



# 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 2013 No.469

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Jan / June

### February Meeting

The February meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013, at 7.45pm. The venue is the Amenities Room, at the southern end of the Administration building, which is to the south of the main building. Entry is via Macarthur Street and car parking is available immediately in front of the meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

John Scott has kindly provided the following introduction:

Guest presenter for the evening will be our member Peter Finlay whose subject will be: *The Inspiration of Flight*.

Peter is a photographer/ writer and contributor to *Aero Australia* magazine. He was the principal aviation researcher for Peter FitzSimons', *Charles Kingsford Smith and Those Magnificent Men*, published by HarperCollins Australia. Members who attended Peter's talk to us in May last year, *Mercy Flight to Disaster - The Loss of RAAF Lincoln A73-64*, will understand something of the influence of flight on Peter's life. At our February 2013 meeting Peter will introduce us to photography/sound composition as an art form inspired by flight. Peter will explain the concept and introduce us to each work as it is presented. There will be three separate titles:

1. "*Born to Fly*". A series of images shot by Peter in a weekend of air-to-air photography arranged by the late Martin Robson and members of the Peninsula Aero Club at Tyabb in Victoria. Nine aircraft are featured with quite amazing clarity with the aid of Peter's professional-quality Canon digital SLR and lens.
2. "*Conquest of Paradise*". Not aeroplanes this time but an essay in dramatic close-up photography of raptors living in dedicated bird of prey conservancies in England. Vultures, Hawks, Peregrine Falcons and several species of owls are shown statically and in flight.
3. "*Warbirds over Wanaka 2008*". Back to aircraft now with some images taken at "*Warbirds over Wanaka*" in 2008. Peter visited the show every day and captured some very unusual pictures of a wide variety of aeroplanes. Machines range from Vampires, Boeing 757 (RNZAF), Bleriot XI, Catalina, Hurricane, Spitfire and an RAAF-111 displayed at staggeringly low level on a cold, crisp NZ alpine morning.

Photography, inspired by flight, is an art pursued by many of our members, some more successfully than others. Members are invited to bring to the meeting copies of their own favourite creations, and Peter will be available for advice on technique.

### Committee Meeting

A Committee meeting, commencing at 6.15pm, will be held immediately prior to the February meeting.

### December Meeting

The theme of the meeting was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of flying boat services between Australia and England. The meeting was held at the Qantas Heritage Collection at Terminal 3, Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport, with the curator of the collection, David Crotty, providing an excellent account of the introduction of the "C" Class flying boats into service and their operational life with Qantas.

Qantas had become an international airline in 1934 after winning a deal with Imperial Airways to partly operate the England Australia air route. Its first aircraft type for the service was the de Havilland DH.86, which was restricted by its payload and hence any future growth of the service. The partnership between Qantas Empire Airways and Imperial Airways ensured agreement on the types to be flown and Imperial Airways' chief executive, George Woods Humphries always envisaged flying boats, which were the only aircraft type capable of carrying a reasonable payload of mail and passengers. Qantas ordered 6 of the Short S.23 C Class flying boats and began operations from Rose Bay to Southampton on 5 July 1938. With the introduction of the flying boats, Qantas relocated its Head Office from Brisbane to Sydney.

David's talk was accompanied by an extensive series of images featuring the flying boats at various times and places during their service with Qantas and when they were impressed into military services during World War II. He also spoke of numerous incidents with the flying boats in civilian and military service. The last C Class flying boat to be used by Qantas was between Sydney and Noumea, with the final service being operated in 1947.

Following the talk, David showed a short film on the take-off accident involving the Pan Am Boeing 707 at Sydney Airport in 1969. The film illustrated the dismantling and removal of the aircraft – with no consideration for the OH&S issues of today!

## AHSA Meetings

### Brisbane

Meetings are held at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on the last Friday of each month at the Royal Queensland Aero Club, Archerfield. Visitors are welcome; contact George Palmer at ahsa\_qld@hotmail.com.

### Melbourne

Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East, in the auditorium. Parking is available under the building – enter from the lane at the south end. The meetings start at 7.30pm - ring the bell if the front door is shut. Visitors welcome – contact Antony Grage on 0418 170 395.

**Wednesday 27 February:** Guest speaker will be John Colloby, talking about his family's involvement in the Air Force and the Department of Civil Aviation.

## 2013 Subscriptions

This is the final reminder that 2013 subscriptions are now overdue. A membership renewal form was included with the December issue of *Southern Skies*. Joint Membership of AHSA (NSW) Inc and AHSA Inc for 2013 is \$65. This entitles members to receive the AHSA (NSW) Inc newsletter *Southern Skies* which is published 11 times per annum, free attendance at meetings which usually feature a guest speaker and includes supper, and the AHSA Inc journal *Aviation Heritage* and *AHSA Newsletter*, which are published 4 times per annum. They are also welcome to attend meetings in Melbourne with a token amount payable for supper.

Members, who wish only to retain an AHSA (NSW) Inc membership, pay \$25 for the newsletter and meetings.

## Calendar of Events

**2 February 2013** Aircraft Showcase – WWII to Korea – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.

**16 February 2013** Aircraft Showcase – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.

**26 February – 3 March 2013** Australian International Air Show, Avalon Vic.

**6 March 2013** AHSA (NSW) Inc Annual General Meeting, Powerhouse Museum.

**16 March 2013** Aircraft Showcase – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.

**17 March 2013** Classic Jets, Antique and Vintage Aircraft Air Show, Parafield SA.

**3 April 2013** AHSA (NSW) Inc Annual Aircraft Recognition and Aviation Trivia competitions.

## Contributions and Contacts

News items, other contributions, or requests for information etc for inclusion in the newsletter can be sent to AHSA (NSW) Inc at P.O. Box K346, Haymarket NSW 1238.

## Thanks

Thanks to Peter Coates and John Scott for their contributions to this newsletter.

## Newsletter

Readers will note the changed format and reduced content in this issue, which has been compiled by Committee members. The Committee is seeking one or more volunteers to take on the role of Editor, and anyone interested should contact the President, Ian Debenham.

## Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW) Inc

### 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 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013 commencing at 7:45pm.

## Business

1. President's Report
2. 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

### **It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,... – Part 11.**

Bobby Terry, who was the second woman only to Phyllis Arnott holding an Australian commercial pilot's licence, was also a member of the American women pilots' organisation, *Ninety-Nines*. During 1937, Bobby suggested to Nancy Bird, who was then operating as a commercial pilot, that she should also join *Ninety-Nines*. Bobby sponsored Nancy's application, and her membership was confirmed in May, 1938, before she left Australia on her overseas trip. Soon after arriving in New York in May, 1939, Nancy made a phone call to the President of *Ninety-Nines*, Betty Gillies, and a whole new network opened up for her. Nancy was immediately contacted by Frances Joannes with an invitation to stay in her family home in the leafy, shoreline town of Branford, Connecticut. Nancy checked out from her Spartan accommodation at the Women's Club Hotel in Manhattan on May 29, and took the 3 pm train on the New Haven Railroad. Back in 1939, the membership list of *Ninety-Nines* contained the names of many affluent women. Nancy found herself welcomed into the charming Joannes home, surrounded by the lawns and trees of a beauty only known to New England.

As it happened, the day after Nancy's arrival in Branford was May 30, which in 1939 was commemorated as Decoration Day in the U.S.A. The tradition was initiated in 1868 for the purpose of decorating the graves of Civil War combatants. As more American servicemen were killed in later conflicts such as the Spanish American War and World War I, these sacrifices were also honoured on Decoration Day. Nancy shared Decoration Day with the Joannes family by attending the parade of service veterans, Indians, local civil organisations and brass bands. For the Americans there would be two more peaceful Decoration Days before World War II created fresh forests of graves to commemorate. Today in the U.S.A., the last Monday in May is a public holiday, and the name has changed to Memorial Day. At the first Decoration Day ceremony in 1868, General John A. Logan said: "Let no ravages of time testify to coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic." The sentiment would have deeply resonated with Nancy through the words she associated with Anzac Day: "Lest we forget".

On May 31, Frances took Nancy to the prestigious New Haven Lawn Club where they lunched with Dr. George M. Smith from the Yale School of Medicine. After lunch Dr. Smith was Nancy's escort during a tour of Yale University. The following day it was time to return to Nancy's pursuit of aviation. Frances drove her down to Stanford, where Frances had connections in the Chance Vought Corporation. But at the time, things at the plant were in a state of flux. It was less than two months since Chance Vought had completed its move from Hartford to Stanford, reforming as the Vought-Sikorsky Division of the United Aircraft Corporation. At the time, Vought's chief designer, Rex E. Beisel, was working hard to make up lost time on the building of a prototype, the XF4U-1, which, as the F4U Corsair, became the most outstanding naval fighter of World War II. The XF4U-1 made its maiden flight from the adjacent Bridgeport Airport, (now Sikorsky Memorial Airport), on May 29, 1940. It must have been an embarrassment for Frances when she and her guest were not permitted entry to the plant because no prior security checks on Nancy had been undertaken.

Nancy next travelled by Greyhound bus up to Boston, Massachusetts, where she was welcomed into the magnificent waterside home of pilots Daisy and Harry Kirkpatrick. Daisy was at the time the immediate Past President of *Ninety-Nines*, and was very influential in general aviation circles. There was a natural rapport between Nancy and her host, evident on the evening of their first meeting when they discussed *Ninety-Nines* long into the night. Their friendship grew in later years when Nancy would visit Daisy, who considered herself to be Nancy's American 'Mom'. The morning after Nancy's arrival in Boston, Daisy arranged a press conference to introduce her guest to the American public. That afternoon the two women were at Boston Airport to go flying. Nancy was given the controls of a Waco N series cabin biplane with a tricycle undercarriage, as well as an Aeronca Chief monoplane. She met another Nancy at the airport that day, Nancy Love, who, with her husband Robert, then owned the Boston-based company, Inter City Aviation. Nancy Love was a test pilot for the tricycle undercarriage

system and later, during World War II, formed the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, (WAFS), which later merged to form the Women Airforce Service Pilots, (WASP). Daisy also made contact with the airlines, and used her influence to ensure that all Nancy's travel to the west coast would be by air and at no cost. On Sunday morning, June 4, Nancy was enjoying sailing on the Kirkpatrick's yacht. When they returned home there was a phone message from United Airlines with an invitation for Nancy to join other VIPs, including Jacqueline Cochran, on a publicity flight of the new Douglas DC-4E airliner, from New York to Washington D.C., the following morning.

With no time to lose, Nancy caught the midnight Boston to New York train, changing into a fresh outfit before arriving at 7 am. The one off DC-4E was an aircraft ahead of its time. It looked more like a Lockheed Constellation, with its revolutionary tricycle undercarriage and triple tail fins, than the later mass produced DC-4. The DC-4E first flew on June 7, 1938, but testing issues delayed the Approved Type Certificate until May 5, 1939. An elaborate transcontinental tour was then embarked upon, and one month later, on the morning of June 5, DC-4E (NX18100) awaited its VIP passengers in New York. No doubt Nancy impressed her fellow passengers, including airline directors, aviation administrators and journalists, by describing her previous experience of modern four engined airliners such as the Junkers Ju-90, and the Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condor. During the flight there were publicity shots of Nancy and Jacky Cochran in the cockpit taking turns in the right hand seat. By the time the DC-4E landed at Bolling Field, Washington's military airport, Miss Nancy Bird was no longer a stranger to her fellow passengers.

Waiting at Bolling Field to welcome the DC-4E, and its passengers, was Oswald Ryan, a member of the Civil Aeronautics Board. He was soon made aware of the predicament of the famous young Australian airwoman who was on her first visit to Washington, and was without accommodation or contacts. Nancy soon found herself in a room at the luxurious Mayflower Hotel, and with an itinerary full of invitations to lunches and cocktail parties. Her first engagement was on May 6, for lunch at the Mexican Embassy. The lunch was to honour the latest achievement of Francisco Sarabia, Mexico's equivalent of Charles Lindbergh, who on May 24 had broken the Mexico City to New York City speed record during a flight to publicise the Mexican Pavilion at the World's Fair. Francisco's Gee Bee R-6H, *Conquistador del Cielo*, was parked at Bolling Field when Nancy and Jacky Cochran arrived in the DC-4E. Jacky would have recognised *Conquistador del Cielo* as the same Gee Bee, using the name *Q.E.D.*, which she flew in the 1934 MacRobertson England-Australia Air Race. For Jacky, and her co-pilot Wesley Smith, the race ended disappointingly at Bucharest.

Before going to the Mexican Embassy, and there being no Australian Embassy at the time, Nancy followed the protocol of visiting the British Embassy, and the Air Attaché, George Pirie, to register her arrival as a British subject in the American Capital. However, George Pirie was at the centre of planning for another more important arrival; that of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who were to cross the U.S. border from Canada at Niagara Falls the following day. This was to be the first time that a reigning British Monarch had ever set foot on American soil. The Royal Visitors were scheduled to arrive in Washington D.C. by train on June 8, before visiting the World's Fair in New York. There could not have been a more exciting time to be in the Nation's capital. The celebratory atmosphere pervaded the lunch for Francisco Sarabia. Nancy was seated at the official table two places from Francisco, and next to John Towers. It was John Towers who in 1919 had planned and led the first air crossing of the Atlantic using three NC flying boats. As he sat down with Nancy he was just one week into his new appointment as Rear Admiral John Henry Towers, Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics. Nancy looked around at the other distinguished guests who included Major General "Hap" Arnold, Chief of Air Corps, officials of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, and prominent pilots; her recent aerial chauffeur, Jim Taylor, among them.

On June 7, Francisco Sarabia's wife and young son were at Bolling Field to farewell him on his non-stop return flight to Mexico City. *Conquistador del Cielo* took off, and struggled to about 100 ft, before stalling and plunging into the Potomac. Francisco died as a result of the crash. *Conquistador del Cielo* was recovered and returned to Mexico where it is enshrined at the Museo Francisco Sarabia at his birthplace, Ciudad Lerdo. A small part of Australia's aviation history is preserved with it. **J. Scott.**



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## *Southern Skies*

THE NEWSLETTER OF AHSA (NSW) Inc  
MARCH 2013 ~ No 470

### **March Meeting**

The March meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 6 March 2013, at 7.45pm. The venue is the Amenities Room, at the southern end of the Administration building. Entry is via Macarthur Street and car parking is immediately in front of the meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

The meeting will be the **Annual General Meeting**, which will include The President's Report, The Financial Report, Election of Office Bearers and other business.

**After the AGM, a DVD on the 2012 AirVenture at Oshkosh will be shown.** To many pilots, aviation enthusiasts, photographers and historians, the trail to Oshkosh is one thing that you must do in a life-time. To members of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) the trail is almost an obligatory pilgrimage. The Americans love it, and just about everyone else does too. And the EAA really knows how to put on a show – along with the super-patriotism that goes with it. In 2012, the organisers claimed that over 10,000 aircraft and about 500,000 pilots and visitors were in attendance during part or throughout the 7 day annual convention and fly-in.

The DVD shows many facets of the 2012 show, including mass arrivals, the Piper Cub 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, the daily air show, home-built projects, some of the very interesting war-birds and vintage aircraft and much more.

Please join us for this very important meeting.

### **Committee Meeting**

A Committee meeting commencing at 6.15pm will be held immediately prior to the March meeting.

### **February Meeting**

**Guest speaker** was Peter Finlay who presented his three photographic essays entitled *"Come Fly with Me"* with images from a series of air-to-air photographic sorties out of Tyabb, *"Birds of Prey"*, a dramatic sequence of very close images of raptors in England, and *"The Eagle and the Hawk"* with images taken at *Warbirds over Wanaka* in 2008. Peter's introduction included a chat on the photographic techniques and equipment used to capture his images.

Peter checked listeners' familiarity with the mysteries of photography and the three parameters which control the amount of light processed by a camera. He pointed out that the two prime factors that

affect the outcome of "shooting" aeroplanes are the shutter speed and the aperture.

When trying to capture propeller-driven aircraft it is necessary to select a relative low shutter speed, in the order of 1/60th to a maximum of 1/250th a second to prevent the prop blades being "frozen" and thus giving the impression of a large glider! Peter admitted to this when taking images of HARS' Dakota A65-94 taking off on its "round-Australia flight" – a poignant moment as his father had navigated this specific aircraft during the 1952 British Atomic tests in WA.

Peter advised a relatively small aperture (say, f 22) would be needed to control the "depth of field" when photographing an aircraft from the rear and keeping the whole machine in focus.

To capture reasonably close up shots of aircraft in flight a long focal length lens is desirable. Peter uses a Canon L f2.8 7--200mm lens with image stabilisation these days, but has also used a lens which zoomed from 100-400mm. The weight nearly killed him! He mounts his lenses on a Canon EOS 40D and the size of its sensor increases the focal length by 60%. Sometimes a benefit, but this inhibits the functionality of wide angle lenses. Some you win, others you lose.

The pros and cons of fully automatic mode versus pre-set camera functions or the photographer being able to set one parameter (aperture or shutter speed) and allow the computer to adjust the other were discussed. Peter chooses shutter speed priority when shooting images of propeller-driven aircraft to avoid the dreaded stopped-prop syndrome.

Peter described the situations where the slide show photography was carried out. Friend Martin Robson arranged a fantastic weekend of air-to-air photography at Tyabb. Aircraft shot included Claudia Jones' Piper Cub and a Super Cub, Rob Black's Auster J/5B Autocar and Midget Mustang, the Ercoupe and a Piper Lance in which Martin owned a part share, Brian Jones' Seneca (camera ship for some forays), John Burgess' Van's RV7A, Nick Caudwell's Nanchang CH-6 and Hans Litjen's Corby Starlet. Martin and Brian selected a host of beautiful coastline as backdrops for the aeroplanes with stunning effects. Celine Dion's "Born to Fly" provided the rousing theme music.

A different aspect of the wonders of flight were flights of the originators of the art, raptors – our birds of prey. Peter visited several conservancies in England, travelling light to obtain photographs for a photo-club

challenge. Peter's tight close-up images of vultures flying in ground effect, peregrine falcons on the wing, several hawks, a ferocious looking Bald Eagle and several species of owl were captured and set to Vangelis' music from the 1992 film "Conquest of Paradise, 1492". Many complimentary "oohs" and "ahhs" were detected from members during this very artistic and impressive photographic presentation.

Judy Rainsford told Peter afterwards that she and her husband had experienced Wedgetail Eagles landing unperturbed beside their car during a trip through the South Australian Flinders Ranges.

To conclude Peter moved back to our main focus - man-made flying machines - with a tour of the 2008 *Warbirds over Wanaka* festival musically backed by the late John Denver's "The Eagle and the Hawk". The climatic crescendo coincided with the first of several startling images of RAAF 6 Sqn F-111 A8-113 navigated by Flt. Lt. Susan Youngman. Spine-chilling to witness, the vapour which the aircraft stripped out of the cold New Zealand mountain air added to the awe-inspiring low-level display of this interesting presentation.

Peter offered us the manuscript of his story on aviation photography which was published several years ago in *Australian Photography*. This will appear in a later issue of the society's newsletter.

**Following** Peter's presentation, John Scott provided a DVD of one of the *Warbirds over Wanaka* air-shows.

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## Vale

### Bill Davey

One of Australia's colourful aviation pioneers, Bill Davey, passed away on January 1, 2013. He was raised on properties in outback New South Wales, and acquired an Auster in the early 1950s to improve his outback mobility. He was given a "concession" to fly emergency supplies commercially along the flooded Darling River in 1956 when most of the navigation landmarks were underwater for months.

Inspired by the potential role of light aircraft in the bush, he acquired a commercial licence and set up aviation businesses in Dubbo, and branches in Deniliquin, Goondiwindi and Moree. Davey Air Services operated air taxi services and later as a Reg.203 commuter airline, utilising aircraft such as Piper Chieftains, DH.114 Herons and Embraer Bandeirantes.

Bill's autobiography *Fair Dinkum* is well worth reading, not only for its aviation content, but also the hardships of living in the outback. Politicians, teachers, Gen X and Gen Y would benefit from Bill's wisdom expressed in the book.

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### Royal Australian Navy Sea Kings

In late January ABC News reported that the RAN has decided to scrap five of the six Westland Sea Kings stored at Nowra upon retirement in December 2011.

N16-118/ "Shark 07" is to be preserved at the RAN Fleet Air Arm Museum at Nowra, whilst it was later announced that the other five helicopters are being sold for spares to UK surplus equipment and component supplier Aerospace Logistics (ASL).

During the recent bushfires, there were several suggestions that these aircraft could be used as water bombers and retained for future emergencies.

The Westland-built Sea King differs from the Sikorsky-built SH-3 Sea King in using an automatic flight control system, British anti-submarine systems and Rolls-Royce Gnome engines (licence-built GE T58 engines). They are not certified for conversion to fire-fighting configuration.

The five Sea Kings being scrapped are:

N16-114/05; N16-125/10; N16-238/20; N16-239/21; and N16-918/22.

## Calendar of Events

- 26 February – 3 March 2013** Australian International Air Show, Avalon Vic.
- 16 March 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Spitfire and Trainers - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.
- 17 March 2013** - Classic Jets, Antique and Vintage Aircraft Air Show, Parafield SA.
- 3 April 2013** - AHSA (NSW) Inc Annual Aircraft Recognition and Aviation Trivia competitions.
- 6 April 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – WWII Pacific theatre - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 14 April 2013** - Barossa Air Show, Rowland Flat SA.
- 20 April 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Trainers to Fighters - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 1 May 2013** - AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting.
- 4 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Bomber/Attack - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 5 May 2013** Wings over Illawarra Air Show, Albion Park NSW.
- 5 May 2013** - David Hack Classic Aircraft Fly-in, Toowoomba - Colac Aero Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Open Day, Colac Vic.
- 18 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Fighters – Temora Aviation Museum

## AHSA Meetings

**Brisbane** Meetings are held at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on the last Friday of each month at the Royal Queensland Aero Club, Archerfield. Visitors are welcome; contact George Palmer at ahsa\_qld@hotmail.com.

**Melbourne** Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East, in the auditorium. Parking is available under the building – enter from the lane at the south end. The meetings start at 7.30pm - ring the bell if the front door is shut. A number of members meet casually for dinner from 6.00pm at the Tower Hotel opposite the RAAFA. Visitors welcome – contact Antony Grage on 0418 170 395.

**Wednesday 27th February:** Our speaker will be John Colloby, talking about his family's involvement in the Air Force and the Department of Civil Aviation.

## Subscriptions

**Note:** This will be the last issue of *Southern Skies* that will be distributed to members who have not renewed their subscriptions. For those members whose renewal subscriptions have not been received, a renewal notice is enclosed.

## Thanks

Thanks to Peter Coates, Peter Finlay, John Scott and Warwick Bigsworth who contributed to this newsletter.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### **It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,... – Part 12.**

“ ‘Moved: that the chair appoint a committee to examine the aeronautical research facilities now available in the country and their best interrelationship and to prepare a comprehensive plan for the future extension of such facilities of the NACA and the universities, including the training of the necessary research personnel.’ The motion was passed and I was appointed chairman of a committee consisting of General Arnold, Admiral Towers and Mr Hinckley.” The foregoing is an extract from the diary of Charles Lindbergh for Friday June 23, 1939. On that day he attended a board meeting of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics at its offices in the Munitions Building in Washington D.C. Those at the meeting were briefed by Dr George Lewis, the NACA Director of Aeronautical Research, who had recently returned from a tour of aircraft manufacturing plants in England, Germany and France. While in London he delivered The Royal Aeronautical Society *Wilbur Wright Lecture*.

At 9.00 am two weeks earlier, Wednesday June 7, Lindbergh was at a meeting of the board of the NACA, in the Munitions Building. That day started for Nancy Bird with breakfast at her hotel, The *Mayflower*. She spent the morning watching an aviation film, (*Test Pilot*, starring Clark Gable, was the current blockbuster), and later made some reference notes back at the hotel. In the afternoon she had a meeting with Robert Hinckley, Chairman of the C.A.A., who had been at the board meeting of the NACA with Lindbergh that morning. Nancy discussed the training of personnel in the aviation industry with Hinckley, as well as America's plans for the extension of air services in the Pacific. That evening she was at a cocktail party with Dr George Lewis. In June, 1939, General Arnold, Admiral Towers, Robert Hinckley and Dr George Lewis could be counted among the most important people in Washington charged with the responsibility for ensuring that aviation would play the most effective role possible in protecting the U.S.A., should war break out once again in Europe. Nancy had been in Washington for only two days, and yet she had met with, and talked to, all four of these aviation leaders, General Arnold and Admiral Towers at the Mexican Embassy on June 6; Robert Hinckley and Dr Lewis on June 7.

On June 8, Charles Lindbergh noted in his diary that: “The cavalry from Fort Snelling rode by on their way to meet the King and Queen of England. Later in the morning, formations of bombers and pursuit planes flew over.” That morning Nancy had been provided with a companion to ensure that she witnessed the pomp and ceremony of this most historic day. He was C.A.A.'s test pilot, Jim Taylor, who had flown her to Port Washington to greet the return of the *Yankee Clipper*. Two weeks earlier, Jim had farewelled Nancy at lunch on the day she left Manhattan for Branford in Connecticut. Now, together again in Washington D.C., they witnessed the spectacular welcome for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth as they arrived by train at Union Station, and were joined by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his wife Eleanor in an open car procession to the White House. It was in the middle of a blistering heat wave in Washington, and after the parade Jim invited Nancy back to his hotel, The *Shoreham*, to cool off in its swimming pool. Later they dined, danced and talked a lot of shop. Jim Taylor was subsequently recommended by Nancy to Maie Casey, as someone to contact in Washington D.C. for assistance with familiarisation with private flying regulations in the U.S.A., and the acquisition of an aircraft. Maie's husband Dick Casey had been sent to Washington to set up an Australian legation, and she sailed for America soon after, with their two children, on the *S.S. Mariposa* in early 1940. Eventually the Caseys purchased a canary yellow Fairchild F-24, which Maie named *Boomerang* with the aid of a bottle of Australian beer. The Diplomatic community in Washington thereafter referred to the couple as The *Flying Caseys*. There is a sad postscript. Jim Taylor lost his life testing a navy fighter over New Jersey in 1942.

On June 9, Nancy lunched with Earl Findley and his wife. Findley was the publisher and owner of *U.S. Air Services*, then the oldest and most influential aeronautical monthly in the U.S.A. That afternoon she received an unexpected invitation to inspect the operations of the Federal Bureau of

Investigation at its Washington Headquarters. Not for the first time, Nancy appears to have been the unsuspecting subject of scrutiny. At the time J. Edgar Hoover had just started to investigate suspected rings of German spies, and the F.B.I. had the primary responsibility for counterespionage in the U.S.A. So here in Washington was an attractive young foreign female, who had arrived unannounced, and already had met with just about every man in the capital with knowledge of classified information about the air defences of the U.S.A. She had also recently spent an extended period in Germany. And wasn't she reported a few days ago snooping around the top secret Chance Vought XF4U-1 project at Stanford? Nancy left the F.B.I. headquarters later that afternoon full of praise for the success of the F.B.I. and its fight against crime. However, there is almost certainly a file in the F.B.I. archives titled something like, NANCY BIRD - BRITISH SUBJECT - SECURITY MATTER - GERMAN AVIATION AFFILIATIONS. She would not have been alone amongst famous aviators to have been the subject of an F.B.I. file. A few months earlier, Charles Lindbergh had been seen smiling on the streets of Berlin. A paranoid J. Edgar Hoover shortly thereafter opened CHARLES LINDBERGH - FILE NUMBER: 65-11449, which grew enormously in the years leading up to, and following, America's entry into WWII. In July, 1941, a friend alerted Lindbergh to the fact that the F.B.I. was tapping his phone.

Nancy was approached by the Columbia Broadcasting System in Washington to be the guest of their high profile presenter, Doris Thompson, on her June 10 broadcast. This was programmed to follow the coverage by CBS of the afternoon visit by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to the World's Fair in New York. There could not have been a better opportunity for Nancy to speak of her experiences in aviation to a wide audience in the U.S.A. That evening, her last in Washington D.C., Nancy dined with Doris Thompson. The next day, a Sunday, she was driven back to New York, where the hospitality of the President of the *Ninety-Nines*, Betty Gillies, awaited. In her autobiography, *My God! It's a Woman*, Nancy devotes a couple of pages to Betty Gillies. Betty married a young navy pilot, "Bud" Gillies, in 1930. By the time of Nancy's visit the Gillies had three children and "Bud" was chief test pilot for the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation. Their home was in the sleepy hamlet of Syosett near the North Shore on Long Island. If Nancy thought she was about to enjoy a few days rest, she was mistaken. First there were visits to the Manhattan offices of United Airlines and TWA to finalise her transcontinental flights. Then there was a publicity photo-op for the *New York Herald Tribune* where, in her capacity as aviation delegate to the Australian Pavilion at the World's Fair, she presented a Koala mascot to a United Airlines hostess. That afternoon she tested a new automatic pilot installed in a Fairchild F-24.

The National Air Races, held at Cleveland, Ohio, during September 3-5, 1938, included a race for the Bendix Trophy from Burbank, California, to Cleveland. One of the air show attractions was the display of glider aerobatics by Hanna Reitsch. Another was the entry of a woman, Jackie Cochran, in the demanding, non-stop, 3,270 Km Burbank to Cleveland race. She was flying Race No. 13, a Seversky P-35. There were nine other male competitors, one of whom was flying her familiar Gee Bee R-6H, *Q.E.D.* Jackie won the event in a time of 8 hr. and 10 min. For this she was awarded the Vincent Bendix Trophy, and, at a later luncheon given by the *Ligue Internationale des Aviateurs*, in New York on June 15, 1939, she received the Harmon International Trophy for aviatrixes. The person who presented the Harmon Trophy was the First lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, fresh from playing hostess to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. And who should be asked to give an after lunch address to the distinguished gathering of aviation personalities? None other than Miss Nancy Bird from Australia. In her autobiography, Nancy wrote: "In 1939, I accompanied Betty Gillies to a presentation of the Harmon Trophy by Eleanor Roosevelt to Jacqueline Cochran. The following day, to my surprise, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in her 'My Day' newspaper column of the Australian girl who had flown 'outback' ". The actual words written by Eleanor Roosevelt in her syndicated column were:-

"Life is full of coincidences. When I found myself being introduced to Nancy Bird—an appropriate name of an aviatrix—and was told that she flew one of the Australian flying ambulances, I felt someone had rubbed Aladdin's wishing lamp for me. I was tremendously interested, for not long ago, in talking about the difficulties of reaching some of our isolated spots in this country, I had been told about this new service carried on in Australia and was anxious to hear about it.".....**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 2013 ~ No 471

### *April Meeting*

The April meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 3 April 2013, at 7.45pm. The venue is the Amenities Room, at the southern end of the Administration building. Entry is via Macarthur Street and car parking is immediately in front of the meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting. The meeting will be the

#### **Annual Aviation Trivia and Aircraft Recognition Competitions**

This year's 30<sup>th</sup> Aviation Trivia competition will be presented by Ian Debenham, who will provide a variety of questions designed to test your aviation knowledge. Winner of the competition will receive the *Slipstream Trophy* and a book or DVD prize.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Aircraft Recognition Competition will be conducted by Warwick Bigsworth who will provide a selection of exotic images of civil, military and perhaps sport aircraft. Participants will compete for the *Brian White Memorial Trophy*, which will be awarded to the winner, and the *President's Trophy* will be awarded to the participant with the median score. Both will also receive a book or DVD prize.

Previous winners are reminded to return their trophies for the hand-over ceremonies. Please join us for this entertaining and light-hearted evening.

### *March Meeting*

The March meeting featured the Annual General Meeting, which comprised the President's Report, Treasurer's Report and Election of Office Bearers.

#### **AHSA (NSW) President's Report 2013**

"While the remodelling of the Powerhouse continues we continue to enjoy the curatorial amenities area of the Harwood building. Although lacking some technology that was available in the PLCs in the Powerhouse it has proved to be a good meeting space for the Society. Its proximity to the car parking and other facilities is an advantage. However, as the PLCs come closer to rehabilitation I think we can see ourselves returning there so that the Museum can regularise its after-hours accommodation.

The 2012/2013 year was, I hope you agree, interesting with enjoyable speakers and aviation media and I look forward to the offerings of the 2013/2014 year.

In my President's Report for the last AGM I asked for suggestions to encourage new members. I renew that request in this report.

I congratulate Colin Lock for his production of his book on Qantas flight engineers and look forward to purchasing my copy. It was pleasantly surprising that Colin had sold his entire production run. This is rare for an aviation publication in my opinion. I'm told it is an excellent read.

My thanks go to the committee members for their continued support and advice: Warwick Bigsworth, our extremely hard working, competent secretary and newsletter editor; John Scott for his ever interesting and well researched "*Loops and Landings*" and for his role of Treasurer. I would also like to thank Barry Collin's son, David, for his audit of the accounts. I would also like to thank Judy Rainsford for taking on the task of "*Southern Skies*" editor while Warwick is immersed in his business activities. I'm sure you will agree that her first effort is excellent. Also thanks to the contributors to the newsletter. Hopefully more members will assist Judy with articles for inclusion.

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

Ian Debenham  
President"

### *Treasurer's Report*

The Honorary Treasurer, John Scott, provided the audited Financial Report for 2012. He advised that the Society's Income for the year being \$2,529.41, and Expenditure being \$1,990.22. The Total Assets as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 were \$9,632.99 and Total Liabilities were \$1,120.00.

### *Election of Office Bearers*

The following members were elected as Office Bearers for 2013:

President:	Ian Debenham OAM
Honorary Secretary:	Warwick Bigsworth
Honorary Treasurer:	John Scott
Membership Secretary:	Peter Coates
Photo Archivist:	David Eyre
General Committee:	Barry Collins, Ken Garland Bill Holswich, Roger Kennedy, Jack Powell

Our congratulations & welcome to our new committee. Ed

Following the AGM, a DVD of *Oshkosh AirVenture 2012* was shown.

### A NEW CASH BOOK

AHSA (NSW) Inc. needs a new cash book to enter the accounts for 2013 and beyond. The old cash book has done sterling service. The first entry, by the treasurer, Frank Walters, is dated October 1, 1964, and records subscriptions of 5/- each for the 21 founding

members. Before listing the names of these members the of the formation of AHSANSW Branch, as recorded in the following paragraph of the AHSAN Journal of January 1965, will be of interest.

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

Although the meeting of September 24, 1964, was attended by 18 people there were 21 subscriptions entered in the cash book on October 1. These were from; R. GIBSON; P. RICKETTS; G. BANFIELD; E. ALLEN; P. McDONALD; R. WHITEHEAD; K. TITMUS; D. EYRE; E. FAVELLE; M. TOOHER; C. O'NEILL; S. GIBSON; B. WHITE; R. COOPER; G. THOMAS; A. THOMAS; W. CARTER; D. COAD; F. WALTERS; N. FARNELL & G. STONE. JS

## Vale

### Dudley Reynolds

Former AHSAN (NSW) member Dudley Reynolds passed away on 5 March 2013. Dudley was a regular attendee at our meetings until ill health caused his inability to travel and his admittance to a nursing home several years ago. He was 86.

Dudley was a Radio Operator in the Merchant Navy during World War II, and served on ships carrying munitions in the Indian Ocean. There were times when his ship was unescorted, had only "pop-guns" for defence, yet carrying a full load of high explosives. He later served in the Merchant Navy in the Atlantic Ocean. After World War II, he joined the Department of Civil Aviation as an Aeradio Officer and served at Kurumba, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, which was an aerodrome used as an alternate for flying boats operating to or from Darwin.

During his time at DCA and its successors, he was promoted through the ranks of Flight Service, ending his career as the NSW Flight Service Supervisor. Dudley had a passion for historically significant matters in aviation, and was a frequent contributor of interesting snippets for use in *Southern Skies*.

## Skyhawks to taste formation flight once again



### Relevant offers

Not quite a steal, but the man who purchased New Zealand's grounded Skyhawk fighter aircraft discovered he got a bargain.

Eight A-4K Skyhawks that sat in plastic cocoons at Woodbourne since 2001 will next month return to the air in formation over Florida in the United States.

Draken International, which provides military training, last year picked up the Skyhawks for \$7.9 million and has found the planes are in superb condition. They've got years of life left in their airframes and the radar and electronics aboard are among the best in the world.

Chief executive Jared Isaacman was downplaying the idea he got the better side of the deal.

"I don't think I would use the word bargain to describe the purchase of these aircraft," he said. "The New Zealand A-4K

Skyhawks are the finest aircraft of their type ever built." But they had "little military value left", he said.

Draken had to pay the shipping and create engine maintenance contracts with Safe Air and Fieldair in New Zealand.

"I would say it would be a fair deal for all parties involved."

Isaacman broke into his honeymoon last year to secure the deal, which includes the Skyhawks and nine RNZAF Aermacchi trainers that were mothballed by Prime Minister Helen Clark in 2001.

It has cost the taxpayer \$37.4 million to maintain them since.

Isaacman said when they got the aircraft late last year they were virtually ready to fly once the plastic wrapping was removed.

The aircraft will return to the sky at Draken's Lakeland base, 1.5 hours west of Cape Canaveral and remain in RNZAF livery.

Just before Clark scrapped the aircraft they were extensively refitted with sophisticated electronics, including radar usually found in F-16s, and standard Nato air-to-air refuelling equipment. Isaacman's deal also includes 20 spare engines and an extensive inventory of spare parts, publications, life support equipment and avionics sufficient to power the fleet for decades to come.

The Skyhawk squadron never saw combat, other than in 1976 when one shot 20mm cannon rounds across the bow of a Taiwanese fishing boat. That aircraft is now in Auckland's Museum of Transport and Technology.

Others have gone to the Air Force Museum in Christchurch, Ardmore's Warbirds Visitors Centre, Tauranga's Classic Flyers, George Hood Aviation Museum in Masterton, Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre in Blenheim, Ashburton Aviation Museum, Croydon Aviation Heritage Trust in Southland, Warbirds and Wheels in Wanaka and the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Museum in Nowra.

- © Fairfax NZ News

PC

## Calendar of Events

**6 April 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – WWII Pacific theatre - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW

**14 April 2013** - Barossa Air Show, Rowland Flat SA.

**20 April 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Trainers to Fighters - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW

**1 May 2013** - AHSAN (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting.

**4 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Bomber/Attack - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW

**5 May 2013** Wings over Illawarra Air Show, Albion Park NSW.

**5 May 2013** - David Hack Classic Aircraft Fly-in, Toowoomba - Colac Aero Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Open Day, Colac Vic.

**18 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Fighters – Temora Aviation Museum

## AHSAN Meetings

**Brisbane** Meetings are held at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on the last Friday of each month at the Royal Queensland Aero Club, Archerfield. Visitors are welcome; contact George Palmer at ahsa\_qld@hotmail.com. There will be no meeting in March due to the Easter break; next meeting will be 26 April 2013.

**Melbourne** Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East, in the auditorium. Parking is available under the building – enter from the lane at the south end. The meetings start at 7.30pm – ring the bell if the front door is shut. A number of members meet casually for dinner from 6.00pm at the Tower Hotel opposite the RAAFA. Visitors welcome – contact Antony Grage on 0418 170 395.

## Thanks

Thanks to John Scott, Peter Coates and Warwick Bigsworth who contributed to this newsletter.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### **It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,... – Part 13.**

Soon after her arrival in America, Nancy was welcomed into the home of Daisy Kirkpatrick at Boston, Massachusetts. Daisy became aware of Nancy's lack of finances and got in touch with her contacts at United Airlines and TWA. Her objective was to persuade the airlines to provide free tickets to Nancy so that she could fly from New York to San Francisco in time to catch the *S. S. Monterey* before it sailed for Australia on July 18, 1939. Thanks to Daisy's initiative, and with the co-operation of the airlines, and members of the 99s living along the air routes, the problem of Nancy's free transcontinental travel and accommodation was solved. TWA had graduated its first class of air hostesses from its school at Kansas City in 1935. The company required entrants to the school to be single, attractive and charming, between the ages of 21 and 26, from 5 ft. to 5 ft. 4 in. tall, 100 lb. to 110 lb. in weight, and to be a registered nurse. Nancy was a perfect match, overcoming the registered nurse requirement through her experience as a commercial pilot operating an air ambulance in Australia. In any case she was made an honorary member of *The Aerial Nurses' Association of America*. Daisy persuaded TWA to enrol Nancy in its air hostess school. This device provided an answer to possible future queries from an inquisitive auditor about the issue of free tickets. The explanation would be that the tickets were for a trainee hostess in New York to attend the company school in Kansas City, and later, to fly her on to San Francisco for further training.

Nancy spent the last few days of her time in New York with the Gillies family at Syosset on Long Island. There were twilight sailing sorties on Long Island Sound on the Gillies yacht, and days relaxing and swimming at the nearby *Aviation Country Club*, where Betty Gillies occasionally parked her Fairchild F-24. One evening was spent at a farewell dinner given by the 99s, followed by a last visit to the World's Fair, where on a dare Nancy performed her first, and last, parachute jump from the 250 ft. tower in the amusement section. On June 19, it was time for her to continue her great adventure. Betty Gillies, with Nancy and Betty's sister Pausy, drove into New York City and had lunch near the Transcontinental & Western Air passenger terminal. Nancy later boarded a bus taking passengers out to Newark Airport. She was booked on TWA Flight 9, the non-stop DC-3 service to Chicago, departing at 4:45 pm. Nancy described her flight: "Very bad visibility and flew above clouds most of the way. Nice meal of chicken, beans, corn etc., served on board. Descended below clouds over fertile country on approach to Chicago Airport."

Although Nancy arrived by TWA, Chicago was the home of United Airlines, and the President of United, "Pat" Patterson, arranged for his assistant to welcome her at Chicago Municipal Airport. For the next two days Philip Wilcocks escorted her on inspections of the airline's head office and airport facilities. There was a lunch for Nancy at which Rudolph Schroeder, an early U. S. Army Air Service pilot and altitude record holder, was a guest. She spent time with United's publicity manager to arrange the shipment of material to Sydney for inclusion in her *Wings The World Over* exhibition. It was then time for the 99s and the affiliated *Chicago Girls Flying Club* to take over the arrangement for lunches and dinners to introduce her to the sorority. Her reputation as a broadcaster had preceded her, and she was soon in front of a microphone sending out a message about women in aviation. Over the week end of June 24-25, there were air shows to attend. At Ashburn Flying Field Nancy witnessed 99s Chicago Chapter President, Jane Ray, perform her aerobatic routine, and then went flying herself in a Stinson. Then on the Sunday there were air races at Curtiss Field, attended by a large crowd. Nancy was a special guest, and was introduced to the spectators over the public address system. She was photographed with Roscoe Turner, the winner of the main event.

On Monday, Nancy was farewelled by a group of 99ers as she boarded the TWA DC3 Skyliner service to Kansas City, departing at 1:10 pm. Kansas City was the home of TWA, and Lionel King for the airline, with a delegation from the 99s, met her on arrival. TWA had its ticket office in the Muehlebach Hotel, and Nancy was signed in as a guest. She dined with Lionel King at the hotel that evening. All of Tuesday was spent with the girls at the TWA Air Hostess School, except for a short

break to make a broadcast on local radio. On Tuesday evening the local branch of *Women's N.A.C.* hosted a dinner for her at the hotel. Kansas City's longest serving Mayor, Bryce B. Smith, was there to welcome her, and present her with a badge incorporating the city emblem. Before she left Kansas City on Wednesday, Colonel Garret took her to the Municipal Court House to visit Judge Cowan, and then on to City Hall to thank the Mayor for his hospitality, and to say farewell. Then followed a long lunch with the TWA girls before she boarded the 4:05 pm. DC3 flight for Albuquerque, via Wichita and Amarillo. Nancy overnighted at Albuquerque before leaving the next day on one of the most spectacular airline flights in the U.S.A. The route from Albuquerque to Boulder City paralleled the Grand Canyon for nearly 100 miles. Nancy was a guest at the Boulder Dam Hotel for four nights, which allowed her three whole days to explore the Grand Canyon, by a local scenic flight, and Lake Mead, the Boulder Dam, (as it was known at the time of Nancy's visit), the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon by boat. On July 3, TWA flew her to Los Angeles. As she relaxed in Los Angeles on Independence Day, July 4, 1939, a contemporary American poet had written a *Prayer On Fourth Of July* which included the lines: "May all her ways between the seas be ways of quietness and peace." This prayer was soon to be abandoned in the Pacific. The name of the poet was Nancy Byrd Turner.

It was now just two weeks before Nancy's planned departure from the U.S.A., and Pan American Airways had undertaken to organise her California schedule. Her first meeting was with Donald Douglas at his Santa Monica factory. He in turn introduced her to his Vice-President, Victor Bertrandias, who took her on an inspection of the Douglas Aircraft Company plant, which was then heavily committed to the manufacture of both civil and military aircraft. By the time the inspection was over, Bertrandias felt comfortable enough to give Nancy some advice about her future career. He was familiar with Australia, and Australians, having spent some time there in 1936 to assist Holyman's Airways with the assembly and test flying of Australia's first DC-2, VH-USY, *Bungana*. The successful test flight of *Bungana* was on April 28. On July 1, 1936, Holyman's Airways, Adelaide Airways and Western Australian Airways merged to become Australian National Airways Pty Ltd. ANA continued the relationship with Douglas as a buyer of its commercial aircraft. Bertrandias could see Nancy's potential as a member of the management staff of ANA. He strongly advised her to consider approaching ANA for a job when she returned home, and no doubt would have supported her as a referee. In September, 1942, Colonel Victor E. Bertrandias was back in Australia as Commanding Officer of the 4th Air Depot Group, USAAF, at Townsville. Victor Bertrandias's wife Marguerite had been an actress of the silent screen, and there may have been some insistence that Nancy visit the nearby 20th Century-Fox studios after leaving the Douglas plant. It was there that she spent the afternoon on the set of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with Basil Rathbone in the leading role as Sherlock Holmes.

In Los Angeles, Pan American Airways provided Nancy with an escort, Juliette Walker, to assist her with her busy schedule. On July 6, there was an important ceremony at Reeves Field Naval Air Station, near Long Beach. Preparations were in place for the naming of Pan Am's sixth Boeing 314 flying boat, NC18606. Nancy joined a select group of leaders of both military and civil aviation at the ceremony. She had already met Oswald Ryan who had travelled from Washington D.C. to be there. She was introduced to Pan Am's Vice-President Mark McKee and Colonel Clarence Young, the manager of Pan Am's Transpacific Division. Then there was the B-314 itself - a magnificent example of the largest and most advanced aircraft yet produced in the U.S.A. Mrs Mark McKee smashed a bottle of champagne over the nose of the huge aircraft naming it *American Clipper*. Nancy spent the following morning shopping and lunching with Juliette. The Pan American Airways cocktail party that evening at the Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel was another opportunity for Nancy to mix with people at the very top of aviation in the U.S.A. She was introduced to Charles Rheinstrom, Vice-President of American Airlines, and the Captain of the *American Clipper*. Dinner followed, then a night club, and finally bed at 2 am. Later that morning Nancy was driven back to Reeves Field to board the *American Clipper* on a flight to San Francisco. The *American Clipper* alighted on Clipper Cove near the Pan Am Terminal on Treasure Island, where another World's Fair, *The Golden Gate International Exposition* was in full swing. As at New York's World's Fair, Australia was represented by a pavilion.. **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 2013 ~ No 472

### **May Meeting**

The May meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 1 May 2013, at 7.45pm. The venue is the Amenities Room, at the southern end of the Administration building. Entry is via Macarthur Street and car parking is immediately in front of the meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

A Committee meeting commencing at 6.15pm will be held immediately prior to the May meeting.

The presenter at the May meeting will be Ken Garland and his subject will be "The Centenary Racer" and the MacRobertson Air Race.

### **April Meeting**

The April meeting featured the 30th annual Aviation Trivia competition and the 45th annual Aircraft Recognition competition. Ian Debenham presented a list of 20 aviation trivia questions. Several of Ian's questions are listed below, with answers next month. **This year's winner, and recipient of the Slipstream Trophy was Ian Dolstra.**

The Aircraft Recognition competition was conducted by Warwick Bigsworth, who provided images of 100 aircraft, all of which being propeller driven. Amongst the more unusual types were a Howard 500, Curtis Owl, B-36 Peacemaker, Fairchild Cornell, Grumman Mohawk, Slingsby Firefly, Northrop YC-125 Raider and Stinson SM-6000B Tri-motor. **Winner of the Brian White Memorial Trophy was David Eyre, with runner-up Robin Mead. Winner of the President's Trophy was Jack Powell.**

Questions from the Trivia Quiz:

1. What type of aircraft was the first to be flown under the Sydney Harbour Bridge following the introduction of a preventative regulation in 1931?
2. Who was the pilot?
3. What type of engine was fitted to the prototype de Havilland Drover?
4. Name the first woman passenger on a flight from England to Australia.
5. What is the name of the Australian recognized as the designer/constructor of the first delta-winged hang glider? (Answers next month.)

### **"Plastic" Fuel Update**

Last year we reported that British aviator, Jeremy Roswell was planning to fly his modified Cessna 182 from Australia to England on diesel fuel extracted from "end of life" plastic that can't be recycled and is filling up landfills. The flight was meant to be carried out in September 2012, but later deferred until November. News has now been received that the flight is now planned for July this year, subject to having supplies of the special fuel stored in 12 different countries where he will be refuelling en-route.

WM

Inviting Collectors to  
Dig deep in your collections  
for a  
**SHOW & TELL NIGHT**  
at the June Meeting.

### **The AHSA (NSW) Inc. Collectors' Club and Houdini.**

Five years ago, when John Scott was writing his *Loops and Landings* series, *On the Trail of Harry Houdini*, AHSA (NSW) Inc. member, Don Hamilton, sent a copy of *Southern Skies* to a family friend, Arthur Dearn, who had a deep interest in Houdini. Arthur's father, the late Edwin Arthur Dearn, was a magician and ventriloquist based in the Shanghai area in the first half of the last century. Edwin was an avid collector who corresponded with his contemporary, Harry Houdini. Arthur inherited his father's collection. Don had asked Arthur whether there was anything in the collection related to aviation which he could pass on to *Loops and Landings*. Don sent John a copy of Arthur's reply dated March 1 2008, containing some useful snippets and which ended with: "Many thanks for your newsletter – it was most interesting. I have put it in the scrapbook with my Houdini memorabilia."

Sadly Arthur Dearn has since passed away, and last February Lawsons sold the Dearn-Houdini collection by auction in Sydney. Lot 1803 contained a signed photograph of Houdini aloft in his Voisin over the Hufaren exercise field at Hamburg on November 26 1909 during his first successful flight. Also included in the lot were other Houdini letters and ephemera. Against an estimate of \$2000-\$3000, Lot 1803 sold for \$17,000. The auction of the Dearn-Houdini collection realised a total of \$220,000. Presumably, somewhere, a lucky bidder is now in possession of a lot which includes one very valuable issue of *Southern Skies*.

The foregoing should give some encouragement to members of the **AHSA (NSW) Inc. Collectors' Club which will hold its inaugural meeting at the Powerhouse on June 5th.**

Members are encouraged to bring along items from their collections, and be prepared to make a short presentation. The value of a collection is generally in the pleasure it gives to the collector. However – just in case – there will be a valuer on hand!

JS

### **F111 to HARS**

The world's last operational F-111C fighter jet has left its Amberley base, west of Brisbane, for a new home near Sydney. The jet is being driven to a museum run by the **Historic Aircraft Restoration Society at Wollongong.**

Air Force Wing Commander Clive Wells said everyone at the Amberley base was sad to see it go.

"It was the home of the F-111 so of course everyone that works here and has worked on the aircraft is disappointed to see them go. Some of them have spent their whole

careers flying and looking after the aircraft so it's a second family," Wing Commander Wells said.

"It certainly was a very unique aircraft. Who knows what technology will bring forth into the future? Maybe there'll be something like that again."

Wing Commander Wells said the plane has a long history. "This aircraft first flew with the United State Air Force in 1969 in Vietnam and we bought it as an attrition aircraft in 1982," he said.

"The last time it flew was the 3rd of December 2010 and that was the final flight of the F-111."

The aircraft had since been stripped of its fighting parts and can no longer be flown.

"It's been de-militarised - both the engines and the airframe - so it's basically a shell."

The jet had its wings and tail removed for the journey south and will stop at Goondiwindi, Narrabri, Gunnedah, Muswellbrook, Beresfield and Ingleburn as part of the trip.

"I think just seeing an aircraft travelling down the highway will be quite a surprise for a lot of people on a Saturday and a Sunday," Wing Commander Wells said.

The jet will be reassembled at Illawarra before it goes on public display.

It is the second of seven F-111s to be rested at the museum. **Note: Aviatex 2013 Expo & Trade Show with 'Wings Over Illawarra' Airshow 3-5 May 2013 \***

#### The Flying Kangaroo Diverted Off Course .....

##### Qantas planes sold to Iran



US investigators foiled a sophisticated plot to funnel three jumbo jets originally owned by Qantas to Iran, in defiance of strict trade sanctions.

Qantas sold the passenger jets to a Middle East company which hatched the plan to send the jumbos to Iran. The planes were shifted between related companies in the United Arab Emirates and the West African country of Gambia over 16 months.

One of the jets - previously named the *City of Tamworth* - ended up in Iran in March last year, before US authorities intervened to prevent the other two 747s joining it there.

The revelations include details of how the firm to which Qantas had sold the three jumbos had created a front company in Gambia to help it get the planes to Iran without raising suspicions.

An aircraft leasing company in California has lodged a formal complaint against Qantas with the US State Department.

CSDS Aircraft Sales and Leasing alerted US investigators about Qantas selling the jumbos to Sayegh Group Aviation in the UAE, and the existence of the front company in Gambia.

The investigators found that the Gambian firm had been "created as a 'clean' company for the purpose of facilitating the lease of the 747s to an Iranian airline or airlines".

CSDS says Qantas did not do its homework on the buyers of its jumbo jets. But Qantas said it had met all its legal obligations and had taken "all reasonable precautions in respect of the sale of the three 747s to Sayegh Aviation Group".

The airline also pointed out that Sayegh was not "subject to any US regulatory investigation or process" when it sold the jets to it in August 2010.

"Whenever we sell an aircraft, we carry out extensive due diligence on the buyer," a spokesman said.

Iran is at the top of countries blacklisted by the US and other Western nations, including Australia. The US's heavy trade sanctions are aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions, and extend to the export of planes and aircraft parts to the Islamic Republic.

Aban Air, the Iranian airline which took the keys to what had been the *City of Tamworth*, wanted to fly it between its base in the Iranian capital Tehran and Bangkok in Thailand.

According to the US Bureau of Industry and Security, the boss of Sayegh had indicated that the other two jumbos - previously known as the *City of Mildura* and the *City of Geraldton* - had been flown in and out of various countries in the Middle East, including Syria.

"He admitted that the transactions were structured so that the lease to Aban Air [in Iran] would appear to be through a 'clean' company, Aviation Legacy [in Gambia]," the enforcement agency said. In placing the ban on Sayegh and its associates, US authorities ruled that the "conduct in this case is deliberate, significant, and likely to occur again" without their intervention.

The case raises questions about the obligations of aircraft sellers such as Qantas to find out the bona fides of buyers to ensure their planes do not end up in the wrong hands.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/qantas-planes-sold-to-iran-20130308-2fr2q.html#ixzz2O3CY0YDF>

Per PC

#### Calendar of Events

- 1 May 2013** - AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting.
- 4 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Bomber/Attack - Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 5 May 2013** - \* **Wings over Illawarra Air Show, Albion Park NSW.**
- 5 May 2013** - David Hack Classic Aircraft Fly-in, Toowoomba - Colac Aero Club 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Open Day, Colac Vic.
- 18 May 2013** - Aircraft Showcase – Fighters – Temora Aviation Museum

#### AHSA Meetings

**Brisbane** Meetings are held at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on the last Friday of each month at the Royal Queensland Aero Club, Archerfield. Visitors are welcome; contact George Palmer at [ahsa\\_qld@hotmail.com](mailto:ahsa_qld@hotmail.com). The next meeting will be 31 May 2013.

**Melbourne** Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East, in the auditorium. Parking is available under the building – enter from the lane at the south end. The meetings start at 7.30pm – ring the bell if the front door is shut. A number of members meet casually for dinner from 6.00pm at the Tower Hotel opposite the RAAFA. Visitors welcome – contact Antony Grage on 0418170395.

**Correspondence in the Aerodrome file at the Historical Society** contains letters to F K McKenzie from the Lowan Shire and Parliament Members and make interesting reading.

A letter from the Shire of Lowan, dated 16th November 1938, signed by Percy Creswell, advises McKenzie that the Council 'will strongly support your action taken relating to the establishment of an Air Flying Training School and an Aircraft Factory in Nhill'.

A letter to The Hon. T H Scholfield M.C. M.M. M.F. Parliament House Canberra, from Mr G A Street, Department of Defence, reads: 'In further to your representations at the insistence of Mr F K McKenzie, Free Press, Nhill, I now desire to inform you that the question of the selection of a site for the new flying school for the RAAF has received the careful consideration of the Government, and after the fullest examination of the matter from all its aspects, it has decided to establish the training school at Forest Hill, New South Wales, six and a half miles from Wagga.'

Not to be dismayed, F K kept up his endeavours and a letter from the Hon. T H Scholfield to F K on the 4th, December 1939, states: 'I have your letter of the 1st Ins, and will get in touch with the Minister of Air straight away, and bring your suggestion with regard to the use of Nhill as a training centre before him.'

I agree with you that Nhill has a very strong claim for consideration as an Air Training Centre, and you may rest assured of my strong representations that the matter should be fully investigated, with a view to approval being given to the establishment of such a centre there.'

On the 12th December 1939, Mr Hole, Minister for Air, wrote to The Hon. Scholfield, saying: 'Further to your personal representations on behalf of Mr F K McKenzie of Nhill, I now find that the Air Board is fully aware of the facilities available at Nhill for the training of pilots and I can assure you that this particular aerodrome will be kept well in mind when considering the sites for any new Air Force units to be formed in conjunction with the Empire Air Scheme or other war developments.'

On the 1st, November 1940, a letter from the Minister for Air, was sent to the Hon. T Scholfield, and said: "I am pleased to be able to supply some information as a result of representations which you made and which were also made by the local authorities regarding a proposal to establish an Air Force Training Unit at Nhill. I am glad to say that Nhill has been selected as the site for an Air Navigation School under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Arrangements will be made as requisite for the planning of the necessary buildings and services at the local aerodrome to accommodate the aircraft and personnel. Training at this school is scheduled to commence in July 1941, and an advance party will arrive some time before that date in order that the necessary arrangements may be put in hand. I have no doubt that in the organization of the school the local authorities will render every assistance to the commanding officer of the school."

A letter to F K from the Department of Air in January 1941 stating that: "I am directed to inform you that under the Royal Australian Air Force Development Program, this unit

is scheduled to form in July 1941, and will have an ultimate establishment of approximately 300 personnel.

It is anticipated that the advance party will arrive in June, but a definite date will not be available until the buildings are nearing completion. The school is responsible for the final stage in the training of Air observers and will conduct courses during a four week training period in Navigation."

Finally; a letter to F K from the Shire of Lowan, dated 21st November 1940 concludes:

"Reference was made by several of the Councillors at the table to the many and excellent services rendered by you in connection with the establishment both of the landing ground at Nhill and also this decision of the Government's to establish this school at Nhill, and I am directed to express to you the hearty appreciation of the council of the efforts made with the above by you.

Signed. Percy Creswell. Shire Secretary.

**This Foreword and Information** from the 1933 Air Pageant makes interesting reading:

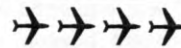
"The training of pilots of aircraft is a work of truly national importance; for there is no doubt that a large number of competent pilots will be required to handle the future development of Aviation. Whilst in the event of a national disaster or emergency, they would form a reserve of partly trained personnel that would undoubtedly be of inestimable value.

Take an interest in Aviation and see that Australia is not behind any country in the world in its Aircraft, Personnel and facilities for operation."

**Acknowledgement:** This article is from the archives of the Nhill Historical Society whose members work closely with the Nhill Aviation Heritage Centre to preserve Nhill's history.

<http://nhillaviationheritagecentre.com.au/>

per PC



From 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March members around Australia joined in commemorative services, functions and ceremonies to commemorate the **92<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Air Force.** Ed.



The distinction of being the first to take to the air belongs to a sheep, a cock and a duck, which were sent up in a Montgolfier Balloon from Versailles on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1783. The balloon descended eight minutes after the start as the hot air cooled. The sheep and the duck were uninjured, but the cock was found to be unwell and his condition was attributed by the learned professors to the rarefied atmosphere above. Closer investigation however, indicated that it had been trampled on by the sheep .....

### Thanks

Thanks to John Scott, Peter Coates and Warwick Bigsworth who contributed to this newsletter.

Contributions to the newsletter should be sent to the Editor – email: judyrainsford@hotmail.com

*in A H S A (nsw)*

## Aviation in Nhill, Victoria by Frank Bound

**Introduction.** The establishment of an aerodrome in Nhill was greatly assisted by the continuing efforts of Fred McKenzie, Reporter and later Proprietor of the "Nhill Free Press". This 1978 tribute to McKenzie by the late Frank Bound, President of the Nhill Historical Society, reads:

**F K McKenzie** was a journalist of high calibre, who during a great number of years used every endeavour within his journalistic capabilities to further the interests of Nhill. Probably his greatest foresight and ambition was typified by the endeavour he used to have Nhill established as an Aviation centre.

For many years F K was a "One man band" in this respect, and when Australia was first being "surveyed" for Aviation Defence purposes, and later for Civil Aviation, it was his constant urging of the local council, and his publication of newspaper articles that kept Nhill's claim to Aviation prominence as the exact geographical centre point between Melbourne and Adelaide well to the fore in the minds of everyone who was anyone as far as Aviation was concerned. It was as a result of his urgings that *the first official landing field in Western Victoria was established in "Moll's Paddock", adjoining Nhill on the East.*

F K then continued to "Badger" the Council to invite every Aviation celebrity to visit Nhill. It was as a result of these urgings that, at the invitation of the Lowan Shire council, *Amy Johnson, Bert Hinkler and Jimmy Mollison, record breaking England to Australia flyers visited Nhill, and earlier than this, Ross and Keith Smith, (later Knighted), dropped Australia's first "Aerogram", right into Victoria Street, addressed to Mr F K McKenzie, C/o the "Nhill Free Press" as they flew over Nhill en-route to Adelaide.*

During the 1930's the Department of Civil Aviation created an official DCA aerodrome at Nhill, with full time staff in radio contact with all aircraft operating in and out of Adelaide and Melbourne. The "Drome" was equipped with a radio beacon, and a revolving searchlight beacon, and when in 1942, the RAAF set up a wartime Navigation and Training school at the Nhill Aerodrome, F K considered this his "greatest achievement". His obituary records that throughout his long journalistic career, he never used his position to write adversely of anyone.

During the 1920s and 30s, F K published material relating to Aviation in some part of the world in practically every issue of the "Nhill Free Press". Extracts from the "Nhill Free Press" detail the story of the Aerodrome:

**Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1919** - First aircraft to land in Nhill: DeHavilland Sub Spotter, 100hp, piloted by Lieuts, Jones, Brearley and McKenzie, landed on the racecourse. Joy flights conducted for £5 and £3. The plane also carried out landings in J & T W Rintoule's paddock at the rear of the Catholic Church. Top speed capability of 75 mph.

**March 20<sup>th</sup> 1920** - Keith and Ross Smith fly over Nhill in a Vickers Vimy dropping the first aerogram in Victoria, addressed to the Nhill Free Press.

**March 1924** - Some preparatory work for the establishment of an aerodrome commenced on Mr Moll's paddock east of Nhill's township, that area now including Glenferness Street to Nhill Motel & Dimboola Road, south into Dickinson's paddock. Limestone North Eastern marker

Establishing Country Airports was still evident when the motel was constructed. After survey and inspection and protracted negotiations, Mr F K McKenzie of Nhill with Col Brinsmead of the Defence Department *finally proclaimed Nhill as a Government Landing Ground, giving Nhill claim to the first official inland airport.*

**October 8<sup>th</sup> 1925** - First aircraft accident in Nhill is recorded.

**September 9<sup>th</sup> 1926** - Mr H L Bond leases aerodrome from Mr Moll.

**September 18<sup>th</sup> 1927** - Subdivision of aerodrome site results in transfer of landing site to property of Young & Sutherland adjoining Halpin Park, now known as Blackwood's paddock & adjoining Park Street, north of School.

**November 1927** - *Sees the arrival of RAAF aircraft and is the prelude of what becomes a regular activity by the RAAF as training flights from Point Cook are conducted.*

**April 18<sup>th</sup> 1928** - Bert Hinkler arrived in Nhill and 1200 people gather to meet him.

**March 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> 1929** - Aero pageant for Back-to-Nhill celebrations. 16 aircraft visit Nhill for the occasion including 11 RAAF planes.

**June 6<sup>th</sup> 1929** - Air service, Perth to Sydney planned with stop at Nhill to be included.

**July 11<sup>th</sup> 1929** - Junkers first all metal monoplane aircraft lands at Nhill, piloted by Capt. Mustard.

**September 30<sup>th</sup> 1929** - Radio link for Sydney to Perth aerial derby established in Nhill and operated by Mr H R Brown of Yanac.

**October 1<sup>st</sup> 1929** - First aircraft in the Sydney-Perth Derby arrive after a turbulent flight.

**March 21<sup>st</sup> 1930** - Adelaide-Nhill-Melbourne return air service established by "Direct Airways". Ticket dated 11th April 1930 held by the late Mr Fred Stephen's family.

**June 26<sup>th</sup> 1930** - Visit by renowned Lady flier, Amy Johnson, on her London to Australia Solo flight.

**March. 1933** - Second Air Pageant in Nhill.

**November 1933** - Charles Kingsford-Smith, visits Nhill on barnstorming tour.

**1936/37** - Radio beacon weather station established at present Government Aerodrome.

**1938** - Full perimeter lighting installed and regular refuelling carried out on regular Australian National Airline DC 3 flights.

**1940** - Commencement of RAAF flying school.

**July 7<sup>th</sup> 1941** - RAAF moves into Nhill to establish No. 2 Astro Navigation School with over 2,000 personnel.

**1942** - Air Training Corp, formed D Flight of Wimmera Squad.

**1946** - Wimmera Aero Club established in Nhill with 3 Tiger Moth Aircraft. Mr F J Williams, First President.

**1948** - Second Air Service established to Melbourne and Adelaide.

**1950** - Nhill branch of Airforce Association established as a result of many of the community having served with the RAAF, 3 of whom were decorated.

**1950 onwards** - Nhill Aerodrome continues to be active with Aero Club in operation.

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### **It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,... – Final.**

There's something about a sailor, particularly a sailor from the United States Navy. That seemed to be Miss Nancy Bird's assessment after her inspection of aircraft on board an American warship in Sydney Harbour during the early 1930s. She wrote in her autobiography that: "My most vivid memory of the visit was learning with shock that the sailors who showed me the aircraft on board wore mirrors on the toes of their shoes so they could see up the girls' skirts as they lifted us on to the wing of the aircraft!" Nancy recalled that the year was 1933, the warship was the aircraft carrier, *U.S.S. Saratoga*, and its captain at the time was Albert Cushing Read. Indeed, the *U.S.S. Saratoga* was in Sydney in 1932, at the State Theatre, in the movie *Hell Divers*, sharing the starring roles with Clark Gable and Wallace Beery. The United States Navy co-operated with MGM in the making of the movie, with scenes on board the *U.S.S. Saratoga*, and at the Naval Air Station on North Island, San Diego. The Navy's carrierbased Curtiss F8C-4 Helldiver biplanes also starred in the movie. The movie would have made a lasting impression on an air minded sixteen year old like Nancy Bird. Many years later, when she wrote *My God! It's a Woman*, her memory of the movie may explain her confusion between the *U.S.S. Saratoga*, which never did visit Sydney Harbour, and the heavy cruiser, *U.S.S. Augusta*, which entered the harbour four days after her nineteenth birthday in 1934, and which carried four, catapult launched, Curtiss SOC Seagull biplanes. However, Nancy did meet Captain Read and go on board the *U.S.S. Saratoga*, in *San Francisco*, during her 1938/39 sabbatical.

If Nancy had any complaints about the behaviour of American sailors it should perhaps have been directed to Captain Chester W. Nimitz, who was in command of the *U.S.S. Augusta* when it was in Sydney Harbour during October 20-26, 1934. The *U.S.S. Augusta* was the flagship of the American Asiatic Fleet, and also on board was the fleet's Commander in Chief, Admiral Frank B. Upham. The purpose of the visit to Australia was to represent the U.S.A. at celebrations for the Centenary of Melbourne. However, the first port of call was Sydney. As it happened, *Augusta's* week in Sydney was one of the most exciting in Australian aviation history. The MacRobertson Air Race started from Mildenhall on October 20. On the following day, Kingsford Smith and P.G. Taylor took off from Brisbane in *Lady Southern Cross* on the first west to east aerial crossing of the Pacific. Meanwhile, *Augusta* excited Sydney residents by catapulting its complement of four Curtiss Seagulls to fly in formation over the city. The *Augusta* was open to the public every afternoon, and there were parties and dances organised to entertain the ship's company of 105 officers and 995 enlisted men. I can't believe that anyone could have kept Nancy Bird away from visiting the *U.S.S. Augusta* during that highly charged aviation week. Therefore, it is more likely that it was on board the *U.S.S. Augusta*, during the week of October 20-26, 1934, that young Sydney women were subjected to certain disgraceful indiscretions while being lifted onto the wings of Curtiss SOC Seagull aircraft.

Nancy made her first contact with the *U.S.S. Saratoga* when she noticed the carrier berthed at the San Francisco Naval Base when she was on board the *American Clipper* as it landed near Treasure Island on July 8, 1939. *Saratoga* was back in port after completing trials of at-sea refuelling techniques, which were later used to great benefit during the extended naval campaigns against the Japanese in the Pacific. The Commanding Officer of *Saratoga*, since June 16, 1938, was Captain Albert Cushing Read. His early fame as a pioneering naval aviator resulted from his command of the Curtiss flying boat NC-4 when it became the first aeroplane to cross the Atlantic from New York to Plymouth, via Newfoundland, The Azores and Portugal, in May 1919. Albert Read may also have had a predilection for the name Nancy, because the three Curtiss flying boats which set out to fly the Atlantic, NC-1,3 and 4, were affectionately referred to as *The Nancies*. Mark McKee made sure that Nancy continued to enjoy Pan Am hospitality after she arrived in San Francisco. Arrangements were made for Pan Am to send airline publicity material to Sydney for her *Wings the World Over* exhibition. On the evening of July 10, she was a guest at another cocktail party hosted by Colonel Clarence Young. Nancy again had the opportunity to talk to Oswald Ryan at the party, and to meet another guest, Captain Read, for

the first time. No doubt she told Captain Read of her previous encounter with U.S. Naval Aviators in Sydney and may have mentioned the clandestine mirrors. The 99s had seen to it that Nancy had a companion, Ruth Wakeman, during her stay in San Francisco. And so it was that Nancy and Ruth were invited by Captain Read to join him for lunch, the following day, on board the *U.S.S. Saratoga*. Nancy wrote that being piped on board the *Saratoga* as official guests of Captain Albert Cushing Read was a memorable experience. After lunch Nancy was escorted on a visit to *The Golden Gate International Exposition* on Treasure Island. That evening she was the official guest of the 99s at dinner in Oakland.

In response to an invitation from a Southwest Section member of the 99s, Nancy left San Francisco by train and travelled down to Santa Barbara to stay for a few days. A member of the Southwest Section, and a future President of 99s, Ethel Sheehy, paid Nancy the honour of flying her plane to Santa Barbara to join her for lunch on July 13. It must have been a sad farewell to her 99s hosts, when she left Santa Barbara to rejoin the programme Pan Am had arranged for her. There is no doubt the experience of her association with 99s members throughout the U.S.A., during the last two months, strengthened her determination to create a similar association for Australian women pilots. Her continued contact with the 99s in later years resulted in her induction into the 99s *International Forest of Friendship* in Atchison, Kansas, during 1979.

On July 6, 1939, Richard Archbold's *Guba II* set down in San Diego Bay after completing the first around the world flight by a flying boat. Part of this journey, the crossing of the Indian Ocean, had been under the command of Nancy's old air navigation tutor, P. G. Taylor, who was responsible for initiating the flight through an agreement with the British and Australian governments. Mark McKee, perhaps realising the significance of this historic event to the young Australian aviatrix in his care, arranged for her to fly down to San Diego where the *Guba II* was being overhauled at the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation factory where it was built. This also gave Nancy the chance to cross the border into Mexico to experience yet another country before flying back to Los Angeles to stay with the McKee's on her last night in the U.S.A.

Nancy boarded the *S.S. Monterey*, and found herself suddenly removed from the magical world of aviation in which she had been so absorbed during the past twelve months. She felt a sense of anti climax, bordering on depression, as she isolated herself in her cabin, in steerage class, over the churning propellers which moved the ship slowly on towards Honolulu. Her finances were also almost exhausted. Eventually she overcame her pride and cabled home for money. At Honolulu she changed to an upper deck cabin. She was then invited to dine at the Purser's table and was seated next to Charles Walton. Nancy wrote: "With constant attention from this charming attractive and gentle man the glorious days on the ocean ended each night dancing to the music of the American band... by the time the ship reached Australia we were deeply in love and became engaged."

When the *Monterey* berthed in Sydney on August 7, Nancy and Charles kept their engagement secret. They decided it was important for Nancy to prepare for her *Wings the World Over* exhibition without distraction. However, during her absence, the public had lost interest in civil aviation and had become more concerned about air defence. Reporters, coming on board for interviews with *Monterey* passengers, sought out Sir Keith Smith, who was returning after inspections of the Bristol and Lockheed plants in connection with government decisions to build Bristol Beauforts in Australia and to import Lockheed Hudsons from the U.S.A. Nancy's fellow passengers also included representatives of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, United Aircraft Corporation, Pratt & Whitney and Fairchild Aerial Surveys, all of interest to the press. Nancy's interview, relegated to the women's Interest columns, commenced with her comment: "It is a pity that flying should be regarded, as it seems to be today, purely as an important defence activity." Three weeks before *Wings the World Over* opened at David Jones, Australia was at war. The centrepiece of the exhibition, a magnificent collection of models and posters from Lufthansa, was never shown. A critic writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* seemed to miss the point with her final words: "The exhibition, however, lacks movement. Some simple working models would be an improvement." The exhibition moved to Myers in Melbourne, closing on November 12. On December 16, Nancy and Charles were married by the Rev. John Flynn at Scots Church in Sydney. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. **J.Scott**



# AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

PO BOX K346 HAYMARKET NSW 1238

## *Southern Skies*

THE NEWSLETTER OF AHSA (NSW) Inc

JUNE 2013 ~ No 473

### ***June Meeting***

The June meeting will be held at the Powerhouse Museum on Wednesday 5 June 2013, at 7.45pm. The venue is the Amenities Room, at the southern end of the Administration building. Entry is via Macarthur Street and car parking is immediately in front of the meeting room. Visitors are most welcome and supper will be available after the meeting.

### **A CELEBRATION OF AVIATION COLLECTIONS**

The AHSA (NSW) Inc. Collectors' Club will hold its inaugural meeting at the Powerhouse on June 5th.

AHSA (NSW) Inc will also celebrate the Silver Anniversary of its first meeting at the Powerhouse Museum, the conservator of one of Australia's significant aviation collections. The Society's role in the addition to the Powerhouse collection of the Beech Queen Air, VH-AMB, resulted in our affiliation with the Powerhouse with the consequent privilege of being given the Powerhouse as a venue for our meetings. We began meeting in Stage 1 on February 3, 1988, and moved into the main building after the official opening of the Powerhouse on March 10, 1988. At the time of the opening, Director Lindsay Sharp said: "At the core of the Powerhouse experience lies our collection. Built over a century, it is the richest in Australia and of international breadth and quality."

President Ian Debenham, past curator of the aviation collection and current volunteer at the Powerhouse, will say a few words about the museum's aviation collection to open our meeting.

Tom Lockley will then briefly introduce us to the prolific aviation collection of the late Bob Wills. Bob was a long time member of AHSA Inc until his untimely death in an aircraft accident on March 18, 2000. Bob Will's extensive collection, which is preserved at the Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown, remains as a fitting memorial to a great collector.

Paul Ewoldt will then explain the passion that drives the individual to collect and preserve items of aviation interest or historical importance.

Time will be available for other members to inform the meeting about their particular collecting endeavours. All members are encouraged to bring items from their collections to promote "Show and Tell" discussions during the evening.

In case any member is not a collector, a copy of an *East West Airlines* post card is included for those who receive *Southern Skies* by mail. This is intended as a collection

starter. The card showing BAe 146 300, VH-EWI, is from a stack that was discarded twenty years ago by the disconsolate staff as they closed the doors of the *East West* regional office in Parramatta. The name, *East West Airlines* had just disappeared, after 46 years, into the anonymity of the parent monolith *Ansett*. Each item in a collection, no matter how small, should tell a story.

JS

### ***May Meeting***

Prior to introducing the Guest Speaker, Ian Debenham advised that there was good news in regard to the preservation of the DC-2 "Uiver", which had been on display at Albury Airport. The local council has accepted responsibility for the restoration of the aircraft to display standard and that it would be enclosed in a purpose-built secure building to protect it from the elements and any further deterioration. The decision to retain and restore the aircraft overturns the desire of the former Council management which seemed willing to dump the aircraft. An offer from the Queensland Aviation Museum was received with the objective to buy the aircraft to save it from destruction, therefore the change of heart by Albury Council was welcomed by QAM.

Guest speaker was Ken Garland, whose subject was "The Centenary Flyer", which was one of several aircraft that did not make it to the start line of the 1934 MacRobertson Air Race.

Whilst on another mission in regard to examining a Cri-Cri experimental category aircraft at Mittagong, Ken recognized a photograph of the Centenary Flyer on the wall. The owner was Richard Leech, son of Ted Leech, who was one of the designers of the Centenary Flyer. Richard also had a copy of the aircraft Design Manual, published in 1935.

The 1934 MacRobertson Air Race attracted much interest from pilots and manufacturers from around the world, and Australian engineers Ted Leech and Jim Jones, along with former RAF flying officer and Schneider Trophy pilot, Don Saville, went about designing an aircraft for the race. The aircraft was a twin engine, twin tail-boom monoplane, with a four spar wing and full-span ailerons that could be used as flaps. The fuselage was made from welded steel tube. It was powered by two Harkness Hornet engines, which, because of the design of the aircraft, had to lie on their sides. Initially rated at 115hp, the engines were boosted to 150hp with counter-rotating variable pitched propellers. Seating was for two, side-by-side, but a narrower cockpit than a current-day Cessna 152.

**'The Centenary Flyer' cont'd**

The initial All Up Weight (AUW) was 2,300lb and ultimate design AUW was 3,375lb. Its design maximum speed was 200 mph and cruise 180 mph. Ken did some checks against the Design Manual, and found that the ailerons would have failed at about 170 mph.

Jim Jones sought funds through the All Australian (British) Aeroplane Fund for assistance to complete construction of "Australia's own plane to compete in Australia's Race from London to Melbourne". The trio also suggested that the aircraft could be purchased by the RAAF, which responded by saying it had no need for such an aircraft. The local newspaper provided little support for the project. However Aircraft magazine supported the project by saying Australia should be able to produce aeroplanes worthy of our pilots. Funding for tyres came from Dunlop and paint from Dulux, whilst the Australian Women's Weekly contributed £500. Initial construction took place at Ryde in north-west Sydney and was later put on display at Grace Bros. on Broadway, Sydney until moved to the Tugan Aircraft factory at Mascot.

It was intended to replace the unsuccessful Harkness Hornet engines with Hermes in-line engines imported from the United Kingdom; but one of the engines was off-loaded in Colombo and failed to reach Australia. Without sufficient funds and certification of airworthiness from the appropriate authorities the project was cancelled and the aircraft never flew. From the Tugan Aircraft factory, the fuselage was eventually moved to another engineering business at Mascot.

For the record, the Centenary Flyer was allocated Race Number 43 and the registration of VH-USJ was reserved, but not taken up.

Ken's talk was accompanied by many interesting images and the Design Manual.

WB

**Answers from the Trivia Quiz:**

1. What type of aircraft was the first to be flown under the Sydney Harbour Bridge following the introduction of a preventative regulation in 1931? **Genairco** (Aircraft at PDC Castle Hill)
2. Who was the pilot? **Goya Henry**
3. What type of engine was fitted to the prototype de Havilland Drover? **DeHavilland Gypsy Major**
4. Name the first woman passenger on a flight from England to Australia. **Jessie "Chubbie" Miller**
5. What is the name of the Australian recognized as the designer/constructor of the first delta-winged hang glider? **John Dickenson**

**AdHSA Meetings**

**Brisbane** Meetings are held at 7.00pm for 7.30pm on the last Friday of each month at the Royal Queensland Aero Club, Archerfield. Visitors are welcome; contact George Palmer at [ahsa\\_qld@hotmail.com](mailto:ahsa_qld@hotmail.com).

The next meeting will be 31 May 2013 and will be an Aircraft Recognition Competition.

**Melbourne** Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East, in the auditorium. Parking is available under the building – enter from the lane at the south end. The meetings start at 7.30pm – ring the bell if the front door is shut. A number of members meet casually for dinner from 6.00pm at the Tower Hotel opposite the RAAFA. Visitors welcome – contact Antony Grage on 0418170395.

**Vale****Keith John Townsend Robey M.B.E.**

Highly respected aviation legend and AHSA (NSW) member, Keith Robey M.B.E. passed away on 9 May 2013 after a long illness. He was 91.

Keith's involvement in flying training is renown, but of course his involvement was much wider and lasted during his youthful years and all his adult life.

He was born in 1921 and from when he was a young boy he had a passion for flight. His father, George, queried why young Keith was not interested in the youth groups of the day, to which Keith replied, "They didn't have aeroplanes". That convinced George to establish the *Australian Air League* of which Keith became the first registered cadet. Keith strongly supported the Australian Air League for the rest of his days.

Keith learnt to fly before World War II and after he was eventually accepted into the RAAF his previous flying experience enabled him to progress swiftly. He flew Tiger Moths, Airspeed Oxfords and Avro Ansons, the latter in maritime reconnaissance roles. He was eventually transferred to a B-24 Liberator Squadron and flew missions out of Darwin and other northern Australia airfields. Following the war he returned to civilian flying, rejecting the offer of airline jobs, and instead returned to the growing flying training business. In 1951 he began flying with Illawarra Flying School and remained in the Operations Manager and CFI roles for 18 years. During his time with Illawarra Flying School the company was involved not only in training, but general charter, the Qantas Cadet Scheme, target towing and aircraft manufacture. The Fawcett 120 was a high-wing single engine four place aircraft, in which Keith spent over 100 hours testing and developing the aircraft. The influx of American light aircraft and lack of any government support put an early end to the development of the Fawcett 120.

In 1969 Keith took up the position of Operations Manager, Ansett General Aviation, the Piper distributor, and remained there for many years until the business was sold. Whilst others might have considered retirement, Keith and his wife, Senja, took over the Police Aero Club at Hoxton Park. It was renamed as the Phoenix Flying School which relocated to Camden upon the closure of Hoxton Park.

Keith's other activities also warrant mention. He was one of the founders of the Bankstown Airport Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Commercial Flying Operators (later known as the General Aviation Association) and of course was a prolific writer of test-flying articles in Aircraft magazine.

Our condolences go to Senja and her family.

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The Mosquito Display at AAMB - Note the Illawarra Flying School Fawcett 120 in background

## MOSQUITO DISPLAY AT AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM, BANKSTOWN

As we all know, the production of the Mosquito at Bankstown was a major project of the early 1940s, yet few Mosquitos have survived.

Some interesting parts have been preserved at the Australian Aviation Museum at Bankstown. The museum also has an original Packard Merlin engine and the original wind tunnel model used at Bankstown for research. However, displaying these interesting items has been difficult. The museum's hangar is packed with fascinating aircraft!

The all-volunteer staff at the museum last year won a grant of money from the *Volunteers In Museums* program that is sponsored by the New South Wales Government. This provided materials for the volunteers to make moveable display stands for the various items. Money was also available for setting up an audiovisual presentation of wartime films of the Mosquito at Bankstown. Volunteer David Hill also worked for hundreds of hours constructing a very detailed large-scale model of a typical Mosquito aircraft. The whole process was a team effort involving many AAMB volunteers. The museum also had some valuable assistance from Don Taylor, of the Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia.

The whole display fits under the wing area of the museum's unique Fawcett 120 light aircraft, and can be easily moved when the museum is rearranged. It is attracting considerable interest, and is preserving the memory of this exciting period in Australian aviation and the remarkable work done at Bankstown. TL

### Calendar of Events

- 1 June 2013 - Aviation Showcase – Trainers to Fighters – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 5 June 2013 - AHSA (NSW) Inc Monthly meeting.
- 15 June 2013 - Aviation Showcase –World War II to Vietnam – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW
- 29/30 June 2013 - Open Cockpit Weekend, Queensland Air Museum, Caloundra Qld
- 6 July 2013 - Aviation Showcase – North American Aviation – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.
- 20 July 2013 - Aviation Showcase – Fighters – Temora Aviation Museum, Temora NSW.

## PNG FIRST AIRMAIL RESURFACES

By HAIVETA KIVIA

**THE First registered airmail posted in Lae in 1934**, resurfaced at the Lae Post Office on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013, courtesy of Cliff Harvey of Willoughby, NSW, Australia. History was staring at the Lae Post Office employees when Post PNG's Mamose Logistics Manager Chris Black brought in Mr Harvey with the envelope, still as fresh as it was sent 79 years ago. The airmail was sent by the Lae Post Master Hugh Lyon to his mother Mrs H Lyon of Kelvin Grove, 131 Dover Road, Rose Bay, Sydney on July 30, 1934 and it arrived at South Road Post office in NSW on August 2, 1934, two days after it was posted in Lae.

The original envelope that the letter was sent in is still in immaculate state with 23 pence eight stamps, depicting the Regiana Bird of Paradise, ranging from a half penny stamp, one and half, two, two and half, three, four, five and six pence, and was signed by the aircraft crew who flew it to Australia.

Lyon also went coffee plantation and gold mining before leaving for Australia. He died 15 years ago in 1998 and his estate, which includes the now famous envelope, was inherited by Mr Harvey and his partner, who were family friends of Lyon, who did not have a living relative to pass on his estates. The aircrew who signed the envelopes were Charles Ulm, Scotty Allen, RN Burton and Danny Young, who are all deceased.

Ulm and Allen, also have history behind their names: they flew as co-pilots with World famous aviator Charles Kingsford Smith.

Mr Harvey was in the country to pay his respect to his late uncle, Sergeant T P Bridewell of the 2nd/17th Battalion, who lies at the Lae War Cemetery after he was killed in action in the Second World War at Finschhafen. *"I will get this framed on a golden frame and displaying in a special place where the letter came from and it will at the Lae Post Office,"* he said.

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BH

### In Touch

Our best wishes to Roger Kennedy who has to go into hospital again for more cancer surgery. He'll be admitted to Royal North Shore Public on 29 May.

## 'OVER' THE BLUE MOUNTAINS : From Foot to Flight

**'Bankstown to Bathurst':** The centenary of 'Crossing the Blue Mountains' was celebrated on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2013 by pilots flying from Bankstown and Richmond RAAF base via O'Connell to Bathurst. The day was VMC, the photographers recorded the shining aircraft and the TV cameras gave vision and spectacle to the public.

In 1813, when Gregory Blaxland, Lt. William Lawson and William Charles Wentworth set out to seek a route, a considerable amount of information had been gathered for their journey from Emu Plains, for not only did they know of numerous routes which didn't work, but they had George Cayley's observations of the main ridge, made from Mt Banks. They also knew that the most successful efforts were those which followed ridges.

From earliest times explorers and soldiers knew the value of a 'view from the top' in planning.

The view from Mt York is not, as implied by some accounts of history, one of expansive pastures. It is of the upper Cox's valley. The Great Dividing Range blocks the view to the west. Descending into the valley, they came to the same bank of the same river as they had been on 12 days earlier - the Cox's River flows to the Nepean. They could have got there by following the river, as John Wilson apparently had done.

Their turn-around point was Mt Blaxland, some 12km short of the Great Divide. They had discovered a way over the Blue Mountains and an area of pasture on the other side. It was May 31, they had been travelling for 21 days, and had covered about 93km; an average of about 4.5km per day. They returned to Emu Plains in 5 days.

Six months later George Evans led a team which followed the Three Explorers' route, and continued on to where Bathurst now stands. He thus became the first European known to have reached the rich pasture land of the Western Slopes and Plains.

Governor Macquarie now became seriously interested. He commissioned George Cox to build a road along the route, and personally made the trip to Bathurst soon after the road was completed. Bathurst, which did not yet exist as such, was to become Australia's first inland city.

And travel was by foot: walking, or coach-and-horses!

**The link** between the 2013 Commemorative Flight and History is noteworthy in Australia due its late British-recorded 'discovery' and development along European lines. It also demonstrates a comparison with geographical discovery, the breakthroughs of science and technology and the development of flight in Australia over a similar period of time.

It is doubtful that many participants admiring the beautiful Blue Mountain scenery in speed and comfort in 2013 thought of the amazing development between traversing the Range by foot and 3 horses, as did the intrepid explorers in 1813, and zipping across in the comfort of modern aircraft in 2013.

**Only 30 years before 1813**, on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1783, two months after the French chemist, Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier named a newly-discovered gas 'hydrogen', Professor Jacques Charles of the French Academy of Sciences filled a 12-foot diameter unmanned balloon with the gas, launched it from the Champs-de-Mars in Paris and watched it disappear into the clouds. When it landed 11 miles away near the village of Gonesse, frightened villagers thought it was an evil-smelling

monster and hacked it to death.

A few years before the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay, the world's first aeronauts, Pilâtre de Rozier and the Marquis d'Arlandes, achieved flight. On 21 November 1783, they took to the skies over Paris, France in a Montgolfier hot air balloon and flew a distance of 9 km. It attracted French interest at the highest level. Within a month King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette watched the Montgolfier brothers launch their first full-sized hot-air balloon.

It is doubtful that many residents living in the new colony of Sydney had heard of this new ability to travel in the birds' environment.

**The first news** of aviation's progress from balloons to winged aircraft reached the colony in May 1843, when an article appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* describing William Henson's Aerial Steam Carriage. It was a propeller driven vehicle whose design was well ahead of its time but never built to full scale.

The following decade, Dr William Bland of Sydney published drawings of his *Atmotic Ship*, a semi-rigid airship powered by a steam engine. Although the ship was never built, the highly acclaimed model and drawings were exhibited at the Crystal Palace in London during 1854 and in Paris the following year.

**Throughout the mid 19th century** several balloon flights were made in Australia, the earliest experimenter being M. Pierre Maigre. In 1856, Maigre's attempted ascent from the Domain, Sydney, was a disaster. The paying spectators felt aggrieved at the aeronaut's failure to fly and rioted. Maigre was lucky to escape with his life.

In 1858 balloonist William Dean was more successful. His gas-filled balloon, *The Australasian*, travelled a total distance of 30 km with two people aboard.

Thomas Gale's first flight in *The Young Australian* in 1869 ended when the balloon tore and Gale was dumped out of the basket and injured. Rufus Wells' balloon flights in 1878 often ended in misfortune. The same year a balloon being launched from the Domain escaped when one would-be aeronaut jumped out, giving his companion an unwanted high altitude view of Sydney.

A memorable night in Sydney saw Henri L'Estrange's ascent from the Domain on 15 March 1881. Trying to fix a gas leak at an altitude of 750 metres, L'Estrange slipped and found himself clinging for dear life. As the balloon careened towards Woolloomooloo he struck a building in Palmer Street igniting the leaking gas. The explosion that followed '*cast a brief, but vivid illumination over the entire suburb*'.

**Ornithopters: mechanical birds or flying machines**

In 1889 Charles Bayliss photographed Lawrence Hargrave's collection of model ornithopters. Hargrave later presented a selection of Bayliss's photographs to the Engineering Association of New South Wales, in an album entitled '*The evolution of the flying machine*'.

**The three-day journey to Bathurst was by Cobb & Co coach on dirt roads with the danger of bushrangers, or on foot.**

*Flight to Bathurst was, as is said, 'but a dream' to some and a challenge to others. Fast flight with coffee and cake was just a sip away in the passing of time. Who would be first? JR*

**Thanks** Thanks to John Scott, Peter Coates, Tom Lockley, Bill Holswich and Warwick Bigsworth who contributed to this newsletter.

Contributions to the newsletter should be sent to the Editor - email:

judyrainsford@hotmail.com

*in A H S A (nsw)*

## LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

### Rose Bay Diary – Part 1.

The AHSA NSW Branch developed a special relationship with the Rose Bay Flying Boat Base during its last years in the early seventies. In the June, 1970, issue of our newsletter, members were advised that the branch had organised a weekend charter of an Ansett operated Short Sandringham from Rose Bay to Lake Eucumbene. The cost of the charter, \$46 per person, covered two days in the Australian Alps, over November 28/29, 1970, including air fare, ground transport by Pioneer Coach, accommodation, all meals and entrance fees. The charter was so popular with members that it was repeated over the weekend of November 20/21, 1971. There were two Sandringham charters during 1972: the first to the dedication of the *Catalina Memorial Park* at Rathmines on September 16, and the second a return to Lake Eucumbene over the weekend of November 18/19. On January 18, 1973, members were invited to attend an inspection of facilities at the Ansett Flying Boat Base, Rose Bay, where Ron Bush explained the maintenance procedures for the two Sandringhams in his care. The annual charter to Lake Eucumbene had now become a Society tradition and, despite the cost per person rising to \$65, the November 17/18, 1973, charter was fully booked. With construction of an airstrip on Lord Howe Island then underway, Airlines of New South Wales announced early in 1974 that it planned to retire its flying boats from service on May 31. However, there was a reprieve resulting in the last service to Lord Howe being flown by the Sandringham *Beachcomber*, VH-BRC, on September 10, 1974. On the previous day, members of AHSA NSW Branch flew on a one hour charter in *Beachcomber* at a cost of \$12 per member. On September 25, the Sandringham *Islander*, VH-BRF, (renamed Excalibur VIII and register N158J), took off from Rose Bay for its new home in the Virgin Islands. On November 28, *Beachcomber*, (renamed *Southern Cross* and registered N158C), followed, bringing flying boat operations at Rose Bay to a close.

On March 1972, two remarkable sisters, with a lifetime observing aviation activity on Rose Bay, attended our Annual General Meeting. Their attendance was acknowledged by our newsletter editor, Greg Anderson, who thanked the sisters, Misses Vida and Marie Breckenridge, for their donation of historical material for our archives. Our Hon. Secretary at the time, Roger McDonald, also requested any member who was researching the history of the Rose Bay Flying Boat Base to contact him. He developed an immediate rapport with Vida and Marie, and despite his relocation to Perth in August 1973, he kept in touch with them. It was through this friendship that Roger was introduced to the rear neighbour of the Breckenridge sisters, the widow of Graham Reddall. Mrs Reddall was looking for a home for her late husband's extensive aviation collection. That collection is now the jewel in the crown of the AHSA (NSW) Inc archives within the library of the Australian Aviation Museum, Bankstown. Graham Reddall's collection of photographs and negatives is cared for by our Photographic Archivist, David Eyre. In July, 1976, Roger visited Vida and Marie for lunch in their house at 14 Rawson Road, Rose Bay. He described it as a truly beautiful old family home, with the most wonderful views over Rose Bay and Sydney Harbour. He then understood why Vida and Marie had been so captivated by the seaplanes and flying boats on the waters below them.

Six years after the end of scheduled flying boat operations, on September 12, 1980, the Mayor of Woollahra Council unveiled a plaque at the site of the Sydney Water Airport. It reads: "In recognition of the valuable service rendered to the people of Australia both in peace and war by the flying boats operating to all parts of the world from the Sydney Water Airport, 1938 to 1974." The 50th anniversary of the start of scheduled flying boat operations, July 5, 1988, was commemorated by the unveiling of a second plaque nearby which reads: "At 7 am on 5th of July 1938 Qantas Airways (in conjunction with Imperial Airways) commenced flying boat operations from Rose Bay. Three services operated per week in each direction between Sydney and Southampton England taking five and a half days with scheduled stops at 31 ports on route. The first flight using a Short 'C' Class Empire Flying Boat registration VH-ABF "Cooee" was under the command of Captain P. Lynche Blossie with a crew of 10 which included three stewards being employed for the first time on a Qantas aircraft. Qantas

ceased flying boat operations from Rose Bay early in June 1955.” As the 75th anniversary of the start of flying boat operations at Rose Bay now approaches, it seemed appropriate for *Loops and Landings* to commemorate the event by observing the local history of aviation in Rose Bay through the eyes of the Breckenridge sisters, from about the time they were born to the time of their excitement as the Sydney Water Airport prepared to commence operations in 1938. The assistance in this endeavour of Roger McDonald, the Woollahra Local History Centre and Diana Hampshire, a close friend of Vida and Marie Breckenridge, is acknowledged with sincere thanks.

Charles and Anna Breckenridge were living in Mosman when their first child, Vida Adeline, was born on May 26, 1910. Their second daughter, Marie Howe, was also born in Mosman on February 9, 1915. The Breckenridge family moved to their new home at 14 Rawson Road, Rose Bay in 1917. In clear view across the bay was 58 Wunulla Road, on Woollahra Point. Number 58 now bears a marble tablet which is inscribed: “Lawrence Hargrave – A Pioneer of Aviation – Lived Here – 1902-1915.” In the book, *Lawrence Hargrave, Explorer, Inventor & Aviation Experimenter*, W. Hudson Shaw and Olaf Ruhen, (1977), there is a photograph of Hargrave, taken about 1902, standing on the foreshore of Rose Bay near his house, looking towards where Lyne Park was then being reclaimed from tidal sand flats. In 1905 eight acres on the eastern side of the park was revoked for use as a recreational oval for the Navy. In 1938 this land became the site for the flying boat base.

In January, 1902, Hargrave wrote to the *London Times* informing the editor that: “I am pursuing my investigation with a view to making a machine of sufficient power to rise from the surface of the water.” By May 1, 1902, photographs taken at the rear of 58 Wunulla Road, show his sixth design for a full size, steam engine powered, trimaran float plane. Throughout 1902, and well into 1903, Hargrave wrestled with the joint problems of engine power and propeller efficiency. There was a third problem – insufficient finance to support his endeavours. He even contemplated the design of a form of rocket or jet engine to get his float plane into the air. At the end of 1903 a frustrated, and thoroughly exhausted, Hargrave fell gravely ill with typhoid fever. On December 17, 1903, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved eternal fame on the other side of the world at Kill Devil Hill, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Hudson Shaw wrote: “Hargrave’s failure to translate the potential power of his engine into thrust for flight destroyed his last opportunity of being the first to fly in a powered, heavier-than-air, machine, an honour and reward he had well earned.” Hargrave’s failure also deprived Rose Bay of world renown as the birthplace of powered, heavier-than-air flight.

By June, 1905, Hargrave’s float plane concept had been taken over by Gabriel Voisin and Ernest Archdeacon who experimented with their Voisin - Archdeacon float plane glider on the River Seine in the western suburbs of Paris. Further development of these experiments resulted in the Voisin biplane, the type that Houdini flew for the last time in Australia, at Rosehill in May, 1910, the month Vida Breckenridge was born. The Hargrave influence on float plane design could also be seen in the form of the Maurice Farman Hydro-Aeroplane that appeared on Sydney Harbour in May, 1914. By then Hargrave had witnessed the success of many of his own inventions in the hands of other aviation pioneers, where the same success for him had been elusive. When war broke out in August, 1914, he was working on a novel four cylinder, two-stroke aero engine, with the assistance of his only son Geoffrey. Geoffrey joined the 2nd Australian Expeditionary Force and sailed for Egypt at the beginning of 1915. On May 25, 1915, the day before Vida Breckenridge turned five, Geoffrey Hargrave was killed at Gallipoli. This tragedy was compounded six weeks later by the death of Lawrence Hargrave himself, at the age of 65, as a result of complications following surgery to remove an appendix. A short service was conducted at 58 Wunulla Road on July 7, before the funeral cortege left for the burial service at the Church of England section of Waverley Cemetery. Just on a century after the Hargrave family moved into their new home at Woollahra Point, an RAAF F/A-18 Hornet flew over Lawrence’s grave, where a ceremony was in progress following restoration work carried out under the sponsorship of the Australian Division of the Royal Aeronautical Society. Next year Australia will begin commemorating the ANZAC Centenary Programme, which will continue through 2014-2018. The year 1915 saw the deaths of both Geoffrey and Lawrence Hargrave. The year 1915 also gave us two baby girls: Marie Howe Breckenridge on February 9, and Nancy Bird on October 16. **John Scott.**