



The Old Fliers' Group
Attached to the Royal Aero Club of WA (Inc).

Coordinator: Brian John, Ph 9883 8001

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August Meeting

Our two speakers at the last meeting were Roger Underwood and Harry O'Neil. As Speaker of the Day, Roger Underwood delivered a thought provoking talk on the role of the aircraft in forest management in Western Australia. Roger spent fifty years in the south west of the state involved in forestry research. In more recent years he was involved in senior administration, with responsibilities for bushfire management in forests, parks and reserves across the whole of Western Australia. These days he works mostly as an independent adviser on forestry and fire management and control.

Roger was 'in on the ground floor' of the aerial techniques for reducing the overall damage caused by forest fires with the introduction of controlled burning where seeding took place from an aircraft.



A controlled burn with reduced under storey.



A Britten Norman Islander used on the project.

Roger gave a down to earth talk with clear explanations on the benefits of prescribed burning - the deliberate burning off the bush under mild controlled conditions so that, instead of an inferno, we have quiet fires that bum up the litter and other fuels on the forest floor, but do little to no damage to the environment or to human assets.

The early prescribed burning program involved bums lit from the ground by gangs of men walking through the bush with drip torches. Later, staff members had the idea of an aircraft equipped to drop incendiaries in a flight pattern that would mimic the grid lines used in hand burning - but it could be done on a much larger scale.

The first thing was to design an incendiary that was non-explosive and safe to carry in the aircraft. Next, a machine had to be designed to eject the incendiary capsules in a regular manner. Then, they had to develop the technique of positioning and navigating the aircraft, and finally the approval of the total concept and design.

The Mini Speaker of the day was Harry O'Neil who flew a Britten Norman Islander in the early days of the project. Harry described how a twin ADF in the aircraft was tuned to two ground stations which were installed in ground vehicles. They were positioned at the perimeter of the prescribed area. After each run the ground stations were driven to new locations to mark the start and finish of the next run.

Members of the group were most interested in both stories and David Mills sincerely thanked them for their efforts.

Next Meeting

At the meeting to be held on Friday September 25th, Joe Ward will tell us of his forty years in aviation: from Mosquitos to Canberras and then on to helicopters, and finally on the big choppers on the North West Shelf.

The Mini speaker will be John "Blue" Bailey who will tell us about his book, Buffalos, Boomerangs and Kittyhawks. I Hope you can make it.

Brian Hernan