



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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June Meeting

Once again the attendance was near the all-time high. Our speakers were: Brian Pope, who spoke on International Air Mail Services, and Ian Howell who told us about Air Mail in Western Australia. Ken Pittman also paid a fine tribute to the late George Gilbert.

Brian Pope's interest in aviation and philately has resulted in a collection of stamps and covers* that trace the history of the air mail system (*a cover is a stamped addressed envelope that has been through the postal system). Brian told us how the first air mail got under way in the USA when a converted DH9 aircraft was used to carry mail across the country. He showed a photo of the aeroplane type and an envelope that was posted in the first year of that service in USA.



DH9, used on the world's first air mail service.

Other examples were of the early air mail letters from Australia to England and Europe, and vice versa. He also had samples that had survived air crashes, ship sinkings, and even one that travelled part of its journey in the ocean currents – in a bottle!

Ian Howell followed with a talk on the development of the air mail system in Western Australia. The service started when the newly-formed company, Western Australian Airways (WAA), under the guidance of Major Norman Brearley, got under way in 1921. The approved route was from Geraldton to Derby. The service was not allowed to carry passengers or mail between Perth and Geraldton as it would have competed with the railway.

With a sizeable subsidy from the Federal Government WAA carried the first air mail in Australia – beating QANTAS by seven months.

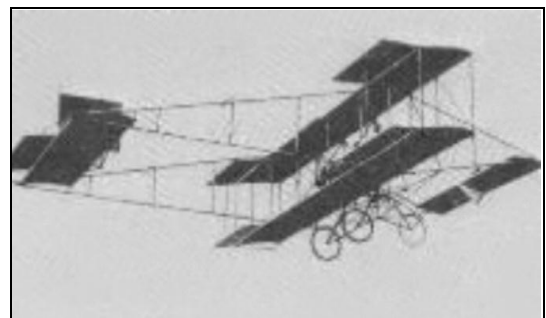
In 1929, WAA also won the contract to provide an east-west air service between Perth and Adelaide. It could now carry mail from Derby to Adelaide, making it the longest air service in the world.



A WAA Bristol Tourer with mail ready for loading.

Centenary of Australian Flight

On July 16, 1910, **one hundred years ago this month**, John Duigan became the first Australian to design, build and successfully fly a powered aircraft in Australia. He built a biplane, based on the Farman type, and powered it with a 25 hp engine which was specially designed and built in Melbourne by J. E. Tilley. The first trials of the biplane were carried out at Mia Mia on July 16, 1910, achieving a few short hops; the longest was about 20 feet. Later, John Duigan's first controlled powered flight was performed on October 7, 1910, over a distance of 196 yards at a height of about 12 feet.



John Duigan in flight – one hundred years ago.

July Meeting

The *Speaker of the Day* at the next meeting will be Ian Howell who will continue his talk on the early WA air mail service provided by MMA, starting in 1934. There will be a short coverage some of the milestones and personal achievements in early Australian aviation.

So try to make it the Royal Aero Club on Friday, 30th July at noon for lunch and to hear our interesting speaker. Hope to see you there.

Brian Heman