



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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Last Meeting

Bob Russell ran the last meeting with great success. After the usual formalities, he showed a series of photographs of unusual aeroplanes. Some of the shapes verged on the ridiculous and raised a few laughs. One of the most bizarre features below.



An odd one.

Speaker of the Day

Squadron Leader Paul Falconer-West, an active reservist with No 25 (City of Perth) Squadron, was the *Speaker of the Day*. He gave an interesting account of the history of 25SQN during World War II, which also included the development of Pearce RAAF Base during the same period. He supported his talk with a series of photographs of the aircraft types flown by the squadron.

Amidst the OFG audience were a number of veteran 25SQN members, including John Bailey from No. 25 Squadron's "C" Fighter Flight. He flew Brewster Buffalo as well as CAC Wirraway and Boomerang aircraft. He also logged hours on the Royal Navy's Fairey Swordfish aircraft, which had been diverted from the Fremantle wharves to 25SQN by a "wharfie" who thought the crated aircraft belonged to RAAF Station Pearce. Also present was Ian Metcher, a former aircraft fitter during World War II. Ian is still an active pilot with RACWA. Mal Crosby, a Reserve Pilot during WWII, began his flying training on the De Havilland Tiger Moth and later finishing with the de Havilland Vampire jet aircraft. Also in the audience was Mal Yeo, a former Operations Officer for the squadron.

In August 1943, 25SQN was re-equipped with the Vultee Vengeance dive bombers which increased the Squadron's capability, in particular for the maritime interdiction role. During that time the squadron suffered the loss of Vengeance A27-295, 50 miles south of Southern Cross and 55 miles east of Narembeen, creating

a wartime mystery. Pilot Warrant Officer Jack Ingram survived, but navigator Flight Sergeant Clyde King was never found, despite one of the largest searches in Australia's history. Charles Page's book, *Vengeance of the Outback*, gives a full account of this tragedy. By the time that you read this article, a contingent of 25SQN personnel and Charles Page will have returned from the Southern Cross area where a re-dedication ceremony was held at the crash site on 16 August 2008.

Mini Speaker

Mal Yeo was the *Mini Speaker*; he related some surprising facts about Caversham airstrip – *The airfield that never was*.

Caversham was one of several *satellite strips* proposed for RAAF Base Pearce after the Japanese attacks in the north of W.A. However, it was then assigned to the Fleet Air Arm of the RN and designed to their specifications to accept aircraft from RN carriers before their ships arrived in Cockburn Sound. It was almost completed in 1943 when the FAA requirement was withdrawn.

Mal illustrated his talk with maps and some secret historic documents relating to Caversham's origin – one of which showed all the aerodromes in the Perth area in 1943, with some very different runways layouts from those now in existence.

Mal was also able to trace Caversham's post-war use as an aerodrome for the Gliding Club of W.A., a motor racing circuit, a driving instruction base for the W.A. Police, and a communications base for DCA and the military.

Thanks go to both speakers and to Bob Russell for their efforts in making the meeting such as success.

Meeting No 50

The next meeting of the Old Fliers Group will be our fiftieth. It marks a milestone for our unique organisation. Looking back, we have been lucky to have had such fine fellowship and such a wide range of informative speakers – and there is no reason why that should change for the next fifty meetings.

The next *Speaker of the Day* will be Andrew Eldridge who will talk on GPS navigation, and your editor will talk about the 2008 Oshkosh Air Show.

Hope you can make to the Royal Aero Club for lunch at noon on this Friday, August 29th.

Brian Hernan