order.

Airmen I Have Met – Their Stories is a compilation of biographies written by, or about, some airmen Derrick has come in contact with over the years. These fascinating stories about some of the great names of Australian aviation including Laurie Crowley, Jim Darbyshire, "Laddie" Hindley, Hugh Coventry, Joe Drage, Peter Clemence, to name just a few, describe activities in peace and war, and in civil and military roles, are a tribute to those who have helped to make our aviation history so interesting and diverse.

Aerial Agriculture in Australia describes the history of the use of aircraft in agriculture and forestry. Each aspect of aerial agriculture is covered, from pasture improvement to firebombing, from weed control to rainmaking. Not only is the history most interesting reading, but the 138 black and white and 60 colour photographs will appeal to all those with an interest in aviation. The book also contains a number of statistics and references which researchers will find most helpful.

Both books are hardback essential additions to your bookshelves.

Fred Niven's DVD – Airlines and Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 - 2002

Available now, a DVD, covering the airlines and aircraft of the Ansett & A.N.A. Groups. This DVD (viewable on both PCs & Macs) covers the entire Ansett and A.N.A. groups of airlines, including predecessors and descendents, in Australia PNG and New Zealand 1921-2001. Its 3,200 pages include

- Full details of each aircraft operated by any Ansett-related airline 1921-2002, up to end-May 2006
- Over 7,400 photos/charts/maps of Ansett-related aircraft & personalities, since 1921

- A detailed history for each airline, including its fleet, history, points served & logos
- Milestones' of Ansett Group aviation events
- Route-maps, timetable covers & lots of other memorabilia & some 'What might have beens'.
- Flight Crew lists for all Ansett Group airlines 1921-2002 (over 160 pages).
and lots more.

Cost is \$AU35 paid by cheque or money order, and sent to: Fred Niven
27 Alfred Grove, OAKLEIGH EAST, Vic. 3166
Phone/FAX: (03) (ISD +61-3) 9544-3388
E-Mail: fniven@bigpond.net.au

Fred is also able to accept transfer of the money by Electronic Funds Transfer, which would be the simplest & fastest for everyone. Contact Fred by Email for details and instructions on EFT.

The Fabulous Catalina – by Robert Cleworth

This book is a collection of Catalina and flying boat anecdotes from veterans and relatives of those who flew these machines. \$50 inc. P&P. Send a cheque payable to The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd to:

Christina Mumford
The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd
Building 2, 35-41 Waterloo Rd
NORTH RYDE NSW 2113

Calendar of Events

2-6 November 2007 Recreational Flying Great Southern Fly-in. Echuca VIC

3 November 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

3-4 November 2007 Back to Holbrook Rag and Tube ultralight Fly-in. Holbrook NSW

4 November 2007 NSW Sport Aircraft Club Open Day. Wedderburn NSW

17-18 November 2007 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

5 December 2007 AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting, Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

28-31 December 2007 The Great Eastern Fly-in. Evans Head 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, E-mail (madsen2010@optusnet.com.au) or (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

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

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 2.

Ehrich Weiss was a promising seventeen year old amateur athlete living in New York, when he first read the memoirs of a mid-nineteenth century, French magician, named Robert-Houdin. Young Ehrich had a fascination with locks and magic since childhood. His introduction to the life of Robert-Houdin inspired him to embark on his own life long profession as a magician and escapologist. He experimented with stage names such as, "Eric the Great", and "Cardo", but finally settled on "Houdini". His given name, Ehrich, had already been Americanised to Harry for most of his friends. Thus Ehrich Weiss metamorphosed into Harry Houdini. By the time he was twenty six, his act was so acclaimed in the USA that engagements were offered by theatres in Europe. From the turn of the century his engagements in Europe took more and more of his time. His international fame grew, and continued to grow for the rest of his life - and beyond.

When Wilbur Wright flew his Model A at Le Mans, France, during August, 1908, Houdini was caught up in the sensation caused by this spectacular demonstration of practical flight. He offered \$5000 for the use of a Wright Model A as part of his act. Houdini planned to be handcuffed and flown over the West End of London. He would then parachute down, escaping from his manacles on the way, to make a triumphant landing in Piccadilly Circus. However, this was not the kind of use the Wright Brothers envisaged for their invention. On reflection, even Houdini perceived certain technical difficulties with the proposed act, and it did not proceed. He still felt that the new art of flying could somehow be incorporated in his future performances. He was also aware of the publicity he would gain by some future involvement with aviation.

The trail of Harry Houdini crossed that of Colin Defries at the Grande Semaine de l'Aviation de la Champagne, held at Rheims during the week of August 22 to 29, 1909. Here, together briefly, were two men destined to play a part in the introduction of powered flight to Australia. Another person at the meeting, also to play a part, was Henry Rougier. Rougier was a racing car driver who had turned his skills to aviation. He was previously a fellow competitor with Colin Defries on the European Grand Prix motor racing circuit. In an interview with George Augustine Taylor, published in the periodical, *Building*, May 12, 1910, Houdini explains how he came to purchase the Voisin biplane that he brought to Australia.

"I always wanted to fly. I think that the inherent feeling in everyone is to be able to imitate the bird some time or other, and a good many people keep good so as to make a certainty of flying when they die. I am going to live a long time, and as I am an impatient fellow, I want to see what flying feels like before I shuffle off this mortal coil.

But, as the Irishman says, "let me commence at the beginning." I was at Rheims on the occasion of the great carnival where the aeroplanes floated about the sky like Albatross soaring above some floating food. There they were, soaring and cutting capers in the air, making us mortals on the earth feel quite puny.

If ever the spark of ambition brightens in the man it is when he sees a fellow creature rivalling the birds in the sky, and no sooner did I see Rougier flit carelessly back and forward, up and down at will, that I determined to have his machine for myself. Yes it was Rougier's machine that I bought, and I will tell you why I bought it. Paulhan, Latham, Farman, and the other big guns had pinned their faith in their own special type of machine. I looked down the list of events. There was a Mechanics Race. Ha! I thought. These men know what is what. So I waited for the great race, and bought the machine that came first. Its pilot, Brassac, was the greatest mechanic on the field and when he found that the machine was bought he sobbed like a baby. I have seen the mother separated from her child, and Brassac in parting with his machine presented such a picture. Those Frenchmen are so lachrymose. So I bought Brassac with the machine, and it was he who taught me all I know. No mother could tend her child more tenderly than Brassac does my machine. If its engine coughs irregularly he nurses it till it

is good again. If I stay up too long Brassac's temper is colossal. "You will break ze macheen," he will say. "You should not keep up long so. If that machine were to fall a big distance it would smash." You see, it is always the machine, not the pilot that Brassac worries about.

I was nearly purchasing a Curtiss biplane. It won the speed race, but it did not seem so safe as the Voisin. I remembered I was but a timid, and I wanted to take no chances at the start. Bye and bye when I know the air, I may - who knows?"

In September, 1909, Rougier had a commitment to take his Voisin to an aviation meeting near Brescia, Italy, and Houdini returned to his theatrical engagements in Europe. By November, Houdini was playing at the Hansa Theatre in Hamburg. It was there that he was reunited with his Voisin, and his future flying instructor Brassac. Houdini's Voisin was stationed at the Hufaren exercise field in Hamburg by permission from German army officials. His use of the field was conditional on some German officers having access to the Voisin, also for the purpose of learning to fly. Later, during WW I, Houdini berated himself in a letter to his wife Bess, "I taught those fellows to fly and they may have killed Americans". As for Houdini, Brassac kept his instructions ground based until he was satisfied that his student grasped the fundamentals of controlling the Voisin. Even then he would not allow Houdini to embark on his first flight until the early morning weather conditions were just right. Houdini's first attempt ended with a crash. It was not until November 26, 1909, that Houdini made his first successful solo flight. For his remaining time in Hamburg, Houdini practised flying whenever Brassac, and the weather, permitted.

This is an appropriate point to consider George Augustine Taylor's argument that Colin Defries was not capable of conducting a controlled flight when he flew in Sydney where, on the other hand, Houdini's ability to conduct a controlled flight at Diggers Rest was beyond question. It is possible to compare the time each pilot experienced in the air before his arrival in Australia. Colin Defries stated that, "I learnt in the aerial school at Cannes in France.....I was five weeks learning. During that time I spent four or five hours in the air." Later, when he returned to France to follow up delivery of his Wright Model A, Defries commented, "I gave five flights at Juvisy, (Port Aviation near Paris), generally in the early morning, but I did not stay up longer than seven minutes at a time." By contrast, Houdini was learning to fly at a time when he was engaged in an exhausting theatrical schedule, during the onset of a northern European winter, and under the supervision of a very conservative instructor. According to George Augustine Taylor, in *The Motor in Australia*, March 1, 1910, Houdini's total experience, at the time he reached Australia, consisted of about 18 minutes in the air, during which he reached heights up to about 80 ft.

Houdini had a further handicap. His Voisin biplane had no direct means of lateral control. Control was maintained entirely by the use of the elevator, rudder and engine power. A dropped wing could be picked up, within limitations, by yawing the aeroplane. Turning, by skidding or slipping using the rudder, was a cumbersome and potentially dangerous procedure. There was good reason for Brassac's insistence on calm conditions for flight. It could be argued that no pilot, no matter how experienced, ever had complete control of a Voisin biplane.

Just as a Melbourne identity, Lawrence Adamson, was instrumental in enabling the first powered straight line flight in Australia by Colin Defries, which was achieved in Sydney, so too a Sydney identity, Harry Rickards, was instrumental in enabling the first powered circling flight in Australia by Harry Houdini, which was achieved near Melbourne. Harry Rickards was a theatrical entrepreneur whose practice it was to make an annual trip to the UK and Europe to book entertainers for his Tivoli circuit back in Australia. This was how he met Houdini in late 1909, and offered him US\$2000 a week, including travel time, to bring his entourage to perform in Australia. Houdini's engagement in Hamburg finished at the end of December.

Brassac had the task of overseeing the dismantling and packing of Houdini's Voisin, which was to be loaded on board the *S. S. Bremen*, for delivery to Melbourne. Brassac then joined Houdini and his wife Bess, together with their stage assistants Franz Kukol and James Vickery, on their way to Marseilles to join the *R. M. S. Malwa*, en route to Australia, via Suez and Ceylon. Houdini may not have been travelling with enjoyable anticipation. He suffered acutely from sea sickness.....**John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

December 2007 No.413

December Meeting - Bankstown

The December meeting will be held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown on Wednesday 5th December 2007, **commencing at the earlier time of 7.00pm**. This will enable members and visitors to inspect the topic of the evening, a DH114 Heron, to be inspected in daylight. Enter via Starkie Drive, near the Milperra Road entrance to Bankstown Airport.

The Guest Speaker will be Paul Ewoldt, the owner of the Museum's DH114 Heron DQ-FDY, formerly operated by Air Tungaru as T3-ATA, Connair and others in Australia as VH-CLW, and several other operators including the Luftwaffe.

Paul will provide a detailed tour of this aircraft and will talk about the particularly interesting history of the aircraft along with photos and Heron memorabilia. Members are also invited to bring along any Heron memorabilia and photographs.

The Museum will be open for inspection and the bookshop will also be open for sales. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

November Meeting

The Guest Speaker for the 25th Annual Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture was Jeff Watson, whose topic was *The Return to Australia of Qantas's first Boeing 707-138B*.

Almost 50 members and guests were entertained and amused by Jeff's recollection of childhood days and how his passion for aircraft evolved. He grew up in Castle Bromwich, UK, where the famous Spitfire factory was established, and where his father owned a local business. By living close to this and much other aviation activity, his fascination with aircraft developed and has not waned to this day.

No doubt that because he is recognised as perhaps Australia's best presenter of aviation material he was approached by Qantas to make a film of the return of the former Qantas B707-138B (VH-EBA), now registered as VH-XBA, from Southend-on-Sea in England to Sydney. He took little time to consider the proposal and he endured the hardships of staying in Southend whilst the aircraft was brought back to

life by the team of volunteers, many of whom were ex-Qantas staff.

Jeff considered that their hotel was of Fawley Towers quality and the locals could not believe that this group of Australians was going to restore the aircraft that had been lying idle at Southend for some seven years.

Following its relatively short life with Qantas, the aircraft was sold to Pacific Western Airlines of Canada in 1967. In 1978 it was sold to Tiger Air for conversion to an executive aircraft and, after several corporate operators, it was sold to the Royal Saudi Air Force as HZ-123 for operation on behalf of Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, the Saudi Ambassador to the United States.

The aircraft is highly significant from any aspect; it was the first commercial jet registered in Australia and it was the first American jet airliner to be built for a foreign airline. It is the oldest example of the Boeing 707 in flying condition and was the 29th example off the Renton production line.

In 2004 a group of Qantas personnel and retired staff began to investigate the possibility of returning this particular aircraft to Australia to be part of the Qantas Founders Outback Museum. Following initial surveys, the team of engineers found the aircraft to be remarkably well preserved, although they believed the instrumentation and electrical systems would need much work to restore them to soundness. The aircraft was purchased by the Qantas Foundation Memorial Ltd in June 2006 and work commenced soon after to bring it to an airworthy state. Over a period of several months the volunteers brought new life to the 47 year-old veteran and a departure was planned for late November 2006.

There were some initial engine problems and spare parts had to be acquired, but on 2 December 2006, the first post-restoration flight was made. Further fine tuning was necessary, and on 8th December, the aircraft departed Southend for the short flight to Dublin where ample fuel could be taken on for the trans-Atlantic hop. Southend's short runway did not permit a heavy fuel load to be carried.

Right up until the final evening before departure, the locals were still doubtful that the intrepid

Australians really intended to fly the aircraft all the way back to Australia; Jeff's impression was that the locals at least provided some comic relief!

Due to adverse weather across the North Atlantic and at the intended destination of Montreal, it was decided to route via the Azores, then Bermuda to Orlando, Florida, where the aircraft and crew met up with John Travolta, the proud owner of the last B707-138B delivered to Qantas. And a great photo opportunity it was, too!

The following day it proceeded to Los Angeles and the on the next day to Honolulu where the passengers and crew had a well-earned rest. It then flew via Nadi to Sydney where it arrived on 17th December to an enthusiastic welcome. After some months in Sydney and several flights to other airports, on 10th June 2007, it eventually departed Sydney for its final flight to Longreach, where it now resides.

Following Jeff's entertaining description of the above journey, he showed his film of the journey, which was also shown on the Channel 7 Network.

Jeff was presented with a framed print of Arthur Butler's Comper Swift, kindly donated by David Marshall. Many thanks to Jeff for a most entertaining talk and to David for his generous contribution.

We were most fortunate to welcome a large number of guests, including Arthur Butler's daughter Anna Yeats along with her own son and daughter.

From Our Northern Correspondent

Our Northern Correspondent, Roy Fordham, has provided Part 2 of his journey to the Northern Hemisphere earlier this year:

"The mention of Napa wines may have been enough to whet your appetite, as it certainly did mine, the moment I heard we were to be treated to a personalised tour of one of the Napa Valley's most prestigious wineries. The added luxury of a teetotal chauffeur made it possible to partake of every wine tasting on offer, including 'helping' my beloved empty the glass she wasn't too keen on, "Waste not, Want not" impressed upon me from a very early age, old habits etc, etc.

This was a day certainly not wasted, and left wanting for nothing, not only the delightful wines, and savory cheese nibbles, but the magnificent scenery, with the winery perched on a hill slope, surrounded by valleys filled with vines, and many varieties of grape, the 'Zinfandel' Rose', (they called it white) call it what you may, the nectar of the Gods.

What was to follow, two days later, would have to rate special mention, as Keith, our host in San Francisco, an Alaska Air Captain, rented a Cessna 172 for an afternoon scenic flight around this incredible part of the world.

He had explained to me some months prior to our visit, that he had taken membership of his local aero club to enjoy the pleasures of 'real' flying again, as opposed to driving his daily mount the Boeing 737.

We took in the sights of the Golden Gate bridge, with Alcatraz sitting out in the bay, making a circular tour of the coastline, flying over another government 'hotel' San Quentin, over a vast lake with what is termed the 'plug hole' at one end, and it certainly looked like one from above. The coast line was a very interesting mix of reachable beaches and completely desolate areas, similar to some Australian locations, only accessible from the ocean. It was also a great experience to fly over the Napa Valley wineries that we had toured just two days previously.

San Francisco, its cable cars, Fisherman's Wharf, Pier 19 with the sea lions in residence taken up many years ago, history relates, after very severe weather drove them into this location for shelter, never again to leave this, their idyllic sanctuary.

It was an incredible sight, seeing so many of these huge creatures sun baking, and squabbling for favourite positions, and a not so pleasant aroma, unmistakably their very own patch.

If you ever visit this lovely city, be sure to take the Tram Car into the centre, a treat in itself, the flowery commentary the drivers give, with reference to many of the stops made along the way, very enjoyable and entertaining, not to mention enlightening.

If you really want to treat yourselves, and believe me you should, visit Macy's for lunch, go to the roof garden restaurant, "The Pancake Factory", you won't forget it, there is so much more to enjoy in this lovely city, you'll leave part of your heart there too."

Roy Fordham

A Valuable Donation

The Society gratefully acknowledges the generous donation by John Nagy and family of material from his late father's collection of Department of Civil Aviation memorabilia.

Some of our former DCA members will remember John's father, George, as a Clerk at Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport during the 1950s through to the 1970s. He passed away in October this year, and John and his sister, who found the papers, thought our Society might be interested.

The collection includes various newspaper cuttings, lists of licensed pilots in 1939, maintenance engineers' syllabi, material on Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and in particular cuttings published after he disappeared off the coast of Burma, and a most eloquent speech to senior DCA staff by Donald George Anderson (later Sir Donald), just prior to the introduction of jet airliners into Australian service.

Also included are two framed photographs of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith: one recording the loss of "Smithy" and Tommy Pethybridge and the other celebrating the 20th anniversary of his first crossing of the Pacific, with Charles Ulm, Jim Warner and Harry Lyon.

The speech by Don Anderson will be serialised in Southern Skies in the new year, and the collection will eventually form part of the Society's archives.

Al Bovelt

Members will recall the sad news of Al Bovelt's sudden passing in June this year. The investigation into Al's death was referred to the NSW Police, who were required to find Al's next-of-kin so that a proper interment could take place.

Unfortunately, the officer assigned to the case took little interest in the matter, despite a number of leads being offered by members of the Society and others in the aviation fraternity. After several months of little action, the case was handed over to Detective Brendan Hicks, who solved the case in just a few weeks.

Several weeks ago, Trevor Dean, the Curator of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown received a call from a former Ansett Flight Attendant who advised she was trying to raise funds for Al's funeral among former Ansett employees. This lady also contacted Channel 9 Reporter Simon Bouda, who took a great interest in the story and then contacted Trevor, who was later interviewed along with Jack Curtis, Chief Pilot for Discovery Air Tours.

The story went to air the following Monday on the 6pm News, then a follow up on Thursday. Immediately following the first story, both Trevor and Channel 9 were contacted by the owner of Euro Funerals, Roselands with an offer to conduct the funeral free of charge.

Al's sister Noeline was tracked down in New Zealand by Detective Brendan Hicks, who persevered in finding her when the Duty Police gave up! Just days after the last AHSA (NSW) meeting, Trevor spoke at length to Noeline and suggested that if she would agree to have Al cremated, Jack Curtis and he would scatter his ashes from a DC-3 aircraft, something I am sure Al would approve of! Noeline agreed to the suggestion.

A funeral service, organised by Euro Funerals, was held at Rookwood Cemetery on Monday 19th November. Although Noeline was unable to travel, she was represented at the service by other members of Al's family, which was also attended by members of AHSA (NSW), the Royal Aeronautical Society and the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown.

When the ashes are released, a Service will be arranged at the Museum, after which a DC-3 will take

off to scatter the ashes. Channel 9 has indicated that it would like to be involved with this service, and will have cameras in the DC-3 and follow the flight in their helicopter.

A Fund has been established to cover other costs associated with Al's interment and Trevor has received pledges of support from the Australian Division of the Royal Aeronautical Society and friends of Al, as well as others including the Australian Aviation Museum Volunteers. AHSA (NSW) will also be making a contribution to this fund. Any excess funds collected will be put towards a Plaque in honour of Al.

Special End of Year Offers

Australian Civil Aircraft Register on CD

Tony Arbon of AustAirData is offering copies of the Australian Civil Aircraft Register for the special price to AHSA members of \$30 for the first CD and \$25 for updates. (Normal RRP is \$70). Contact Tony at PO Box 1425, Caboolture, Qld 4510. The hard copy version is no longer in print, so ensure that you get your snapshot of the Australian Register on CD through Tony.

The Boats I Flew – by Bryan Monkton

Available from the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown for \$39.95 or \$49.95 via mail order.

Bryan Monkton served his country well during WWII, flying first as a Flight Instructor, then a Fighter Pilot (Hurricanes) and finally, flying Catalinas over various parts of the Pacific. After the war, Bryan founded Trans Oceanic Airways with five war surplus Sunderland Flying Boats and started commercial flights to Lord Howe Island, the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides and New Caledonia.

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

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

He will remain the only pilot ever to launch, takeoff, land and moor a Sunderland Flying Boat entirely on his own - an almost impossible task.

Bryan Monkton sadly passed away on 29 May 2003 and is at rest beside his devoted wife Monica at Moss Vale. His book, "The Boats I Flew", details his amazing adventures on sea, land and air in a way that will make it difficult to put aside.

Books by Derrick Rolland

Derrick's two excellent books, *Airmen I Have Met – Their Stories* and *Aerial Agriculture in Australia* are available at the special reduced price of \$30 each, including P&P within Australia.

Derrick's address is: 6 Alpine View Avenue, Bright Vic 3741; phone (03) 5755 2053. Payment for the books can be either cheque or money order.

Airmen I Have Met – Their Stories is a compilation of biographies written by, or about, some airmen Derrick has come in contact with over the years. These fascinating stories about some of the great names of Australian aviation including Laurie Crowley, Jim Darbyshire, Hugh Coventry, Joe Drage, Peter Clemence, to name just a few, describe activities in peace and war, and in civil and military roles, are a tribute to those who have helped to make our aviation history so interesting and diverse.

Aerial Agriculture in Australia describes the history of the use of aircraft in agriculture and forestry. Each aspect of aerial agriculture is covered, from pasture improvement to firebombing, from weed control to rainmaking. Not only is the history most interesting reading, but the 138 black and white and 60 colour photographs will appeal to all those with an interest in aviation. The book also contains a number of statistics and references which researchers will find most helpful.

Both books are hardback and essential additions to your bookshelves.

Fred Niven's DVD – Airlines and Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 - 2002

Available now, a DVD, covering the airlines and aircraft of the Ansett & A.N.A. Groups. This DVD (viewable on both PCs & Macs) covers the entire Ansett and A.N.A. groups of airlines, including predecessors and descendents, in Australia PNG and New Zealand 1921-2001. Its 3,200 pages include

- Full details of each aircraft operated by any Ansett-related airline 1921-2002, up to end-May 2006
- Over 7,400 photos/charts/maps of Ansett-related aircraft & personalities, since 1921
- A detailed history for each airline, including its fleet, history, points served & logos
- Milestones' of Ansett Group aviation events
- Route-maps, timetable covers & lots of other memorabilia & some 'What might have beens'.

- Flight Crew lists for all Ansett Group airlines 1921-2002 (over 160 pages) and lots more.

Cost is \$AU35 paid by cheque or money order, and sent to: Fred Niven

27 Alfred Grove, OAKLEIGH EAST, Vic. 3166

Phone/FAX: (03) (ISD +61-3) 9544-3388

E-Mail: fniven@bigpond.net.au

Fred is also able to accept transfer of the money by Electronic Funds Transfer, which would be the simplest & fastest for everyone. Contact Fred by Email for details and instructions on EFT.

The Fabulous Catalina – by Robert Cleworth

This book is a collection of Catalina and flying boat anecdotes from veterans and relatives of those who flew these machines. \$50 inc. P&P. Send a cheque payable to The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd to:

Christina Mumford

The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd

Building 2, 35-41 Waterloo Rd

NORTH RYDE NSW 2113

Calendar of Events

1 December 2007 Lunch with the Tiger Moths and AAAA Toy Run. Luskintyre NSW

1-2 December 2007 Corryong Airport Summer Fly-in. Corryong Vic.

2 December 2007 Berrima District Aero Club Social Fly-in and Barbeque. Mittagong Airfield NSW

28-31 December 2007 The Great Eastern Fly-in. Evans Head NSW

9-10 February 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

24 February 2008 Pt Cook RAAF Museum Air Pageant. Pt Cook Vic.

8 March 2008 Wings Over Illawarra. Albion Park NSW

22-23 March 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

Contributions and Contacts

News items, other contributions, advertisements or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238 or to Warwick Bigsworth, E-mail (madsen2010@optusnet.com.au) or (02) 8824 7814.

Thanks

Thanks to Trevor Dean, Roy Fordham and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY
NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 3.

Remember 2003, and the 100 years of powered flight celebrations? In January 2003, the editor of *Flight Safety Australia*, CASA's bimonthly magazine, offered a prize of \$3500 for the best essay celebrating flight in Australia. The winning entry, entitled *Conquering the Southern Skies*, was published in the January - February, 2004, issue of the magazine. The author covered the period from the birth of Lawrence Hargrave in 1850 to the involvement of the RAAF in the Iraq War in 2003. However, there was a notable omission. None of the participants in the early attempts at powered flight in Australia is mentioned - with the exception of George Augustine Taylor. Taylor's eminent place in our early aviation history is not contested. However, it is unfortunate that reliance on his version of that history obscures an inspiring story in which many others played an important part.

Since 2003, more of our aviation history is accessible on web sites. A serious researcher might trust the Mitchell Library site where he would be informed, "*The first Australian to make a heavier than air flight was George A. Taylor who made a series of glider flights at Narrabeen on 5 December 1909. Later that month, Colin Defries made several attempts to become airborne at Victoria Park Racecourse, using an imported Wright Biplane and a Bleriot, with varying degrees of success. By 1910 other aviators with imported flying machines strove to make the first powered flight in Australia. Several claimed success, although Ehrich Weiss, better known as escapologist Harry Houdini, is credited with the first controlled flight, at Rosehill, Victoria.*" This is still pretty much the George Taylor version. I believe the association of Defries with a Bleriot was due to comments by Taylor, after Defries failed to fly on December 4, 1909. George was reported in the press as urging Defries to abandon further attempts at flight on the Wright biplane, and to wait until the arrival of the Bleriot, which was then at sea on its way to Melbourne. Defries did more than just attempt to become airborne at Victoria Park, he never did fly a Bleriot there, and Rosehill is not Diggers Rest. I'm hoping that the Mitchell will correct its web site before March 2010, which is the centenary of Houdini's flights at Diggers Rest and, coincidentally, is also the centenary of the month the Mitchell Library opened its doors to researchers.

Unfortunately the retrospective pen of George Taylor has also infected the web site of The Australian National Aviation Museum at Moorabbin. Here we are told that, "*Harry Houdini, the celebrated 'escapologist' was to visit Australia on a theatrical tour, so the Aerial League undertook to invite him to bring his Voisin biplane with him, mindful of the publicity such a flight would generate in their attempts to promote aviation. Before his arrival, several aircraft were imported into Australia from Europe and America, the close proximity of their initial flights or attempts at same, combined with sometimes dubious newspaper reports have clouded the issue. A Mr Defries attempted to fly an imported Bleriot at Sydney's Vic. Park racecourse in December 1909 and was reported to have 'hopped' the aircraft off the ground. Another attempt a few days later led to a crash, after which he took no further part in proceedings.*" It is true that George Taylor worked tirelessly, through the Aerial League, to promote Australian aviation to Australians. But, the last thing he wanted, during 1909 and the early months of 1910, was foreigners in Australia with their imported aeroplanes. Also there was no imported aeroplane from America in Australia at the time, and Defries did not even 'hop' a Bleriot in Sydney.

I agree with the ANAM web site that, "sometimes dubious newspaper reports have clouded the issue." I have endeavoured to show, in past L&Ls, where George Taylor has been guilty, in the magazines *Building* and *The Motor in Australia*, of biased and self promoting commentary about events relating to early powered flight in Australia. He seemed to be in denial about conceding that anyone, other than himself, had actually flown in Australia, even as late as the deadline for the April 1, 1910, issue of *The Motor in Australia*. He told his readers, "A Farman machine is coming to Australia. We trust it will have better luck than the Wright, Bleriot and Voisin machines, which up to the present time have not got off the earth." Then, during April, with Houdini and his Voisin about to arrive in

Sydney, *The Daily Telegraph* engaged Taylor as its aviation correspondent. The power of George's pen was about to progress from specialist magazines to the wider readership of a Sydney daily newspaper. The first series of articles actually attributed to, "Lieutenant G. A. Taylor, Founder of the Aerial League", commenced on May 7, 1910 under the heading, *Australia and the Aeroplane*. However, Taylor was present at Rosehill Racecourse on April 18, in his capacity as official recorder of Houdini's flights, for the *Aerial League of Australia*. Therefore, I suspect that Taylor's aviation reports for *The Daily Telegraph* actually commenced on April 19.

It would have been fascinating to be present when the trails of Harry Houdini and George Taylor finally crossed in Sydney. Both men were seasoned self publicists, both had huge egos, and both strove for recognition as being the best at what they did. Nevertheless, it was Houdini who necessarily had a much wider experience of interacting with people, manipulating audiences and demanding absolute loyalty. While Houdini was able to garner witness statements for his flights at Diggers Rest, his influence over George Taylor resulted in his receiving the more official recognition of a trophy from the *Aerial League of Australia*.

Returning to the ANAM comment about dubious newspaper reports, I have looked at *The Daily Telegraph* of May 10, 1911, which is often used to demolish any claim by Colin Defries to have flown at Victoria Park. In April and May 1911, *The Daily Telegraph* needed a qualified reporter to cover the activities of Joseph Hammond and Leslie MacDonald with their *Bristol Boxkite*, which was then operating from Ascot Racecourse in Sydney. One of the more spectacular flights, as far as Sydney residents were concerned, was when Leslie MacDonald flew over the harbour and central Sydney, on Tuesday morning May 9. The British and Colonial Aeroplane Company sales mission was focussed on selling the *Boxkite* to the Australian Military Forces. As an officer member of the Australian Intelligence Corps, with particular knowledge of aviation, Taylor would have been well briefed on the activities of Hammond and MacDonald. I suspect, therefore, that it was Taylor who wrote the report in *The Daily Telegraph* of May 10, under the heading, *Voyaging Through The Air*. On the adjoining page there is a record of a long interview with Lawrence Hargrave entitled, *A Fool - Proof Aeroplane*. Hargrave was seeking funding for his own 14 ft span, box kite, powered aeroplane. I believe that this article was also written by Taylor, because of the writer's obvious detailed knowledge of the subject and his intimate rapport with the interviewee. In any case, who else but Taylor would commence his report, *Voyaging Through The Air*, with the following paragraph? "What has been accomplished in Australia with the Bristol bi - plane? Prior to the advent of this machine the people in this state scoffed at aviation. They had seen Houdini perform a sort of hop skip and jump around the Rosehill racecourse on his Voisin machine. They had also seen Dufries (sic) guide with tolerable accuracy a Wright bi - plane around the Victoria Park course - but it was on the ground all the time and remained on the ground in spite of sensational reports that appeared in British aeronautical journals in the effect that magnificent flights were being made in Sydney. Naturally the Sydney public were somewhat dubious as to the practical value of the aeroplane." Taylor had previously written to the Royal Aeronautical Society in England, using the same language, to refute the so called, 'sensational reports' concerning Defries. His denigration of Houdini's flights will be explored in a later L & L.

Just for the record, when Defries did fly on December 9, 1909, the *Daily Telegraph* reporter, who was not George Augustine Taylor, wrote in the December 10 issue of the paper under a headline, Aerial Flight in Australia, Successful Trial At Victoria Park, "The Wright aeroplane accomplished its first flight yesterday afternoon at Victoria Park Racecourse. After several preliminary tests it succeeded in flying 115 yds, the height from the ground varying from about 3 ft to 15 ft. It was admitted on all sides that the machine in rising behaved like a bird. It flew perfectly horizontal and showed no tendency to dip at either wing. When the aeroplane rose there was an involuntary shout of delight from the 250 spectators present. 'He's flying', was the universal cry, and there was cheering all along the ground. The manner in which the aeroplane flew was a revelation and led one to believe that had Mr Defries tried to continue longer he could have done so."

I have reported previously, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Dec 10, account of Defries flight. Now, can anyone explain why these are not reports of a controlled, straight line flight?....**John Scott**