



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

February 2008 No.414

Feb 2008 - 1

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6th February 2008, 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 evening will be a Members' Night, featuring Buy, Sell and Swap and talks by two members, John Scott and Warwick Bigsworth.

John Scott will discuss the life and adventures in Australia of Ehrich Wejss, better known as Harry Houdini. Readers will be familiar with the story of the first powered flight in Australia in John's *Loops and Landings* pages during the past year, and the credit that Houdini has received for that first flight. But there was a lot more to Houdini than his feats of escapology and his flight at Digger's Rest on 18th March 1910. John will reveal more about the man and the connection with George Augustine Taylor.

Warwick Bigsworth spent much of December in Canada, some of which time was in British Columbia. He visited several seaplane bases, including Sproat Lake near Port Alberni, the home of the Martin Mars water bombers. One of these two aircraft had recently returned from fire fighting in California and was on the Coulson ramp, receiving some well earned rest. Despite the miserable weather, which included rain, sleet, low cloud and even a little snow, he captured a few interesting photographs of the Mars as well other seaplanes in the Victoria BC and Vancouver areas.

Warwick will talk about this part of his visit to Canada, complemented by a few slides.

Committee Meeting

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

December Meeting

The December meeting was held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown and Guest Speaker was Paul Ewoldt, the owner of the DH114 Heron DQ-FDY, which is located at the Museum. A

large number of visitors and guests attended the meeting, where Paul gave a guided tour of his historic Heron and a very informative background talk about the aircraft.

The aircraft, c/n 14108, was first registered as G-5-15 to the deHavilland Aircraft Co in the United Kingdom, and in May 1957, it was acquired by the Luftwaffe and serialised as CA+001. It served with the Luftwaffe as a VIP transport until March 1963 when it was sold to Shackleton Aviation and registered as G-ASFI. Later that year the registration N4661T was reserved for the aircraft, but was not taken up.

In August 1964 the aircraft was sold to Transportes Aereos de Guinea Portuguesa and registered as CR-GAT. In May 1970 the aircraft was acquired by Connair, Alice Springs, and on 21st July 1970 it was registered VH-CLW. Connair converted the aircraft to a Riley Heron with Lycoming engines replacing the Gipsy Queens in 1972 and it flew with the airline in Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland until sold to Kendell Airlines, of Wagga Wagga NSW in February 1977.

It was sold to Air Tungaru in May 1981 where it was registered as T3-ATA, and ferried from Wagga Wagga to Tarawa by Don Kendell and John McKnight.

In 1982 it was sold to Sunflower Airlines of Fiji and registered as DQ-FDY. It remained in Fiji until 1997 when the aircraft was acquired by Heron Airlines, Bankstown, and returned to Australia. It was intended to restore the aircraft to service, however the amount of corrosion was found to be excessive and such restoration was not considered feasible.

After lying idle and deteriorating in the open at Bankstown for several years, it was eventually acquired by Paul for display in the Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown.

Afternote. Darwin based member Bob Calaby remembers that he flew on this aircraft in July 1981 when it was in service with Air Tungaru. Bob was working on an Australian Aid Project in Tarawa, Republic of Kiribati, and on this particular trip, he flew Tarawa – Onotoa – Tamana – Arorae – Beru – Nikunau - Tarawa with Captain Ray Cooney.

Bob also notes that the plush blue seat used by Chancellor Adenauer when the aircraft was in Luftwaffe service is in the Australian Aviation Heritage Centre in Darwin. Some images of the aircraft in Air Tungaru service that were provided by Bob have been passed on to Paul Ewoldt.

Vale Barry Joseph Walker

Members will be sad to hear of the sudden passing of popular member Barry Walker on 7th December 2007.

Barry was born on 27th June 1932 and lived for most of his life in Sydney's eastern suburbs. He regularly attended AHSA meetings and always had a story to tell about visiting air shows or flying on exotic aircraft types.

He was a fitter and turner by trade, and since his retirement he travelled extensively, attending many international air shows including Farnborough, Paris and Oshkosh. He made many of us green with envy when he mentioned that he'd flown on the Concorde as well as warbirds such as the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator. Barry had also revealed to us that he had witnessed the crash of the TU-144 "Concordski" at the 1973 Paris Air Show.

One particular interest that Barry had was that of the DC-5 and he traded notes with other members on that aircraft. He had a keen interest in all things mechanical and was a keen motor bike rider, often arriving at meetings in his leathers. He also had property at Quandialla, near Young, and spent much time in this rural environment.

Barry's funeral was held at Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park on the 14th December and is survived by his brother and nieces and nephews.

Al Bovelt

Further to the story on Al Bovelt's passing, Trevor Dean has advised that the DC-3 VH-DNA,

which will be used to scatter Al's ashes, is awaiting the installation of a new engine before the ceremony can take place. We will advise members when the event takes place.

Calendar of Events

2 February 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

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

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

1 March 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

8 March 2008 Wings Over Illawarra, Albion Park NSW

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

6 April 2008 Albury Air Show, Albury NSW

25-27 April 2008 Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia National Fly-in, Temora NSW

Contributions and Contacts

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

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2008 are now due. Please complete the enclosed subscription form and return as soon as practicable.

Thanks

Thanks to Bob Calaby, Yvonne Calder, Trevor Dean and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc will be held at the Powerhouse Museum, Harris Street Ultimo on Wednesday 5th March 2008 commencing at 7:45pm.

Business

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

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

Talk by Director-General of Civil Aviation (D.G. Anderson) to Assistant Directors-General and Directors

Henty House Theatrette, November 20 1962

(In the December 2007 issue of Southern Skies, I mentioned the donation of several papers from the George Nagy collection that had been archived from the Department of Civil Aviation. This is the first of two episodes of an address by Don Anderson (later Sir Donald Anderson) from that collection).

Gentlemen,

I have asked you down here this afternoon to talk to you about some of the things that have been happening on the question of jet aircraft. As usual, when policy decisions of this sort are taken, they are not properly or fully understood by the public, and as a result a controversy arises in which the Department and its Minister inevitably become involved. It has occurred to me that we have a staff of 5,000 people and if the leaders of our staff, which you fellows are, are properly informed, it would be a big help in your discussions with your own staff – and I specially want you to call your own staff together and talk to them – and in your clubs and other associations in your own districts. I believe we can have a valuable public relations effect in this area – so it is very largely up to ourselves. I was prompted to do this by reason of the fact that a friend of mine was talking to some air traffic controllers at Essendon and these people could not see any reason why we were building Tullamarine for example. Now we cannot have that sort of reaction within our own organization – because it is quite wrong. Let me try and give you some of the background to some of these very important decisions.

First of all we decided on this occasion to lay down some ground rules for jet re-equipment. In other words we were determined to do it in accordance with some programme and some conditions which would be approved by the Government and also be given effect to by the Parliament in legislation. Right from the outset we were in a position to know what the successive steps would be, and would be in a position to answer any questions that arose in Parliament or elsewhere. That policy is simply this. When the Government agreed back in October 1961 – when this Act passed through both Houses of Parliament – it said in effect that the airlines should be re-equipped with jet aircraft on or after July 1, 1964. Now you might well ask why the middle of 1964? For the simple reason that this will be the time at which the early model Viscount and the DC6Bs will have been substantially depreciated and can therefore be sold without any substantial capital loss by the airlines. The second reason why 1964 was chosen was that it seemed to give this Department a reasonable time in which to get together the radar, the navigational systems, and the airports that would be necessary to accommodate this jet equipment – not all the time needed but at least some of it. We also said the airlines should not make application for these aircraft before November 18, 1962. There were two reasons for this. One was that we thought this was sufficiently close to July 1964 for the airlines to have some sort of idea of the sort of aircraft they would buy and we thought once they knew this – and we were sure this would mean that they would need a new airport in Melbourne – and we would at that time have access to all the facts about these aircraft and their performance to enable us to put a case. Secondly, November 18 was chosen because this was – under the original Airlines Agreement – the date on which the eligibility of the Ansett Company for further guarantee expired and we did not want to give them in the period up to November 1962 any additional eligibility for guarantee for any jet equipment. We did not want to give it before they used up the eligibility for guarantees they have under the existing Agreement which expired on November 18, 1962.

Now we were pretty cautious in laying down these rules, and the other conditions that were imposed were these: The airlines were allowed to buy two jet aircraft each but they had to introduce their first and second aircraft on the same date. This was related to the economics of the Two Airline Policy where we wanted stability in the industry. We did not want anybody to get three or six month jump on anybody else. But we did put in a clause which said if one side held the other side up for more than six months in applying for a certificate, then the other one was not obliged to conform with this rule about introducing the aircraft on the same date – but provided they had certificates within six months of each other, they had to introduce them on the same date – on the same date after July 1, 1964. The other condition that we imposed was that they had to buy aircraft of comparable size and performance. Now what does that mean? The airlines were told early in the piece that the Caravelle 10A which is a development of the existing Caravelle 6R, the de Havilland Trident, in its 128,000 lb extended version in order to meet the Perth requirement, and the 152,000 lb Boeing 727 – the airlines were told that these aircraft were comparable in size and performance as far as we were concerned and they could buy any one of the three – but it was up to them to make their own choice. In this way we fairly shrewdly, and properly in my view, avoided

getting ourselves involved in their choice of equipment. On the other hand there were certain other light jet aircraft in the field – there was the BAC 111 which weighs in its extended version about 81,500 lb all up and about 50 mph slower and carries 66 passengers as compared with about 100 with the larger jets in a comparable configuration. Now what we would not have permitted from the point of view of our two airline policy would be for one airline to buy say the Trident and the other one to buy the BAC 111 because there you would have two aircraft which were not comparable in size and performance and which could have had a markedly adverse effect on the stability of our two airline policy. So they either each had to buy light jets or both buy a heavy jet – but not necessarily the same type of jet and this was made clear to them right from the outset.

Let me say of course that I always had the uneasy feeling that one for example, might buy the Caravelle and one the Trident – or one the Trident and one the 727 and so on, and you technical people who are knowledgeable in these matters will know why – because we would have had the job of running in two types half way around the world from where they are made whereas there is a lot to be said from the technical and safety point of view in concentrating all your supervision and all your resources on one type. However, notwithstanding that, we made it very clear to the airlines that they had the choice and whatever they chose we would agree to it as long as the aircraft was airworthy and so on, and as long as they were aircraft of comparable size and performance. The other reason why there was some merit in them buying the same type is again from the point of view of our two airline policy. If one airline has serious difficulties and its aircraft was a failure and the other was a brilliant success, the two airline policy goes for a Burton. So we took a very calculated risk in giving them a free choice of equipment.

Well the airlines have operated on this policy (under these ground rules) for about twelve months now and you see a lot of things hinging on November 18. This was the time by which we expected to have some knowledge of the performance of the aircraft the airlines wanted to buy so that we in turn could solve our own airport problem. It was also the time at which the airlines could place their orders and so on. Well a month or so ago the airlines submitted to the Government at my request – I asked them to make a submission saying what was their general plan without stating specific types. Both airlines said to the Government they wanted to begin jet re-equipment in 1964-5 with heavy jets – two of each possibly followed by a third heavy jet twelve to eighteen months later – in the Caravelle, Trident, Boeing class. They also said that in 1966 to 1968 they wanted to begin replacing their Viscounts with some light jets, possibly the BAC 111, but it could be, they said, the Douglas 2086 – it could be the Caravelle 6R or the F28 – although they felt at this stage as matters now stood, it would be the BAC 111. However, an aircraft in that general category. That is all they said. So we asked the airlines then to give a statement of what their requirements were in the way of aerodromes for these aircraft. We were told by them what the performances of these aircraft were, what they wanted done, where they wanted to use these heavy jets and where they would want to use the Electras and the Viscounts they would be re-disposing.

In fact the DC6B will go out of service when these heavy jets come in but the Electras would be re-disposed and some of the Viscounts would go off on to subsidiary routes. At any rate the airlines produced a programme which was estimated to cost £5 million. We hammered away at it and got it down to £1½ million and then we went to the Government and told them simply this: That although we would not have the same margin at Essendon with a heavy jet that we have got with an Electra or perhaps with a Viscount in the take-off case anyhow, we nevertheless felt that the heavy jet could operate for a limited period at Essendon although we could not guarantee how noisy it might be. Now this is the consensus of operational opinion in this Department of Mr Wiggins' side and on the performance side that the heavy jet can be operated safely at Essendon.

Now the aerodrome will need some strengthening before this happens – taxiways and runways – and it may be quite noisy, but we have always found that the prospect – as in Sydney where people know we are building that runway out into the Bay, we have had very little difficulty since with the noise problem. At any rate, this decision has been taken. It has been taken on the basis of the best operational and safety judgments that we have available to us in this Department, and the airlines who have studied the matter very carefully, also believe this is the case. However, we went on and told the Government that this operation at Essendon should only be regarded as an interim measure – that the real solution at Melbourne was a new airport with runways long enough to enable heavy jet aircraft – under all temperature and headwind conditions – to carry a full payload on a direct route from Melbourne to Perth. As matters now stand whatever heavy jet is operated out of Essendon, with a high temperature and headwinds, it will not be able to carry a full payload out of Essendon for Perth but on most occasions it will carry a reasonable payload. However, the airlines would not naturally want this to be a constant feature of this operation and if the noise gets up, they might have to restrict their operations. So Essendon will do temporarily for these aircraft to be introduced into service – it does some economic penalty – it will impose some noise problem – but I think it is something we can get by with until we get Tullamarine built. This, the airport boys assure me, can be done by 1967 and I can assure them that if it isn't – etc, etc !!

(To be continued next month)

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 4.

By the time we meet, as a society, for the first time this year, the aeronautical community in the U. K. will be well into its celebration of "100 Years of British Aviation". The programme commenced on December 4, 2007, with the Royal Aeronautical Society Cody Lecture, and will continue throughout 2008 celebrating the British pioneers, and promoting the importance of aviation to the people of the U. K. The 2008 Cody Lecture will be brought forward to October 16, when, according to a plaque located near the site of the former RAF Officers' Mess at Farnborough, "The first aeroplane flight in Great Britain was made from this hillock by F. S. Cody on the morning of 16th October 1908. He took off in a westerly direction and flew for a distance of 1390 ft..." Cody's spectacular landing, after his first flight, is described by his biographer, Arthur Gould Lee. "The plane banked steeply and slid sideways, the left wing struck the ground, and the machine swung round and crashed on its nose with much crumpling of wood and canvas. In spite of the heavy impact, Cody was unhurt except for a few minor cuts and bruises. Enveloped by wreckage, he stretched out and switched off the engine to stop the still-turning propeller."

I was struck by the similarity of Cody's first flight with that of Colin Defries at Victoria Park Racecourse on December 18, 1909. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reporter recorded the distance flown by Defries as a quarter of a mile, or 1320 ft. The reporter then described Defries' distraction after losing his hat, and the subsequent landing which was almost as spectacular as Cody's. "As the wheels caught the bumpy turf the aeroplane seemed to swing around to the left, and then rebound slightly. The aviator tried to bring it to a standstill, but it ran on, notwithstanding that the engine had been stopped. In doing so the support for the front single wheel burst, and this caused the runaway biplane to tilt a little to the side, so that the right wing caught the turf and damaged one of the wing stays." Just like Cody, Defries also emerged unhurt from his damaged aeroplane.

These straight line flights by Cody and Defries are almost identical in length, and both ended in landings that resulted in damage to their aeroplanes. There is, however, one important difference. At the time of his first flight, Cody was conducting taxiing trials, and became airborne unexpectedly; whereas Defries' flight was planned, at least up to the moment he lost his hat. And yet in the U. K. Cody's achievement on October 16, 1908, is recognised as the key date when that country was introduced to powered flight, while here in Australia it is still argued that the flights of Defries either did not happen, or in any case were uncontrolled.

It is a reminder that the start of our own celebration of the centenary of powered flight in Australia is now less than two years away. When I first wrote *The Looming Australian Aviation History Wars - Part 1, October 2006*, I felt that there were two key dates that would be universally agreed. Like the U. K. we could start our celebrations in the month of December, with acknowledgement of George Augustine Taylor, not so much for his gliding flights at Narrabeen Heads, on December 5, 1909, but for his unrelenting efforts to make Australians aware of the future importance of powered flight. Again like the U. K., we could climax our celebrations in the month of October, with acknowledgement of John Duigan's all Australian effort; his first controlled flight at Mia Mia on October 7, 1910, in the biplane he designed and built. As I wrote back in October 2006, it is the awkward dates between Taylor and Duigan that should be clarified. I hope that I have provided enough evidence concerning December 9, 1909, when Colin Defries piloted the first controlled straight line powered flight in Australia. Let us now examine another awkward date - March 18, 1910.

Harry Houdini arrived in Melbourne just 98 years ago on Sunday February 6, 1910, after an overnight train trip from Adelaide, where he and his entourage had disembarked from the *R. M. S. Malwa*. He was on stage at the New Opera House on the following Monday night. Houdini had suffered badly from seasickness during the long voyage from Europe, and had lost 6 kg in weight. It says a great deal about his stamina that, immediately after his arrival, he was able to commence his

professional performances, which were so physically and mentally demanding. His aviation successes in Australia are even more commendable when it is remembered that they were achieved in parallel with his heavy theatrical workload.

No doubt Houdini's mechanic, Brassac, was at the Melbourne docks on February 22, to greet the *S. S. Bremen*, and to supervise the unloading of the Voisin biplane. By this time Ralph Banks had already selected a suitable site for aerial trials at Diggers Rest. By agreement with Mr Cook, the owner of the property, Houdini's Voisin joined Banks' Wright Model A, both being housed in tents on the bank of old Plumpton's dam.

There are two monuments, and also a Houdini Drive, commemorating Houdini at Diggers Rest. One monument is located on the Calder Highway near the railway station; the other is located as near as public access permits to the actual site of Houdini's flights from Plumpton's paddock. The monuments were unveiled on March 18, 1990, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Houdini's flights. The Aviation Historical Society of Australia is acknowledged as assisting with the information on the plaques and interpretative photographic panels.

The photographic panel near Plumpton's paddock has the wording, "This photograph was taken behind the the pine trees on the horizon. Harry Houdini in his Voisin bi-plane machine, made Australia's first *officially recorded controlled powered flight* on March 18, 1910. Ralph Banks in a *Wright Flyer* was also at this site. Both planes were housed in tents on the bank of the Plumpton dam, located behind the trees on your right. Banks' plane crashed on March 1st, 1910, allowing Houdini to take the lead. Houdini made three successful flights, the most notable being two miles long, at an altitude of 100 ft, lasting three and a half minutes." The photographic panel at the Calder Highway monument states that *The Aerial League of Australia* was the body responsible for the official recording of the flights. I would dispute this. Certainly there is the trophy awarded, and inscribed, "*The Aerial League of Australia to H. Houdini for the First Aerial Flight in Australia, March 16, 1910*", but this presentation was in Sydney more than a month later. I have seen no evidence that *The Aerial League* had any formal presence at Diggers Rest on March 18, nor was any other "official" body recording events. Nevertheless, the flights were recorded, photographed and witnessed. Houdini had a statement describing his flights signed by nine witnesses, four of whom were his own employees, four were associated with the Wright Model A, including Ralph Banks himself, and the ninth was a local.

The report in *The Age* of March 19, 1910, acknowledged previous powered flights in Australia by Ralph Banks who, "had risen and flown several times but only for short distances." Although Banks flight of 900 ft was not much short of Cody's first flight. *The Age* also mentioned flights by the "Bleriot machine, belonging to Mr Jones, which was on Thursday wrecked at Adelaide." Perhaps, because of his acrimonious departure from Melbourne, or because reports from George Augustine Taylor in Sydney were believed, no mention was made of Colin Defries. However, since Houdini had so dramatically exceeded the performances of all preceding aviators, *The Age* pronounced that his was the "first successful flight yet made in Australia in a heavier-than-air machine." *The Age* goes on to describe Houdini's first flight at Diggers Rest. "In his first attempt Houdini sent his machine tearing across the paddock at tremendous speed, the biplane rising in less than a hundred yards. Just as it rose the machine swerved straight for a solid gum tree, and the hearts of the onlookers beat fast as they saw disaster - perhaps death - right in the track. Mechanically the aviator moved the elevating lever, and the biplane skimmed over the tree like a bird. **A complete circle of the paddock was made** at about 50 miles an hour, and the descent was accomplished with perfect ease and gracefulness. To land, Houdini flew low, stopped the engine, and sailed easily and gently to earth on the momentum of the machine."

The bold lettering is mine, because this is what I believe is Houdini's enduring achievement. The brass plaques at Diggers Rest commemorate, "the first recorded controlled powered flight in Australia." If I could, I would remove the word "controlled", and replace it with "circling". Houdini, by completing a circuit, demonstrated not only control, but the first practical use of an aeroplane in Australia. Who makes March 18, 1910, an awkward date? The answer of course is Frederick Cyril Custance, who is Houdini's only challenger as the first to circle an aeroplane in Australia. **John Scott.**



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ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

March 2008 No.415

March Meeting

Annual General Meeting

The March meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5th March 2008, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

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

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

Following the AGM, a DVD featuring aspects of the Korean War will be shown.

Committee Meeting

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

Welcome

Welcome to members of the Early Birds Association of Australia who are receiving *Southern Skies* for the first time. Due to an aging membership in the Early Birds Association, it was becoming increasingly difficult to prepare and distribute *Early Birds News* in a timely fashion. Committee members from AHSA (NSW) and the Early Birds Association have agreed that there will be mutual benefits in AHSA assisting the Early Birds Association in distribution of its newsletter, which will be included with the March, June, September and December issues of *Southern Skies*.

Early Birds Association members are most welcome to attend AHSA monthly meetings, which are held at the Powerhouse Museum, on the first Wednesday of each month, commencing at 7.45pm.

February Meeting

Our regular Queensland correspondent, Roy Fordham, made a welcome appearance to the

February meeting and raised an important issue which should concern all those interested in aviation and Australia's heritage. Roy spoke of the Exmouth (WA) Shire Council's proposal to change the name of Learmonth Airport to Ningaloo Airport. Roy and Keith White related the story of WCDR Charles Learmonth DFC and Bar, who was killed on 6th January 1944, when his Beaufort bomber crashed into the sea, some 18 miles north-west of Rottnest Island, WA. The accident was caused by a jammed tail trim, which forced the aircraft into a fatal nose dive. Charles Learmonth calmly described the condition over the radio, and the cause of the many Beaufort crashes was corrected, thus saving many lives. Roy urged all members and the Society to write to the Council at the address below to protest about the proposed change.

Mr P. Anastasakis
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Exmouth
PO Box 21
Exmouth WA 6707
Email: ceo@exmouth.wa.gov.au

John Scott discussed the life and adventures in Australia of Harry Houdini. In a number of publications, Houdini has been awarded the honour of being the first person to fly a heavier-than-air powered aircraft in Australia. The event took place on the 18th March 1910, at Digger's Rest, Vic, when Houdini flew his Voisin in a controlled circuit of Plumpton's Paddock. He made several more flights in the coming days, and went to Sydney in April 1910 to undertake a series of flights at Rosehill Racecourse.

Houdini's first flight in Sydney was on 18th April, having been delayed by one day due to weather. In fact, Houdini made a number of subsequent flights in Sydney and his total flying time in Sydney was greater than that recorded in Victoria.

John believes that George Augustine Taylor initially demeaned Houdini because Taylor had always desired that an Australian should be first to fly a heavier-than-air powered aircraft. But following

Houdini's flights in Sydney, Taylor was most impressed by Houdini's skill and charm and became a dedicated supporter. Houdini also encouraged Taylor to arrange for the Australian Aerial League to present Houdini with a trophy acknowledging his flying achievements, and was presented at the Sydney Town Hall. Yet only a year later, Taylor discounted Houdini's flight as a mere hop, skip and jump.

John's detailed research revealed a number of similarities between Taylor and Houdini, not the least of which was the trophy bestowed upon Taylor by the Australian Aerial League – almost identical to that awarded to Houdini. John's *Loops & Landings* column will reveal more about Houdini.

Warwick Bigsworth showed a number of slides of seaplanes at the Vancouver Airport and Victoria Harbour seaplane bases as well as images of the last remaining Martin Mars water bomber flying boats at Sproat Lake, near Port Alberni BC. He described the busy terminals which featured many movements by DHC Beavers, Otters and Cessna 185s and Caravans. Notwithstanding the inclement weather and meeting with "Base Closed" signs on arrival at Sproat Lake, Warwick managed to capture a number of shots of C-FLYK "Philippine Mars" and C-FLYL "Hawaii Mars" on the ramp at Coulson Flying Tankers.

The Martin Mars was originally designed as a long range maritime patrol bomber, and the prototype was delivered to the United States Navy in 1942. Its role was subsequently changed to that of a general purpose transport, and although an additional 20 examples were ordered, only five were delivered due to the cessation of hostilities in 1945. These aircraft were named after the Pacific Islands that they were intended to serve: Hawaii, Marianas, Philippine, Caroline and Marshall Mars. The fleet averaged three to five round trips weekly transporting personnel and cargo across the Pacific and setting new records for passengers (301) and weight-lifting (68,327 lbs). In 1950 the Marshall Mars burned to the waterline near Honolulu, whilst the remaining four aircraft went on to log 87,000 accident free hours on transpacific flights until retired by the US Navy in 1956.

Following several years of inactivity the aircraft were acquired by a Canadian consortium and the first was converted to a water bomber in 1960. Only the two above survive, with one aircraft active in fighting forest fires in California just a week prior to Warwick's visit. Some interesting statistics on the aircraft: length 36 metres, wing span 61 metres, mtow 74,843 kg and able to carry 27 tonnes of water.

Valuable Acquisition

Ian Debenham reports that Sydney's Powerhouse Museum has acquired Genairco VH-UOG, nicknamed the "Jolly Roger", which was used by

Goya Henry for joy-flights over Sydney Harbour. Henry was well known for his continued flouting of aviation laws, with his best known stunt being to fly the aircraft under the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1936.

The aircraft is one of only nine designed and constructed by the General Aircraft Company in Mascot between 1929 and 1933. The Genairco was the first aircraft series to be designed and manufactured in Australia and this particular aircraft is one of only three surviving today.

The aircraft is presently in storage at the Powerhouse Museum's Castle Hill storage facility and will be put on display in due course.

Calendar of Events

1 March 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

1-2 March 2008 Light Weight Aircraft Association Annual Sport Aviation Weekend. Yarrowonga Vic

8 March 2008 Wings Over Illawarra, Albion Park NSW

8-9 March 2008 Annual Clifton Fly-in. Clifton Qld

21-23 March 2008 Natfly 08 RA-Aus Recreational aircraft Fly-in. Narromine NSW

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

5 April 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

6 April 2008 Albury Air Show. Albury NSW

13 April 2008 7th Annual Antique and Classic Aircraft Fly-in. Parafield SA

19-20 April 2008 Jamestown Flying Group Fly-in. Jamestown SA

25-27 April 2008 Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia National Fly-in, Temora NSW

25-27 April 2008 Sport Aircraft Association of Australia WA Regional Fly-in. Serpentine WA

Contributions and Contacts

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

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2008 are now overdue. For those members who have not paid, please complete the subscription form included in the February issue of *Southern Skies* and return as soon as possible. Note that unfinancial members are not entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting

Thanks

Thanks to Ian Debenham, Roy Fordham and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

Talk by Director-General of Civil Aviation (D.G. Anderson) to Assistant Directors-General and Directors

Henty House Theatrette, November 20 1962

(In the December 2007 issue of Southern Skies, I mentioned the donation of several papers from the George Nagy collection that had been archived from the Department of Civil Aviation. This is the second and final episode of an address by Don Anderson (later Sir Donald Anderson) from that collection).

Now there is an urgent need to build Tullamarine. We will not have a satisfactory jet operation out of Melbourne on domestic services until we get a decent airport in Melbourne. This of course is what we have been telling the Government since 1959 and of course while we are on it, we might just as well build it to international standard as well as for domestic services.

And of course we also put the proposition to the Government whilst we were about it that the international terminal in Sydney was an eye sore, that it had water in its foundations and was likely to fall down and every other unsavoury and unpleasant fact we could think to relate about it, that none of the Departments who were in it were satisfied with it, that the international airlines had complained unanimously about it. We told the Government that the domestic airlines were rather satisfied for the present with the nice new terminals they have constructed themselves. Some time ago, Mr Pickford went around the world and looked at all sorts of terminals and in collaboration within the airlines we have agreed on a site for the new Sydney terminal building which is over on the western side of the field – actually on the north-western side. There is a lot of fill required there and we are going to build it in the first place only for international operations. We do not think it will be built until 1968 and I believe the main cause of this delay is the need to develop the pavements and fill in and so on. It is a little more difficult project because it involves more or less reclaimed area. So we felt that this project ought to be done as well. There are two other projects already approved – one was the Launceston project for £1,300,000 and the other was the extension of the short Sydney runway out into Botany Bay.

But the programme that we have got – and when we talk about £30 million I want to put it in perspective; £30 million sounds a lot of money but most of it would have been spent whether we had jets or not – or at least a lot of it would have been spent. Now to begin with, £750,000 is spent every year on Departmental buildings and I sincerely hope, Mr Pickford and Mr Garward, that some part of that £750,000 will shortly be spent on that badly needed operations centre at Sydney. There is £1½ million that is spent on something like 300 or 400 aerodromes – you know, just normal development on them. The new runway at Wyndham and other works at Wyndham this year will cost £100,000 and so on. There is another £300,000 spent each year on local ownership. Now if you add that up over our five year programme you will see that it adds up to near enough to £12½ - 13 million. So this is really about half the amount of money we have been talking about which really would have been spent in any event. Now the only additions to that amount are £4 million for the international terminal building at Sydney, £10 million for Tullamarine, £1.3 million for Launceston and £1½ million worth of additional work which is basically necessary over the next three years – so the whole of that £30 is not devoted to jets.

Some people say why introduce jets anyhow? Our colleagues in other departments ask this quite reasonable question. Well the answer given on the civil aviation side by our Minister was simply this. There are great economies in going over to jets because first of all, we will get the economy inherent in the size of this operation. At the present time, it takes two Electras and two Viscounts to shift the traffic from Melbourne to Sydney at 8a.m. It would obviously be much cheaper to do it with two Boeings or two Tridents, because one jet will do the work of two Electras and naturally there is economy inherent in that. There are also some economies inherent in not keeping fully depreciated equipment in operation any longer than it has to be. But in any event the Viscount and other aircraft, although they can be kept airworthy, are going to be increasingly expensive to keep airworthy. Also the jet is – on the safety side – backed by the best design and manufacturing brains and experience in the world and I would say that in another five years if we were still flying turboprop aircraft internally we would be as out of date as we would be today if we were still flying piston engined aircraft.

So this transfer to jets is a technical step which I believe we are ready to take and is a progression we should make as soon as possible.

I want you fellows to be champions of this. We are all in this Department. We are all looking for progress. I want you to speak up when people start knocking this business of going to jets. Going to jets does not just mean a saving of ten minutes between Sydney and Melbourne. It means vastly improved network of services on the long haul routes to places like Perth; it means on the whole greatly improved frequencies of service and comfort on the

main traffic routes; it means improved services on the other routes where Electras and Viscounts will go out and serve. Instead of taking a Viscount to Darwin when the jets come, we will take an Electra. So we are going to do a lot more with these jets than just save ten minutes between Melbourne and Sydney and I would like you to knock that one on the head good and hard.

Now what does all this mean from the viewpoint of the Department? Well it seems to me that people like Dr Bradfield, Pickford, White, George Brown and I mention Mr Phillips and his lieutenant Mr Lewis, have all played a notable part in evolving this whole programme. Now we have a £2½ million programme for radar for air traffic control purposes – and we had some experts overseas picking the best sort of radar and other equipment there is – and in co-operation with the operational side we have devised new positive control systems for our terminal areas based on positive radar control. This means by the time these aircraft with very high speed and performance climbing into and out of our major terminals where traffic is congested, it means we will have positive methods of controlling them and monitoring them up to 150 miles out. This is wonderful! We also have approval for radio navigation aids programme involving putting in 22 VORs which is a radio aid which will greatly increase the capacity of our airways. It is like increasing the capacity of a highway from two to ten lanes. We have got approval also to improve our communications system based on a long term plan which will greatly increase the number of places in which pilots talk directly to control staff and so on.

It is a very nice picture when you think of it, and we have got a few years to do this. It is a great challenge in terms of administration to see that it is done. Of course the 1970s will be offering a different sort of challenge but this is the challenge today on the technical and airways side.

Now, we also have got the opportunity to carry out those personnel training programmes which are so important in the air traffic control branch and elsewhere. In communications we have got the chance to get on top of these problems and I believe we have the same sort of chance in aviation medicine and everywhere else. The approvals we have got in terms of finance for the airways side are most valuable. We have also got very satisfactory approval to plan our airports system over the next five years. All that we need to do is to see that all these facilities, the buildings to house them, the staff to man them, come together by not much later than 1964. That is what this jet age means to the Department of Civil Aviation. It means the most tremendous challenge that has ever been put to us because this time we are not in a position of having been denied money. I remember Roy Badenach always used to say – and he was a profound philosopher on some of these matters as those of you who knew him will remember – he said it has always been traditional in civil aviation that you have to wait until your pavements are pounded into dust and your air traffic control systems reduced to complete confusion and your communications and radio systems obsolescent before anyone thought of ever giving you any money to do anything about it. In other words the airlines with their equipment and their demands were always years ahead of us. Now to my knowledge this is the first time whereby some planning and a little bit of luck, we are at last given a chance to plan ahead. And I want you fellows to get well onto that. It is a tremendously important one for us all.

We have a few years to get ready for this and it should be a first class operation. Later on in 1966-68 we will have more jets like the BAC 1-11 and perhaps by 1970 a few light jets like the F28 coming along to replace the Fokker (F.27). We could have by 1970 or maybe a little later a completely jet operation.

The airlines today both made applications to the Minister for permission to buy two Boeing 727s each. Both T.A.A. and Ansett-A.N.A. stated in their opinion it was unquestionably the best aircraft for their purposes and they each gave detailed reasons why they wanted to buy it. Since the aircraft they want to buy is in that category of Trident, Boeing, Caravelle, the Minister has already approved the applications. I have no doubt the choice of the Boeing 727 will be criticised but it has been made clear that this is the airlines' own choice. If necessary, the Minister will publish all the reasons that both of the airlines have submitted, because we want to avoid very carefully – and I think in view of the facts we must – the suggestion that any pressure has been put to bear on either airlines on what they should buy.

In response to a question on the continued use of Essendon, Mr Anderson stated: We will continue to use Essendon while we have a legitimate use for it. I cannot say how long that will be. Certainly it will take the airlines some years to transfer their vast mechanical and maintenance outfits they have got from Essendon to Tullamarine and they will have to go back to Essendon for maintenance for some years – much to Dr Bradfield's annoyance. After that situation has been cleaned up and most of the domestic operations have gone to Tullamarine – I don't think it will be too long before all the services go there, because it would be most uneconomic for the airlines to conduct their operations from two centres. And at that time, provided there has not developed in the meanwhile some other legitimate aviation use for Essendon, it will be sold – but the timing of when it is disposed of is entirely with this Department. If any legitimate aviation use develops we will keep Essendon. Essendon and Tullamarine can be operated as a complex – the operation of one is comparable to the other. So if we need Essendon, we will keep it.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 5.

On Saturday November 5, 1910, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a letter from an anonymous member of *The Aerial League of Australia* complaining about the *League's* inactivity. "To my knowledge there has not been a meeting called or a communication read relating to aeronautics during the last six months." It was no coincidence that just six months earlier, on May 1, Harry Houdini completed his final flight in Australia at Sydney's Rosehill Racecourse, and his mechanic, Brassac commenced dismantling the Voisin biplane preparatory to shipping it to America. There is no doubt also that Houdini had taken the lift out of George Augustine Taylor's wings of ambition to be recognised as the first to make a powered flight in Australia. Subsequent to Houdini's departure the activities of *The Aerial League* were much diminished, and Taylor turned his talents more and more to wireless telegraphy. Within twelve months he had achieved the first transmission of a military wireless signal in Australia.

Prior to Houdini's arrival in Sydney, Taylor continued to promote his own ascendancy, through the various publications he wrote for, in the race to be first to achieve powered flight in Australia, and at the same time to cast doubt on his competitors. Taylor enjoyed the respect of many influential members of government, the military and industry. The power of his pen was considerable. His repeated assertions that Defries "did not rise from the ground" had disposed of his first competitor. During the early months of 1910 he directed his attention to likely competition from Houdini and an imported Bleriot in Adelaide. In *The Motor in Australia*, March 1, 1910, Taylor noted the arrival in Melbourne of Houdini, whom he condescendingly described as a variety stage artist. He was dismissive of Houdini's aeronautical experience: "The gentleman referred to has flown for about 18 minutes at Berlin." In the same issue Taylor wrote: "The full sized automatically stable aeroplane has now been completed by Mr George A. Taylor and his first flight is expected within a fortnight." In the March 12, issue of *Building* he pre-empted any claim that might come from the south by proclaiming that already, "The first Australian aeroplane, as pointed out in our January issue, was successfully flown during December and January by the hon. secretary of *The Aerial League* during his experiments at Narrabeen." Finally, on April 1, with Houdini already in Sydney and performing at the Tivoli Theatre, Taylor wrote in *The Motor in Australia*, ".....the Wright, Bleriot and Voisin machines.... have not got off the earth."

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the events of December 5, 1909, under the heading, "Gliding at Narrabeen". In January Taylor claimed for his glider the distinction of being the first heavier-than-air apparatus to fly in Australia. Now, in March, he was claiming to have flown the first Australian aeroplane. The word 'aeroplane' originated in France in the mid nineteenth century. Octave Chanute in his *Progress in Flying Machines*, published in 1894, defines the word, 'aeroplanes', as "thin fixed surfaces, slightly inclined to the line of motion, and deriving their support from the upward reaction of the air pressure due to the speed, the latter being obtained by some separate propelling device." My current *Dictionary of Aeronautical English* defines the word, 'aeroplane', as "power-driven heavier-than-air craft with fixed wings". I find no confusion in my copy of *The Aero Manual 1910*, between descriptions of gliders, which fly without power, and aeroplanes, which fly with power.

Taylor, with his writing skills, knew very well the meaning of the aeronautical words he was using, and the interpretation he wished to convey to his reading public. Unhelpfully, his words have caused confusion for subsequent researchers of Australian aviation history. This confusion was immediately expressed by the aviation correspondent to Melbourne's *The Leader* on April 2, 1910, "We have Taylor in Sydney, who claims to have made a flight on his self-constructed monoplane, but there is nothing yet authentic regarding this flight." And the confusion persists. I attended the *RAAF History Conference* in Canberra on August 24, 2001, which was titled, *The Birth of Australian Military Aviation*. From a paper on *The Perception of Flight Before World War I*, I quote, "in 1908 John Duigan

built a biplane designed along the lines of a Maurice Farman machine. The machine finally flew in July 1910 and over the next few months flew at least sixty flights in Victoria. Duigan was not the first man to fly a heavier-than-air machine in Australia. That privilege fell to George A. Taylor on 5th December 1909." The technique of passing a glider through the filter of "heavier-than-air" to create an aeroplane, serves to obscure the fact that, where Duigan succeeded in achieving powered flight, Taylor failed.

In answer to the anonymous member, Taylor's reply was published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on November 10, 1910. An impressive list of exhibitions, lectures and achievements by *The Aerial League* was provided, although most fell in the twelve months between the formation of *The League* on April 28, 1909, and April 29, 1910, when Taylor stood in the Sydney Town Hall to present *The Aerial League's* trophy for the first aerial flight in Australia to Harry Houdini. How had it come to this? After all his proud and patriotic promises that an Australian would be the first to fly, Taylor had capitulated to the claims of an American showman with his obsolete French biplane. The answer was simple. By then there was irrefutable evidence of sustained flight by Houdini from witness statements and photographs, particularly cinematographic film widely shown to the Australian public. Then there was the overwhelming personality of Houdini, who would not be denied recognition of his success.

Houdini was ready to make his first flight at Rosehill Racecourse on Sunday April 17, with hundreds of people in attendance. However, the disappointed crowd dispersed when Brassac declared wind conditions unfavourable, and no flight could be attempted. On Monday morning at about 8 am it was cold and windless - suitable weather for flying. Details of the subsequent flights, as reported the next day in the local papers, were not consistent. It seems that three attempts were made; the first resulting in a straight line flight of about 200 yards; on the second attempt the Voisin refused to become airborne; the final flight of the day was over about half a mile which *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported as, "A short turn to the right and another to the left, and the turn has been successfully negotiated. The machine inclines violently to the left, rights herself, then almost immediately lurches towards the left once more, and commences to descend. She comes down quickly with a rush, hitting the ground with the left hand portion of the front plane. The impact was so severe that Houdini was thrown from his seat, landing on his hands and knees some distance from his disabled machine." Houdini was no doubt badly shaken, and Brassac had some work to do to make the Voisin airworthy before further attempts planned for the following day. Despite having already given the honour to Colin Defries, in its report on December 10, 1909, and in the face of unconvincing demonstrations by Houdini so far, *The Sydney Morning Herald* of Tuesday April 19, declared that: "For the first time in New South Wales a man has succeeded in flying." How effectively was journalistic amnesia induced under the influence of George Augustine Taylor?

On Tuesday morning April 19, George Augustine Taylor was at Rosehill Racecourse on behalf of *The Aerial League of Australia*, equipped with an aneroid barometer, and other measuring devices, to make 'official' records of any flights by Houdini on the day. I believe that Taylor was also acting as a reporter on aviation matters for *The Daily Telegraph* at the time. Already, Taylor was considering a proposal before *The Aerial League* to commemorate Houdini's achievement of the preceding day - "the first flight in New South Wales". On Wednesday April 20, *The Daily Telegraph* carried Taylor's report on his observations. The only flight of the day was described as, "at the turn of the course it begins to rise, now the elevating plane is raised. Higher it soars, higher still, till an elevation of about 50 ft is reached. Then the wind springs up, and at once the machine is deflected. But it comes towards the ground with the graceful swoop of a dove. It does not strike the earth, for at the psychological moment the elevation planes are moved ever so slightly and the descent becomes a gentle upward glide, followed by a poise and then an easy settling on the ground." In this report Taylor has placed the reader in the pilot's seat of the Voisin, and is no doubt reflecting his own experiences as the pilot of his glider at Narrabeen Heads. It is easy to understand how some camaraderie developed between Taylor and Houdini and how Taylor soon fell under Houdini's spell.

On the evening of Wednesday April 20, 1910, *The Aerial League of Australia* held a meeting. It was proposed by Mr Garland, and seconded by Mr Hargrave, that Mons. Brassac and Mr H. Houdini be submitted for election as members. The two gentlemen were elected unanimously. **John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

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Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

April 2008 No.416

April Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 2nd April 2008, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

The business for the meeting will be

Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz and Aircraft Recognition Competition

The 25th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz will be hosted this year by Ian Debenham, who will present the prestigious Slipstream Trophy to the winner.

Following a decision made at last year's annual general meeting, and further endorsed this year, any member who will be attending the meeting is invited to submit up to three questions and answers that might be included at the discretion of the Quiz Host. Questions must be submitted to iand@phm.gov.au or by post to the Society, and to be received no later than Monday 31st March 2008.

Following the Trivia Quiz, Warwick Bigsworth will provide a number of images for the 40th annual aircraft recognition competition. Participants are also invited to submit up to 10 of their own slides which will be included in the competition. Contestants will compete for the impressive Brian White Memorial Trophy.

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

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

The new method of running these competitions will be reviewed after this year's meeting.

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

March Meeting

The March meeting featured the Annual General Meeting and included the President's Report, the Honorary Treasurer's Report and the election of Office Bearers for the current year.

AHSA (NSW) President's Report 2008

Although 2007 was another good year for the Society thanks to the program of speakers, it will be remembered as the year we lost two of our regular attendees, Al Bovelt and Barry Walker. Both will be missed.

Despite inflation the Society has been responsible in its financial management throughout the year and thus there is no increase in membership fees for the foreseeable future.

As noted in my last President's Report the Society faced two issues that were not that pressing but required monitoring. The first was the requirement of the Powerhouse Museum to maximise its income from other than the State Government. Thus we had lost the Target Theatre as a venue for our Arthur Butler Memorial Lecture and our regular meeting venue was not as reliably available as before. These issues have not caused any serious inconvenience. Since that last Report the Museum's Director, Kevin Fewster, has resigned to take up the post of Director of the National Maritime Museum in London and the new Director of the Powerhouse, Dawn Casey, is due to take office on March 17th. The Society will view with interest Dawn's approach to the Museum's funding situation and her view of the Museum's affiliated societies. I am not signalling any further issues in our relationship with the Museum but we are in a process of change and must remain aware and flexible to ensure the continued well-being of the Society.

I would like to remind everyone that it is important to remember that the centenaries of Australian aviation will be celebrated in 2009/10 and we should be in the forefront of those celebrations. The Society has already met with the Executive of the Sydney Branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society to find common cause in recognising the first flights in Australia, both gliding and powered. Further work is in progress and "*Southern Skies*" will keep you informed of the Society's work in this regard. Jo' Scott will also continue his scholarly research or subject for "*Loops and Landings*".

That having been said, I would like ' opportunity to thank the committee mer

support, Warwick Bigsworth, our extremely competent secretary and newsletter editor, John Scott for his ever interesting and well researched "*Loops and Landings*" and John Swanson for his handling of the Society's funds.

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

Ian Debenham President

Treasurer's Report

John Swanson presented his financial report for the 2007 year. The Society funds still remain healthy, with income for the year \$1,499.02 and expenditure of \$1,202.29. The Society's net assets as at 31st December 2007 were \$6,719.39.

Election of Office Bearers

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

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

Following the AGM, a DVD featuring aspects of the Korean War was shown.

Members' Night

This year, we will be holding another members' Night where three of our members are invited to talk on their special area of interest in aviation. It could be research, an interesting trip or just something of interest to the presenter.

At this stage, the night is tentatively programmed for the May monthly meeting, but subject to the availability of another guest, it might be deferred to the August meeting.

Any volunteers to speak are requested to contact Warwick Bigsworth or John Scott and advise of their interest.

For the Diary – June Meeting

The Museum of Sydney will be displaying the Flying Boats exhibition from 10th May to the 17th August 2008. The Society has been invited to conduct its June meeting at the Museum which is located on the corner of Bridge and Phillip Streets, Sydney. The meeting will commence at our normal meeting time, and will consist of a talk by Matthew Holle, the Museum's Building Manager, and a private inspection of the exhibition. Further details will be included in upcoming newsletters.

Airlines and Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 – 2002

Fred Niven has advised that he plans to finalize the contents for Edition 6 of the 'Airlines & Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921-2002' DVD by the end of March and will then send the master to the printers for printing; hopefully for distribution starting during April. He expects the price to be the same as the current edition (\$AU35 including Australian P&P).

The DVD may well be his last and will certainly be the last for a number of years – Fred claims he needs a break. It will include a large number of additions (lots more aircraft photos, more timetables, maps, more photos of people, lots of extra advertisements and much more) to the current one.

It looks like including around 4000 'pages' and 8000 photos, maps etc. Many kind people have added a number of great improvements to the latest edition's coverage of the history of the Ansett and A.N.A. Groups. Many of the photos will amaze.

Fred would like to try to gauge roughly how many copies of the new DVD will be required, to, hopefully, avoid having to arrange a reprint (as happened with the current edition), or ordering too many.

If you plan to purchase the new DVD at some stage, please contact Fred via e-mail, (fniven@bigpond.net.au), or phone (03) 9544 3388 or via mail, 27 Alfred Grove, Oakleigh East, VIC 3166, with your name and whether you plan to buy soon, or later. If you wish to pre-order, please advise so and include your mailing address – Fred will prepare your mailing sticker and let you know when the DVD is available, forms of payment, etc.

McIntyre Field

Keith White has kindly passed on a recent copy of the Tocumwal Historic Aerodrome Museum's newsletter, which contained some information about McIntyre Field.

For many years there has been a mystery of why Tocumwal Aerodrome was called McIntyre Field by the Americans. It had been generally assumed that it had been named after RAAF Flt Lt Ivor E. McIntyre, who with Wing Commander S.J. Goble first circumnavigated Australia in 1924 in a Fairey IIID Seaplane. Museum staff were never quite convinced of this and continued their search for the real background. From the U.S.A.F. Historical Research Agency at the Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, has come a copy of General Order No.19 25th July 1942, issued from HQ, US Army Air Services, SWPA, by Major General Lincoln, stating "Announcement is hereby made that the flying field at Tocumwal, NSW is named McIntyre Field in honour of Captain Patrick W. McIntyre, Air Corps,

US Army, who was killed on June 5 1942, while testing a bombardment airplane near Archerfield, Brisbane, Queensland”.

Tocumwal was taken over by the RAAF in 1942 and at various times housed No. 82 Wing, No. 7 Operational Training Unit, No. 7 Aircraft Depot and No. 7 Central Recovery Depot. During WWII, up to 4,500 RAAF and 400 WAAAF personnel were based at the airfield.

Aircraft based at RAAF Tocumwal included Consolidated Liberators, Curtis Kittyhawks, Vultee Vengeances and an Airspeed Oxford.

From 1942 until 1960, when the RAAF closed its base, the airfield was a huge storage and repair depot for aircraft types including Avro Anson, Lancaster and Lincoln, Bell Airacobra, Bristol/DAP Beaufort and Beaufighter, CAC Boomerang, Wirraway and Winjeel, de Havilland Mosquito and Vampire, Douglas Dakota, Gloster Meteor, Lockheed Hudson, Lodestar and Ventura, North American and CAC Mustang, and Supermarine Spitfire.

Bob Brown is President of the Tocumwal Historical Aerodrome Museum and can be contacted at PO Box 47 Tocumwal NSW 2714 for membership details of the support group.

For more information, visit the website: <http://ahoy.tk-jk.net/macslog/TocumwalHistoricAerodrome.html>

Passing Parade

George B. Litchford

Whilst the name may not be immediately familiar to readers, his legacy will be an important factor in the safety of aviation throughout the world.

George B. Litchfield, a prolific aviation inventor who had a vital role in the development of collision warning systems used on most airliners around the world, died on 28 February 2008 in Albany, NY, USA. He was 89 years old.

He began working in navigation and surveillance technologies for aircraft in 1941 at Sperry Gyroscope Research Laboratories and was still at it over 50 years later. One of his insights was that hardware already on aircraft that help air traffic controllers keep track of them could also be used as an anti-collision system. That equipment is the radar transponder. Radar systems operated by aviation authorities send electronic queries that aircraft answer with their transponders, giving the aircraft's identity, speed and altitude.

George Litchford worked for years on elements of the system that eventually became the Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System (TCAS). The United States' Congress required that the system be installed on all passenger aircraft after an AeroMexico DC-9 collided with a private aircraft near Los Angeles in August 1986, killing 82 people.

He also patented a method for a receiver on the ground to eavesdrop on aircraft answering air traffic control surveillance radar. A company that licensed that method, Passur (then called MegaData), used it to track the last moments of T.W.A. 800, the B747 that exploded off the Long Island, New York, coast en-route to Paris from New York in 1996. The company now operates the system in 90 locations worldwide, covering 150 airports. Airlines also use the data to track their arrivals, and airports use it to identify flights that violate noise regulations by flying at times or in places that are forbidden.

George Litchford also worked for the U.S. Navy on a landing system for aircraft carriers and on equipment to help civilian aircraft land in low visibility.

On the Internet

Airliner List.com

(www.airlinerlist.com)

This site provides a number of spreadsheets featuring production and owner histories of a wide variety of airliners. Prop and jet histories are included, along with some images. The site has a great selection of links, too.

Aircraft Registration Database Lookup

(www.airframes.org)

For those interested in registrations and Mode S transponder address, this site is ideal. Data on airliners, business jets, helicopters and private aircraft showing common registry information is available. The site also features aircraft hull losses by years.

Airline Flight News

(<http://airlineroute.blogspot.com>)

This is an interesting blog on airline route news from all over the world, with a cross reference to all airlines listed. It also has some links to otherwise obscure sites.

MRC Aviation

(<http://mrcavation.blogspot.com>)

Here is another worthwhile blog, this time from New Zealand. If you have an interest in non-scheduled aircraft movements in New Zealand, you'll find this worthwhile. There are a number of images included, some of which will have visited Australian skies, too.

Peter Dunn's Australia @ War

(<http://home.st.net.au/~dunn/>)

This site has been mentioned before, however there is much more material now included on the site. There is a vast number of pages on Australian, American, British and other Allied forces in

Australia, Japanese and German raids, allied units in Australia and the Pacific, matters on reconnaissance, and much more. The site also contains some entertaining tales from prolific writer John Laming, who has stories about Lincolns from 10SQN RAAF Townsville, Mustangs, and even Messerschmitts. Well worth another look.

Steve Darlow E-zine
(www.stevedarlow.co.uk)

Steve Darlow BSc, a British author of aviation books has recently sent this message to several sources in Australia.

"I am trying to promote a new initiative and wonder if AHSA members would be interested.

I have just launched an online E-zine FIGHTING HIGH, which pays tribute to the Allied airmen who won the air battle 1939 - 1945, drawing on a considerable amount of first hand accounts to keep their memory alive. Issue one includes fascinating articles illustrated with numerous unpublished photographs, book reviews and an aircraft recognition competition.

FIGHTING HIGH is a pdf document and free to download via the following link –

www.stevedarlow.co.uk/fightinghigh.htm

I am already receiving a considerable amount of favourable feedback, so just trying to spread the word further."

Steve Darlow BSc Military Aviation Author

Books and Models

I've recently been made aware of the Red Roo Models website, which features not only a number of models, tips and hints, decals, conversions and books on modelling, but also a number of other books on military aviation in Australia.

Red Roo Models is a small, family owned, Australian company dedicated to providing modellers with an interest in Australian military aviation, the best in resin casting, photo-etched brass, decals and modelling profiles (all with an Australian bias).

The conversions section includes the U16/21 version of the Gloster Meteor, cuffless propeller blades for CAC Mustangs, DHA Vampire FB.31, DC-3 Cyclone engines, various wheel conversions, engine cowls, to name but few.

The book section includes the many editions of the Aviation History Colouring Book, by Ian Baker; Frend Bilong Australia Tru – The Douglas Boston in Australian Service; Buffalo Down Under; Bell P-39 Airacobra in Australian Service; Strike Back – B-24 Liberator in Australian Service, by Bob Livingstone; and, Southern Cross Mustangs – The P-51s of Australia and New Zealand, by David Muir.

These books are aimed to assist the modeller, but Southern Cross Mustangs features much more detail on the aircraft's service, the differences between the North American and CAC models, civilian conversions, extensive sections on markings, nose art, target towing conversions, and histories of units and operators of Mustangs and detailed listings of all the civilian and surviving airframes. There are over 100 photographs, plus profiles, plan views and detailed drawings.

Red Roo Models can be contacted through the website (www.redroomodels.com) or by phone on (03) 9560 0695 or by post at PO Box 113 Glen Waverley, VIC 3150.

Calendar of Events

5 April 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

6 April 2008 Albury Air Show. Albury NSW

13 April 2008 7th Annual Antique and Classic Aircraft Fly-in. Parafield SA

19-20 April 2008 Jamestown Flying Group Fly-in. Jamestown SA

25-27 April 2008 Sport Aircraft Association of Australia WA Regional Fly-in. Serpentine WA

25-27 April 2008 Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia National Fly-in, Temora NSW

26-27 April 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days, Temora NSW

26 April 2008 Wings, Wheels and Wine, Mudgee NSW

3 May 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

10 May 2008 Sunbury (Penfield) Fly-in. Sunbury Vic.

25 May 2008 Fleet Air Arm Museum Open Day. HMAS Albatross, Nowra NSW

Contributions and Contacts

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

Subscriptions

This is the final notice to advise that subscriptions for 2008 are now overdue. For those members who have not yet paid, please complete the subscription form included and return as soon as possible. This will be the last issue of *Southern Skies* to be distributed to non-financial members.

Thanks

Thanks to John Scott and Keith White for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Part 6.

Let me begin with a clarification. During the short talk I gave, at our February meeting, I said that Houdini's total flying time in Sydney was greater than that recorded in Victoria. What I meant to say was that the time between his first and last flights in Sydney, (from April 18 to May 1), was greater than at Diggers Rest, (from March 18 to March 21). This is significant because, without the longer and more publicised exposure in Sydney, Houdini's aviation achievements in Australia would be much more compromised than they are today. At Diggers Rest he shared Plumpton's paddock with Ralph Banks who had already flown on March 1, and on the day he himself first flew, Australia's national newspapers were reporting a sensational flight by Mr F. C. Custance of about three miles in 5 min. 25 sec. at Bolivar, South Australia. On March 18, Houdini's three flights did not even come close to equalling Custance's reported flight of the previous day. On the other hand, Houdini's aviation exposure in Sydney was highly publicised, and free from the distraction of Banks and Custance. Rosehill Racecourse was also a more accessible location, for Houdini and spectators, than Diggers Rest. Most importantly, Houdini's time in Sydney brought him into contact with George Augustine Taylor and members of *The Aerial League*. In turn this resulted in his reception at the Sydney Town Hall, the presentation of a trophy, and his entrenchment as the first man to make an aerial flight in Australia.

At the meeting of *The Aerial League* on Wednesday April 20, 1910, George Augustine Taylor informed the members that Houdini, "at my personal request brought his biplane to Sydney, in order to enable members of the League to get an idea of how a full sized machine could be constructed, and also to be able to witness demonstrations." Taylor then informed the members how deeply he had placed them in Houdini's debt: "When it is considered that he has gone to considerable expense in bringing his machine this far also to much expense, in the fact that he has the upkeep of three European mechanics, you will agree with me when I point out that the Members of the League are deeply indebted to this gentleman for his trouble and kindness and I venture to consider that Mr Houdini's visit with his machine will save many of our members considerable expenses prior to their building full-sized machines." The members were no doubt relieved when Taylor explained how their debt to Houdini might be repaid. "Several Members of the League have suggested to me that in some little way we should recognise Mr Houdini's successful flights which as certified took place at Diggers Rest in Victoria some months ago, copy of certificate signed by reputable gentlemen to be sent to the League for its information." It was immediately moved and carried that, "at the next general meeting to be held, Mr Houdini is to be made a presentation on behalf of the League on account of his having made the first successful flight in Australia."

In his address to members Taylor did not mention a previous squandered opportunity to inspect the erection of a Wright biplane in Sydney Town Hall, or to observe the subsequent demonstrations at Victoria Park Racecourse. Nor was it disclosed that Houdini and Harry Rickards had always planned to bring the Voisin to Sydney for commercial purposes. Within two days, broadsheets were being handed out to the public on Sydney streets advertising *Aviation Week*, and stating that: "Mr Harry Rickards, at enormous expense, has arranged with the great Houdini to give a series of public flights on his Voisin biplane." It is also clear, from the minutes of the meeting, that *The Aerial League* relied solely on the witness statement produced by Houdini, and had had no representative at Diggers Rest. Nor was there ever any objective assessment, by *The Aerial League*, of previous flights by Defries, Banks, Wittber and Custance.

Meanwhile Houdini, while still performing nightly at the Tivoli, with matinees on Wednesdays and Saturdays, continued his early morning trial flights in preparation for *Aviation Week*, which was to commence at Rosehill Racecourse on Monday April 25. Early on Friday morning, April 22, Houdini had flown for about a mile when, "suddenly the machine was caught in a cross current of air and, its speed being retarded, it commenced to descend. It fell quickly, and hit the ground with considerable force."

Houdini himself described his crash landing as, "coming down with a sickening thud and breaking part of my biplane." This time it would take Brassac considerably longer, than after the crash on the previous Monday, to repair the Voisin. Harry Rickard's *Aviation Week* seemed to be heading towards the same disaster as J. & N. Tait's *Flying Fortnight* - unfulfilled public expectation, adverse wind conditions and the vulnerability of aeroplanes to damage. As it happened, no flying was possible on the Monday or Tuesday of *Aviation Week*. By Wednesday advertisements took the focus off promised flights by highlighting: "Afternoon tea for the ladies will be served in the Pavilion by the hostess, Mrs Houdini." It was not until the last day of *Aviation Week* that the Voisin was finally back in the air.

Taylor now found himself on the horns of a dilemma. On one hand he felt compelled to honour Houdini, and not just "in some little way" as he had suggested. On the other hand he was a patriot, and had his country's honour, and that of Lawrence Hargrave, to uphold; not to mention his own credibility as the leading advocate for Australian aviation. There was also the morale of members of *The Aerial League* to consider, many of whom were involved with the Commonwealth flying machine competition, the closing date for which had been extended from March 31 to June 30. There were forty five applicants listed for the competition with Taylor himself having knowledge of twenty three machines already built or under construction. He was anxious that this momentum not be diminished by the distraction of flights by foreigners.

The Aerial League had given Taylor the responsibility of organising the presentation to Houdini, and had allotted an amount of five guineas to cover expenses. There was never any doubt that Taylor would choose the most splendid public interior in Sydney, the Vestibule of the Town hall, for the occasion. The programme for the reception, set down for Friday April 29, would be titled "An Evening With the Conquerors of the Air." The same title had been used by *The Aerial League* for the opening of its aeronautical exhibition on July 23, 1909. Then, the conquerors of the air referred to were the likes of the Montgolfier brothers, Lilienthal, Hargrave, Zeppelin and the Wright brothers. Now, on April 29, the conquerors of the air would appear live at Sydney Town Hall; Lawrence Hargrave, George Augustine Taylor and Harry Houdini.

Foremost among Taylor's many talents was his skill as an artist. Therefore, he applied himself with relish to the creation of the trophy to be presented to Houdini. He conceived it as a cast bronze representation of Australia on a globe, holding up two eagle wings, with a scroll in the form of an aeroplane fuselage complete with propeller. The casting was to be mounted on polished Australian timber in the shape of a shield. Taylor then called in a few favours from his sculptor mate Gilbert Doble. Doble was given only three days to complete his task. Taylor was a consummate draftsman, and it is most likely that he personally devised and applied the inscription on the trophy. The inscription reads: "The Aerial League of Australia to H. Houdini for the First Aerial Flight in Australia 16 March 1910." In my opinion it was Taylor, because of his eye to history, who decided on "16 March 1910" in order to place Houdini in clean air with respect to any future claim from Custance. Inevitably, the ruse simply emphasised the precedence of Custance, and tended to discredit Houdini. As for the: "First Aerial Flight in Australia", this had already been achieved over half a century before, by William Dean in the balloon *Australasian*, from the Cremorne Gardens, Melbourne.

There is an intriguing sequel to the saga of Houdini's trophy. In a remarkable forty seven page tribute to her late husband, in *Building* magazine, February 13, 1928, Florence Taylor refers to a shield being presented to him in 1911 by *The Aerial League*. It was for his experiments, "flying on a heavier-than-air motorless machine with the weight of the body for its propelling force." It seems the Taylors had an aversion to the word "glider". At our September meeting last year David Craddock showed us a photograph of Taylor's shield. It was obvious that Gilbert Doble had cast a replica of Houdini's trophy. It was identical - except for the inscription. Unfortunately, the inscription could not be made out from David's photograph, and the trophy's whereabouts is unknown. It is reasonable to assume that Taylor's name replaces that of Houdini, and the date recorded is 5 December 1909. Taylor disliked the word "glider", and there is no room on the scroll to replace "Aerial" with, say, "heavier-than-air motorless machine with the weight of the body for its propelling force". Could it be possible that "Aerial" was simply replaced by "Aeroplane"? After all, there is a propeller on the trophy.. **John Scott.**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

May 2008 No.417

May Meeting

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 7th May 2008, commencing at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

The business for the meeting will be

***The Passion of New Zealanders for Their Aviation Heritage and Its Celebration
combined with
The Sale of Books and Ephemera from the Late
Barry Walker Collection***

John Scott recently returned from New Zealand after attending the Warbirds over Wanaka 2008 Air Show, and visiting the country's major aviation museums. He was impressed by the richness of New Zealand's aviation history, and the high standard of its presentation in museums like the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre, The RNZAF Museum at Wigram, and the Sir Keith Park Memorial Aviation Collection at MOTAT, Auckland. John will introduce two short videos, the first describing an aviation event that occurred at the beginning of the last century, while the second illustrates an important event for civil aviation in New Zealand that took place about half a century ago.

The first video shows how enthusiastically New Zealanders, from the Prime Minister down to the youngest school child, supported their aviation pioneer Richard Pearse during the 2003, Centenary of Powered Flight Celebrations. Just in case members get carried away by the claim that Richard Pearse flew a powered aeroplane on March 31, 1903, they will be hosed down by Ian Debenham, who will respond to the video with the facts concerning these claims.

The second video covers an air show that is still talked about in New Zealand, almost half a century after the event. The opening of the new airport at Wellington, on October 24, 1959, was the cause for great celebration with an air show that was supported by large contingents from the air forces of the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Aircraft

manufacturers from the USA, the UK, Holland and Australia were also represented. Warwick Bigsworth is familiar with operations at Wellington International Airport, having spent some time in the rather unique control tower there. He will explain why turbulence may have been the cause of a spectacular keel scrape by a RNZAF Sunderland while making a low pass down the runway during the air show. A major disaster was also narrowly averted, during the air show, when an Avro Vulcan touched down just short of the runway wiping out its port undercarriage, and scraping its port wing, before its Olympus 104 engines powered it away to an emergency landing at Ohakea.

There will then be time to browse the Barry Walker Collection, which the trustees of Barry's estate have generously donated, hoping that members will provide a good home for it, and at the same time add to the Society's funds.

The collection includes about 70 books, mainly military but civil as well, over 30 videos and over 200 photographs of aircraft at museums and air shows that Barry had visited over the years.

Committee Meeting

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

April Meeting

The 25th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz was hosted this year by Ian Debenham, who presented the winner of the prestigious Slipstream Trophy to David Eyre. Some examples of the questions posed are included later in this newsletter.

Following the Trivia Quiz, Warwick Bigsworth provided a number of images, plus a further 10 from Anthony Coleiro, for the 40th annual aircraft recognition competition. Winner of the Brian White Memorial Trophy was none other than David Eyre, with Ken Garland runner-up and Anthony Coleiro being awarded the President's Trophy.

Images included vintage shots of Convair 580 and 880, Grumman Avenger, Hellcat and Mallard, Curtiss Seagull, McDonnell Banshee, Fokker D VII, de Havilland DH-60M Moth and DH-89B Dominie,

Dornier Do28, Percival Provost and Proctor, Canadair CL-41 Tutor and CL-44, as well as more contemporary types such as TBM 700, Sukhoi SU-27, Boeing E-3D Sentry and Gulfstream G-200.

Vale Christopher Hugh O'Neill.

29 January, 1937 – 23 March 2008

Following waning health over the last two years, Chris passed away peacefully on 23 March and his life was celebrated by family and friends on 27 March before burial at the Macquarie Park (Catholic) Cemetery, North Ryde.

Unlike his two brothers, Chris was born in Sydney shortly after the family moved from Melbourne, a city he always enjoyed visiting. Following schooling, he joined the Public Service at the NSW Land Titles office where he rose through the ranks before retiring. The family connection to Melbourne cemented his long interest in Australian aviation, particularly airlines. In the early months of 1950 Chris accompanied his mother on a trip by air to Melbourne to visit family members, flying south in a TAA Convair 240 which was a thrill but the return journey ex Essendon was to be a bigger thrill. The scheduled TAA aircraft had been substituted by a DC-3; not a TAA DC-3 but the Qantas DC-3 VH-EBJ! Following these flights he started his airline memorabilia collection and became fascinated with Butler Air Transport, collecting anything with the word Butler on it! He always said he only had one hero – Arthur Butler!!

Chris led a busy life as apart from his aviation interest, he was a trophy winning Ballroom Dancer, necessitating training at least five nights a week. He gained a host of trophies within Australia and New Zealand during the late 1950s and early 1960s, many being for Latin America dance where he won a number of Championships. He withdrew from competitive dancing in 1962 although he kept in regular contact with his dancing partners until his death. During the last 2 to 3 years of the 1950s, Chris operated his own small home based business of being an agent for Iceland stamps (from a country which interested him greatly, both aviation and non-aviation) and the Australian distributor of small local magazines, one being the North Australian Monthly, published in Cairns and overseas stamp magazines.

Chris was an early member of the AHSA, his membership being recorded in the June, 1962 issue of the Journal with his main interest as civil aviation. In June 1964, he joined fellow enthusiasts Stephen Gibson and Michael Croker to edit a small local aviation news magazine, *New South Wales Air Log* which recorded aviation happenings within this state. Seven months later, the publication was revamped as *Australian Air Log* covering news from around the

country and he continued to be a sub-editor until the Editorial office moved to Adelaide under new Editor, Geoffrey Goodall. Chris remained a contributor until it ceased in 1968.

When local Sydney members were contacted in mid 1964 about forming a NSW Branch of the AHSA, Chris was an early participant, attending the formation meeting on 24 September, 1964 and subsequently attended the first formal meeting on 21 January, 1965 in the Auditorium at Qantas House, Hunter Street where monthly meetings were held for many years. Over the years, Chris held various positions within the Branch and the Federal office while it operated from Sydney during the late 1960s and 1970s.

Chris's interest in airlines and civil aircraft, particularly early Lockheed types made him a regular visitor to the National Archives in Melbourne from 1961 until his last visit in March 2007 while over the last 12 years, he made regular 2 or 3 times weekly visits to the Sydney branch of these Archives, the last only 4 weeks before his passing. He was also a regular visitor to other institutions like the Mitchell Library and the City of Sydney Library. His research made him an expert on Australian airlines, various aircraft types, particularly Lockheed, early Bankstown airline and charter operators and the colourful people behind them and more recently, migrant arrivals in Australia by air. Chris was a regular visitor to many airports photographing aircraft and built up a large collection of negatives and slides but this activity waned over the last 20 years as he concentrated on research. He typed copious notes on all his interests and freely made his knowledge available to others. His passing has robbed Australia of a real aviation historian and he will be missed by many with whom he regularly exchanged research results.

Chris is survived by his older brother John, three nephews and their families.

Roger McDonald.

Vale Henry Irving (Hal) Sewell

Hal passed away peacefully on 4th April 2008 at the age of 82.

He was a long serving member of AHSA (NSW) and although not a regular at meetings, Hal made a significant contribution though his book, *Flying the Southern Skies*, which was published in 1999.

Hal had been the Chief Engineer in charge of Electrical Maintenance for the Department of Civil Aviation for many years until his retirement in 1991. Hal was regarded by all those who knew him as a most diligent engineer, who knew all the whys and wherefores of electrical engineering as it applies to civil aviation; a craft that is perhaps long forgotten.

Following his retirement from the Civil Aviation Authority, he acted as a volunteer guide at the Powerhouse Museum.

He is survived by his wife, two adult children and their spouses and three grandchildren.

Vale Elly Beinhorn

David Eyre has advised of this passing which might not have been widely reported.

"I note that German aviatrix, Elly Beinhorn, who flew a Klemm to Australia in the 1930s, died in Munich on 28 November 2007. She was a very interesting lady and came along to one of our AHSA meetings in the 1970s and gave a talk. She gave me an autographed photo of her aeroplane, which we used on the cover of the Journal at the time."

From the internet "Flightstory Aviation Blog:

German aviation pioneer Elly Beinhorn-Rosemeyer died last Wednesday, November 28, at age of 100 in a senior citizen home near Munich, Germany. The 1907 born record holder was the first woman to circle the earth, in the early 1930s.

At age of 21, against the wishes of her parents she moved to Spandau in Berlin to learn to fly at Berlin-Staaken airport. Soon she did aerobatic displays at weekends in a small Klemm KL-20 plane. Long distance flying was her real passion. In 1931 she seized the opportunity to fly to Portuguese Guinea (now Guinea-Bissau) West Africa on a scientific expedition. On the return journey, engine failure resulted in a crash-landing in the Sahara. With the help of nomadic Tuareg tribesmen, she joined a camel caravan to Timbuktu.

Shortly later, on her flight around the world, her Klemm monoplane was developing mechanical problems near Bushire, Persia. There she met Moye Stephens, who helped her fix the problem. Stephens and travel-adventure writer Richard Halliburton were flying around the world in a Stearman C-3B biplane, The Flying Carpet. She accompanied them on part of their flight, including the trip to Mount Everest. She flew on to Bali and Australia. In the process, she became only the second woman to fly solo from Europe to Australia, after Amy Johnson. Having landed in Darwin, North Australia, she headed down to Sydney, arriving in March 1932. Her plane was dismantled and shipped to New Zealand, then Panama where it was reassembled. Elly resumed flying, following the western coast of South America. She was presented with a medal in Peru. An ill-advised trip across the Andes followed. The plane was dismantled once more in Brazil and shipped to Germany. Elly arrived in Berlin in June 1932.

Back in Germany she was awarded the Hindenburg Cup and several other monetary awards

from the German aeronautical industry, which enabled her to continue her career.

Elly Beinhorn was married to Bernd Rosemeyer, a race driver who died 1938 in an attempt to break a car speed record with 430 km/h. She was buried in an honorary grave in Berlin.

Famous solo flights:

1931: Guinea Bissau (before the world flight).

1932: Round the World flight.

1933: Second African flight on a Heinkel single seater: Cairo, Cape Town, Libreville, St Louis, Casablanca, Tunis.
1934/35: Central America and USA (the Klemm crossed the Atlantic by ship): Panama, Mexico, Los Angeles, New York.

1935: Two continents in a day: Gleiwitz, Istanbul, Berlin.

1936: Three continents in one day: Istanbul, Damas, Cairo, Budapest, with the new Messerschmitt Me108 Taifun.

1939: She tries to fly to Japan with the Taifun, but Japan and China are at war and war rumors in Europe force her to turn back in Bangkok.

1952: Flight to Benghazi in a Piper Cub: Colombier, Mailand, Roma, Catania, Tunis, Gabes, Tripoli, Marble Arch, Benghazi.

Congratulations

In the September 2007 issue of *Southern Skies*, we made mention that the son of north-coast member Don Binskin, AVM Mark Binskin, had been promoted to Air Commander Australia. In March this year, the Prime Minister announced that AVM Binskin had been selected as the next Chief of Air Force. He will be promoted to Air Marshall and assume the CAF role with effect from 4th July 2008. Congratulations Mark!

Airlines and Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 – 2002.

Fred Niven's 6th edition of the 'Airlines & Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921-2002' DVD has been completed and is now for sale direct from Fred. The price is \$AU35 (including Australian P&P).

The brand-new DVD (contents nearly 4GB) covering the airlines & aircraft of the Ansett group of airlines is produced by Fred, who spent over 37 years at Ansett, during many of which he acted as an unofficial company aviation historian.

This DVD (viewable on both PCs & Macs, but not TVs) covers the entire Ansett Group of airlines in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand from 1921 to 2002, including all aircraft disposals up to 31 March 2008.

Its extremely comprehensive coverage includes Ansett Airways to Ansett Australia, A.N.A. and Airlines of Australia and all their predecessors, Aeropelican, Hazelton, Kendell, Skywest (and all its predecessors) and all the other subsidiaries of A.T.I. (and their predecessors) and their aircraft, since

Western Australian Airways operated Australia's 1st scheduled air service in 1921.

Its approximately 3,500 pages (not including the 8 video presentations) include:

- Full details of each aircraft operated by any Ansett-related airline 1921-2002; including their previous & subsequent histories, up to 31 March, 2008; indexed by both registration & airline.
- Around 8,000 photos/charts/maps of Ansett-related aircraft & personalities, since 1921.
- A detailed history for each airline, including its fleet, history, points served & logos.
- 'Milestones' of Ansett Group airline-related aviation events; by airline & for the group.
- Route-maps, timetable covers & lots of other memorabilia & some 'What might have been's'.
- Flight Crew lists for all Ansett Group airlines 1921-2002 (177 pages).
- Separate sections on A320s, BAe 146s, 727s, 737s, 747s, 767s, Convair CV-340/CV-440s, Fokker F.27s, F.28s & 50s, DC-2s, DC-3s, DC-4s, DC-5s, DC-6 & DC-6Bs, DC-9s, Lockheed 188 Electras, Short S.25 Flying Boats & Vickers Viscounts.
- Details of all known Ansett Group-related aircraft accidents/incidents.
- great video presentations.

Please post money orders/cheques, made out to Fred Niven, or cash, to: Fred Niven, 27 Alfred Grove, OAKLEIGH EAST, Vic., Australia 3166. Or, contact Fred at fniven@bigpond.net.au or on (03) 9544 3388 for details of direct money transfer.

The DVD covers the history and aircraft of all Ansett Group related airlines, including the following, their predecessors and successors:

- Ansett Airways, A.N.A., Adastral Airways (airline services), Aeropelican, Aircrafts Pty. Ltd. & Queensland Airlines, Airlines of Northern Australia & Ansett N.T., Ansett Air Freight & Ansett Australia Cargo, Ansett Flying Boat Services, Barrier Reef Airways, Trans Oceanic Airways, Butler Air Transport, Airlines of N.S.W., Connellan Airways, East-West Airlines, Guinea Airways & Airlines of South Australia, Hazelton, Kendell, Lloyd Aviation (airline services), MacRobertson-Miller Aviation, Mandated Airlines Ltd., Pacific Aviation (airline services), Patair, Skywest & Trans West, South Pacific Airlines of N.Z. (SPANZ), Southern Airlines/Goulburn Valley Air Services, Transcorp Airways.

Books

Wings on the River by David Jones
ISBN: 9781921054273

This is the story of flying boats that operated on the Brisbane River and Redland Bay. The book is very well researched and features chapters on the pioneering flights between the wars; Qantas operations on the Empire Air Mail route; wartime U.S. Navy flying boats services across the Pacific to

General MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane; Barrier Reef Airways; Trans Oceanic Airways and Ansett.

There are plenty of black and white photographs, and comprehensive appendices which contain data on operators, their fleets and routes flown, plus a chronology of events and extensive bibliography.

I'm sure that anyone interested in flying boats will find this book most enjoyable and a valuable addition to the bookshelf.

The book is available through the publishers, Boolarong Press (www.boolarongpress.com.au) or PO Box 308 Moorooka QLD 4105, or phone (07) 3373 7855. Orders can be made by secure means over the internet. The RRP is \$24.95 plus P&P.

Trivia Quiz

1. In an early episode of "The Flintstones" cartoon show, what was the name of the real airline depicted on the "stone-age" aircraft?
2. Who was the designer of the Thruster and Gemini ultralight aircraft?
3. What gave the Cessna Citation its name?
4. New Zealander JJ Hammond arrived in Australia in 1911 to demonstrate what type of aircraft?
5. In what year was the first Australian airmail flight?

Answers next month.

Calendar of Events

3 May 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

10 May 2008 Sunbury (Penfield) Fly-in. Sunbury Vic.

25 May 2008 Fleet Air Arm Museum Open Day. HMAS Albatross, Nowra NSW

1 June 2008 SAAA Chapter 4 RV Fly-in Brunc' Albion Park NSW

4 June 2008 AHSA Monthly Meeting – Museum of Sydney Flying Boats Exhibition

7 June 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

7-8 June 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

Contributions and Contacts

News items, other contributions, or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) 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 David Eyre, Roger McDonald and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

On The Trail Of Harry Houdini - Final.

The art of spin, in a public relations sense, is not new. During April 1910, George Augustine Taylor was caught up, not unwillingly, in the Great Houdini publicity machine, and no doubt enjoyed basking in its warmth. At the same time, even subconsciously, he must have been irritated by the fact that Houdini's enduring fame was being further enhanced by his possession of what Taylor himself had so desperately sought - the Holy Grail of being the first to fly a powered aeroplane in Australia. This possibly explains why Taylor, even while committed to the ceremony that would so publicly hand Houdini the prize, commenced using his own communication skills to appropriate some of Houdini's fame for Australia, and Lawrence Hargrave.

At the beginning of April, with the Deutsches Museum in Munich having already accepted, Taylor publicised the procrastination of the NSW Government, which had long since refused the free offer by Lawrence Hargrave of his model collection. In *The Motor in Australia*, Taylor wrote: "It is now a matter of history that Australia set the world on the track of aerial conquest by the remarkable discoveries of Lawrence Hargrave, but it is not well known that the splendid collection of models by which he built up his great investigations has been awaiting acceptance by the Government of this State. Think of it! Some hundred odd models of beautifully worked metal, resting in their cases for lack of interest in the, 'pioneers that be'. The priceless models by which Hargrave opened the great mystery of the ages are rotting in his workshop at Woollahra Point!"

George Augustine Taylor was at the Rosehill Racecourse at the times Houdini flew his Voisin, both as a recorder for *The Aerial League*, and as a reporter for *The Daily Telegraph*. In his report for the newspaper on April 20, Taylor informed his *Telegraph* readers of the connection between Houdini, his Voisin, Australia and Lawrence Hargrave: "Our illustration renders a detailed description of the biplane unnecessary. Suffice it to say that in it we see Australian genius returned to Australia, for, as Houdini remarked, "This machine has been constructed on the principle of the Hargrave boxkite - all honour to the inventor." Then, in *The Daily Telegraph* on April 27, Taylor announced an aeroplane contest: "Australia at last has an Australian-made aeroplane. It is a monoplane, and has been entirely constructed by a young Australian. It is now about to be tried at Rosehill against the Voisin biplane with which Mr Houdini is making records. This contest represents the Australian Boxkite coming back with a foreign engine and being challenged by an aeroplane made in Australia." Readers of *The Daily Telegraph* could have been forgiven for believing that, apart from Houdini and the 'foreign engine', *Aviation Week* at Rosehill racecourse was an all Australian affair. A photograph of the monoplane appeared the next day in *The Daily Telegraph*. It was the Bleriot look alike previously named *The Building Australia*. The monoplane is described in *Loops & Landings*, August 2007. On the day of the competition, neither the *The Building Australia* nor the Voisin became airborne.

Perhaps not entirely by coincidence, on the day Houdini was to receive his trophy, Taylor commenced a series of essays in *The Daily Telegraph* on "Aeronautics in Australia". Quite remarkably, in view of the occasion, Taylor's first essay was titled, "Why Foreign-Built Machines Fail". He offered the following explanation: "Altogether Australia has only seen three types of aeroplanes - the Wright, the Bleriot, and the Voisin. A careful study of these types demonstrates an interesting scientific fact which makes it doubtful whether a European-built aeroplane will ever be any great success in this country." The fault, explained Taylor, was not with the airframes, all of which depended on Hargrave's invention, but with the foreign engines. Taylor continued: "It is noticed that an engine built in a temperate climate such as that of England or France, will lose much of its power in Australia where the air is more rarefied." Despite a letter to the paper the following day from a Mr Paul Chauleur, pointing out that this "scientific fact" was so much nonsense, Taylor persisted with his argument in a further essay in *The Telegraph* on May 11, titled "The Problem of Power". Taylor then wrote: "Australia has seen three foreign-built aerial engines in the Wright, Bleriot and Voisin, and in each the chief trouble

was failure to give required or normal power." Although the repeated association of the word "failure" with the Voisin was hardly a fulsome endorsement of Houdini's achievements, it was the dismal failure of the engine intended to power his own 1909 monoplane that Taylor was bitter about. He was, at this time, in the process of suing Percy Middleton, the unfortunate student designer of his engine. If only the engine had been a success Taylor himself may have, months before, stood in The Vestibule of the Town Hall to receive the trophy now stolen by a foreigner. The matter came before Justice Sly in the Supreme Court of NSW on June 28. The verdict was handed down in favour of Middleton. During 1911, when Taylor received a replica of Houdini's trophy, he again chose to downgrade Houdini's flying achievements. In *The Daily Telegraph* of May 10, 1911, Taylor wrote that the people of NSW, "had seen Houdini perform a sort of hop-skip-and-jump around Rosehill Racecourse on his Voisin machine."

As the foremost expert on Australian aviation history, at the time of the first edition of *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, George Augustine Taylor was invited to contribute the article on aviation. The third revised edition was published in 1927, shortly before Taylor's death. You will find no assistance, from Taylor's contribution, to clarify those awkward dates concerning the introduction of powered flight to Australia. About Houdini he writes: "Early in 1910 H. Houdini brought a Voisin aeroplane to Australia, and made his first flight at Diggers Rest in Victoria; successful flights were also made at Rosehill near Sydney." It is noted that Taylor does not say that Houdini made the first powered flight in Australia, nor is any date given. About Custance he writes: "In the same year a Bleriot machine arrived in Australia and a few short flights were made with it by Cuthbert (sic) of Adelaide." About Defries he writes nothing - except that, "a Wright machine was exhibited in the various States, but no flights were undertaken." However, Taylor is clear about the date, December 5, 1909, when he became, "the first man in Australia to rise in the air on a free heavier-than-air apparatus." He is also clear about a second date, July 16, 1910, when another Australian, John Duigan, flew an Australian built aeroplane at Mia Mia, Victoria. When Taylor reflected, in the December, 1919, issue of *Building*, just one decade after his glider flights at Narrabeen, it is clear that he considered these flights to be just one milestone in his broader achievement. What he also wanted to be remembered for was his awakening of the Australian people, and Government, to the importance of aviation as a factor in defence, which in turn led to the establishment of military aviation in Australia. Finally, he wanted credit for championing Lawrence Hargrave's gift to the world of the secret of powered flight.

On the last day of *Aviation Week*, Sunday May 1, 1910, Houdini made his last flight in Australia. The flight was not in the calm of early morning, but in windy conditions of early afternoon before about 500 spectators. Taylor was on hand to record the duration of the flight as 2 min 17 sec, during which the Voisin circled the Rosehill Racecourse at least twice for a distance of 2 3/4 miles. "The demonstration was received with wild enthusiasm by those who witnessed it. Several ladies were so unnerved that they became hysterical, while members of the sterner sex rushed towards the aviator and lifting him shoulder high carried him to where his chief mechanic - the most satisfied man on the ground, if Houdini be excepted, was standing. Mr Brassac declared it to be the most sensational flight he has had the pleasure of looking at. The manner in which Houdini met and overcame the many difficulties he encountered in mid-air was amazing." Houdini returned to Rosehill Racecourse on May 3, to watch as the Voisin was dismantled for return to America. He and his party travelled north by train to Brisbane, where they departed Australia on May 11, en route to America on board *S. S. Manuka*.

The Aerial League held a farewell dinner for Houdini at the Paris House restaurant. After dinner Houdini gave a speech about his first successful powered flight at Diggers Rest. He ended with the following words: "I was proud. I was the first man to fly in this great country. A great nation that in future will hold pride of place in aerial invention. Why? I will tell. The Australian box kite reached France twenty years ago. Voisin placed an engine in it and it flew. I bring Australia back her own. The box kite comes back like the prodigal son, but married to a foreign engine. I was proud to fly in Australia with the Australian box kite! I was proud to fly here first, proud for myself, and proud because I speak the same tongue as Australians, because I come from that great United States that was British born." The speech could have been written by George Augustine Taylor - and most probably it was. **John Scott**



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO Box K346 Haymarket NSW 1238

Southern Skies

The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

June 2008 No.418

June Meeting – Special Venue Museum of Sydney

The June meeting will be held at the Museum of Sydney on Wednesday 4th June 2008, at 7.30pm for 7.45pm. The Museum is located on the corner of Bridge and Phillip Streets, Sydney. Parking is available on the street (if you are lucky) or at nearby parking stations at the Intercontinental Hotel (on the corner opposite) or at the Opera House. Members and visitors are most welcome to attend, and entry will be free; no arrangements can be made for supper.

The business for the meeting will be

A Private viewing of the Museum of Sydney's new exhibition: Flying Boats Sydney's Golden Age of Aviation

The Museum's Building Manager, Matthew Holle, is the guest curator of the exhibition and will be our guide for the evening.

Matthew's father, Noel, was an aircraft mechanic and later chief maintenance inspector on the flying boats at Rose Bay, whilst his mother, Margaret, was an air hostess on the Ansett flying boats. For more than two years Matthew has been assembling this vast collection of memorabilia on flying boats that operated to and from Rose Bay in Sydney Harbour, and his efforts have now come to fruition.

The exhibition retraces not only the early days of the Empire "C" Class flying boats and the later operations of Solents, Hythes and Sandringhams that were operated by Trans Oceanic Airways, Qantas and Ansett, but also the war time activities of the RAAF and the post-war return of POWs by Catalina. There are models, photographs and memorabilia which will be of great interest to most of our members.

Ian Debenham and Warwick Bigsworth recently attended the launch of the exhibition and both were very impressed by the layout of the display and the extent of the content. There are films of flying boats running unobtrusively in one area, models, a mock-up of the cabin area, uniforms and many photographs, timetables and promotional brochures.

Please join us for the tour of this very exciting exhibition.

May Meeting

The May meeting featured *The Passion of New Zealanders for Their Aviation Heritage and Its Celebration*. John Scott recently visited New Zealand and was impressed by the enthusiasm demonstrated by New Zealanders about one of their favourite heroes, Richard Pearse. John provided a DVD which featured the centenary celebrations afforded to commemorate Pearse's alleged flight in a powered aircraft on 31st March 1903, more than 8 months before that of the Wright Brothers in 1903. Various New Zealand sources claim that more flights were made later in the year, but still before that of the Wright Brothers.

The centenary celebrations were to include a flight in a replica of Pearse's aircraft, which had been constructed for the occasion. However the locals were to be bitterly disappointed when the replica failed to become airborne despite coaxing from the hundreds in attendance.

Ian Debenham provided a contrary view on the possibility of the supposed flight. He noted that not even Pearse himself claimed that he did actually fly. Ian queried the alleged output of the engine – 60hp from an air cooled unit, but without cooling fins; and the propeller which appeared to be of a most inefficient design. He also disputed the lift that could be achieved by the fabric wings; although they may have been able to provide some kite effect that may have provided some lift, but there was no directional control whatsoever.

John also presented a DVD on the air show commemorating the opening of the new airport at Wellington, on October 24, 1959. The film showed aircraft such as a TAA Fokker Friendship and BEA Dart Herald, both of which were under consideration for acquisition by the then National Airways Corporation. Military contingents from Australia, Great Britain, the USA and New Zealand also participated in the show. The images of a Blackburn Beverley lumbering into the air were interesting, but

the scraping of the runway by a RNZAF Sunderland and the undershooting of the runway by a RAF Vulcan were the highlights. Other types noted included Canberra, Vampire, Hercules, Hastings and Dakota. The original runway length was only 1630 metres and was extended to its current length of 1936 metres in the early 1970s. In comparison, Albury Airport's runway is 1900 metres in length and that of Coffs Harbour is 2080 metres.

Warwick Bigsworth described some of the sights he observed at Wellington Airport when he made several business visits to the control tower during the 1990s. The turbulence and cross-wind on final approach to Runway 34 were spectacular, to say the least.

Following the main part of the meeting, members were able to peruse and purchase items from the late Barry Walker's collection of books, videos and memorabilia. The Society raised a welcome amount and, as there are still a number of items remaining for sale, we will be making these available for perusal and sale at a later date. A catalogue of the books remaining will be prepared for members' information.

Airlines and Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921 – 2002.

Fred Niven's 6th edition of the 'Airlines & Aircraft of the Ansett Group 1921-2002' DVD is now for sale direct from Fred. The price is \$AU35 (including Australian P&P).

Please post money orders/cheques, made out to Fred Niven, or cash, to: Fred Niven, 27 Alfred Grove, OAKLEIGH EAST, Vic., Australia 3166. Or, contact Fred at fniven@bigpond.net.au or on (03) 9544 3388 for details of direct money transfer.

Books

Billy Stutt and the Richmond Flyboys, by Neville Hayes

Noted Australian aero historian, Neville Hayes presents the story of the training of pilots at Richmond NSW for service in World War I.

Whilst the Defence Department's Central Flying School at Point Cook struggled to keep training aircraft in the air, the NSW Government put together an aviation school on Ham Common at Clarendon, west of Sydney, complete with land, buildings, aircraft instructors and mechanics, to train pilots for service abroad.

With no training aircraft available from Great Britain, NSW turned to the USA's Curtiss Jenny. The Curtiss machines proved to be a superb choice, and under the guidance of the ace aviator and Chief Instructor WJ "Billy" Stutt, turned out more pilots than England knew what to do with.

After the War, the land and buildings became the fledgling Richmond Air Base.

The book has many previously unseen photographs and brings to life the story of student pilots, the part they played in the Great War and the politics behind the scenes.

The book is available at a special price to AHSA (NSW) members and readers of this newsletter for \$25.00 plus \$8.50 P&P, through Pacific Downunder, PO Box 133, Cowes, VIC 3922, phone (03) 5952 2927; email: pacdown@nex.net.au; and the company website is www.net.nex.au/users/pacdown. Mention that you are an AHSA (NSW) or Early Birds member to attain this special price.

Trivia Quiz - Answers

1. In an early episode of "The Flintstones" cartoon show, what was the name of the real airline depicted on the "stone-age" aircraft?
A. Qantas
2. Who was the designer of the Thruster and Gemini ultralight aircraft?
A. Steve Cohen
3. What gave the Cessna Citation its name?
A. The racehorse "Citation"
4. New Zealander JJ Hammond arrived in Australia in 1911 to demonstrate what type of aircraft?
A. Bristol Boxkite
5. In what year was the first Australian airmail flight?
A. 1914

Calendar of Events

1 June 2008 SAAA Chapter 4 RV Fly-in Brunch. Albion Park NSW

7 June 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

7-8 June 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

5 July 2008 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

19-20 July 2008 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

4-6 October 2008 Arthur Butler Memorial Fly-in. Tooraweenah NSW (see attachment, courtesy of Pacific Flyer magazine).

Contributions and Contacts

News items, other contributions, or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) 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 Pacific Flyer magazine, Ken Garland and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

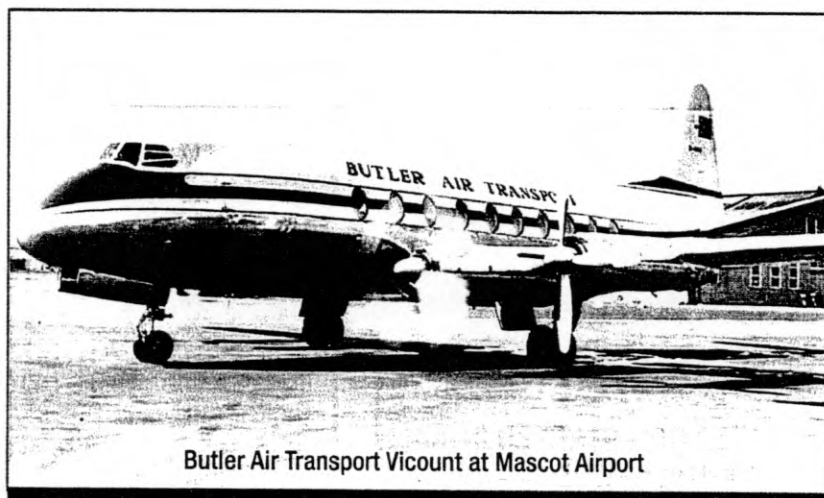
Arthur Butler Memorial Fly-in 2008



Arthur Butler



Arthur Butler in front of the
"Warrumbungle" DC-3



Butler Air Transport Vicount at Mascot Airport

**October Long Weekend, Sat-Mon, 4-6 October 2008 - Main Venue - Tooraweenah
Aerodrome - supporting venues in and around Tooraweenah, NSW
2831 -Y TWN South 31° 26.5 - AEast 148° 54**

Arthur Butler, a contemporary and friend of Charles Kingsford-Smith and Nancy Bird-Walton, was a remarkable man. Although still well remembered in aviation circles, his is not a household name in this country. Butler demonstrated ultra competence in every field of his endeavour, accomplished pilot, navigator, engineer, cartographer and entrepreneurial airline manager.

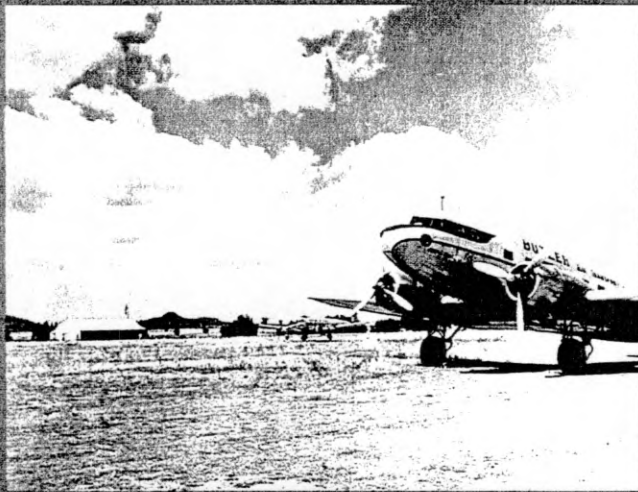
This memorial weekend will go some way to establish his place in the minds of the Australian people, as well as in the archives. We will commemorate his lifetime achievements with the Arthur Butler Fly-in Memorial Weekend.

The programme will include:

Viewing of contemporary planes, vintage planes and aviation memorabilia. Guest speakers on aviation history and anecdotes. Dedication of memorial plaques Book Launch Memorial Dinner Entertainment at Mountain View Hotel.

Other exciting attractions are in the pipeline. Did you work for or with Arthur Butler? Do you know someone who worked with Butler Airways or Air New South Wales?

This will be the perfect opportunity to gather old friends together to remember the wonderful pioneering days of flying with Butler Air Transport Pty Ltd.



Comper Swift 1931

How To Get Here:

Gilgandra is located in New South Wales, Australia. Within New South Wales Gilgandra is located in the Central West at the junctions of the Newell, Oxley and Castlereagh Highways. Gilgandra is the halfway point between Melbourne and Brisbane, with Sydney approximately 5 hours to the East.

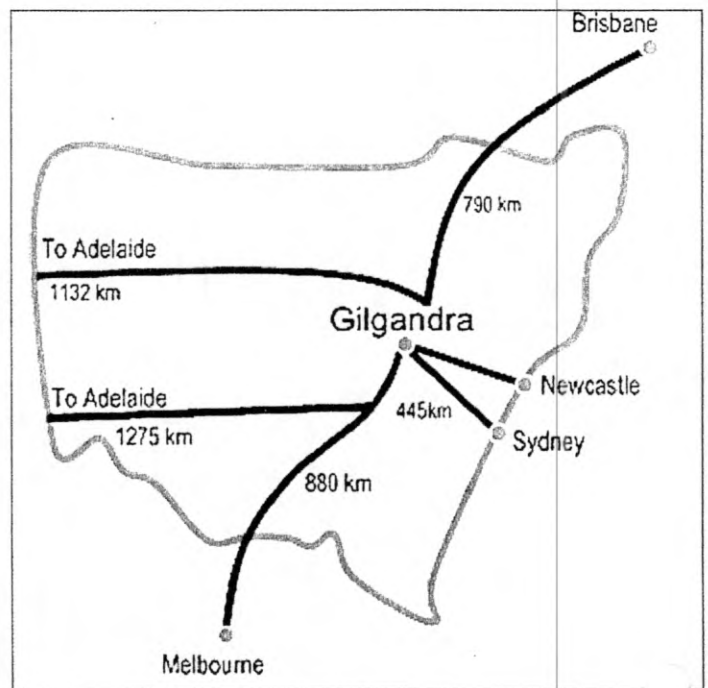
Getting to Gilgandra by:

Car. Gilgandra is serviced by three highways and is easily accessible by road. If you require information regarding the best possible route, please contact our Visitors Centre

Coach. A Countrylink Coach travels to and from Gilgandra daily, the coach enables passengers to travel to and from Dubbo and also Lightning Ridge, Walgett and Coonamble.

Air. Gilgandra is located just 45 minutes north of Dubbo where regular daily flights travel to and from Sydney. Gilgandra has an aerodrome capable of landing the 55 tonne Hercules aircraft. The aerodrome is perfect for charter flights.

Train. The XPT has a daily route between Dubbo and Sydney, the Countrylink Coach links Gilgandra passengers to this service.



For Further Information please contact
Secretary: Jan Robertson - "Tara" - Tooraweenah NSW
2831- Phone Jan: 02 6848 5315 - Fax: 02 6848 5359
Photos from the private collection of Mr G.K Rohr
- Email: janr@bordernet.com.au

BUTLER, CECIL ARTHUR (1902-1980), aviator, was born on 8 June 1902 at Sparkhill, Warwickshire, England, son of Arthur Harry Butler, commercial clerk, and his wife Ann Rebecca, née Seabridge. The family migrated to New South Wales about 1910 and settled at Lithgow. Suffering from dyslexia, Arthur was educated by his mother until he was 9 and subsequently went to Coerwull Academy, Bowenfels, and Lithgow District Public School.

In 1917 he was apprenticed as a tool, jig and gauge maker at the local Small Arms Factory, transferring in 1921 to the Australian Aircraft & Engineering Co. Ltd at Mascot, Sydney. He attended Sydney Technical College at night, obtained his ground engineer's licence in 1923, and worked for the Larkin-Sopwith Air Craft Supply Co. Pty Ltd and Larkin's Australian Aerial Services Ltd as a ground engineer at Hay. Having gained his pilot's licence in 1927, Butler went 'barnstorming'.

Ambitious to design and construct his own aircraft, in 1930 he completed and tested a small, all-metal, high-winged monoplane. Later that year he piloted a tiny Comper Swift from England to Australia in the record time of 9 days, 1¾ hours. On 30 March 1932 at St Ambrose's Anglican Church, Gilgandra, New South Wales, he married Doris Elaine Garling.

With financial support from P. S. Garling (his wife's uncle), in 1934 Butler successfully tendered against stiff competition from established airlines for the Charleville (Queensland)-Cootamundra (New South Wales) section of the England-Australia airmail route; he fulfilled the terms of the contract for four years, using D.H. 84 Dragon aircraft.→

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

In Search of Bolivar - Part 1.

Bolivar is a suburb of the City of Salisbury, a municipality located about 20 kilometres north of Adelaide's CBD. The suburbs of Adelaide read like an atlas of the British Isles - with the exception of Bolivar. What possible connection could there be between the British colonists of South Australia and Simon Bolivar, the great early nineteenth century *Liberator* of the Spanish colonies of South America? However prosaic, there is an explanation. Bolivar took its name from a local pub, *The General Bolivar*. A Mr Walpole was the builder of the pub, and he named it after the sailing ship on which he arrived in the colony. Bolivar has the distinction of preserving the site of the first powered flights in South Australia. The memory of Simon Bolivar also has some connection with powered flight. When the world was celebrating the Wright Brothers centenary on December 17, 2003, it would have been appropriate for the flags of the *Simon Bolivar International Airport* to have been flown at half mast. The airport serves Caracas, Venezuela, the birthplace of Simon Bolivar. December 17, 2003, was the 73rd anniversary of his death.

I commenced my search of Bolivar during October 2003, when I visited the memorial that Bill Wittber unveiled on June 27, 1967. Photographs of the unveiling suggest that open spaces still surrounded the site. At the time of my visit, residential development had encroached so much that any impression, of the gently undulating farmland that existed in 1910, was lost. The memorial consists of a vertical panel on which a side elevation of a Bleriot XI is outlined in mosaic. Adjacent to it is a concrete pedestal on the top of which a brass plate is attached with the following words.

WITTBER'S HOP

HERE ON MARCH 13TH 1910, IN A BLERIOT MONO - PLANE OWNED BY F. H. JONES
CARL W. (BILL) WITTBER, DURING TAXI - ING TESTS WAS UNEXPECTEDLY AIRBORNE
IN A HOP CAUSED BY A GUST OF WIND.

FOUR DAYS LATER FRED C. CUSTANCE MADE THE FIRST FLIGHT
IN THIS AIRCRAFT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

ON LANDING IT WAS WRECKED. THE PILOT ESCAPING UNINJURED.

THIS MEMORIAL WAS ERECTED BY
THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY
AND UNVEILED ON 27TH JUNE 1967

BY C. W. WITTBER Esq. J. P.

These words seem to have been carefully chosen and, no doubt, reflect the advice given by Bill Wittber about the events of March 1910. Of the three individuals named, Bill was the only survivor at the time of the unveiling. He died on March 26, 1970, a couple of weeks after the 60th anniversary of "Wittber's Hop". It is notable that only one flight by Fred Custance is described, and this flight ended in a crash that wrecked the Bleriot. Also the first flight claim is confined to South Australia.

Since 1967 the appearance of the memorial had become degraded due to weathering, and was somewhat obscured by the surrounding residential development. During 2001, The City of Salisbury carried out a renovation of the site, probably motivated by the approaching celebrations in 2003. A new, vertical, white panel was also installed, with the original wording repeated, but now more easy to read in black. The panel also carries a photograph of a Bleriot XI and pilot. Otherwise there is no new information, except that a new heading has been added to the panel which reads:-

FIRST AUSTRALIAN POWER FLIGHT

"WITTBER'S HOP"

Unfortunately the new heading simply complicates what was previously an easily interpreted memorial. Does the "First Australian Power Flight" refer to "Wittber's Hop"? If not, and it is meant to refer to Fred Custance, why not replace South Australia with Australia in the wording on the new panel? What has changed, since 1967, to extend the claim on behalf of Wittber or Custance, beyond

the borders of South Australia? Bill Wittber, who was a modest man about his own achievements, and who had the best knowledge of the events of March, 1910, would not have approved the addition of those four new words to the memorial he unveiled.

One phenomenon of the aviation world is much the same today as it was a century ago. It is the magnificent men in their flying machines who get most of the glory when something outstanding is achieved. Those who facilitate the achievements, the visionaries, designers and engineers often fade into the background. The Bolivar memorial mentions F. H. Jones but briefly, and yet it was Jones who made everything possible. It was also Jones whose comments, about the events at Bolivar, contributed at various times up to a few months before his death in 1958, ensure that March 17, 1910, is a very awkward date indeed. Even the words on the memorial dare not speak that date directly.

Frederick Hooper Jones was born at Gawler, South Australia, on March 18, 1879. A simple calculation will show that he celebrated his 31st birthday on the day Houdini first flew at Diggers Rest, and just one day after Custance flew at Bolivar. Fred Jones was the second of seven children. His parents were married at Greenwich, England, on January 29, 1877. After the birth of their first child Edith, later in 1877, they set sail for the young colony of South Australia, and settled in Gawler. One could speculate that, being the eldest son in a growing family during those early pioneering years, Fred Jones would have quickly matured. By the time he married his sweetheart, Ella, at St Paul's Church, Adelaide, on Christmas Day, 1901, he was probably well on his way to becoming an independent and successful businessman. Fred and Ella set up house in Norwood, close to the business centre of Adelaide. Their first child, Margaret, was born on November 24, 1902 - a son followed in 1905.

Early in his business career, Fred Jones was aware of the value of self promotion, and exposure through advertising and publicity. Reports of his activities in Adelaide can be traced through various publications, from 1903 until his departure, in 1916, to live in Melbourne. He was associated with bicycle making, warehousing and importing. By 1909, he was an agent and manufacturer's representative for various products imported from overseas. Fred Jones appears to be one of the first Australians to foresee the commercial opportunities associated with the rapidly advancing science of aviation. He was certainly the first to take himself to Europe to investigate the developments first hand. His arrival in England could not have been better timed. It was just as hopeful aviators were preparing to compete for the Daily Mail prize of £1000 for the first to fly across the English Channel.

After Louis Bleriot was successful on July 25, Fred Jones was able to closely inspect the Bleriot XI when it was placed on show at Selfridges store in London. His next opportunity to meet some of the leading aeroplane builders from Europe, and the USA, came in August when he attended la Grande Semaine D'Aviation de la Champagne at Rheims. Thus Fred Jones mingled with the crowd that included Colin Defries and Harry Houdini. Each of these men was destined to be associated with the introduction of powered flight to Australia. Of all the aircraft he inspected, Jones was most impressed by the Bleriot XI. An appointment with Bleriot in Paris was arranged, following which Fred Jones placed an order, securing machine No 37 on the rapidly expanding production line. At about this time Colin Defries also placed an order for a Bleriot XI, on behalf of Lawrence Adamson.

While Fred Jones was abroad, aviation enthusiasts at home in South Australia had not been idle. In October, a South Australian section of *The Aerial League of Australia* was formed. At least one member was experimenting with an aeroplane, and another was designing a new type of propeller. When Jones arrived back in December, he may have been startled to read advertisements for a day devoted to *The Fun Of Flying* at the Jubilee Oval on Saturday, December 11, at 3 pm. The highlight of the day was to be a demonstration by Sergeant-Major R. Doherty, who, "will leave in his aeroplane and fly to the residence of Mr Robert McEwin at Glen Ewin, 14 miles from Adelaide." This would eclipse the modest success achieved by Colin Defries at Victoria Park Racecourse, during *The Flying Fortnight*, just two days earlier. It might also affect any future return on Fred Jones's considerable investment of time and money in his speculative aviation venture. On the morning of December 11, *The Advertiser* carried a supportive editorial on the future of aviation. That afternoon, 4000 spectators gathered at the Jubilee Oval hoping to witness the first powered flight in South Australia's history.....**John Scott.**



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THE EARLY BIRDS
 ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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 (NSW) Inc

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EARLY BIRDS NEWS

June 2008
 Vol 15 No.2

Dear fellow "Early Birds"

2008 is certainly moving along very quickly and to make matters worse, in Sydney, we seem to have skipped autumn and gone straight into winter! As we get older some of us have a tendency to feel the cold more than we used to.

Our Annual re-union luncheon will again be held at the Bowler's Club of NSW, 99 York Street St. Sydney on Friday 24th October 2008 commencing at noon for a 12.30pm lunch. The cost will be \$36.00 per person (excluding drinks). Name tags will be provided at the venue for those attending.

Let's make it the biggest attendance we have had for some time. Don't forget if we have less than 30 people attend we may not be able to retain our private lunch room.

Please complete the RSVP form now and return it to our Secretary. Hopefully all members will make the effort to come along this year.

It is also the time of the year when you are advised of your subscription status.

Your SUBSCRIPTION STATUS is		Owing: \$
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Best wishes to all members and their families.

Regards

Les Hancock

-----cut here-----

ANNUAL REUNION LUNCHEON ACCEPTANCE:

Iwill be attending the luncheon and

Will be bringing.....with me.
 (FULL NAME OF GUEST - For name tag)

Cost per head \$36.00 (drinks excluded)

Cheque attached covering: Subscription \$.....
 Luncheon \$....36.00..
 TOTAL \$.....

RSVP to Don Hamilton
 Hon Sec
 15 Chivers Ave
 LUGARNO NSW 2210



At the 2007 luncheon, members seemed keen to hold another luncheon so we decided to give it a go, as we have been holding our minimum numbers enable us to occupy a private room.

So please roll up we need your support again.

As you know the majority of members decided in favour of assistance from the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc (AHSA), as a result you have now had your first newsletter thanks to the committee of the AHSA, I think it was a good move.

John Scott is to be congratulated for his in depth story on Houdini, many hours must have gone into research.

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THE EARLY BIRDS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA.

Financial Statement

For the Year Ended 30th April, 2008.

2007		2008
\$		\$
2,347.64	Cash Book Balance as at 30 th April, 2007	2,424.66
	Receipts	
957.00	Subscriptions – Current	935.00
180.00	– In Advance	<u>255.00</u>
		1,190.00
1,287.00	Annual Reunion Luncheon	1,207.00
48.00	Donations	83.00
<u>17.37</u>	Interest	<u>19.48</u>
<u>4,837.01</u>		<u>4,924.14</u>
	Expenditure	
	Newsletters	
660.00	Production & Printing	
230.60	Postage	361.74
1,112.50	Annual Reunion Luncheon	1,225.00
218.29	Administration Expenses	375.88
<u>190.96</u>	Printing & Stationery	<u>48.01</u>
2,412.35		2,010.63
<u>2,424.66</u>	Cash Book Balance as at 30 th April, 2008	<u>2,913.51</u>
<u>4,837.01</u>		<u>4,924.14</u>
77.02	Surplus of Receipts over Expenditure	488.85

Certified that the above Statement represents a true account of The Association's money for the year ended 30th April, 2008.

.....*D. Hamilton*.....
D.A.Hamilton
Hon. Secretary.

.....*D.D. Angus*.....
D.D.Angus, F.C.A.
Hon. Auditor.