



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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Last Meeting

After a few organisational stutters and stammers in the background, the May meeting got under way with over ninety members in attendance. After the usual preliminaries to register apologies and to welcome guests and new faces, Ted Fletcher gave us, "The Last Man Left in the Air Force" – a parody on the sequence of events that might take place if the Government, in an attempt to save money, wound the Air Force back to one man. The original was written when mass retrenchments and economies were announced for the RAF. Thinking it also had some relevance to our own Air Force, it was adapted to local conditions. (With apologies to the anonymous original author). The poem is attached for those who missed the meeting.

THE LAST MAN LEFT IN THE AIR FORCE

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
I've an office at Pearce AID,
And a copy of Queen's Regulations
Which only apply to me.
I can post myself up to Tindall,
Tho' that would be a dead loss,
Or send me for service at ARDU,
Or cancel the lot – I'm the boss.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
But the great Parliamentary Brains
Omitted, when sacking the people,
To sell off the Stations and planes.
The result is my inventory's bulging
With cannons and campstools and quarters,
Plus a signed book of verses by Williams,
Which I keep for impressing reporters.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
I suppose you imagine it's great
To be master of all I survey and command,
But I can tell you it's difficult, Mate.
I inspected three units last Thursday,
As the C-in-C (Acting) of Strike,
Then I swept half the runway at Learmonth
And repainted Sale's only push bike.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
My wife says I'm never at home.
When I'm not flying Hercs, I'm at Townsville
Laying gallons and gallons of foam.
Or I'm in my marine craft at Nowra,
Shooting flares at the crowds on the shore.
Or I'm orderly corporal at Richmond,
It's an interesting life - not a bore.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
I'm the last ADC to the Queen,
I'm the Duty Clerk seen down at Fairburn,
I'm the RAAF rugby team.
I'm still painting Laverton's guardroom,
And air-testing several planes,
I'll take a last look at what's left of Point Cook,
And clean out Amberley's drains.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force,
And I'm due to go out before long,
There's been no talk of replacement,
But with luck I might get the last gong.
I hope to enjoy my retirement,
I've put up a really good show,
And I'll not cut myself off entirely
'Cos there's always reunions, you know.

Mini Speaker

At long last we heard the story of the Birmingham Small Arms Bomb – a BSA motorbike that had to be jettisoned over the Nullabor. Many thanks to John (Blue) Bailey.

Speakers of the Day

For a change in presentation format, we had two Speakers of the Day. Both flew for Coastal Command during WWII. First was Bill Paterson, who flew Beauforts and Beaufighters in the Mediterranean and Bruce Gaston who flew Very long Range Liberators over the North Atlantic.

Bill told of his time in North Africa and excursions to Italy, Corsica and action over the Mediterranean and the Adriatic.

Bruce told of the long flights to "The Atlantic Gap" to attack enemy submarines that played havoc on allied shipping.

Both speakers gave the audience an understanding of the enormous contribution that Coastal Command made to the war effort. The Atlantic and the Mediterranean had to be kept open at all costs. Both gave particularly graphic descriptions of sorties and action and we thank them for it.

Next Meeting

At the June meeting, Harold Rowell will tell us of his experiences in Douglas Bostons during WWII. The Mini Speaker will tell the story of, arguably, the most notable historic flight in Western Australia.

I hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club at noon on Friday June 29th for a pleasant lunch for the modest sum of \$12.00.

Brian Hernan

