



## The Old Fliers' Group

Attached to the Royal Aero Club of WA (Inc).

Coordinator: Brian John, Ph 9883 8001

### Bulletin Sheet No 34, April 2007

#### Record Attendance

For the first time, the attendance at an OFG meeting passed 100. The official figure was 105. It is obvious that those who attend the meetings enjoy the chance to catch up with friends and hear the speaker's stories. If the numbers increase much more we will need to knock a wall out to make room!

#### Poetry

We gave Fred Robins a rest this month and invited John "Bomber" Bailey to read his poem "The Flying Dogma". It told the story of a bushman's terrifying flight with a "man of the cloth" in outback Western Australia. It was read with feeling; it was humorous; it was appropriate; and most of all, it was appreciated by those present. There were shades of Banjo Patterson and Mulga Bill throughout. It was great.

#### The Mini Speaker

By pure coincidence, the Mini Speaker was another John Bailey – but to make the distinction we will refer to the second as "Blue" Bailey (Coincidentally, he too is a poet in his spare time). Originally Blue was scheduled to talk about the "Birmingham Small Arms Bomb", but we changed the programme at the last moment. Instead, he told us of a Stinson Reliant that first graced Western Australian skies as a new aircraft in 1936. In those days it was owned by the Vacuum Oil Company. Notably, it was the first civil aircraft to use a radio navigation aid for direction finding in WA.

A few years ago the same aircraft was purchased by Blue's son, Kevin. The two of them brought it back from the East on a trailer and set about the painstaking restoration to "better than brand new" condition. Recently, Kevin flew it over to the Avalon International Air Show in Victoria where it gained the "Grand Champion" prize for best vintage aircraft.

"Blue" helped Kevin for a great number of the estimated 4000 hours of restoration. Thanks "Blue" for bringing us up-to-date.

#### The Speaker of the Day

The Speaker of the Day was Harold Rowell, who told us of three experiences with non-forecast fog – two with DC3s, at Perth and Geraldton, and the third at Derby when he was virtually in the circuit. Forced to divert at night with sixty passengers in an F28, he chose Fitzroy Crossing as his alternate and an unexpected chain of events unfolded.

Harold's audience heard the full story of his brush with fate. You could have heard a pin drop throughout, except when his dry sense of humour took over.

On the occasion of the diversion to Fitzroy Crossing a series of problems arose that caused a great deal of consternation.

- (1) Communication with the town was from aircraft to Derby and then to a phone in the hospital where a night nurse put the ground plan into action.

- (2) The hospital two miles from the aerodrome.
- (3) The contractor who should have laid out the flares out of town.
- (4) The shed containing the flares was securely locked.
- (5) Once broken into, there was no kerosene in the shed.
- (6) While these problems were being sorted out, the aircraft was holding at 20 000 ft to the south of the town and using precious fuel.
- (7) When told that preparations were complete an approach was made – only to find the flares were laid at the opposite end of the runway to that advised.
- (8) A go-round was initiated at low level and, following a dumbbell turn, the aircraft successfully landed in the opposite direction.
- (9) The aircraft came to a standstill as it was taxied clear of the runway. It was out of fuel.

This is only a summary of the incident – there were many more details discussed. Thanks to Harold, his audience heard a most amazing story of one of the most remarkable events in the history of Western Australian aviation.

#### Macca on ~~Sunday~~ Friday

Thanks to the efforts of Brian John, we were fortunate to have Ian MacNamara, more commonly known as Macca, at our last meeting. He was in Perth for a day or two before visiting Geraldton to conduct his usual Sunday morning program on ABC Radio.

He told us how he had recently done quite a bit of flying with Dick Smith, and also how he appreciated the role of the Flying Doctor in outback Australia.

#### Flight with Leo

After the last meeting, Leo Feakes took three of our members for a flight in Baron. All enjoyed the excursion, but his passengers found that their "rusty" joints caused entry and exit to be a trifle difficult. Thanks to Leo, this offer is ongoing. So if you have a hankering to go for another fly – let it be known at the next meeting.

#### April Meeting

The Main Speaker at the March meeting will be Max Bourne. Max. He flew Lancasters during WWII and has prepared an interesting talk for you.

The mini speaker will again be John "Blue" Bailey, who will tell us the delayed story of the "Birmingham Small Arms Bomb."

Come along to the Royal Aero Club at noon on Friday April 27th to hear our speakers and have a nice lunch with tea or coffee for the modest sum of just \$12.00.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan