



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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Bulletin Sheet No 45, April 2008

OFG Background

The Old Fliers Group meets eleven times per year, so you may think, with this Bulletin being number 45, we have just completed our fourth year. But that is not so, we are well into our fifth year.

In fact, the group had its first meeting on Tuesday October 28, 2003, when Hal Sutton, Brian John and Roy Hamilton gathered a few long-standing members for lunch at the club restaurant. The next meeting was arranged for the last Friday in November 2003. Meetings with small numbers were held in January, February and March 2004. The April 2004 meeting attracted over a dozen members and was held for the first time in the Club's committee room and the first *Speaker of the Day* was introduced. Stan Schur had that privilege when he told us about flying in Rhodesia, and for the Rhodesian Air Force. After that meeting, Bulletin Number 1 was produced and mailed to about twenty members to announce the May 2004 meeting. Since then there has been a *Speaker of the Day* and a monthly Bulletin (except Decembers).

The July 2004 meeting saw us move to the Pilots Bar to accommodate twenty-four members. They heard Ron Minchin's talk on Stirlings, glider towing and D-Day.

Meetings in the Pilot's Bar lasted five months, during which time we had to open the sliding doors to spread the overflow into the main lounge. The November meeting of 2004, with over forty members in attendance, was the last at that location.

In January 2005 we used the main lounge for the first time so that sixty members could hear Denis Gorton tell us of the joys (and tribulations) of building his own aeroplane. At that point it became necessary to use a PA system. The March meeting of 2005 saw the first of the *Mini Speakers* when Doreen Newell told us of her experiences with MMA as an air hostess in the 1950s. Soon after that PowerPoint displays were introduced to assist speakers.

From then, numbers have steadily increased to the point where we are bursting at the seams. At the last meeting the attendance nudged 110; there is virtually no more room for expansion and the club is contemplating buying extra chairs to handle the crowd.

The continued success of the OFG is obviously due to the moving stories from our speakers. Even though the quality of delivery has, at times, been exceedingly high, it is not an essential requirement. I remember one early speaker who had to be continually prompted by his wife as he lost concentration, over and over—but I would not have missed

his story for the world. He was a hero in the true sense of the word; he seemed to thrive on action and danger in WWII. Some of the stories have been hidden for many years. One speaker opened by saying, "I have not told this to anyone in sixty-one years—not even to my wife and children." His story of WWII brought both laughter, and at times, moist eyes to his audience.

So, as we continue in our fifth year, it is a BIG thank you to all of our previous speakers for their effort in preparation and presentation. Older members have been reminded of happy and sad occasions while younger members have learned something of the history of aviation in war and in peace. If YOU have a story that should be told, let us know.

March Speaker of the Day

Our *Speaker of the Day* at the last meeting was Don Stephenson who spoke of his memories and his involvement in World War II. A native of Hull, Don described how his hometown was the second most bombed city in England. The large inlet at the mouth of the Humber River, on which Hull stands, provided a good landfall for the Luftwaffe after crossing the North Sea. It also proved to be a good exit point as the enemy aircraft started their journey home – and to drop the last of their bombs.

In 1942, at the age of seventeen, Don volunteered for aircrew and became an air gunner, first on Catalinas and later on Liberators. He served mainly in South East Asia, India, Ceylon in 191 and 358 Squadron. Thanks go to Don for a very descriptive and interesting talk.

Learmonth Action

Charles Page's report reminded us of the action being taken to prevent the name change of Learmonth Airport. Protests have come from wide and far and we hope they have had an impact on the shire president and councillors.

New Zealand Tour

On advice from those who know, the timing of the proposed NZ tour has been altered. The departure date has been revised to November 5, 2008. A detailed outline of the tour will be given by club member, Rod Garnaut of Jetset Travel Northlands. He will bring us up to date at the coming meeting.

Next Meeting Delayed by 7 Days

Due to Anzac Day, the April meeting will be delayed to May 2. The main speaker will be John Bailey who will talk of his experiences with NASA in Australia and the USA, and Les Jubbs will talk on the recovery and delivery of the Catalina.

Hope to see you at the Club at noon on Friday, May 2.

Brian Hernan