



## The Old Fliers' Group

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

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The March meeting again saw the Club filled to capacity with members, friends and visitors to hear our two speakers – and for the book launch.

#### Book Launch

Brian John and Fred Robins got together to publish a collection of Fred's poems. Titled *Reflections*, the thirty-page book contains twenty-eight poems – most of them with an aviation theme. When production costs have been retrieved the profit from sales will go solely to the Old Fliers' Group. At \$10.00 per copy it is a very affordable item and excellent value. Copies will be available both before and after each meeting over the next few months. Fred is happy to personally sign copies till his writing-hand aches.

#### Mini Speaker

Our March *Mini-speaker* was Peter Melsom who told of the mysterious disappearance of the Perth businessman James Clay, and his passenger, in his newly-purchased Cessna C-320 on the flight from Bankstown to Coolangatta. Peter travelled with James from Jandakot as far as Bankstown, whereupon he left the aircraft before James and his passenger set off for Coolangatta. In deteriorating weather James made a radio call a short distance from his destination, but he failed to arrive.

In the poor conditions, it was assumed that James would have diverted to the right of track to avoid the hilly terrain of the hinterland, so the majority of the search took place over the ocean, but nothing was found. Sadly, it took fourteen years, almost to the day, for the wreckage to be discovered in the hilly terrain about twenty-five miles from Coolangatta.

During his talk, Peter displayed photos of James, the C-320, VH-CPP, and newspaper clippings relating the disappearance, and the discovery of the wreckage.

#### Speaker of the Day

The *Speaker of the Day* was Les Jubbs who spoke of the ATA – the Air Transport Auxiliary that operated in England during WWII. This group, consisting of over 650 pilots, delivered over 300 000 aircraft of 147 types to their respective squadrons.

While the ATA consisted of both men and women, Les concentrated mainly on the female pilots. His talk was supported with a range of photos that showed

young ladies, one as young as nineteen, preparing to fly aircraft like Stirlings, Lancasters, Mosquitos, Spitfires, Hurricanes, Typhoons, and many more.

One of the ATA girls, Lettice Curtis ferried the following: 222 Halifax, 28 Lancaster, 108 Stirling, 14 Liberator, 1 Fortress, 4 Beaufort, 11 Beaufighter, 12 Blenheim, 12 Hudson, 125 Mosquito, 23 Warwick, 84 Wellington, 13 Whitley, 126 Oxford, 5 Aircobra, 3 Battle, 18 Barracuda, 4 Defiant, 17 Lysander, 64 Hurricane, 26 Master Variants, 9 Mustangs, 162 Spitfires, 7 Swordfish, 59 Tempest, 11 Tomahawk, 30 Typhoon, 13 Walrus/Sea Otter, 7 Firefly, plus 233 other aircraft, in all a total of 1467 aircraft. Not a bad effort!



*Joan Hughes about to fly a Stirling.*

Thanks go to both speakers for their fine effort.

#### Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on this Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. The *Speaker of the Day* will be Mike Taylor who will talk about post war nuclear matters. The *Mini-speaker*, Colin Morton, will tell us of his recent visit to the UK for a RAAF dedication ceremony.

Hope you can make to the Royal Aero Club at noon on this Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, for lunch and the usual chat.

Brian Hernan