



The Old Fliers' Group

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

Coordinator: Brian John – Phone 9582 5233

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March 2012 Meeting

There were only a few spare seats at the March meeting. Nearly 100 members were in attendance for lunch and to hear the speakers.

Speaker of the Day

The *Speaker of the Day* was John Chesbrough. He related the story of how he and his wife, Marguerite flew, initially from USA to North Africa, then through Europe and on to Australia in a single-engine two-year-old Mooney 210.



The Mooney in flight.

The initial part of the journey took them from Houston in Texas, to Florida, New York, Halifax and St. John's before crossing the North Atlantic to Spain and then on to Oran in North Africa.

Before departure, the Mooney was put through a thorough maintenance check, an additional fuel tank of 200 litre capacity was installed in the rear and emergency equipment stowed. Clearances, passports, visas and necessary documentation was prepared in a short space of time.

On leaving St. John's in the early evening, John climbed to 13,000 ft on an instrument departure. Their route took them to Terceira, a small Portuguese held island in mid-Atlantic. It was there that John made an unscheduled landing for fuel – just to be sure – then it was on to Seville in Spain and North Africa.

After a break which took them to Europe, it was off again. Leaving from Nice in France, they flew to Corsica, Tunis, Malta and Greece where they accepted some traditional Greek hospitality. Then on to Egypt – Cairo, Luxor and the Pyramids – and through the Middle East where they were confronted with the usual obstruction, graft, corruption and extortion at airport after airport. (Some things never change)

There was a slight improvement in procedures in India and South East Asia, then on to Singapore and Indonesia where they felt much more comfortable with the bureaucracy.

At last they had Australia in their sights, Port Hedland was their aim. It was in the days of the "cabin spray". On taxiing up the terminal they were approached by a customs official and presented with two spray cans which they were asked to empty into the cabin and keep the doors and vents closed for two minutes, to exterminate any bugs that may have hitched a ride.

"So this is Australia?" they thought.



So this is Australia!

John's talk was most illuminating; it was one that displayed courage and a pioneering spirit from both him and Marguerite. It was sometimes filled with excitement and frustration – but most of all there was a determination to see the job through.

Prior to John's talk we saw some photographs of Darwin taken after the first raid on 19th February 1942. Australian authorities saw fit to ban photography, so the images of the damage are *thin on the ground*.

Next Meeting

Chip Harvey will be our next *Speaker of the Day*. He will tell us about the aerial photographic reconnaissance that took place during WWII, and the reason it was necessary. Chip's sorties were carried out in Spitfires.

As usual, lunch will get under way at about noon on Friday April 27th – hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan