



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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April Meeting

The April meeting got under way with a poem from our Group poet, Fred Robins. Due to an oversight, we had to replace "Blue" Bailey with "Bomber" Bailey, so the Birmingham Small Arms Bomb will have to wait. "Bomber" recited two poems, the first written by him to celebrate the end of the war and the second was a translation of a poem by a Russian soldier who wrote to his wife during the war. It was a very powerful delivery.

The Speaker of the Day

The Main Speaker at the April meeting was Max Bourne. Max spoke of his early flying in the RAAF and then in England where he encountered a steep learning curve as he learned to navigate over the confusing wealth of information in the English countryside. He had learned his trade over the relatively barren landscape around Geraldton. With just over 270 hours he was introduced to the Lancaster and after a conversion, lasting 11 hours, was sent on his first mission.

Max told us of the early development and failure of the Avro Manchester, and how the design was quickly converted to the Lancaster by "stretching" the wings, designing a new centre section and adding two more engines. The original Bristol engines performed poorly until replaced with Rolls Royce Merlins. He spoke of the aircraft performance, fuel consumption and the bomb load; 4000 pounds, Tall Boys, the Grand Slam and the Barnes Wallace bouncing bomb.

When Max completed his tour of 30 missions into Germany and enemy territory to such destinations as Essen, Frankfurt, and the Rhur Valley ("Happy Valley"), he spent time instructing on Lancasters.

It was a very informative but relaxed talk, peppered with humorous incidents that brought a chuckle from his audience on many occasions.

Thanks go to our poets and speaker of the day.

Vale Alex Henshaw

Alex Henshaw passed away in England on February 24, aged 94. Alex was a pre-WWII race and long-distance pilot, who contributed much to aircraft design and construction. Pre-war, he held the England to South Africa speed record and during the war he worked for a number of organisations, including Vickers and Supermarine. As a test pilot he flight-tested over 3000 Spitfires and over 300 Lancasters as they

came off the production line. He is the only man to have barrel rolled a Lancaster! He wrote three books, *Flight of the Mew Gull*, *Sigh for a Merlin* and *Wings over the Great Divide*- all great books and well worth the read.

He was a truly remarkable man.

Macca on Sunday

On the Sunday after the last meeting Ian Peirce, son of Ivan Peirce of Catalina fame, was interviewed by Macca. Ian has taken over the farm that Ivan took up over 40 years ago. The interview covered farming and his father's contribution to aviation during WWII.

Flight with Leo

Leo Feakes took four more OFG Members for a fly after the last meeting and there are already four more names on the list for a flight after the coming meeting.

Alston Cartoon

This Alston cartoon came to light the other day. It should have a degree of appeal to most members.



Next Meeting

At the May meeting we will hear from Bill Paterson and Bruce Gaston who will talk about WWII operations in North Africa and the North Atlantic. We may even be able to hear the story of the "BSA Bomb".

Come along to the Royal Aero Club at noon on Friday May 25th to hear our speakers and have a nice lunch for the modest sum of just \$12.00.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan