



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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March Meeting

The March meeting got under way with the usual formalities that included apologies, visitor introductions and general news – and for the first time, a few jokes!

Also it was reported that Bill Charney, who spoke at our last meeting on his Beech Staggerwing, had left Perth and was in Timor on his way north to Vietnam. You may check his progress by doing a Google search for **biff windsock**. Last time I checked he was tracking up the west coast of Malaysia.

March Speakers

The *Mini Speaker* was your editor with a coverage of the record breaking flight by a Lockheed Neptune – the Truculent Turtle, which departed Pearce Air Force Base on September 29th, 1946, and flew 18,082 kilometres, in 55 hours and 17 minutes, to the Naval Air Base in Columbus Ohio. Originally hoping to make Washington DC, the Neptune took off with 6800 Imp gallons of fuel and over 300 Imp gallons of oil on board. It not only broke the distance and endurance record, but it also created a new record for the heaviest lift by a twin-engine aircraft. The load included the crew of four and a baby kangaroo.

The takeoff was assisted by four JATO bottles (jet assisted takeoff), two on either side of the fuselage – each produced 1000 lbs of extra thrust when the Neptune was half way through its takeoff run.



The Neptune during a 14 second JATO burn on takeoff.

The route was via Alice Springs, Cooktown, Marshall Islands and to the USA. It broke the previous record set by a B29 when it flew from Guam to Washington D.C., a distance of about 12,500 kilometres.

The *Speaker of the Day* was Ted Fletcher who spoke on Operation Gridiron, a secret mission involving two Catalinas that took off from Crawley in April 1942 to fly to the Philippines to deliver supplies and to withdraw important personnel from Corregidor.



Track North **—————**
Track South **- - - - -**

The route took them up the Western Australian coast to Shark Bay, Broome, on to Darwin where they arrived at dawn without knowledge of the special procedures for allied aircraft. They were lucky not to be shot down by trigger happy gun crews who still had Japanese bombings on their mind. After resting during the day they took off at night to fly over enemy-held territory to Lake Lanao, an American stronghold in the Philippines for fuel and a weather report. After camouflaging the aircraft during daylight

hours and getting little rest, they took off, again at night, for Corregidor where they landed in the dark, dropped off urgently needed supplies and picked up their passengers.

During the return journey both Catalinas again landed at Lake Lanao for fuel. While departing, one drifted onto rocks, resulting in a large gash in the hull below the water line. In desperation, temporary repairs were carried out while the other flew on. After a day of hard work the patched Catalina continued to Darwin.

By flying at night they avoided the ever-present risk of attack from Japanese fighters. Over all, it was a most dangerous mission with any one of a number of factors likely to turn against them at any time. Later, the crews were awarded the Silver Star for their heroic effort.

Ted gave a blow-by-blow description of how the drama unfolded and how both aircraft and crews, plus important personnel, arrived safely at Crawley.



A Catalina from Patrol Wing 10 on the Swan River.

A vote of thanks for both speakers was moved by John Wager.

Cruise with a Difference

Margaret Murray has organised a tour with a difference. It is an exciting opportunity to travel up the Nile in style through some of the ancient wonders of the world into the *Land of the Pharoes*.

OFG members and friends who may be interested can contact Margaret at the coming OFG meeting, or by phone on **9311 4359** or **0427 256 064** for detailed itinerary.

Margaret is a Tour Leader not travel agent and donates her hosting services towards supporting the Aviation Museum, Bullcreek. She has been arranging and hosting tours for the RAAFA, Bullcreek, for over 25 years. There are already twelve people booked on the 10 day 9 night tour which starts in Cairo on 27th August 2010. The price of \$2809 per person (twin

share) is ground content only and air fare needs to be added. As a guide, this ranges from \$1600 upwards depending on airline choice and stopovers, etc. The attractive tour price is made possible by dealing direct with the Egypt Travel Company based in Cairo.

The tour includes visits to Cairo, Alexandria, El Alamein, Luxor, Valley of the Kings, Kom Ombo, Aswan, and the Pyramids and Sphinx.

Departs Friday, 27 August 2010
10 days, 9 nights from \$2,809 per person
5 star coach, boat & hotels
Fully escorted, transfers, Egyptian visa, and multi lingual Egyptologist

Full payment required by 2nd July.

Optional extension available - 5 day cruise Lake Nasser to Abu Simbel

Just Joking

After the landing of a Concorde at Heathrow the tower came up with: "Nice landing sir, but you were a little left of the centreline".

To which the Concorde captain replied, "Yes, and if you were watching carefully you would have noted that my first officer was a little to the right of it".

Both optimists and pessimists contribute to aviation. The optimist invented the airplane, the pessimist, the parachute.

Aircraft Identification:

If it's ugly, it's British.

If it's weird, it's French.

If it's ugly and weird, it's Russian.

April Meeting

At the April meeting, the *Speaker of the Day* will be Graham Hartree, a locally trained pilot who is now flying with Emirates. He will be talking on "Polar Operations" in a Boeing 777. Graham regularly flies over or near the North Pole when flying from the Middle East to U.S.A.

The Mini Speaker, Peter Yates, a retired Cathay Pacific captain who will talk about the effects of high altitude and low temperature on jet fuel.

So try to make it the Royal Aero Club this Friday, 30th April at noon to have a nice lunch and to hear our interesting speakers. Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan