



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 2009 No.425

file 2009 - 1

February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 4th February 2009, at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The theme for the evening will be

Sir Reginald Ansett

The 13th February 2009 will commemorate the 100th anniversary of Sir Reginald Ansett's birth. It is therefore timely to recollect his contribution to the Australian Aviation industry. A film on Reg Ansett's life will be shown and members are invited to bring along any items of memorabilia concerning Reg Ansett and the Ansett group of companies.

Members will also be aware of the recent passing of our esteemed Honorary Life Member, Nancy-Bird Walton. A short reflection on her life and contribution to the Society will be made.

Committee Meeting

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

December Meeting

The theme for the meeting held at the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown was the Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer. The guest speaker was Sy Allsep, who owns two Twin Pioneers: one under restoration to static display level at the Museum, and VH-EVB, which is being restored to airworthiness. Sy gave a very comprehensive talk about the Twin Pioneer and how he acquired his two examples. He had on display a large number of photographs, handbooks and diagrams and spoke about the various aspects of this fascinating aircraft.

The Twin Pioneer had its share of problems – the performance of the Series I proved to be less than desirable due to the 540hp Alvis Leonides engines; and metal fatigue at the V-brace in the wing caused wing failure. The second version, the Series 2 had 600hp Pratt & Whitney R-1340s, and this also fell short of performance expectations. The ultimate

version, the Series 3 performed much better with the 640hp Alvis Leonides engines, although expected sales were never achieved.

Members and visitors were able to inspect the aircraft under restoration at the Museum.

A number of slides of Twin Pioneers were shown by David Eyre, Eric Favelle and Warwick Bigsworth. These included VH-AIS in its days with BHP and other operators in the aerial survey role, as well as the then recently imported 4 ex-RMAF aircraft which were planned to come onto the Australian Register.

Members and guests who attended the meeting were most impressed by the enthusiasm and obvious labour of love that Sy has dedicated to his aircraft.

Afternote: Readers will be pleased to hear that VH-EVB undertook a number of test flights from Bankstown during December 2008, and is now "back in service".

Vale Nancy-Bird Walton OBE, AO

Nancy-Bird Walton passed away on Tuesday 13th January at the age of 93. Awarded an OBE in 1966, Nancy-Bird Walton became a Dame of the Knights of Malta in 1977 and in 1990 was awarded an AO by the Australian government.

Much has already been written in a variety of other publications on Nancy's passing, and the following obituary has been prepared by AHSA (NSW) President, Ian Debenham:

The recent passing of Nancy-Bird Walton, a Life Member of AHSA (NSW), and a prominent member of Australia's aviation community leaves a vacuum that will be difficult, if not impossible, to fill. Members will be aware that Nancy attended many of the Society's meetings over the years when her busy schedule allowed. Her prominence did not remove her from her kindred spirits. She enjoyed the meetings and engaged in the pre and post meeting conversations with fellow members. She was one of the 'people'. But she was an exceptional person. Her charm, enthusiasm for aviation, her love of people, her oratory, allowed her to achieve much in her 93 years. The two autobiographies "Born To Fly" and "My God It's a Woman" detail her history and

achievements and to understand her charisma one had to be with her in a crowd of people to see her weave her magic – receiving her admirers on equal terms and never seeming to tire of their attentions.

I am fortunate to have met her and spent time in her company. Very fond memories of her will remain with me for my life.

In 2000, in support of the Powerhouse Museum's "Women With Wings" exhibition Nancy contributed these words to be printed in the exhibition book:

"The beauty of the world from the air is food for the soul. To take off into a cloudless blue sky as the dawn is breaking is an experience impossible to describe"

Ian Debenham

Catalina Arrives

The Catalina Flying Memorial PBV-6A Catalina (N160AT) arrived at Bankstown on 7th December 2008 after its ferry flight from Portugal. The trip was not without some excitement, but given the civil disturbances in the Indian Sub-continent and Thailand, the ferry flight went well.

The aircraft, which has since been restored to the Australian Register as VH-CAT, departed Seia, Portugal on 16th November and first stop was Salamanca, Spain. The route was then via Cannes, Naples, Rhodes, Luxor, Bahrain, Muscat, Mumbai, Colombo, Medan, Bali, Darwin, Cairns, Bowen, Maroochydore to Bankstown.

Perhaps the most memorable facet of the ferry flight was it touching down on Lake Macquarie near Rathmines, much to the surprise and joy of the thousand or so spectators.

The Catalina Flying Memorial is still urgently seeking funds to operate and maintain this historic aircraft.

Donations can be made to:

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

From Roger McDonald on the Catalina

Roger has provided the following article from an unnamed newspaper source:

"With eyes skyward and smiling, 1000 Catalina enthusiasts gathered on the shores of Lake Macquarie to witness the first trip since 1981 of a Catalina to a former home of the flying boats.

Secretive Catalina flying missions launched from Rathmines in World War II caused significant delays to the Japanese assault on Darwin and put all involved into the history books.

Rathmines Catalina Flying Club organised a fitting welcome for the craft which it bought two years ago, as it circled the former RAAF base at Rathmines yesterday on its way to Sydney for further restoration.

"It's not just the plane, it's what the plane represents to the region," Catalina festival organiser Mike Usher said.

The Catalina completed several circuits over Rathmines base, causing rapture on shore as it touched the surface of the lake before taking off again.

"It put on a show and there were cheers, claps, shouts and screams, it was an absolute magic day," Mr Usher said.

"She'll now be converted to her WWII glory and then we'll start pressure for a museum and hangar."

It will go to Bankstown, where it will be modified before returning to its new home on Lake Macquarie.

The plane is the second working Catalina in Australia, but the only one that can operate from land and water. The Catalina has passed through 12 countries, refuelling at each stop, since leaving Portugal last month.

It uses 400 litres of fuel an hour and it has cost at least \$350,000 so far to restore and bring to Australia."

Roger notes that the sight was nearly as nice as the arrival at Rathmines on 16th September 1972 of Ansett Sandringham VH-BRC when on charter to AHSA!

Learmonth Name Change Ruled Out

Charles Page, author of *Wings of Destiny*, has forwarded the following clipping from *The West Australian* newspaper, dated 27th December 2008, via Roy Fordham, our North Queensland correspondent:

"Exmouth Shire has abandoned controversial plans to re-name the historic Exmouth Airport, with president Ronnie Fleay conceding this week that overwhelming opposition to the move meant the council had all but ruled it out.

The Shire has received almost 400 letters against the idea, with people outraged at plans to re-name the town's airstrip as Ningaloo Airport to cash in on the tourism association with the famous reef.

The name change was supported by Tourism WA and was investigated by the Exmouth Visitors Centre at the request of the Council.

Under the plan, only the domestic airstrip would have been re-named – the Department of Defence would keep the Learmonth name for its air base.

The idea came from local tourist operators who felt that the name Ningaloo had "more punch" with tourists.

However Cr Fleay revealed the issue did not rate a mention in the centre's final report and "more than likely" won't be put to the council for a vote.

She said that the letters, which were mainly from people outside the shire, showed a strong attachment to the name.

"We haven't officially ruled it out, but my gut feel is that council won't even be interested in putting the idea forward...because if we can get that much opposition further afield certainly we'd get a similar response locally" she said.

The Royal Australian Air Force named Learmonth Airport in honour of World War II Wing Cdr Charles Learmonth, after his death at age 26.

He died while on a training flight in January 1944 between Pearce and Rottneest Island in the notoriously dangerous Beaufort bomber.

Moves to change the airport's name were met with outrage from his widow, 89 year old Marjorie Le Souef and the RSL."

Learmonth Relatives Honour WCDR Charles Learmonth DFC & Bar in Memorial Ceremony at RAAF Base Learmonth

On 8th December 2008, a memorial ceremony for Wing Commander Charles Learmonth DFC and Bar was held at RAAF Base Learmonth. Relatives attending included John Learmonth from UK, Charles Learmonth's niece Kathy Baulch, and nephew John Baulch, both from Victoria. The gathering included an RAAF contingent, Army, RSL, the Shire President, CEO, Councillors, and people from the Shire. Guests arrived to the strains of Andre Rieu's emotive recording of Waltzing Matilda.

The ceremony was held at the Memorial Cairn at the north end of the runway, and was ably supported by the base caretaker, Flight Sergeant Les Johnston, who also acted as MC. The memorial was first dedicated in 1972, by Charles Learmonth's widow, Marjorie Le Souef. The couple met in 1940, while Charles was based at RAAF Pearce. Marjorie joined up as a VAD nurse, and was due to be posted overseas, but Pearl Harbour changed all that, and the couple married in March 1942. A few months later, Charles was posted to New Guinea.

In a moving and emotional ceremony, retired airline pilot Charles Page said, "It's now forty one years since I landed an MMA DC3 at Learmonth. Since then I have flown overhead many times in 707s or 747s, but only recently, did I learn why the airfield was so named. Charles Learmonth flew in the air search for HMAS *Sydney*, fought in the New Guinea air war, the Battle of the Bismarck Sea, and was killed in a tragic Beaufort accident near Rottneest Island in 1944. He inspired great loyalty, and it has been a privilege to write his story." Charles Page is the

author of *Wings of Destiny*, a biography of the famous WWII flyer.

In his address to the gathering, Wing Commander Murray described Charles Learmonth as a true hero. His views were echoed by Exmouth Shire President, Veronica Fleay, who made a gracious speech, and quoted from a eulogy by Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock, and a letter by Korean War veteran, Group Captain Les Reading. John Baulch then told the gathering of his family's pride in the memory of Charles Learmonth, after which, John Learmonth spoke eloquently of Charles Learmonth and gave some readings from *Wings of Destiny*, The Reverend Alan McMahon then gave a moving recital of the aviator's poem "High Flight". All then stood for the playing of 'Evening Hymn', 'Last Post', and 'Sunset'. The ceremony concluded with wreath laying and a stirring flypast by Norwest Air Work.

The Learmonth relatives then made a memorial flight over the airfield, and around the North-West Cape. After returning to Perth, they visited the Aviation Heritage Museum at Bull Creek, which has a display and memorial to Charles Learmonth. The Learmonth relatives wish to thank the RAAF, Flight Sergeant Johnston, and the Shire of Exmouth for making their visit so special.

Charles Page via Roy Fordham

DC-2 Uiver

Roger McDonald has been keeping a keen watch on the proposals by Albury Council to dispose of the DC-2 "Uiver", which has been on display at Albury Airport for many years. The *Border Mail's* Howard Jones reported on 10th December 2008:

"Albury's DC2 plane is more than a memorial to the KLM Uiver, it is a rare survivor of US fighter ace Eddie Rickenbacker's "Great Silver Fleet" of the 1930s.

Cr Neville Hull, whose motion to retain the plane in Albury was passed in the council works committee this week, says more research needs to be done into the plane's history.

This could be incorporated in displays when the plane is moved at the airport next year if his motion is confirmed by the council on December 22.

Cr Hull was countering criticism the DC2 restored by Rotarians in 1979 was not the KLM plane that landed in Albury in the Melbourne Centenary Air Race in 1934.

Cr Hull said the plane bought by Rotarians in 1979 and repainted as the "Uiver" had been grounded after World War II, when it was part of the RAAF's wartime transport fleet.

But it had started life in 1934 as one of the Eastern Air Lines batch of DC2s known as the Great Silver Fleet.

He told the council on Monday the relocation could be carried out for \$50,000 with the need to spend 10 times that on a professional restoration.

This idea did not rule out a restoration if funds became available.

"It's impossible for the council to find \$500,000 and displaying it (as it is) is the best option," he said yesterday.

Cr Hull said he received messages of support for his move to retain the DC2 by preserving it."

New Book

Nothing's Impossible – The Alan Rea Story

In the last two months of his life, Alan Rea set out the stories and lessons of his life to his 16 year old great nephew. Alan shared his adventures and reflections through his early years in the Great Depression, the challenges of war, the emergence of the civil aviation industry and the creation of his own Flinders Island Airlines.

The resulting book, *Nothing's Impossible*, captures the audacity and daring of one of Australia's aviation greats. But beneath the achievements and the anecdotes, the philosophy that "nothing's impossible" which fuelled Alan's aviation, business and travel adventures, leaves its mark on all those who read this story.

The paperback can be ordered through Daniel J Ednie-Lockett "Nothing's Impossible", 5 Warida Avenue, East Malvern, VIC 3145 for \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for P&P. Cheques to be made payable to Daniel J Ednie-Lockett. Daniel can be contacted on (03) 9571 2689 or via email at dan.ednie@gmail.com.

For the Diary

As mentioned in our Calendar of Events below, the Wings over Illawarra Fly-in will be held on Sunday 22nd February 2009 at Albion Park and hosted by the Shellharbour Council, Sport Aircraft Association Chapter 4 and the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society. Most of HARS aircraft will be in attendance as well as some visitors from the Temora Aviation Museum and HMAS Albatross.

AHSA (NSW) will have a stand, where there will be book sales, as well as provide general information about the Society.

Calendar of Events

31 January-1 February 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW **CANCELLED**

7 February 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

21-22 February 2009 Wing and Wave Fly-in, Old Bar Airstrip NSW

22 February 2009 Wings Over Illawarra. Albion Park NSW

7 March 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths, Luskintyre NSW

7-8 March 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

10-15 March 2009 Australian International Air Show. Avalon Vic

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now due for 2009. Please complete the enclosed subscription form and return as soon as practicable. The annual fee remains at a modest \$25.00.

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 Ian Debenham, Roy Fordham, Roger McDonald, Charles Page 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 4th March 2009 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) Photo Archivist
 - (f) Committee
4. Any other business

Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Secretary

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

A Time To Reflect, And A Time To Celebrate.

Our President, Ian Debenham, was the guest speaker at the AGM of The Royal Aeronautical Society, Sydney Branch, on December 10, 2008. The subject of the talk was, *First Flights in Australia: Upcoming Centenaries*. Ian's talk was a timely reminder that the centenaries of events leading to the introduction of powered flight to Australia are fast approaching. The Royal Aeronautical Society in the United Kingdom acted as the co-ordinator of a highly successful year of celebrations devoted to the achievements of *One Hundred Years of British Aviation*. Although the focus date was October 16, 2008, the centenary of Samuel Cody's flight in BAA No 1 at Farnborough, it was the British contribution to the following century of aeronautical progress that inspired so many corporations and individuals to join the celebrations. At the same time the future was not ignored. The centenary energised the planning necessary to try to solve the many problems facing the next 100 years of aviation. Fund raising during the year also supported the Centennial Scholarship Fund, put in place to train the next generation of skilled individuals who will be the future of aviation.

It is a good thing for a nation to engage with its history and pause to reflect on the past. Many Australians did this at the State Funeral Service, on January 21, to celebrate the life of our own, beloved, Nancy Bird-Walton. Nancy lived through 93 of the first 100 years of powered flight in Australia. She was part of that history, she recorded it faithfully, and communicated it with unrivalled skill. The century of powered flight began for Australians on December 9, 1909, when the Wright biplane, named *Stella*, took off on its short flight at Victoria Park Racecourse. The end of that century, during which aviation brought enormous changes to the development of Australia, and the mobility of its citizens, was encapsulated by the landing, at *Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport* on September 21, 2008, of Airbus A380-842, VH-OQA, named *Nancy-Bird Walton*.

In Victoria there are a number of committees already working towards organising events to celebrate the centenary of powered flight in Australia. The Aviation Historical Society of Australia Inc has joined with Museums Victoria, The Australian National Aviation Museum at Moorabbin and The Civil Aviation Museum at Essendon, to act as co-ordinators of proposed commemorations. The universally accepted focus date for Australian celebrations is July 16, 2010, the centenary of John Duigan's first short flight at Mia Mia in the powered biplane he designed and built with the assistance of his brother Reginald. Check the internet at (www.duigancentenaryofflight.org.au) for the current status of planning for this event. AHSA Inc is also involved with a planning committee to celebrate the centenary of the first flights in Australia by Harry Houdini at Diggers Rest on March 18, 2010. Houdini has a large international following which will ensure world wide interest during 2010.

In South Australia, Graham Hosking has the second of two Bleriot XI replicas, built to airworthy standards by students of Burnie TAFE College in Tasmania. Construction was carried out during 1999-2003, under the supervision of Ron Sushames, who was head of the Engineering Department at the time. The first replica was completed for the Centenary of Flight 2003, and is now in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. The second replica was not completed, and Graham Hosking submitted a successful tender for its purchase. It is understood that the original 25 hp Anzani engine from the Fred Jones Bleriot XI will be fitted to the replica when it is completed. Graham Hosking said, "we plan to finish the project in time to re-enact the centenary of those South Australian flights." These were the 1910 flights by Bill Wittber on March 13, and by Fred Custance on March 17.

Here in NSW we are fortunate to have an airworthy Wright Model A replica, similar to the *Stella*, which is based in Narromine. It is understood that the Wright Flyer Committee is considering the various ways the replica could be part of any celebration of the centenary of the flights by Colin Defries at Victoria Park Racecourse on December 9 & 18, 2009. The replica is currently being re-engined. However, the committee is reluctant to disassemble the aircraft again for road transport, because of past experience of damage to the airframe. The Australian Gliding Museum have under construction

three full scale replicas of George Augustine Taylor's glider. It is intended to display the first replica to be completed at The Australian International Airshow at Avalon during March 10 to 15, 2009. The second will be available to take part in the celebrations at Narrabeen on December 5, 2009. It is proposed to use the third for manned gliding trials.

At the time of writing this edition of *Loops & Landings* it appears that the more distant the date for celebration, (June 16, March 13, 17 & 18, 2010), the more advanced are the plans. The closer the date, (December 5, 9 & 18, 2009), the less detailed are the plans. Perhaps there is an even closer date, (April 28, 2009), when we should really start our celebrations, if those celebrations are to acknowledge the point in time that the first organised push began to make Australians, and their politicians, aware of the remarkable technological journey they, and the world, were about to embark upon. There can be no doubt that it is George Augustine Taylor, through his foresight, great personal energy and unique position of influence, who deserves the credit for getting Australia off to such an early start. And, because his wife, Florence, was such a competent business partner, she also deserves credit for enabling George to spend so much time away from their joint publishing enterprise, during 1909, to allow him so effectively to further the cause of powered aviation in Australia.

I have in my collection a small milk jug, souvenired many years ago from The Australia Hotel. It is a memento, not so much of high tea at The Australia, as it is of the pleasures of its Long Bar. Alas, The Australia closed its doors on June 30, 1971, and was soon demolished to make way for the existing MLC Centre. Over eight decades earlier, on the morning of Tuesday, June 18, 1889, a large crowd had gathered at the corner of Castlereagh and Rowe Streets to witness the Premier of NSW, Sir Henry Parkes, officiate at the stone-laying ceremony for the hotel. During 1889 there were another couple of events that were destined to give Australia an early international representation in the development of powered flight. The first was the birth of Harry Hawker at Moorabbin on January 22, 1889. The significance of the life of Harry Hawker came to mind recently when reading the special centenary edition, which was published by the editors of *Aeroplane* magazine late last year. The edition was titled *100 Great British Aircraft and Aviation Milestones*, and it was published to celebrate a *Century of British Aviation*. Harry Hawker's name is mentioned in no less than 14 of the 100 entries, through his association with the Sopwith Company, and the H. G. Hawker Engineering Company which he established in 1920, not long before his untimely death on July, 12, 1921.

The second event in 1889 was Lawrence Hargrave's development of a rotary engine, using compressed air; an invention he intended for use in powered flight. 1889 was also the year that prompted Octave Chanute to commence a review of the progress of experimentation with flying machines. In October 1891, he began contributing a series of articles, titled *Progress in Flying Machines*, to the New York periodical, *The Railroad and Engineering Journal*. The series eventually ran for 27 issues of the journal. As a result of this work Chanute was asked to organise the Third International Conference on Aerial Navigation which was held in Chicago in 1893. In January 1894, Chanute finally published his book, *Progress in Flying Machines*, which was an edited compilation of his previous journal articles. In his introduction of Lawrence Hargrave in the book he wrote: "If there be one man, more than another, who deserves to succeed in flying through the air, that man is Mr Lawrence Hargrave, of Sydney, New South Wales. He has now constructed with his own hands no less than 18 flying machines of increasing size, all of which fly, and as a result of his many experiments (of which an account is about to be given) he now says, in a private letter to the writer, that: "I know that success is dead sure to come."

How appropriate it was, that Lawrence Hargrave should be invited to take the chair for the inaugural meeting of *The Aerial League of Australia*, held on Wednesday afternoon of April 28, 1909, at The Australia, which by then had become Australia's premier hotel. It was George Augustine Taylor who had organised the meeting and who took the floor to move that *The Aerial League of Australia* be formed. The motion was seconded by Major Charles Rosenthal and carried unanimously. At the conclusion of the meeting votes of thanks were passed, by the thirty gentlemen in attendance, for the Chairman, Lawrence Hargrave, and the Hotel management for the use of their facilities...**John Scott.**



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The Newsletter of AHSA (NSW) Inc

March 2009 No.426

March Meeting

The March meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 4th March 2009, at 7.45pm. Enter from the Macarthur Street end and the meeting room is adjacent to the foyer. Visitors are most welcome and need not be accompanied by a member. Supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will be the Annual General Meeting.

The agenda will include the President's Report, Honorary Treasurer's Report and Election of Office bearers.

Following the AGM, some images from a recent warbirds air show in New Zealand will be shown.

Committee Meeting

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

February Meeting

The meeting commenced with a minute's silence in memory of our esteemed Life Member, Nancy-Bird Walton. Her close friend of many years, Judy Rainsford, then gave a most eloquent eulogy to Nancy-Bird.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of Sir Reginald Ansett's birth, a video, *The Reg Ansett Story* was shown. The video was produced in the mid-1990s and provided some interesting aspects and opinions about the airline and its financial problems long before its demise in 2001. I'm sure that presenter, Jeff Watson, would have re-worked the story had the film been made after the closure of the company.

Several members brought in pieces of Ansett ephemera for display to the meeting. Amongst the items were newspaper cuttings, tickets, menus, tableware and timetables.

Castle Bromwich

From our North Queensland correspondent comes this interesting story:

"It is my hope that the heading to my offering for the newsletter will encourage our readers to read on, as it would be my pleasure to escort you all

through the gates to the workshops of the Supermarine facility of Castle Bromwich, to mentally witness the construction of a magnificent Spitfire.

Here I must beg poetic licence, as the above mentioned gates, engraved proudly in the name of Castle Bromwich, are located not in England, but here in Australia.

To assist clarity of this mental picture experience, I would recommend a re-read of Alex Henshaw's book, *Sigh for a Merlin*, as I am in no doubt many of our members would have already added this classic to their library shelves.

Much of the action in the book takes place in and around Castle Bromwich, in England's Midlands, where most of the Spitfires were factory built and test flown by A. H.

The Midlands, whilst being an industrial area, also had its fair share of the beauty of rural England's green and pleasant land, but also suffered the effect of industrial fogs.

But for the purpose of our visit, the location is not in far off in England, indeed we only need to travel to the green and pleasant lands of rural Queensland, approximately thirty minutes by road from the city of Brisbane.

Nothing is more synonymous with, or to, the Spitfire than Castle Bromwich, other than the works at Eastleigh, in Hampshire, Southampton, and the Solent, with ghosts of the S-6 and the Schneider Trophy.

But I digress. Now allow me to escort you through the gates to the works office, where we are met by Karen, wife of Mike O'Sullivan, the man responsible for bringing the opportunity of owning and flying a Spitfire, to pilots around the world, hitherto only a distant dream.

It is now I must inform you, that we are not about to be in the hallowed presence of a full scale Spitfire, but a 90% scale, Mk 26 version of the original aeroplane.

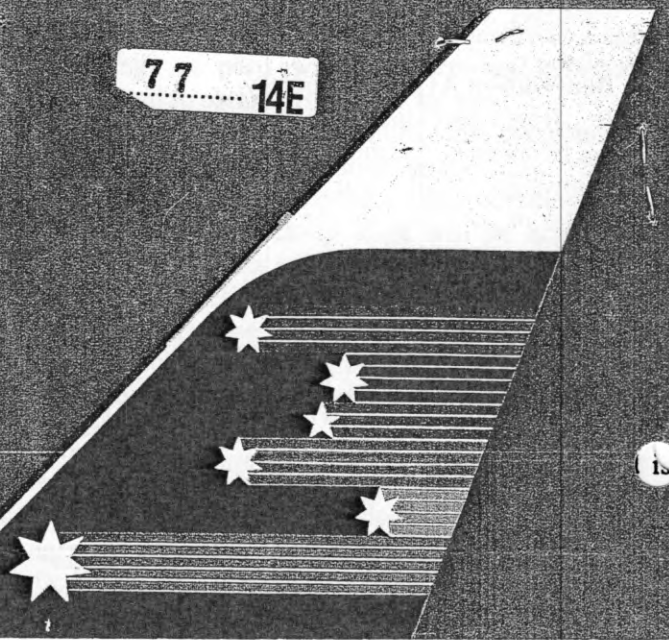
I here humbly apologise to the purists, but for my part, I am in awe. We are now shown into the factory, and the pure pleasure of a completed fuselage meets our eyes. This particular fuselage is painted in the European camouflage scheme complete with D-



Seat allocation must be completed not later than 20 minutes before departure.
Please note important information inside front cover.

77.....14E

Ansett Flight Ticket.



Save **ANSETT**, Mr Howard

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Rise And Rise Of George's Motorless Aeroplane - Part 1.

Amongst the centenaries of powered flight, to be celebrated in Australia over the next few years, there are two that stand apart from the others. The first, involving an "aeroplane" with no engine, should be subjected to closer scrutiny by historians than has previously been the case. The second, involving an aeroplane, with an engine but no wings, should also be reassessed for the importance of its Australian initiative, and for the tantalising prospect of discovering a long lost aviation treasure.

To explain the origins of the wingless aeroplane, a quotation from the book by Peter Lewis, *British Aircraft 1808 - 1914*, will assist: "The first Vickers aeroplane, designated No 1, was built early in 1911 at the Vickers works at Erith, Kent... Captain Wood, who had been appointed manager of the Vickers Aviation Department, flew the Monoplane No1 for the first time in July, 1911, ... The machine was bought by Douglas Mawson for the use of the 1912 Australasian Antarctic Expedition, and was shipped to Australia."

In March, 1909, Douglas Mawson and his mentor, Professor Edgeworth David, were received as heroes in Sydney, after their return from Ernest Shackleton's *British Antarctic Expedition*. During the expedition, David and Mawson were on the first ascent of Mount Erebus, and were also the first, with Dr Alistair Mackay, to reach the South Magnetic Pole. Fame and adulation followed Mawson on his return to the University of Adelaide, where he was a lecturer in petrology and mineralogy. For the remainder of 1909, Mawson would have been brought up to date with the progress of aviation during his absence, informed no doubt by the activities of *The Aerial League of Australia* and its South Australian Branch. During subsequent visits to the United Kingdom, Mawson became a close friend of Kathleen Scott, the wife of Robert Falcon Scott. Mawson was already air-minded enough to be planning the use of a Bleriot Monoplane, to reconnoitre ahead of sledging journeys, on his own 1911-1914 *Australasian Antarctic Expedition*. However, it was Kathleen Scott, whose passion was powered flight, who put him in touch with her friend Hugh Watkins at Vickers. As a result, it was a Vickers Monoplane, not a Bleriot, that arrived at Port Adelaide on board the *RMS Macedonia*, on Saturday, September 30, 1911.

At the time the Vickers Monoplane arrived in Adelaide, Mawson was absent in Sydney, busy with details concerning the financing of his expedition. It was planned that the monoplane would give some public flights at Cheltenham Park Racecourse in Adelaide, as a means of raising funds. Lt Hugh Watkins had joined the expedition as pilot, and he was assisted by Francis Bickerton as his mechanic. Frank Wild, also a member of the expedition, was at Cheltenham Park Racecourse to assist during preparations for the flying demonstrations. The racecourse at Cheltenham was perhaps jinxed when it came to aviation exhibitions. There had been the non-appearance of Fred Custance and his Bleriot in March 1910, followed by the tragic demonstration by Monsieur H. C. L'Oste Rolfe in another Bleriot the following July. Neither was third time lucky for the Vickers Monoplane. At dawn on Wednesday, October 4, 1911, Hugh Watkins carried out a trial flight to a height of about 100 ft, involving five circuits of the racecourse. However, he was nearly blinded by petrol spraying from a fuel tank, which made it difficult for him to land. On the following day, again at dawn, he attempted another flight, this time with a passenger. What happened next is best described by Hugh Watkins himself, in a letter to his boss Captain Herbert Wood, back home at the Vickers Aviation Department.

"I've done the 'Bus in. We got it here alright, and did quite a good flight the morning before the smash. I was up for about 20 or 30 minutes when the petrol started squirting out of the top tank owing to too much pressure from the large tank. I was nearly blinded and the fumes were awful .

The next morning I took Wild up, (the Chap you lifted) about 200 ft up. I got into a fierce tremor, and then into an air pocket, and was brought down about 100 ft, got straight , and dropped into another, almost a vacuum. That finished it. We hit the ground with an awful crash, both wings

damaged, one cylinder broken, and the nose bent up, the tail in half etc.

I've got a cracked chest bone, and any amount of bruises and cuts. Wild got his shoulder sprained and some bruises etc....I tried everything to get her right, but it was no good. the machine was perfect, and the engine was pulling like blazes. it was simply pure rotten luck."

Douglas Mawson was not amused. Payment for the Vickers Monoplane had not yet been settled. Hugh Watkins was sent home to England. In 1916, Vickers finally wrote off the debt of £955 owed by Mawson for the purchase of their first aeroplane. Mawson was able to salvage the monoplane's fuselage and engine, which was still capable of its secondary role as an air-tractor. The wingless monoplane departed on board *Aurora*, with Mawson's expedition, when it sailed from Hobart on December 2, 1911.

The Mawson's Huts Foundation has a mission statement to: "conserve in perpetuity for the Australian people the unique, historical buildings known as Mawson's Huts; base for one of the most significant expeditions in Antarctic history." Since 1997, the Foundation has organised and financed eight major expeditions to the location at Cape Denison to carry out its mission. This summer a feature of the expedition was a search for the remains of the Vickers Monoplane which is believed to still be in the vicinity of Mawson's Huts, covered in ice and snow. It was last seen peeping above the snow in 1976. The monoplane was not found this year, although the expedition did not come away empty handed. A seat from the air-tractor was found. The tail of the monoplane, with its original fabric still intact - previously recovered and stored at Cape Denison - is likely to be returned this summer for conservation. The ninth expedition will continue the search for the Vickers Monoplane.

Douglas Mawson was the first to plan the use of powered aircraft for polar exploration, and to put those plans into effect. Despite being thwarted by the accident in Adelaide he pressed on with the use of his now wingless aeroplane as an air-tractor. It would not be unreasonable to adopt 1911 as the start of the first century of powered aviation in the polar regions - north or south. During those 100 years Hubert Wilkins was an aviation pioneer in the Arctic and the Antarctic. Douglas Mawson also returned south with his BANZARE team, equipped with a DH 60G, VH-ULD. He was himself in the air over Antarctica for the first time on January 5, 1930.

I have in my possession a book which was once in the library of Edgeworth David. It is inscribed by the author; "To my dear friend Professor Sir Edgeworth David with many happy thoughts of kind advice in days gone by. George A. Taylor. 1923." The title of the book is, *A World Of Peace, Its Advantages And How To Win Them*. The book is a study of nationalities at the Third Assembly of *The League of Nations*, at Geneva in 1922. It is a small book of only 118 pages, taken up mostly by the speeches of the various delegates. The remarkable thing about the book, in view of its title, is that George found space in it to promote his own achievements in the fields of aviation and the transmission of wireless messages. There is a remarkable photograph on page 113, showing his glider climbing steeply above Narrabeen Beach. The photograph is captioned: "A Motorless Aeroplane being utilised by the writer for a number of distance flights at Sydney, Australia, November (sic), 1909." In the text of the book, after denouncing the lack of recognition given to Lawrence Hargrave, he wrote, "I noted a somewhat similar state of affairs during my recent European tour, when interesting demonstrations were being given for the first time in Germany, France and Great Britain of utilising motorless aeroplanes for distant flight instead of simply using them for gliding from a height; yet similar results were achieved by the writer with an identical construction in Australia thirteen years before."

George Augustine Taylor's final assessment of his own achievements on December 5, 1909, appeared in the 1927 edition of *The Australian Encyclopaedia*: "This was the first occasion on which a motorless aeroplane was utilised for direct flight, a principle not taken seriously in Europe until 1922. The machine had a box-kite as tail balance, and steering was performed by the leaning of the operator from side to side; it was demonstrated that flying against the wind, turning and gliding back to above starting point, turning again to fly against the wind, and continuing in the air while the wind lasted, were all possible." Did Taylor really believe that his achievements at Narrabeen in 1909 were equivalent to those he observed in Europe in 1922, despite the rapid advances in aerodynamics during WW I? Next month's L&L will explore the ups and downs of George's amazing motorless aeroplane. **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

April 2009 No.427

April Meeting

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1st April 2009, 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 26th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz will be hosted by Ian Debenham, who will provide the questions on behalf of last year's winner David Eyre, and present the Slipstream Trophy to the winner.

Following the Trivia Quiz, David Eyre will provide a number of images for the 41st annual aircraft recognition competition. Contestants will compete for the Brian White Memorial Trophy.

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

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

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

March Meeting

The March meeting was the Annual General Meeting, which comprised the President's Report, Treasurer's report and election of office bearers.

Following the AGM, a DVD of the 2007 Omaka Air Show, featuring a number of war birds in New Zealand was shown.

AHSA (NSW) President's Report

"2008 was another very good year with much to interest the members, not least of which is the camaraderie and conversation that occurs at the monthly meetings. It is most enjoyable to be in the company of like-minded people to be able to discuss various aspects of a mutual interest. It is a valuable learning process as well as an excellent social occasion.

The death of our beloved Life Member, Nancy-Bird Walton in February was deeply felt. Although her attendance at the monthly meetings had declined due to her age and the issue of transport for her to and from the meetings, her occasional attendances were always a great pleasure to the assembled members. She will be missed.

In my last President's Report I mentioned that the Museum's new Director, Dawn Casey was an 'unknown quantity' as far as her policy on the Museum's relationship with affiliated societies such as AHSA. Although I have not seen a printed policy or heard an articulated one it appears that Dawn is more disposed to fostering good relationships with affiliates and the community in general so a loosening of restrictions on the affiliates has been perceived although it is certainly not back to the 'salad' days. Time will tell.

There have been calls from AHSA Inc. in Melbourne for the opening of a dialogue with AHSA (NSW) and, I understand, AHSA Queensland for a closer relationship with members from NSW and Queensland becoming members of AHSA Inc as well as of their State body. The closer ties and relationship should be encouraged but a major hurdle remains in the current practice of paying subscriptions to AHSA (NSW) and also to AHSA Inc if you want to receive copies of their quarterly journal "Aviation Heritage". The subscription rate for AHSA Inc. is considerably higher than that of AHSA (NSW) which acts as a deterrent to many to join both bodies. Your Committee is proud of its record of being able to keep subscription costs low while still providing members with the product they have enjoyed over the years and would not be happy to impose a major increase in subscriptions to facilitate membership of both groups. I feel the result would be predictable. However, if there is a way to get over this hurdle we will certainly seek it.

A brief reminder about the upcoming aviation centenaries in 2009/2010: Please let as many people as you can know about them. All the information you need is in "Loops and Landings" courtesy of John Scott and it important to spread the word.

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

Thank you all for your interest and commitment to aviation history."
Ian Debenham

Treasurer's Report

John Swanson reported that total income for 2008 was \$7,558.92 and total expenditure was \$6,520.04. Our total assets as at 31st December 2008 were ANZ Term deposit \$5,200.00 and CBA Current account \$2,355.93. There were no liabilities.

Election of Office Bearers

The office bearers elected for 2009 are:

President: Ian Debenham
Hon. Secretary: Warwick Bigsworth
Hon. Treasurer: John Swanson
Photo Archivist: David Eyre
Committee: Peter Coates, Barry Collins,
Bill Holswich, Roger Kennedy, Jack
Powell, John Scott, Keith White.

Searching for Smithy

The Sydney *Sunday Telegraph* reported in February that Sydney film-maker, Damien Lay would be travelling soon to the Bay of Bengal in search of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's final resting place.

Lay claims that he will restore Sir Charles' reputation as our greatest aviator and rescue it from allegations that he made an error or fell asleep in the cockpit. Using research and findings by Jack Hodder in 1938 and the work of the late aviation historian, Ted Wixted in 1983, Lay says he is certain he will find the remains of the plane close to Aye Island in the Bay of Bengal.

Hodder first searched Aye Is. after discovery of an Altair wheel. His search of the island found tree damage consistent with an aircraft crash. Wixted built on these findings and felt that the aircraft ditched into one of the island's bays. Lay will film his attempts for a documentary, *The Lost Anzac*.

As this issue goes to print, Damien Lay claims to have found the wreckage and is sending imagery to Lockheed for verification.

Captain John Kessey DFC

The article accompanying this issue has been kindly provided Captain John Kessey DFC, a member of The Early Birds Association and respected member of The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. The following comes from the GAPAN website.

John Kessey joined the RAAF in January 1939 as a pilot trainee at Point Cook. During his wartime career he flew over 180 daylight missions, primarily on the Beaufort aircraft, against the Japanese in New Guinea and was awarded the DFC.

On completion of hostilities in the Pacific in 1946, John initially joined A.N.A. and was trained on DC2, DC3 and DC5 aircraft becoming a captain, but was quickly 'headhunted' by T.A.A. and became a Check/Training Captain on DC3 and DC4 aircraft.

He later joined British Commonwealth Pacific Airlines flying DC4 and DC6 between Australia and the USA where he remained until he started work in the family business. In 1960 he returned to flying, this time in Papua/New Guinea, to fly with Ansett Airlines on DC3, Bristol Freighter and Fokker F27 aircraft, but in 1976 returned to Brisbane, where he flew F27s until he retired from flying. He was awarded the Guild Award of Merit in 2007.

Calendar of Events

4 April 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

10-13 April 2009 Natfly 2009 Recreational Aviation Australia Fly-in. Narromine NSW

10-13 April 2009 Australian National Aerobatic Championships. Parkes NSW

11-12 April 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

18 April 2009 Wings Wheels and Wine Air Show. Mudgee NSW

24-26 April 2009 AAAA National Fly-in and Air Show. Echuca Vic

2 May 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

9-10 May 2009 Sydney Aviation Model and Memorabilia Show. Bankstown NSW

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are now over-due for 2009. Another, and final, renewal form is enclosed for those members who have not renewed their subscriptions. No further issues of Southern Skies will be sent to those who do not re-subscribe. The annual fee remains at a modest \$25.00.

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 John Kessey DFC, John Scott and Keith White for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Rise And Rise Of George's Motorless Aeroplane - Final.

The memorial to George Augustine Taylor, near the Post Office in Pittwater Road, Narrabeen, consists of a, "bronze plaque with a high relief profile head of Taylor, inscription in raised letters, mounted on the cut and polished face of an otherwise rough hewn granite pillar, with a triple stepped concrete base, 180 cm high overall." It should be added that the memorial is now encircled by a garden bed, supported by a low Narrabeen Sandstone retaining wall. The wording on the plaque is as follows:-

THIS MEMORIAL COMMEMORATES
THE FIRST FLIGHT IN AUSTRALIA
IN A HEAVIER - THAN - AIR
FLYING MACHINE BY
GEORGE AUGUSTINE TAYLOR
AT NARRABEEN HEADS ON
5TH DECEMBER 1909

The custodian of George's memory, his widow Florence, was still living at the time the memorial was unveiled on September 25, 1965. She would have taken great care before approving the words on the memorial. In her forty seven page tribute to her husband, after his death in 1928, Florence referred to his achievement at Narrabeen on a "heavier - than - air flying machine with the weight of the body as its propelling force". There was no way she would have George's marvellous invention described as a mere glider. George loved the power of words, and the power of imagination. A casual passer-by, standing in front of the memorial for the first time, would read the words, but would then be forced to use his or her imagination. "A heavier - than - air flying machine must have something to do with aviation. There is no image on the memorial to tell me what the flying machine looked like. It doesn't sound like a balloon. Perhaps it was an aeroplane. Could this be where the first powered flight in Australia took place? Was George Augustine Taylor Australia's first aeroplane pilot?"

Over the years, as others challenged Taylor's position as Australia's supreme authority on aviation matters, they were reminded that it was he, Taylor, who, "was the first to soar through Australian air". And his simple glider took on mysterious aerodynamic qualities. He was not without supporters. Writing in *The Australian Motor Owner* in April 1924, E. Dwyer Gray stated the following:

"In 1922 the press of the world rang with the news of the triumph of the motorless aeroplane in Europe. Yet it had all been done in Australia a dozen years before. On December 5, 1909, George A. Taylor, who was associated with Hargrave in his devotion to pioneering aviation, made 29 successful flights at Narrabeen Beach, New South Wales, in a motorless biplane 28 feet long, invented by himself. This was not a glider like those of Chanute and the Wright Brothers, that, starting from a height slowly slid to earth by gravity; on the contrary, its great "wings" were so arranged that it rose and flew in a manner akin to that of the stiff-winged albatross."

Apparently relying on Taylor, and the likes of E. Dwyer Gray, for references, Stanley Brogden set about writing his *History of Australian Aviation* which was published in 1960. Both fact and fiction are irretrievably mixed in the following quotation from Brogden's history.

"The link between Hargrave and the introduction of powered flight in this country was George A. Taylor - artist, journalist, radio engineer, and generally an all-round intelligence of a high order. Taylor collaborated with Hargrave in the experimental boxkite work in the 1890's. The chief memorial in this country to Hargrave's labours are the photographs taken by Taylor during the experiments of sixty years ago.

Taylor established a factory at Redfern, Sydney, in 1908, to construct boxkites to Hargrave's specifications. The first which had a wingspan of 28 feet and weighed 128 pounds was flown by Hargrave at Narrabeen Beach. One of the several people who left the ground clutching one of these

boxkites was Mrs Taylor, who was the first woman ever to leave the Australian soil by a mechanical process...Taylor meanwhile joined *The Australian Army Intelligence Corps*. Backed by *The United Services Institution of NSW*, he made some fine experiments in the study of air resistance on curved planes. Under Army control a biplane without engine - a glider in other words - was built and flown. The aircraft was 28 feet long, weighed 102 pounds and on form could fly if the wind was more than 10 mph. This aircraft was tried out at Narrabeen Beach. Taylor himself being the pilot. The first flight was 258 yards, from a sandhill. One day alone Taylor made 29 flights, all under perfect control. That date, 5 December 1909, is the one recognised by many people as the dawn of Australian flying."

Time has not diminished the influence of the writings of George and Florence on some authors attempting to describe the couple's contribution to early aviation in Australia. The following is quoted from the biography of Florence Taylor in, *Great Australian Women*, by Sussana De Vries, published in 2001. It makes a delightful story, but does not let too much fact get in the way of fiction.

"Shortly after their marriage, George became interested in aviation and learned to fly gliders. He became so fascinated by aeronautics that he established his own factory where he manufactured gliders and light aircraft. In 1909, he promoted *The Aerial League of Australia* and expressed his view to the Government that it would be important to establish an air force. Urged on by her husband, Florence conquered an initial fear of heights and gained a pilot's licence. In 1909, she made the first glider flight ever attempted by a woman. There was enormous public interest when she took off in her glider from the Narrabeen sand hills near Sydney and she was cheered by all the onlookers. Flying and the romance of the air became a passion with both of them."

To bring us all down to earth it is essential to read, or read again, David Craddock's book, *Feeling The Air*, which he published in 1999. There you will find the facts, and only the facts, concerning Taylor's considerable contribution to early aviation in Australia. If the casual passer-by could be encouraged to read David's book, he or she would be amazed by the energy Taylor expended, during 1909, in his efforts to alert Australians, and their Government, to the importance of the new art of powered aviation. In that context, the relevance of a short, untethered glider flight at Narrabeen, falls into perspective. However, if the passer-by was a pedant, he or she might also discover a few clues in David's book suggesting that George Augustine Taylor was not the first person to fly an untethered glider in Australia, and that his wife, Florence, was not Australia's first woman pilot!

In *Feeling The Air*, David writes, "This was the most interesting statement in the article, which appeared in *The Motor in Australia* on Thursday, December 2, 1909. It mentioned flying the glider before the date normally ascribed for the first flights." The article in question, written by Taylor himself, states: "At present Mr Taylor is breaking in two of his mechanics by allowing them to practice gliding on his small aeroplane glider at Narrabeen Heads. It is a rather ingenious idea, practising air balancing on a glider before tackling the the complete machine. Just as it is more profitable, when learning to ride a bicycle, to practice on a cheap jigger, so Taylor and his mechanics are doing aerial aerobatics on Narrabeen sands on an inexpensive glider, in preference to doing them on a valuable monoplane, with a 100 lb engine for company." It is clear from this article, that Taylor regarded his glider as just a preliminary step on the way to his goal of being the first to fly a powered aeroplane in Australia. It was only after he failed to achieve his goal, that his glider metamorphosed, via a heavier - than - air flying machine, into a motorless aeroplane. Many years later, in an interview with Jack Percival, *Sun Herald*, May 13, 1962, Sir Edward Hallstrom stated that he was one of Taylor's two mechanics and that: "I test-flew it, (ie Taylor's glider), before he took it up. I reached a height of 40 ft and glided back to the sand."

David also writes in *Feeling The Air*, "Florence may have only made a single 'flight' remaining tethered to the ground crew on that day." In an interview in 1961, Florence confirmed that: "being a precious mortal, they never let the guide ropes go and I flew only 90 yards in 1909." Our passer-by pedant might ask, "was this a true free flight, and was Florence Taylor a pilot or merely a passenger?"

The Hon. Mr Justice R. Else-Mitchell concluded his speech at the unveiling of the Narrabeen memorial with the words: "It is fitting that this memorial should be erected to record forever Taylor's achievement in the development of aviation." It is ironic that the words on the memorial do not communicate that achievement. Instead they may simply misinform the casual passer-by. **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 2009 No.428

May Meeting - Different Venue

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6th May 2009, commencing at 7.45pm. Due to other commitments within the Museum, this month's meeting will be held on the Ground Floor of the Harwood Building, which is the building to the south of our normal venue. From the carpark, proceed to the southern end of the building and through the main doors to our meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

The guest speaker for the meeting will be Ian Debenham, whose topic will be

First flights in Australia

Readers will be very familiar with the saga of the first flights in Australia in John Scott's *Loops and Landings* supplement. Ian Debenham has used much of this material to develop a comprehensive talk on the subject, which he also presented to the recent Annual General Meeting of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Sydney Branch. Ian's talk will be accompanied by a PowerPoint and video presentation.

Members will be aware that the Society provided a stand at the recent Wings over Illawarra Fly-in, which was held at Albion Park Aerodrome. A number of books, magazines and journals, which were kindly donated by Honorary Life Member, Bruce Winley, AHSA Inc and John Swanson, were sold and the proceeds retained by the Society. The remainder of these books and magazines will be offered for sale at the May meeting.

Committee Meeting

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

April Meeting

The meeting comprised the 26th Annual Aviation Trivia Quiz which was hosted by Ian Debenham, followed by the 41st Annual Aircraft Recognition competition, which was presented by David Eyre.

Winner of the Trivia quiz was David Eyre (again) who received the Slipstream Trophy. A sample of questions posed appear later in this issue.

Winner of the aircraft recognition competition and the Brian White Memorial Trophy was Warwick Bigsworth, followed closely by Ken Garland. Winner of the President's Trophy was Allen Clarke. David Eyre compiled an excellent array of aircraft images, including unusual types such as the Aermacchi Bosbok, Christen Husky, Aero Morava, Airspeed Envoy, Sikorsky S-92, Evektor Sportstar, Vultee Valiant and Fly Synthesis Texan, to name but few.

Members' Night

In October this year, we intend to hold a meeting featuring short presentations by some of our members. These very popular meetings have been held once a year for the past few years, and all who have attended have been most impressed by the knowledge and experiences of fellow members.

If you have some special interest or experience in aviation that you would like to share, please advise John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth of your ability to contribute.

Special Anniversary

The publication of this issue coincides with the centenary of the formation of the Aerial League of Australia by George Augustine Taylor. Please note John Scott's comments in his *Loops and Landings* Supplement.

Vietnam Find

Minister for Defence Science and Personnel, Hon. Warren Snowdon MP announced on 21st April 2009 that an Australian Investigation Team believes it has found the aircraft flown by the last two Australian Defence Force members missing in Vietnam.

Flying Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver disappeared on 3rd November 1970 when their Canberra bomber A84-231 was lost without trace.

"The Australian Defence Investigation Team are confident they have located the RAAF Canberra bomber wreckage in thick jungle in an extremely rugged, remote and sparsely populated area of Quang Nam Province, Vietnam, near the Laotian border," said Mr Snowdon.

While no human remains were found, a number of military artefacts have been discovered including a club badge which was unique to RAAF 2 Squadron. Mr Snowdon said the next step would be a thorough archaeological dig which will confirm whether there are any human remains at the crash site.

Australian Aviation Museum

Most members will be aware that due to Bankstown Airport Ltd's commercial needs, it no longer welcomes the presence of the Australian Aviation Museum Bankstown at its present site. Hence the Museum has agreed to relocate to Camden Aerodrome.

The plans were recently presented to Museum volunteers, who were advised that a new unique building, designed by Tony Balzac, will take the shape of an aircraft with fuselage and wings, the latter housing the aircraft collection. The current hangar will be relocated and used as a restoration and workshop area.

The Museum President, Barry Thompson, believes that one of the most exciting features will be the re-erection of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's original hangar from the then Mascot Airport. This hangar, acquired by the Museum some years ago, has been preserved and held in storage.

The new Museum complex at Camden is scheduled to open in late December 2009.

On the Grapevine

We hear on the grapevine that the HARS ex-Aeronavale P2V-7 Neptune (VH-LRR), which has been undergoing restoration for several years, is expected to become operational again mid-year. The HARS DC-4, VH-PAF, currently being fitted with a new wing at Archerfield, is also expected to arrive at Albion Park before year's end.

Philately and the Internet

Australia Post has announced that within the next year, it intends to release stamps featuring Colin Defries, Harry Houdini and John Duigan, to commemorate the centenary of Australian powered flight.

For some detailed information about these pioneers, peruse the website:

www.ctie.monash.edu.au/hargrave/biography1.html

Readers will be pleased to note that the website now accords Colin Defries the honour of being the pilot of the first powered flight of a heavier-than-air machine in Australia, although the detail still needs some editing. The website also features information about a number of other Australian aviation pioneers, including George Augustine Taylor, Fred Custance and Bill Wittber, as well as other nationals who had

an involvement in the development of aviation in Australia.

Trivia Quiz

The following questions are some of those posed by Ian Debenham at the Trivia Quiz held at our April meeting. Answers will be provided next month.

1. Name one of the two pilots who were claimed to have flown at Bolivar, South Australia in 1910.
2. What type of aircraft was used by RAAF No.1 Squadron during their counter insurgency role in Malaya between July 1950 and July 1958?
3. For what particular flight is the Powerhouse Museum's Bleriot famous?
4. What was the name of the pilot instructor of the NSW State flying school at Richmond?
5. What type of engine was fitted to the "Southern Cross"?

Forward Planning

Planning has commenced for the Wings and Wheels Air Show to be held at Ingham, Queensland in September 2010. Air show organiser Christian Smith expects a large attendance at the air show which is being held to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. Amongst the aircraft it is hoped will attend are a Spitfire, T-28 Trojan, Winjeel, T-6 Harvard and Fiat G-59.

We will ensure that our Queensland members are kept aware of progress of the proposed air show.

Calendar of Events

2 May 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW

2-3 May 2009 Gathering of Trojans. Toowoomba Qld

9-10 May 2009 Sydney Aviation Model and Memorabilia Show. Bankstown NSW

6 June 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre

6-7 June 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW

3-5 July 2009 Wide Bay International Air Show. Bundaberg Qld

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 Ian Debenham and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

From: FactualTV [mailto:newsletter@factualtv.com]

Sent: Friday, 17 April 2009 8:38 PM

To: Regional Services

Subject: PRESS RELEASE: Launch of online channel dedicated purely to AIRCRAFT

PRESS RELEASE

A brand new website has been launched: aircraft.factualtv.com.

Here, users will find the best long and short form videos and documentaries about Aircraft. The site also provides news, blogs and other content related to Aircraft.

FactualTV is an online service dedicated to gathering content relating to many different themes and subjects. Visit factualtv.com to see the entire choice of channels and categories.

Kind regards,
The Team at FactualTV
Visit the site at aircraft.factualtv.com



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was issued with Certificate No 199, on March 26, 1912, although the record shows that he was considered to be self taught. The lack of a civil flying school, coupled with the absence of suitable aircraft for training, explains why there were no further candidates, after Bill Hart, to be tested for an Aviator's Certificate. For example, even though John Duigan demonstrated his biplane at Mia Mia, in the presence of Mr W. F. Marshall, Hon. Secretary of the Victorian Section of the Aerial League, on May 31, 1911, it was clear that the requirements of the *Federation Aeronautique Internationale* for an Aviator's Certificate would have been beyond the capabilities of Duigan's aircraft. It was not until John Duigan next travelled to England, that he was able to qualify for *The Royal Aero Club's* Certificate No 211, on April 30, 1912, after training with the Avro school at Brooklands.

In March 1912, Bill Hart transferred his operations from Penrith to Ham Common at Richmond and contemplated setting up a flying school there. In September, 1914, Maurice Guillaux also selected Ham Common for a flying school. Over this period, *The Aerial League of Australia* does not appear to have fulfilled its self proclaimed responsibility as, "the governing Authority of Aviation in Australia." Certainly there were no candidates who presented for testing. It may have become evident to George Taylor that he was facing an impossible task to exert his authority, as flights and attempted flights were starting to proliferate around Australia. In any case he had other pressing demands on his time, and much of 1914 was taken up by an overseas trip he and Florence made to North America.

When Henry Petre arrived in Australia in January 1913, he found the proposed site for the military flying school at Duntroon unsatisfactory. He eventually recommended the acquisition of 734 acres of Mr George Chirnside's property at Point Cook, for the new school, on the shore of Port Phillip Bay, south-west of Melbourne. On arrival in Australia during 1913, three of the five aircraft purchased by the Commonwealth were stored in Sydney and two in Melbourne. They were not taken to Point Cook until February 1914. Further delays occurred before the first flight in Australia of a military aircraft, (Bristol Boxkite CFS-3), took place on March 1, 1914, at the new Central Flying School. Both Henry Petre and Eric Harrison had qualified for Aviator's Certificates in England on September 12, 1911. Petre sailed from England for Australia on December 6, 1912, and Harrison on April 25, 1913. Thus by March 1914, both pilots lacked current flying experience, Petre more so than Harrison. Harrison flew the Boxkite successfully during the morning of March 1. That afternoon, Petre crashed after carrying away a telephone line while airborne on one of the Deperdussins, thus causing the first military aircraft accident in Australian aviation history.

In the absence of Taylor, and probably without much knowledge of the previous activities of the Aerial League, Henry Petre, and some of his fellow officers and instructors, met at the London Hotel in Melbourne on October 28, 1914, to form *The Australian Aero Club*, which was subsequently affiliated with *The Royal Aero Club*. With war having been declared with Germany on August 4, it is not clear what purpose Petre had in mind for a civil flying club. However, in NSW during August 1915, Premier Holman held meetings to discuss his plan for a flying school to train young men as pilots for the new air war overseas. By August 8, 1916, all was ready at the NSW State Aviation School, at Richmond, to start training the first course of 25 students. Being a civil school, the students, on qualification, were awarded an Aviator's Certificate from *The Australian Aero Club*. The wording on the certificate states: "We the undersigned recognised by the RAC of UK as the sporting authority in the Commonwealth of Australia certify that:-" The undersigned were E. Harrison, Chairman and R. F. Galloway, Secretary. Where was *The Aerial League of Australia*, as the, "governing Authority of Aviation in Australia," while its responsibilities were being so comprehensively appropriated? And who was the holder of Aviator's Certificate No 1, awarded by *The Australian Aero Club*?

The declaration of war cast a shadow over the future direction of civil aviation in Australia. It was inevitable that it be placed under the control of the Commonwealth Minister for Defence, at least for the time being. When George Augustine Taylor returned from America, he was consumed by patriotic sentiment and wanted to serve as a volunteer in the military forces, but was rejected because of health reasons. Frustratingly, his military record is missing from the National Archives of Australia. Notwithstanding, for the duration of the war, *The Aerial League of Australia* was put into hibernation. It was not dead, but just like the Norwegian Blue parrot, pining for the fiords, it was resting. **John Scott.**

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Death Of The Aerial League - And The Birth Of Qantas. Part 1.

Please keep the envelope that contained this issue of *Southern Skies*. If all goes according to plan, it should bear the date of the centenary of the birth of *The Aerial League of Australia* - April 28, 2009. The father, and sole parent, of the League, was George Augustine Taylor. And while the League had many office bearers of high standing in the community, it was predominantly George A. Taylor, as Hon. Secretary, who made things happen, and used his publications to communicate the objectives of the League. I was reminded of Taylor's work ethic by fellow member Keith White, who sent me a copy of the minutes of meetings of the League for the period before WWI. Included with the minutes was a copy of Aviator's Certificate No 1, awarded to William Ewart Hart by The Aerial League. Taylor's graphic design talent characterises the certificate. Even the date, on which it was awarded to Bill Hart at a public meeting in the Royal Society's rooms, has a nice Taylor touch to it. At the top left corner of the certificate **No 1** is inscribed. On the top right corner is the date, **5 Dec 1911**, which was also the second anniversary of Taylor's own triumph at Narrabeen.

The wording on Bill Hart's certificate summarises how far the League had come in less than three years under Taylor's leadership. "This League, recognised as the governing Authority of Aviation in Australia, hereby certifies that *William Ewart Hart* having fulfilled the conditions required by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale is qualified as an Aviator, signed George A. Taylor, Hon. Secretary, and Allen Taylor, President." The League had moved from promoting, to the first stages of controlling, civil aviation in Australia. Already, the first aerodrome in Australia, located near the railway station at Penrith, had been selected and secured by the League. Permission to use it for gliding or flying had to be obtained from George Taylor. Using his own initiative, Taylor affiliated the League with *The Royal Aero Club* of Great Britain, and *The Federation Aeronautique Internationale*. The League had extracted a promise from Bill Hart to, "put up a record for safe rather than circus flying." When Hart was later the defendant in a legal action, as a result of his flying activity, there was a murmur of displeasure from the League. There was just the hint that the League considered it had the authority not only to award, but also to withdraw, Australian aviator's certificates.

George Taylor had not come to this position of authority without detailed planning and hard work. Branches of the League were formed in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Taylor had some trouble with Queensland where two centres of operation, one in Mackay and the other in Brisbane, were directed to amalgamate into a single body. A further split threatened in June 1910, when Charles Lindsay Campbell formed *The Queensland Aero Club*. In a series of letters to the editor of the Brisbane Courier, from June to October 1910, Taylor and Campbell conducted a public confrontation. This eventually resulted in negotiations to merge *The Queensland Aero Club* with *The Aerial League of Australia*.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Government, lobbied vigourously by Taylor himself, finally acted to become involved in the establishment of a military aviation school. In January 1911, the Australian Military Board sent a cable to the War Office in London seeking advice. In June the Australian High Commissioner in London was given authority to select two aviators and five flying machines. On December 23, 1911, the Australian Government advertised for two competent mechanists and aviators to be appointed to the Defence Department. It wasn't until December of the following year, that the first of two appointees, Henry Petre, sailed from the UK to take up his position of instructor at the Australian Military Aerial School, then proposed to be established at Duntroon. The second appointee, Eric Harrison, remained in England to supervise the acquisition of two BE2a biplanes, two Deperdussin monoplanes and one Bristol Boxkite, which had been ordered by the Australian Government.

The Aerial League of Australia issued only one Aviator's Certificate. Bill Hart found it necessary to have his Australian Certificate No 1 validated by application to *The Royal Aero Club*. He



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 2009 No.429

June Meeting

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3rd June 2009, 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 guest speaker for the meeting will be recently elected Committee Member, Peter Coates, whose topic will be

Reflections on a career in Air Traffic Control

Peter was an Air Traffic Controller in the RAAF, serving at RAAF Base Richmond, RAAF Base East Sale, Sydney and RANAS Nowra (HMAS Albatross) before joining the ranks of civil ATC with the then Department of Transport. He worked in civil control towers at Sydney, Bankstown and Camden and retired only last year from duty at the latter two towers.

Peter will discuss some aspects of his career, particularly during his military service, and highlight some of the differences between the military and civil environments.

Please join us for another entertaining evening of aviation.

May Meeting

Ian Debenham presented an entertaining lecture on the First Flights in Australia, much of which was based on John Scott's *Loops & Landings* pages which have appeared in this newsletter since October 2006.

We were most fortunate to have in attendance Ms Zaniah Defries, the grand-daughter of Colin Defries. Zaniah has resided in Sydney for several years and during that time has been in communication with John Scott and other members of the Society exchanging information about her grand-father. Zaniah spoke about him, her grand-mother and other members of the family and revealed several stories about the exploits of Colin. Zaniah also kindly offered to assist the Society in any promotion supporting the 100th anniversary of Colin Defries' famous flight. This was indeed a great introduction to Ian's talk.

Ian's lecture began with the glider flights made by George Augustine Taylor and others, and Taylor's involvement in the formation of the Aerial League of Australia. Taylor went on to be the contributor to The Australian Encyclopaedia in aviation matters, where he identified Harry Houdini as the first aviator to make a powered heavier-than-air flight in Australia. The noted aviation author, Stanley Brogden adopted most of Taylor's accounts of early Australian aviation in his book, *The History of Australian Aviation*, and argued the merits of Houdini and his South Australian rival, Fred Custance with this "first flight" achievement; but he eventually accredited Custance with the first flight.

Of course, we now know the real story to be different. On 9th December 1909, Colin Defries made the first powered flight at Victoria Park, near Sydney. Through John Scott's research of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*, it has been clearly established that Defries made a flight in his Wright Model A, *Stella*, of about 115 yards. Ian provided images of the aircraft at Victoria Park Racecourse and of the *Sydney Mail's* reporting of the event.

The Royal Aero Club of Great Britain had already established a clear definition of flight and the nature of Defries' feat clearly met those criteria. Hence, there should now be no doubt about the achievement of Colin Defries.

Ian discussed the flights made in 1910 by Harry Houdini, Fred Custance, Bill Wittber and others, and showed a brief film clip of Houdini's flight. The reasons behind Taylor's decision to discount Defries' feat are debatable, but unfortunately the myth has been continued in reference books, including encyclopaedias, and on plaques.

With the research carried out by John and the presentation made by Ian, and a little help from electronic media aids, it seems that history might have been re-written to reveal the true series of events almost 100 years ago.

Ian has now advised that this same talk will be presented to the Royal Aeronautical Society, Melbourne Branch at a combined meeting with AHSA Inc in Melbourne; at an upcoming event at the Powerhouse Museum's Castle Hill, NSW facility; and

will possibly be published in a future issue of a well-known Australian aviation magazine.

On the Internet

BBC Tribute to the Berlin Airlift
(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/8046296.stm>)

This story from the BBC was published to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Berlin Airlift. An interesting movie is at the end of the story.

Military Factory – Aircraft
(www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft)

This website provides an extraordinary list of military and civil aircraft from 1900 through to the present. Each type includes operational details, specifications, service history with many images. You will spend hours here!

F-111G to the RAAF Museum

The RAAF F-111G A8-272 “The Boneyard Wrangler” arrived at the RAAF Museum Point Cook on 1st May 2009 after a 4 day trip by truck from RAAF Base Amberley. The aircraft was the centre of attention at a number of schools on its road trip to Point Cook.

The aircraft was known as “The Boneyard Wrangler” because it was the first of the ex-USAF F-111Gs to be recovered from the AMARC facility at Tucson, AZ, USA, refurbished and delivered to the RAAF in May 1994. It served in the RAAF with 6 SQN and was the aircraft used in the flypast at the closing ceremony of the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000.

The former USAF F-111Gs that served with the RAAF have all been retired and the original F-111C models are expected to be retired during 2010 when they will be replaced by the F/A-18F Super Hornet.

Book Release

Southern Cross Mustangs by David Muir

Southern Cross Mustangs began life as an article for a modeller’s magazine about the target towing Mustangs used by Illawarra Flying School. After a decade of research, the manuscript developed into a 460 page tome and is now available through Red Roo Models. It has 600 profile views covering the known markings and equipment variations, over 490 photographs and over 275 plan and detail drawings to illustrate details such as equipment, markings and modifications.

The price is \$125.00 plus p&p and is only available through Red Roo Models, PO Box 113 Glen Waverley, Vic 3150; ph (03) 9560 0695; Email redroo@bigpond.net.au or www.redroomodels.com.

Answers to the Trivia Quiz

These are the answers to last month’s questions posed by Ian Debenham at the April Trivia Quiz.

1. Name one of the two pilots who were claimed to have flown at Bolivar, South Australia in 1910.
A. Fred Custance; Bill Wittber
2. What type of aircraft was used by RAAF No.1 Squadron during their counter insurgency role in Malaya between July 1950 and July 1958?
A. Avro (GAF) Lincoln
3. For what particular flight is the Powerhouse Museum’s Bleriot famous?
A. First air-mail flight in Australia
4. What was the name of the pilot instructor of the NSW State flying school at Richmond?
A. William (Billy) Stutt
5. What type of engine was fitted to the “Southern Cross”?
A. Wright Whirlwind J-5

Members’ Night

In October this year, we intend to hold a meeting featuring short presentations by some of our members. These very popular meetings have been held once a year for the past few years, and all who have attended have been most impressed by the knowledge and experiences of fellow members.

If you have some special interest or experience in aviation that you would like to share, please advise John Scott or Warwick Bigsworth of your ability to contribute.

Calendar of Events

- 6 June 2009** Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre NSW
7 June 2009 SAAA Chapter 4 Annual Winter RV Fly-in Breakfast, Albion Park Aerodrome NSW
6-7 June 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW
3-5 July 2009 Wide Bay International Air Show. Bundaberg Qld
25-26 July 2009 Temora Aviation Museum Flying Days. Temora NSW
1 August 2009 Lunch with the Tiger Moths. Luskintyre 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 Early Birds News, Ian Debenham and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The Death Of The Aerial League - And The Birth Of Qantas. Part 2.

If George Augustine Taylor could be asked to identify the villain who caused the death of *The Aerial League of Australia*, he would probably point his finger at Major - General Gordon Legge C.M.G. C.B., who, at the time of the dastardly deed, was Chief of General Staff, Australian Military Forces. It is true that, in the years before WWI, Gordon Legge was an aviation sceptic seeing a limited role for it in the military and an even smaller role in commerce. In August 1914, he raised a minute on Aviation Establishment, which stated: "In defence of Australia under existing conditions there is little scope for the employment of aeroplanes. To attain all that appears to be necessary in the near future, the general lines on which we are going are sufficient, more especially as this branch of the service is very costly when a properly constituted fighting unit is to be created." Legge's experiences in the Middle East and in Europe, during the next three years of WWI, completely reversed his position. Following his return to Australia in 1917, he became a leading advocate for the involvement of aviation in Australia's defence and for commercial transport. In April 1918, Legge initiated the establishment of a Defence Council committee, on which he was represented, to investigate the post war aerial defence of Australia. In August, acting on the committee's recommendations, the Federal Cabinet authorised an expenditure of £3m on an aviation program leading up to June 30, 1921. In November 1919, Legge argued for a national capital expenditure of £1.5m for: "The construction of aerodromes near our capital cities and other strategical points...with annual expenditure of about £1m...which can give us an Air Force of about 600 aircraft, of which 400 will be purely military, and 200 civil subsidised craft."

Gordon Legge's conversion on the road to Damascus was a result of his direct exposure to the rapid development of aviation, which in turn was driven by the dynamics of WWI. On the other hand, George Taylor's belief in aviation was in no need of conversion, at least when it came to national defence. However, he was not an active participant in the war and since 1912, had lost direct contact with aviation. He was in his early forties, and an epileptic, when the war started. On June 4, 1912, he had been promoted to the rank of Captain in his part time service with *The Australian Intelligence Corps*. In October 1914, he attempted to join the *7th Light Horse*, but because of his age and health, he was seconded to *The Intelligence Section General Staff*. This effectively returned him to his desk, and confined him to Australia. Throughout the war he continued to work on his publications. His patriotic zeal was channelled into a new weekly magazine, *The Soldier*, which was first issued on May 30, 1916. He used this magazine to write about aviation, but he was becoming increasingly out of touch with overseas developments. At this time, Taylor was running a successful business, and had interests other than aviation demanding his time. It might have been expected that, after the war, he would have been satisfied to be a fatherly adviser on aviation matters, or even an historian, rather than resume his previous role as an active head of the Aerial League. However, this expectation would ignore the mixture of supreme ego, authoritarianism, and patriotism, that made up the character of George Augustine Taylor.

There is evidence that Taylor planned to awaken *The Aerial League of Australia* from its slumbers, as soon as the war ended, and to reinstate his own position of authority over the future of post war aviation in Australia. Signs of the awakening Aerial League can be found in the pages of his weekly publication, *The Soldier*. During 1918, Taylor reported that he had restructured the League, with himself as the Hon General Organiser, and with acting Hon Secretaries appointed for each of the states. In *Billy Stutt and the Richmond Flyboys*, the late Neville Hayes records that: "For the duration of the Aviation School, Stutt and the Executive Member and Superintendent had to cope with requests to borrow planes, sponsor joy rides, or conduct exhibitions." Thus in a letter dated: "24 April 1918, G. A. Taylor, manager of *The Soldier*, official organ of the RSSILA in Sydney, suggested a plane fly to Brisbane on Empire Day, May 24." Taylor was informed that this would not be possible because of the condition of the planes. Then on 16 August 1918, the Minister for Public Instruction, Gus

James, received a letter from Mr R. A. Quinn, Hon Secretary of the NSW Branch of the League, informing him that: "On Saturday September 7 a number of the members of the Aerial League will pay a visit to the school. I shall feel much obliged if you will grant me the necessary permission to make a short flight with Stutt on that occasion." This request was denied. Quinn sent a follow up letter on 28 August, "making it clear permission is for myself, as Hon. Secretary of the League, to make the flight." This further plea bore no fruit with the minister. Such a discourtesy to the Aerial League was a discourtesy to George Augustine Taylor, who after all, "was the first to soar through Australian air."

There had been signs, from the time of the formation of *The Australian Aero Club* in Melbourne back in 1914, of the growing irrelevance of *The Aerial League of Australia*. When the NSW Government set up a committee, in January 1916, to oversee the establishment of *The State Aviation School* at Richmond, there was no representative from the League. Lt Col E. H. Reynolds, Director of Operations at Point Cook, was made a member of the committee. As if the Aerial League had never existed, he recommended *The Australian Aero Club* as the authority to issue aviator's certificates to graduates of the school. Reynolds embarked for Egypt two months later, as C. O. with No 1 Sqn AFC.

If George Augustine Taylor had failed to recognise the signs of his fading influence on aviation matters, as the war continued, he must have suffered a reality check when, on March 15, 1918, a new monthly magazine from the Wireless Press, was launched in Sydney. It was titled, *Sea Land and Air*, and its managing editor was the redoubtable Edward J. Hart. Hart had just come from service with the AIF, but prior to the war he had been a journalist with *The Daily Mail* in London. He had experienced first hand the introduction of powered flight in Europe, supported munificently by his employer, Lord Northcliffe. Hart not only attracted competent contributors to his magazine, he published informed editorial comment himself on the two fields in which George Taylor considered himself to be both a pioneer, and at least Australia's expert - wireless telegraphy and aviation.

Taylor tolerated the publication of *Sea Land and Air* until the September, 1918, issue. Then, on October 11, in his own weekly magazine, *The Soldier*, he wrote: "A journal entitled *Sea Land and Air* (No 7) has come to hand. It is published in Sydney, and purports to give information on Aviation and Radio - telegraphy, but from the inaccuracy of some of its information and apparent ignorance of some of its writers, it seems very much "at sea" on some of the subjects it purports to chronicle." Taylor took aim at two of the contributors to *Sea Land and Air* - Ernest T. Fisk and Col E. H. Reynolds, DSO, OBE, who was by then Staff Officer for Aviation, AIF. Fisk had committed the sin of not acknowledging that it was Lieutenant G. A. Taylor of The Australian Intelligence Corps who had been the first in the world to carry out practical trials with wireless apparatus on moving trains. The sin of Edgar Reynolds, apart from his previous involvement with the State Aviation School, was to write: "until a few months ago, (ie before *Sea Land and Air*), Australia possessed no publication of any description whereby its citizens could obtain accurate information on aeronautical questions." Taylor replied that since 1909, when he was: " the first Australian to get into the air on a heavier - than - air apparatus", his publications had covered all events of public interest in matters to do with aviation. He concluded: "It therefore is apparent that a mistake has been made in the title of the new journal. It should be, *Sea land and Hot Air*."

Gordon Legge served on the Military Board as Quartermaster - General, between 1909 and 1911, at the time Taylor was so vigorously lobbying the government to establish an air force. Thus he knew how effective Taylor could be when it came to influencing politicians. Following the outburst in *The Soldier*, against one of his subordinates, Legge probably concluded that it would be better to have Taylor on the team rather than be continually sniped at, and undermined from the sidelines. He immediately made contact with George Augustine Taylor.

In early November members of a provisional post WWI committee of the Aerial League received a letter from Taylor which read in part: "I attach an extract from a letter forwarded to me by Major - General Legge, Chief of General Staff, Commonwealth Military Forces, at whose behest I have revived *The Aerial League of Australia*, which has been marking time since the declaration of war. Will you kindly meet me at this address on Friday 15th November, at 4pm so that I can place before you proposals in connection with the matter." Unbeknown to George, a time bomb was ticking...**J. Scott.**

The article below on the Porterfield was supplied by Margaret, daughter of the late Early Bird Eric Jones. In part her letter states: the missing link in the past Reg Ansett pre John Bange Porterfield story which seems to never have been published. Both VH UVH and the Genairco VH UOD.

THE PORTERFIELD and THE MISSING YEARS

By Margaret Jones

If you Google the Porterfield VH-UVH, you will read that this was the aircraft in which Reg Ansett won the Brisbane to Adelaide Cup in 1936. The next entry jumps to 1955 when it was purchased by John Bange. Flying mag articles invariably state that "at some point in its life, the aircraft forfeited its LeBlond/Ken Royce radial in favour of a Continental C-75". This is the story of those missing years.

My father, Eric Darcy Jones, was born in Orange in October of 1916 and while a teenager in Canowindra had his first flight with Smithy. Flying became a passion. He quickly graduated from motor bikes to aircraft. I'm not sure of the timeline, but he met George Mendham through friends, spending 2 years as a groundsman barnstorming with the air circus. His great friend, Tommy Barrett, bought a half-built Luton Minor but passed it on to dad to finish when the family ice works took up all his time. Along the way he also came under the influence of Bowden Fletcher who talked of the Citizens Air Force and a coming conflict. He advised dad to join up. On the 22nd January, 1940 he joined the RAAF at Richmond and the first person he saw was Bowden, who said: "I told you so!".

Dad became a Flight Sergeant in the Fleet Air Arm with No.9 Fleet Cooperation Squadron, equipped with Walruses which were placed on cruisers and armed merchant ships and launched by catapult. He was assigned to HMAS Sydney. Roy Foster, a Leading Aircraftsman on the Manoora asked if he would swap ships, as Roy's wife was very sick and he wanted a few more days with her. This meant swapping the pride of the fleet for a merchant ship, but dad agreed and Rathmines gave permission. Roy later left in the Sydney and was one of the 645 who lost their lives. It seems fitting that the Daily Telegraph announced on 18 November this year that HMAS Manoora (the 3rd to carry the name) would take 280 descendants of the crew of the Sydney to a memorial service over the sunken wreck.

After the war dad had spent 6 months with ANA on Dakotas when he heard that Bryan Monkton was intending to start up Trans Oceanic Airways at the old Dutch Base at Rose Bay. Monkton offered him a job and they went off to Rathmines to convert the Sunderlands for passengers. While at TOA he bought a Baby Aeronca VH UXV for 50 Pounds which needed a lot of work and which was full of red back spiders. His friend, Geoff Badgery was building a glider in a boatshed at Lugarno and offered to share the space in return for dad lending a hand with the Grunau Baby. When the Aeronca was ready it went to Sid Marshall's hangar. Another great friend. Sid gave me my first flight in the Puss Moth when I was 18 months old, and when I was older he would often come to dinner on Friday nights. I would hide in the dark at the top of the stairs and listen to his stories of China and Egypt and New Guinea.

My mother used to make a Pineapple Meringue Tart each weekend and take it to the drome. Anyone working in the hangar was welcome to a slice. One day she noticed a young man having trouble splicing a cable and suggested that dad should help. It was Terry Lang and the aircraft was the Genairco VH-UOD. Terry became an honorary member of the family and all of my cousins and schoolmates got a joy flight in the Genairco.

On rainy days Sid would unlock the Porterfield and let dad and Terry sit in it and daydream. To them the Porterfield was special. When a sea captain made an offer for the Aeronca too good to refuse, dad wrote to Reg Ansett and asked to buy the Porterfield. Reg agreed. Those were happy times until dad had an accident breaking his back in several places. There was a year off work and no money coming in. VH UVH had to be sold. Tom Barrett expressed an interest, and so on Saturday, 3 September 1949, dad and another mate, Ron Gower, decided to fly it to Orange. The weather was iffy, dad said if they were definitely going over the mountains they would fly over the house and waggle the wings. This saved their lives because, even though the Porterfield had recently had a CofA, there was a hairline crack in one cylinder which broke apart and fell into a lady's backyard in Fairfield. They had to make a forced landing between two saplings in a field. So there was some work to be done and the engine to be changed.

When it was flying again, the Begum Haroun, wife of a diplomat. wanted her own plane. She asked dad to paint it in her country's national colours and so the Porterfield changed to blue fuselage, gold wings and a red and white arrow down the side. The Begum had learned to fly wearing slacks, because you can't use a joystick when wearing a sari. Unfortunately, her religious authorities brought pressure to bear to stop her flying. And so in 1955 the Porterfield was sold to John Bange and is still in the hands of the Bange family.

After my mother died of breast cancer in 1969, my dad was devastated and I knew I had to get him back to flying. He renewed his licence and bought an Auster VH EO!, and later a Beechcraft Musketeer VH TYF. When notice came of a design fault he completely rebuilt the wings. Arthritis in the hips was becoming a problem and so he sold the Beechcraft but continued to fly out at The Oaks in his mate, Phil Hasset's little red Mini-cab. But the day came when he couldn't climb into the cockpit. He stopped flying at 83 and never went to the aerodrome again. It would have been too upsetting. He had designed greeting cards for the crew on the Manoora so when he was 89 I got him to take up calligraphy, something he could do sitting down and he did some beautiful work. He died in April this year, aged 91 after a long bout with prostate cancer refusing chemo and radiation. I asked the funeral people to spray the casket aircraft silver and cover it with snow gums and eucalyptus. A friend recited the poem "High Flight" and we said goodbye to the hymn 'On Eagles Wings'. For someone who had had to leave school at 12, he had achieved a lot. He was a wonderful dad, this boy from the bush who just loved to fly.'



ERIC DARCY JONES

PHONE: MU 1028

BANKSTOWN AERODROME ST 4502



MARSHALL AIRWAYS

KINGSFORD-SMITH AERODROME
MASCOT. N.S.W.

Date 5th August, 1946

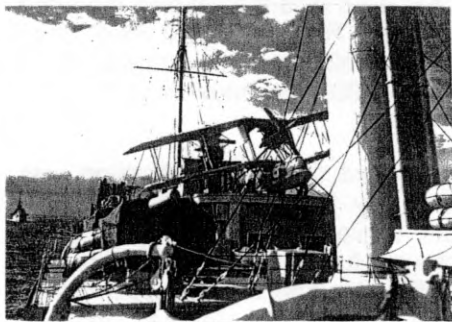
Mr. E. D. Jones,
Cambridge Street,
PADDINGTON.

No 48

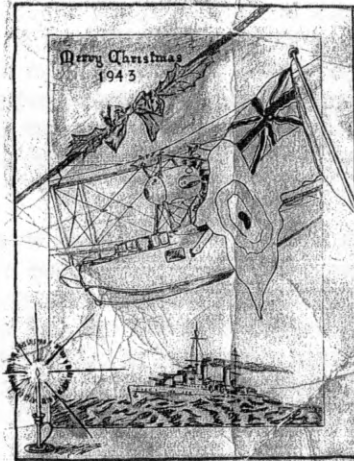
Job No. 778

TO: Certificate of Airworthiness Overhaul carried out
on your "Porterfield" Aircraft VH-UVH.

SURVEYING
THE DAMAGE



HMAS MANDORA

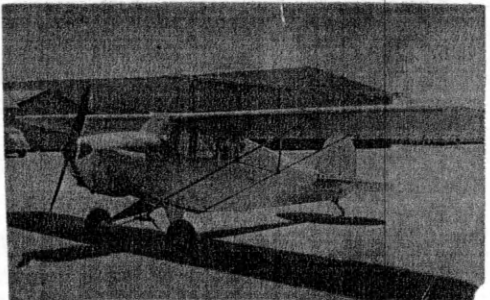


P 6075 Department of Civil Aviation,
Kingsford Smith Aerodrome,
MASCOT.

MR. E. D. JONES, A.N.A. Pty. Ltd., Mascot,
has permission to enter Kingsford Smith Aerodrome, Mascot, on
Duty.

Date 8th February, 1946.

H. A. MANN
District Superintendent



PORTERFIELD SEPT '1950

'TAHITI STAR'



TRANS OCEANIC AIRWAYS

Pacific Island Service

FLIGHT INFORMATION

Time 15.25
Position Rose Macquarie
Distance from Sydney is 122 miles
Distance to Rose Macquarie is 174 miles
Height 6000 Feet
Air Speed 174 m.p.h.
Head Wind Component 9 m.p.h.
Ground Speed 165 m.p.h.
Estimated time of Arrival at Rose Macquarie
is 16.35



AUSTER

BABY AERONCA



Please pass this card on when read. If you would
care for a duplicate as a souvenir of the flight, the
steward will be glad to obtain one for you from
the Captain.

TANGO YANKEE FOXTROT

