



AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc

ABN: 83 295 759 224

HON SECRETARY, PAUL EWOLDT : E paul.ewoldt@hotmail.com
13/40A ROSLYN GARDENS RUSHCUTTERS BAY NSW 2011

Southern Skies

THE NEWSLETTER OF AHSA (NSW) Inc

APRIL 2019 ~ No 537

Honorary Life Member AHSA (NSW) Inc: Ian Debenham

**THE APRIL AHSA (NSW) Inc MEETING
WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3rd COMMENCING at 8:00 pm.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM
DOWNSTAIRS AT THE NORTH RYDE RSL COMMUNITY CLUB.**

The club is located at the corner of Pittwater and Magdala Roads, North Ryde. There is ample free parking and visitors are most welcome. The facilities of the club are available to members and visitors for pre and post meeting refreshment and conversation.

MEMBERS MEET FOR DINNER IN THE RIVER VIEWS RESTAURANT ON THE TOP FLOOR AT 6.30 PM.



**THE MEETING WILL FEATURE
THE 35TH ANNUAL AVIATION TRIVIA COMPETITION
AND THE 50TH ANNUAL AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION
COMPETITION.**

The winner of the *Aviation Trivia competition* receives the prestigious *Slipstream Trophy*, also a book or DVD prize.



The *President's Trophy* will be awarded to the 'most improved' with a book as well.

The winner of the *Aircraft Recognition quiz* will receive the *Brian White Trophy* and a book prize.

THE AHSA (NSW) Inc ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING included the President's Report, the Financial Report and the Election of Office Bearers.

AHSA (NSW) PRESIDENT'S AGM REPORT 2018

Paul Ewoldt, 2018 President, provided the following report:

IT hardly seems possible that yet another year has passed and I am presenting another report on the previous year's activities of the AHSA (NSW) Inc. In 2018 the Society progressed well with a steady flow of activities and achievements.

Our monthly meetings portrayed a rich variety of speakers both from guests and members.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED: May - Peter Marroszeky's talk about the Boeing 787 "Dreamliner";

August - a joint talk by Gareth Morgan, President, Des Sheehan, Secretary and Gordon Lasslett, Treasurer, about the work of the Australian Society of WW1 Aero Historians;

September - Chris Bailey of the "Riverwood Hornets", Australian Air League presented a history of the AAL and the current work of the "Riverwood Hornets".

Later in the year I was invited to their annual awards ceremony at Riverwood in December and was honoured to present an award to one of their cadets.

Our annual Arthur Butler lecture in November saw Darren "Buster" Crabb, ex RCAF, RAAF and corporate pilot also Chief Flying Officer at Temora aviation museum, present a talk about his career.

The year concluded with the now annual Christmas dinner at Sydney Rowing Club.

The 2019 programme will also provide a diverse range of speakers and their chosen topics, "watch this space!"

Growth in membership is slow, two new members in 2018 and one in early 2019. We currently have 60 members.

We also sadly lost Keith White in 2018.

The Society continues to support major commemorations and events.

In 2019, work is well under way on a collaboration between the AHSA (NSW) Inc and Bayside Council, Mascot, to stage a major exhibition at their library/museum in connection with the Centenary of Sydney Airport, "Mascot 100".

Plans to commemorate the arrival of Ross and Keith Smith 1919-2019 are also taking shape, with the AHSA providing support via archival material and the like.

Last year was my final appearance at "Aviation Cultures" (Mark 1V). Having worked on three of these conferences I felt it was time to move on and let it be managed by others with a fresh perspective.

In any case in 2019 this will be in a different format and location to be known as "Heritage of the Air" to be held between 14-17 November in Canberra.

Locally within the AHSA I have held talks with our counterparts in Victoria regarding creating digital copies of "Loops and Landings", written by John Scott.

At a meeting of the AHSA Committee it was agreed in principle for this to go ahead but further talks and a meeting with them are necessary before proceeding further.

Also Christine and I had a meeting with Anna Gebels from the University of Sydney to discuss the viability of creating an online "gallery" of photographs of some of the Society's aviation artefacts via "E-Hive". Again this needs further research and a "cost benefit analysis" needs to be investigated.

It is also desirable to pursue applying for grants from various groups such as MGNSW to fund such proposals. I will report further on this in due course.

Once again I cannot take on these tasks completely on my own so I ask if there is anyone willing and able to help, then please let me know!

In the meantime, thank you Christine Ewoldt, Treasurer, for managing the accounts, a very important role. Thanks also to John Scott for maintaining the membership records; to Judy Rainsford, our brilliant newsletter editor; and again Christine Ewoldt in her role as Society archivist.

Thanks also to all our other Committee members, namely Alan Campbell, Cathy Hobson, Gordon Lasslett, Tom Lockley, Mike McGree and Harold Xui.

As always a big THANK YOU to the members for your continued support.

Paul Ewoldt
President

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS 2018

Judy Rainsford was invited to take the Chair and preside over the election of office bearers.

Results of the election of office bearers were:

President	Paul Ewoldt
Hon Secretary	Paul Ewoldt
Hon Treasurer	Christine Ewoldt
Membership Secretary	John Scott
Programme Organiser	Paul Ewoldt
Archivist	Christine Ewoldt
'Southern Skies' Editor	Judy Rainsford
General Committee:	Alan Campbell Tom Lockley Judy Rainsford Mike McGree Gordon Lasslett (Librarian) Cathy Hobson Warwick Bigsworth

All members were elected unopposed.

Photo Archivist, David Eyre, retired from the committee but will continue working with Christine in this role. The members thanked David for his work in this regard.

HONORARY TREASURER'S REPORT

DUE to the Commonwealth Bank withholding interest on the Society's cheque account, Christine Ewoldt, Treasurer, was unable to present the full report on the years financial activities.

A full report will be available at the April meeting of the AHSA (NSW) Inc.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

APRIL 1919 - 2019

Chronology GL

03 Australian Frank Briggs of the No. 2 School of Aerial Navigation & Bomb Dropping was instructed to give Mr Winston Churchill some flying instruction. But Churchill either finding his instructor was a colonial or because of the weather departed without a lesson. Since Gallipoli Churchill regarded ANZACs poorly.

06 In Germany, Bavaria is declared a Soviet Republic.

11 It is reported that, in Newfoundland, Harry Hawker has tested the *Sopwith Atlantic* but is weather bound by rain and mist.

- In Paris Japan's proposal to include a "Racial Equality Clause" in the Covenant of the League of Nations secured a majority of votes in favour but was defeated due to lobbying of the UK & USA by Australian PM Billy Hughes to protect the White Australia Policy. The defeat turned Japan to nationalistic policies.

12 **Aerial Transport Ltd**, Australia's first air transport company, was registered by the Commonwealth Treasury. Capital was to be held by British born subjects and the entire staff was to be British born. Like Mr Churchill they did not trust colonials.

16 The **Aerial Co Ltd** was registered in Sydney with registered office in Martin Place with that old friend of Australian aviation, Lebbeus Hordern, as Managing Director.

18 Frank Briggs engages in a mock dogfight with Canadian ace Maj. 'Billy' Barker VC. Frank managed to get in a short burst, 'because he let me, to save my face with the onlookers. 1.

- In the Battle of the Governments in Bavaria the Communists defeat the republican forces.

- At Brooklands Jack Alcock tests the transatlantic Vickers Vimy and finds it perfect.

26 In south Russia 266 Sqn RAF in its first operation flew a Short 184 from Petrovsk to carry out a reconnaissance to the north.

29 Polish Air Force pilot Lt Stefan Stec flying a Fokker E.V in the Polish-Soviet War shot down a *Ukrainian Nieuport* for the first Polish victory of the war.

- The German representatives arrive in Paris for the Peace Talks.

30 The British Air Navigation Regulations (1919) issued in London prescribing conditions under which civil flying could take place.

1. Francis (Frank) Briggs returned to Australia and set many aviation records before retiring to become the Shell man



at Mascot Airport. The writer was one of a team that interviewed Frank in the '60s. The tape and transcript are available from the ASWWIAH. There is a memorial to Frank in Perth Airport.

Gordon Lasslett

NB

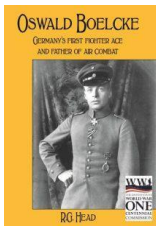
THE MAY MEETING OF THE AHSA (NSW) INC WILL BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8TH MAY 2019; the date is the week after our normal meeting date as the guest speaker is only in Sydney on that second week.



LIBRARY READING

Those members of AHSA who attended the Australian Society of WWI Aero Historians (ASWWIAH) Literary Lunch at the Roseville Services Club enjoyed an excellent presentation, *Oswald Boelcke, and other topics*, by the guest speaker, Brigadier General R. G. Head USAF (Retd), one of their overseas members.

His wife, Carole, introduced her husband whose achievements as a pilot, leader and author have produced a book with insight and thorough research.



(For more detailed background see March 2019.)

It has taken a century for books to be written in English with statistics and records of wartime battles not dominated by British outlooks and British bias. In Australia there has been few tomes from German, French, Italian, Russian etc records and viewpoints. Brigadier General R. G. Head has indeed presented researched history that should spark interesting debate: *Oswald Boelcke - Germany's First Ace and Father of Air Combat - a study of the Great War airman who did much to develop fighter tactics used even today*.

If you would like an autographed copy of this 240 page hard cover book one may be ordered from our librarian Gordon Lasslett at his email address glaslett@bigpond.net.au.

Gordon purchased a signed copy for the AHSA library. It is available for borrowing – don't miss it! JR

Oswald Boelcke (German: [ˈbœlkə]; 19 May 1891 – 28 October 1916) was a German flying ace of the First World War credited with 40 victories; he was one of the most influential patrol leaders and tacticians of the early years of air combat.

Boelcke is honored as the father of the German fighter air force, as well as considered the "Father of Air Fighting Tactics".

Boelcke fulfilled his childhood dream of a military career by joining the Imperial German Army in July

1912. He followed his interest in aviation, learning to fly as World War I began. After duty as an observer during 1914, he became one of the original fighter pilots during 1915.

He and Max Immelmann were the first German fighter pilots awarded the *Pour le Merite* (the 'Blue Max'). When Immelmann was killed in combat in June 1916, the German high command grounded Boelcke after his 19th victory. During his month's forced grounding, he was tasked to help transform the *Fliegertruppe* (Flying Troops) into the *Luftstreitkräfte* (Air Force).

His innovative turn of mind codified his combat experiences into the first ever manual of fighter tactics distributed to an air force, the *Dicta Boelcke*.

The *Dicta* promulgated axioms for individual pilot success, as well as a requirement for teamwork directed by a formation's leader. Present day tactics manuals stem from the *Dicta*.

After a month's holiday leave spent on a military inspection tour of Turkish facilities, Boelcke was picked to lead one of Germany's first fighter squadrons, *Jagdstaffel 2* (Fighter Squadron 2). By war's end, this squadron Boelcke so strictly trained had had 25 aces in its ranks, and four of its members became generals during World War II.

During the short time before his death, Oswald Boelcke became the world's leading fighter pilot, scoring 21 more victories while commanding *Jagdstaffel 2*.

He was killed in a crash following a midair collision on 28 October 1916.

Wikipedia



Oswald Boelcke

The *Pour le Mérite* (The Blue Max).

Born	19 May 1891 Giebichenstein, Province of Saxony, Prussia; near Halle (Saale)
Died	28 October 1916 (aged 25) Near Douai, France
Allegiance	 German Empire
Service/branch	<i>Telegraphen-Bataillon Nr. 3; Luftstreitkräfte</i>
Years of Service	1911–1916
Rank	<i>Hauptmann</i>
Unit	<i>Jagdstaffel 2</i>
	Pour le Mérite, (<i>Blue Max</i>) Royal House Order of Hohenzollern, Knight's Cross with Swords, Iron Cross, First and Second Class, Lifesaving Medal, Plus eight lesser decorations



Dicta Boelcke

Wikipedia

Hauptmann (Captain)
Oswald Boelcke,
author of the
Dicta Boelcke

The *Dicta Boelcke* is a list of fundamental aerial maneuvers of

aerial combat formulated by First World War German flying ace, Oswald Boelcke. Equipped with one of the first fighter aircraft, Boelcke became Germany's foremost flying ace during 1915 and 1916. Because of his success in aerial combat and his analytic mind, he was tasked by Colonel Hermann von der Lieth-Thomsen with writing a pamphlet on aerial tactics. Completed in June 1916, it was distributed throughout the German Air Service some two years before the French and British militaries followed suit with their own tactical guides. Air combat tactical manuals based on the *Dicta Boelcke* have become more elaborate over time, and have become a mainstay for NATO's air combat training of American, German, Dutch, Norwegian, Turkish, Italian, and Greek fighter pilots.

The author

Oswald Boelcke was one of the first effective warriors with an airplane as one of the original German pilots successful in air-to-air combat. During mid-May 1915, he began to fly one of the original fighter aircraft equipped with a synchronized gun. As he began to shoot down opposing French and British airplanes, he became one of the first German fighter aces. Often flying with Max Immelmann, Boelcke gained experience in the new realm of aerial combat as he discovered the utility of **having a wingman**, of massing fighter planes for increased fighting power, and of flying loose formations allowing individual pilots tactical independence. Based on his successful combat experiences, he used his training as a professional soldier and his powers as an analytic thinker to design tactics for the use of aircraft in battle.

During this period of pioneering aerial warfare, the British Royal Flying Corps air effort could be summed up by, "Attack everything". The French *Aeronautique Militaire* was concentrating its efforts on building up its bomber force. Boelcke tried to interest Immelmann in devising a tactical doctrine for fighters, to no avail.

In mid-1916, Boelcke codified his tactics in the *Dicta Boelcke*, which was the world's first tactical manual for an air force.

During early 1916, Boelcke wrote a brochure entitled "Experiences of Air Fighting", giving tips for attacking any one of three types of opposing aircraft. This was not unique; a few other fliers in the war were sharing such combat tips with one another on a personal level.

After Immelmann's death, Boelcke was withdrawn from combat on 27 June 1916, while he was the war's leading ace, and assigned to *Fliegertruppe* (Flying Troops) headquarters. His reassignment was in line with the German military doctrine of *auftragstaktik*, or order tactics: The belief that the junior officer on the battlefield best knows the tactics needed there. As part of his staff duties revamping the *Fliegertruppe* into the *Luftstreitkräfte* (Air Force), Boelcke wrote the *Dicta*, which was then distributed throughout the *Luftstreitkräfte* as the world's first tactical manual. It was two years before the British and French followed suit in 1918.¹ Spurred by the example of the *Dicta*, many of the world's military air forces would eventually develop their own tactical manuals, codified as tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The *Dicta Boelcke*

According to Boelcke's first biographer, Professor Johannes von Werner, the eight dicta were written for Colonel Hermann von der Lieth-Thomsen.

1. Try to secure advantages before attacking. If possible, keep the sun behind you.
2. Always carry through an attack when you have started it.
3. Fire only at close range, and only when your opponent is properly in your sights.
4. Always keep your eye on your opponent, and never let yourself be deceived by ruses.
5. In any form of attack it is essential to assail your enemy from behind.
6. If your opponent dives on you, do not try to evade his onslaught, but fly to meet it.
7. When over the enemy's lines never forget your own line of retreat.
8. For the *Staffel* (squadron): Attack on principle in groups of four or six. When the fight breaks up into a series of single combats, take care that several do not go for the same opponent.

THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE: Gerrard Henderson organises a variety of speakers mainly on political and social issues, and occasionally authors. On **Tues Apr 9th Ann Blainey** will be speaking for an hour on the book, '*CHARLES KINGSFORD SMITH – HERO AND INNOVATOR*'. Members of AHSa are welcome to attend; please identify as members – no charge. Ring Reg Lobb Ph 4294 1656 Per John Scott

An example of the Fokker Eindecker, first fighter airplane with a successfully synchronized gun. Boelcke learned his aerial tactics flying one of these aircraft.



There are various versions of the Dicta.

One version that varies somewhat from the above:

1. Always try to secure an advantageous position before attacking. Climb before and during the approach in order to surprise the enemy from above, and dive on him swiftly from the rear when the moment to attack is at hand. .
2. Try to place yourself between the sun and the enemy. This puts the glare of the sun in the enemy's eyes and makes it difficult to see you and impossible for him to shoot with any accuracy. .
3. Do not fire the machine guns until the enemy is within range and you have him squarely within your sights. .
4. Attack when the enemy least expects it or when he is preoccupied with other duties such as observation, photography, or bombing. .
5. Never turn your back and try to run away from an enemy fighter. If you are surprised by an attack on your tail, turn and face the enemy with your guns. .
6. Keep your eye on the enemy and do not allow him to deceive you with tricks. If your opponent seems damaged, follow him down until he crashes to be sure he is not faking. .
7. Foolish acts of bravery only bring death. The *Jasta* (squadron) must fight as a unit with close teamwork between all pilots. The signals of its leaders must be obeyed. .
8. For the *Staffel* (squadron): Attack in principle in groups of four or six. When the fight breaks up into a series of single combats, take care that several do not go for one opponent. .

Still another version can be found online.

If followed assiduously, the *Dicta* tactics often led to an unseen approach for a surprise attack. As historical study has shown, thus getting in the first shot in an engagement guarantees a successful attack over 80% of the time.

Legacy

After writing the *Dicta*, Boelcke's tactics were taught in the fighter school that he had suggested founding.

He suggested that fighter planes be organized into squadrons. He also organized and led one of these original German fighter squadrons, *Jaqdstaffel 2*.

By the time he died in action after his 40th victory, he had thoroughly schooled his squadron in his tactics. *Jasta 2* went on to be one of the two most successful German fighter squadrons during the remainder of the war, scoring 336 victories, and achieving a victory ratio that ran as high as 12 to one. Eight of its original members became aces; in all, 25 aces would serve in *Jasta 2*, scoring 90% of its victories. Four of its members would serve as generals during World War II. There was a steady rotation of *Jasta 2*'s aces into commands of other squadrons; the most prominent example of this was Manfred von Richthofen, leading ace of the war and assigned to command the most successful German squadron, *Jasta 11*. As a result of Boelcke's tactical concepts, the Imperial German Air Service exacted an ever greater toll on Allied aircraft right up until war's end. For instance, *Jasta 2* was credited with 46 victories for the month of September 1918.

When the next logical step was taken by the Germans in organizing fighter squadrons into a wing in June 1917, Richthofen was picked to lead it. Before his death on 21 April 1918, he wrote his own *Dicta* for wing tactics; it referred extensively to Boelcke's *Dicta*.

During the early days of World War II, South African ace, Sailor Malan, espoused his Ten Rules for Air Fighting. These rules closely followed the *Dicta Boelcke*; for instance, Rule 5's "Always turn and face the attack" could have been lifted from the *Dicta*. Malan's Rules were distributed throughout the Royal Air Force.

The simple *Dicta Boelcke* manual has, over time, evolved into widespread use of tactics, techniques, and procedures manuals for air forces worldwide. The United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the United States Navy (USN), and the United States Air Force (USAF) each have their own air tactics manuals. Under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the USAF trains German, Dutch, Norwegian, Turkish, Italian, and Greek fighter pilots at Sheppard Air Force Base, using air tactics manuals descended from the *Dicta Boelcke*.

Thank you, Gordon Lasslett, John Scott, Paul & Christine Ewoldt, Tom Lockley, and aviation friends for submissions to this newsletter.

Contributions should be sent to the Newsletter Editor:

judyrainsford@hotmail.com

in 67 AUSA (NSW)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS : 2019

THE TEMORA AVIATION MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT DISPLAYS

Email: info@aviationmuseum.com.au
Website: http://www.aviationmuseum.com.au/event/aircraft-showcase



Australia's best annual airshow returns Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th MAY 2019: an Australian extravaganza -> ILLAWARRA REGIONAL AIRPORT Ph (02) 42083997

INTERSTATE NEWS

MELBOURNE MEETINGS are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month in the auditorium of the RAAF Association, 24 Camberwell Rd, Hawthorn East. Website http://www.ahsa.org.au/

BRISBANE MEETINGS are held on the last Friday of each month in the Lounge Area, Terminal Building, Archerfield Airport, Brisbane. Contact ahsaqld@gmail.com or Warwick Henry at 0417 771 563

The following FOR DISCUSSION :

AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY of AUSTRALIA (NSW) Inc



ABN: 83 295 759 224
13 / 40A Roslyn Gardens
Rushcutters Bay NSW 2011

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRY

ARE YOU

- > INTERESTED IN AVIATION HISTORY, PARTICULARLY AUSTRALIAN ?
-> INTERESTED IN JOINING PEOPLE WITH SIMILAR AVIATION INTERESTS ?
-> DO YOU LIVE TOO FAR FROM MEETING VENUES ?
-> WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A JUNIOR MEMBER OF AHSA ? (\$5 pa)

I AM INTERESTED IN JOINING AHSA (NSW) Inc.

PLEASE FORWARD: Tick appropriate box:

- Information about AHSA (NSW) Inc.
- A membership application form
-> AHSA (NSW) Inc subscription - \$40.00
-> Members receive the newsletter SOUTHERN SKIES
- via EMAIL. - via post

Name:

Phone No Mobile

Address:.....

..... Postcode

Email:.....

Signed:.....

Print name

Send this form to:

The Acting Membership Secretary, AHSA (NSW) Inc, C/- W. J. Scott, PO Box 1450, LANE COVE, NSW, 1595

Smith flight to Australia commemoration: December-January 2019-20.

Progress report.



The basics: Appreciation to all who have sent ideas and offers to take part in some way. We are still at a very early stage and absolutely nothing is definite yet.

Latest news on the Darwin to Adelaide flight idea:

The major announcement from the Darwin organisers of the electric plane race: It is now intended to announce starters and the route in mid-April.

Also, there is a new suggestion that the Darwin to Adelaide section should be organised so as to arrive in Adelaide on the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the Vimy, which reached Darwin on 23 March 1920; in other words the flight will occur in the days before that date. This would avoid the Christmas / New Year holiday season. The idea would lose the momentum that would arise if it followed on from the Darwin commemorations and also the continuity of philatelic flights, which is a pity. It seems that Australia Post will be producing a series of collector products, as they did for the Guillaux flight. Your opinion would be appreciated.

The people around Cloncurry have far bigger concerns at the moment, so a delay in planning this part of the route is inevitable. It would be great if people could continue talking about the possibilities for the Darwin to Adelaide event and we will put together the ideas that emerge after mid-April. I will be overseas for the next four weeks, but reachable by email if needed.

TL

Countdown to 10 December 2019: The Philatelic Flight of 1969.

Nobby Buckley, South Australian aviator (from South Australian Aviation Museum website)

Noble (Nobby) Buckley was born in 1905. His grandfather had emigrated in 1860 and was an enterprising businessman, who in 1909 was instrumental in setting up the suburb of Noble Park in Melbourne, which he named after Nobby with streets named after other family members.

Nobby showed a great skill as mechanic and had a wide-ranging early career, notably as a bore sinking contractor. In 1934 he learnt to fly, and in 1938, he was employed by Guinea Gold as a pilot, mainly flying the Lockheed L10A Electra. He acquired many engineering and radio qualifications, operating mainly on an Adelaide - Darwin route.



His adventurous career involved many crashes, notably of Lockheed VH UX1, in December 1939. The aircraft crashed into a timbered area following engine failure shortly after take-off. The aircraft broke up in the crash, one survivor ending up in a tree inside the aircraft toilet. The aircraft caught fire, but the ten passengers were removed from the wreckage and all lived.

In June 1946 Nobby was appointed Chief Pilot of Guinea Airways. He remained in that position until Guinea Airways ceased operations at the beginning of 1960 and became Airlines of South Australia, part of Ansett Airlines. He retired as chief pilot in June 1960 but continued as pilot for the airline until June 1965. Always active in the aviation community in general, he was a prominent member of the Royal Aero Club of South Australia and the Australian Air Pilots Association. He was prominent on getting the Vickers Vimy to Adelaide and establishing the display facilities in 1958. He remained active in aviation affairs until his death in 1985 at the age of 75.

The flight of VH-AEQ

To celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Smith flight, an air race was held from England to Australia in 1969. Great Britain, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, Portuguese Timor and Australia released commemorative stamps. The story of the race is very interesting, and will be the subject of later articles, but here we are interested in just one aircraft, not part of the race. The Australian Air Mail Society, of which the most prominent members were Ernest Crome and Nelson Eustis' chartered TAA's DC-3, VH AEQ, to carry the mail from Singapore to Melbourne over the Vimy's route. A wide variety of philatelic material was produced, a few samples of which are seen overleaf.

The pilot in charge was nominally Captain D. Gillespie, another very experienced pilot, but Nobby was the second pilot, and his wife, Jessica, was hostess. The navigator was listed as D. George. Fifteen philatelists were carried on the flight. The flight landed in Darwin on 10 December, as did the Vimy, and flew on to Melbourne, arriving on 14 December.

A very special passenger was Reg Williams who had flown the Blackburn Kangaroo as copilot in the 1919 air race. The Kangaroo crashed enroute at Suda Bay, Greece, on 8 December 1919, and because the Vickers Vimy completed the race on 10 December, the Blackburn crew decided to abandon the journey. Reg was the only 1919 participant still living. Ross Smith and Jim Bennett were killed in a plane crash in 1922 and Keith Smith died in 1955. Wally Shiers died in 1968. Some philatelic items were signed by Lady Anne Smith, Keith Smith's widow.

As outlined in *airliners.net*, VH-AEQ was a C-47 built in 1942. In 1944, having done 1,922 hours, it was converted to civilian standards. 24 seats were installed by Australian National Airways at Essendon, and it was operated by ANS, TAA, and East-West airlines. It had been withdrawn from service in November 1969 and the Singapore flight was almost its swansong.

Nevertheless, the old plane went out in a blaze of glory. It had been converted to 'Viewmaster' specifications with large rectangular windows. For the philatelic flight, it was given special livery, recording the event and the names of sponsors – Mildara wines, John Mack cameras, Kings Tours and Shell petrol. It performed well, doubtless largely because of its very skilled crew. Its registration was cancelled in October 9, 1971, and the aircraft had flown 48,607 hours. It has been displayed in various museums and may still be in storage in Victoria.

The images overleaf feature the Australian and Indonesian commemorative stamps.

Tom Lockley



Souvenir cover prepared by Darwin Philatelic Society with facsimile vignette and cachet to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Smith brothers flight. Postmarked: Melbourne 26 Feb 1970.

Signed by Lady A Smith, widow of Sir Keith Smith.



Flown on re-enactment flight to commemorate the original flight of 1919. Carried in T.A.A. DC3, VH-AEQ from Indonesia to Melbourne, chartered by the Australian Air Mail Society. Signed by pilot, Capt. N. Buckley.

LOOPS AND LANDINGS

Inspired by John Kingsford-Smith

The BP England - Australia Commemorative Air Race - Part 1.

In *Australian Aviation Centenaries in 2019 – Part 1*, (L & L November 2018), Ron Gibson's entry for **31 January** records details of Reginald Lloyd's survey of an air route across Australia to Calcutta, Port Said or Baghdad. Ron concluded this entry with: "The route surveyed was nominated by Ross Smith as the most suitable for the air race contestants flying to Sydney." In January 1969, it was Reginald Lloyd's nephew, George Alfred (Peter) Lloyd, who was well advanced organising the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the 1919 England to Australia air race. At the time, Peter was the President of *The Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia* and, following his successful Chairmanship of the Organising Committee for *The BP England - Australia Commemorative Air Race*, he was awarded the 1969 Oswald Watt Gold Medal.

It may be difficult for members, now in 2019, to believe that an Australian Prime Minister would ever be inspired to provide federal financial support for an air race. But Billy Hughes in 1919, and John Gorton in 1969, were indeed enthusiastic supporters. Billy Hughes was Prime Minister from October 27, 1915, to February 9, 1923. This period covered the last three years of WW 1, and the deliberations of the Versailles Peace Conference. On his second wartime visit to England, he sailed from Sydney on April 26, 1918, and did not return until August, 1919. During that time he was aware of the £10,000 prize offered by Lord Northcliffe, through his newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, for the first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic by aeroplane.

Hughes had taken a keen interest in aviation from its earliest days and, while in England, would have been closely following Harry Hawker's preparations for the Atlantic attempt. He was also informed about an Australian crew, Ross Smith (pilot), Jim Bennett and Wally Shiers (mechanics), who were supporting Major General Sir W. G. H. Salmond, and Brigadier General A. E. Borton, on a flight which took off from Heliopolis on November 30, 1918, and arrived at Calcutta on December 17, 1918. The aircraft was an RAF Handley Page 0/400, C9700. Billy Hughes had the skill of communicating with Australians serving abroad, and had been given the affectionate title, *The Little Digger*. After the Armistice, some Australian airmen had spoken to him about the possibility of flying back home rather than returning by sea. Hughes then made the unilateral decision to match Lord Northcliffe. On March 10, 1919, an announcement was made back in Melbourne that: "The Commonwealth Government has decided to offer £10,000 for the first successful flight to Australia from Great Britain, of a machine manned by Australians." Subsequently Hughes took to the air himself with RAF No 2 Communications Sqn, flying a couple of times between Paris and London. He was thus the first Australian Prime Minister to take a VIP flight. His pilot was Frank Briggs. The first Oswald Watt Gold Medal was awarded to Frank Briggs for his 1921 flights from Melbourne to Brisbane, and from Melbourne to Perth.

Following the death of Sir Keith Smith on December 17, 1955, there was again a national focus on the historic flight of the Vimy and her crew. Earlier in 1955, the Vimy was declared a non welcome relic at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, because it had not actually fought in WW 1. It was confined to crates in a store at RAAF Base Fairbairn. The momentum to create a permanent memorial was soon initiated from abroad through a pledge of £10,000 from Vickers and its associated companies. This triggered the launch of a public appeal in South Australia, which resulted in raising the balance of the ultimate cost of £ 30,000 for the existing memorial hangar which houses the Vimy at Adelaide Airport, finally dedicated in 1958. The Commonwealth Government owns the Vimy, and somewhat grudgingly consented to granting land on the airport for the memorial, and to maintain its annual upkeep. A further memorial, financed by the Lions Club of Enfield and erected on the spot where the Vimy landed at Adelaide on her final flight on March 23, 1920, was unveiled on February 19, 1966. As the fiftieth anniversary of the great flight approached, there was momentum building for a suitable form of commemoration. As planning advanced, the last crew member, Wally Shiers, died on June 2, 1968.

A commemorative air race, following as closely as possible the route of the 1919 air race,

seemed to Peter Lloyd to be the most suitable way to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the first flight from England to Australia. He soon realised that seeking publicity and finance for the venture could be overshadowed by the national preparations already underway for the Bi-Centenary of Captain James Cook's first landing on the east coast of Australia. Cook sailed from Plymouth on August 26, 1768, and arrived back in London on July 17, 1771. But there was the coincidence of the first arrival by a ship from England at Botany Bay on April 29, 1770, followed 150 years later by the first arrival by aeroplane from England at Botany Bay on February 14, 1920. Peter decided that he would join the opposition, and seek to make the air race a part of the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary celebrations. With this approach he was able to report on his negotiations with the Commonwealth Government at the annual council meeting of *The Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia*, at Cairns on April 25, 1969. "The Prime Minister himself has given exciting and encouraging support, including tangible monetary support...The broad plan now is for the race to be a handicap event, and to commemorate both the 50th anniversary of the Smith Brother's flight and be the opening event on the East Coast of Australia of the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Year".

Peter Lloyd's approach to the Commonwealth Government for financial support fell on fertile ground because of the experience as airmen of both the Prime Minister, John Gorton, and the Director-General of Civil Aviation, Sir Donald Anderson.

John Grey Gorton was born on September 9, 1911, and when he obtained a pilot's licence in England on June 30, 1932, he gave his place of birth as Wellington, New Zealand. He had decided to learn to fly while waiting to go up to Oxford University. By the time WW 2 broke out, he was married to his American wife, Betty, with their two children, and was working on his orchard at Kangaroo Lake, Victoria. On May 31, 1940, he enlisted in the RAAF Reserve. Under extreme pressure to recruit pilots, the RAAF had extended the upper age limit for acceptance from 28 to 30 years. On November 8, John was accepted by the RAAF for training as a pilot. On April 14, 1941, Betty gave birth to their third child, and on May 1, John obtained his wings at *RAAF Base Wagga*. Leaving Betty with the heavy responsibility of running the orchard and raising their three children, John sailed for England where he arrived just a week before his 30th birthday. He was posted to *No 61 OTU RAF Heston* where he trained on Spitfires. He was then posted to *No 135 Sqn RAF* which was equipped with Hurricanes. In anticipation of Japanese aggression, No 135 Sqn sailed for the Far East in November, 1941, and John found himself ashore in Singapore on January 13, 1942. Just a week later he was scrambled to attack incoming Japanese bombers. In a dog fight with their escorting Zero fighters he was forced to crash land on Bintan Island where his Hurricane flipped onto its back and his face was smashed on the gun sight. He was rescued from the island, returned to Singapore, only to be immediately evacuated on the *S. S. Derrymore*, which was promptly torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. He was again rescued by *HMAS Ballarat* and finally delivered back to Australia on March 7. He was then posted to *No 77 Sqn RAAF* on June 16, and flew Kittyhawks at Darwin and Milne Bay. On April 11, 1943, John Gorton was posted to *No 2 OTU Mildura* as a flying instructor. It was not until November, 1944, that he was admitted to Heidelberg Hospital for surgery to repair his face. He was discharged from the RAAF on December 5, 1944. He served as Prime Minister of Australia from January 9, 1968, to March 22, 1971.

Sir Donald Anderson was born in South Australia, the state of birth for three of the Vimy crew. He served as a pilot with the RAAF from 1940 to 1946. On discharge from the RAAF he joined the Department of Civil Aviation. In 1956 he became Director-General of Civil Aviation, and the following year he was awarded the Oswald Watt Gold Medal for his most notable contribution to aviation and in particular for his performance on behalf of Australia and Qantas in enabling the company to become an all-around-the-world operator.

There were others in high Commonwealth Government positions at the time, who were also receptive to the running of a commemorative air race. Sir Richard Casey and his wife Maie were accomplished private pilots, and he was Governor-General from September 22, 1965, to April 30, 1969. Senator Robert Cotton was Minister for Civil Aviation from November 12, 1969 to December 5, 1972. He was educated at St Peter's College in Adelaide, and trained as an RAAF pilot in 1942 and 1943. If only similar Commonwealth stars were aligned for the centenary celebrations.....**John Scott.**