



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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After a few recent enquiries, it is worth noting that the word 'Fliers' in our group's name does not mean that you have to be a flier or an ex-flier to join. Even the slightest interest in aviation, civil, military, recreational or historical is sufficient qualification to join our meetings and talk flying. This virtually means that there are no restrictions on membership – just come along and enjoy the company.

Last Meeting

The last meeting got under way with a poem by Fred Robins on "square dancing". (He used to be a "caller") It is often the case that Fred's poems contain a bit of humour, and last month's raised a few chuckles. When in full flight (pardon the pun) he almost ran out of "puff" – as did many of those who participated in the dancing when it was so popular.

Speakers of the Day

The *Speaker of the Day* at the last meeting was Harold Rowell, who told of his training and wartime experiences. He was on the No 1 OUT Beaufighter course and later moved onto Bostons, flying them mainly in New Guinea. The Bostons were never ordered by the RAAF; they were destined for the Dutch, but when the Dutch East Indies were over-run the Bostons were diverted to Australia.

Harold told of missions out of Lae and Goodenough and how enemy ordinance took away his hydraulics (plus his new sunglasses and his propelling pencil). The subsequent landing on one main wheel with no flaps or brakes caused some small amount of excitement for both the onlookers and the crew of A28-8 "Jessica".

"Jessica" ended up off the strip and in the jungle – where it remained. In more recent times "Jessica" was retrieved by the RAAF, transported to Australia and beautifully restored for display purposes. It was a great story.

Mini Speaker

The *Mini Speaker* was your editor, who talked on the "Kalgoorlie Biplane". Starting with an idea by a group of motorcycle enthusiasts in late 1913, the first WA-built aeroplane became a reality in mid-1915. Initial construction was carried out by a syndicate in Kalgoorlie and final touches were added at Coolgardie where a series of trial flights were made at the racecourse and later at Bowe's Paddock to the north-west of the town. The pilot and driving force in the syndicate was A.E. "Jack" Geere, who was the only licenced pilot in WA at that time.

While attempting to triumphantly fly the biplane the 25 miles to Kalgoorlie, an engine failure led to a forced landing in the scrub. A horse-drawn jinker was used to recover the relatively undamaged aircraft, but the horses bolted and the

biplane was all but destroyed. It took four months to construct a new aeroplane in Coolgardie.

After another series of setbacks, the virtually new biplane was eventually flown to Kalgoorlie where a number of demonstrations took place. It was christened by the Mayor's wife in late 1915. After that, it was transported by rail to Perth and demonstrated to the Governor and the public.

The first Perth passenger was Mr. M. De Pedro, who, as a memento of his flight, was later presented with the propeller. In 1938, Mr De Pedro donated the propeller to the Royal Aero Club where it eventually got lost from sight. That is, until it was discovered under a bench in the electrical workshop by Reg Adkins in about 1980. Reg, who knew of its importance, made sure it was kept in "protective storage".

At the end of the talk, John Douglas was asked to come forward and "unveil" the propeller. In the near future, it will be displayed in a suitable cabinet for all to see. It is, after all, the most historic aircraft propeller in Western Australia.

Unfortunately, Reg could not be at the meeting as he was away from Perth on holidays. However, sincere thanks go to him for his sharp eye and for looking after this most historic item for about 25 years.



Reg Adkins with the long lost "Kalgoorlie" propeller.

Next Meeting

At the July meeting, the *Speaker of the Day* will be Chip Harvey who will tell us, among other things, of his days in Spitfires during WWII. Also, Alan Mitchell will talk on his observations in the early days of aviation.

I hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club at noon on Friday July 27th for a pleasant lunch at the usual price.

Brian Hernan