



## The Old Fliers' Group

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

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#### Last Month's Meeting

Once again the attendance was excellent and we had two fine speakers after lunch.

The Mini Speaker was Les Jubbs who spoke on the acquisition, restoration and transport of the Catalina that is now on display at the Aviation Heritage Museum at Bull Creek.

Les' talk was supported by a number of slides that showed the very poor condition of the Cat when it was acquired. The work carried out by the restoration team in USA was nothing short of amazing. After restoration the wings were crated and the fuselage cocooned in a plastic material for transport to Australia on a US ship. The assembly and installation of the Catalina was a work of art and we now have an aircraft on display that looks as good as new.

Les has done a huge amount of work on the role of Catalinas used by the RAAF and Qantas—we may hear more from him at future meetings.

John "Bomber" Bailey made a return appearance as Speaker of the Day. His talk was based on the years he spent flying for NASA. While working as a field engineer at Nor West Cape, John met a wartime acquaintance who was the captain of a NASA Douglas DC-6B. The first officer on the 6B had been taken ill so John, with his wide experience on four engine aircraft, was asked to step in—good luck for John and bad luck for the first officer.

The DC-6B was used in the Apollo Project to collimate and calibrate equipment at ground stations around the world. The DC-6B in normal cruise at 30 000 ft transited a ground station at the same angular rate as an Apollo spacecraft at a height of a few hundred kilometres. The equipment on the DC-6B was similar to that on the space craft, thus its transmission and reception was used for calibration purposes prior to each launch of the Apollo series.

Over a three year period, John was involved in the repeated collimation of half a dozen ground stations in Australia, and others around the world. The work took him to USA and other interesting places in a period of development of the Apollo Program.

As usual, his talk was impressive, and it was amazing to think that a man who learned to fly in 1938 played a small, but important, part in the landing of man on the Moon.

#### Thanks

Thanks go to Les and "Bomber" for entertaining us.

#### New Zealand Tour

There has been a good deal of interest in the NZ tour, but there is still room for a few more. After the last meeting, club member Rod Garnaut of Jetset Travel Northlands, got into a huddle with a group of prospective tourists. He covered important details and answered questions.

The package has great prospects for those who are ready for a relaxing holiday in November. If you compare the package and price to any other three-week tour of New Zealand you will be pleasantly surprised.

For information, contact Rod Garnaut and Jetset Travel Northlands on phone on 9345 2033 or by email at [travel@jetsetnorthlands.com.au](mailto:travel@jetsetnorthlands.com.au).

Your decision must be made before the extended deadline date of Friday May 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### Book Launch

The book, *Wings of Destiny*, written by Charles Page, was launched at a gathering of about 170 people at the AFA on Sunday afternoon, May 4. Charles gave an insight into his research for the book and a fact-finding mission to New Guinea where he visited the air bases and haunts of Wing Commander Charles Learmonth and No 22 Squadron.

Attendees were treated to rare footage of a movie film showing Learmonth in No 22 Squadron Boston aircraft in action in New Guinea. The footage was captured by the well-known wartime photographer Damien Parer.

*Wings of Destiny* was officially launched by Wing Commander Russel Page, CO of RAAF Base Pearce. Support speaker, Harold Rowell OAM, told of his experiences in No 22 Squadron when he flew missions with Learmonth on many occasions.

It was suggested that a copy of *Wings of Destiny* be sent to the Shire of Exmouth to shame them into withdrawing their proposal to change the name of Learmonth Airport.

#### Next Meeting May 30<sup>th</sup>

At the next meeting, on Friday May 30<sup>th</sup> Brian Floyd, an ex-Cathay Pacific captain, will talk about the ubiquitous Avro Anson. Brian worked as an apprentice ground engineer on Avro Ansons. Later, when qualified, he maintained them, and later still flew them. The Mini Speaker will be Bob Russell who will tell the story of how he parachuted supplies to a yacht in distress off the coast, east of Esperance.

Hope to see you at the Club at noon on Friday, May 30<sup>th</sup>.

Brian Hernan