



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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October Speaker

At the October meeting members were treated to a great talk by Ted Fletcher. He concentrated on the 1921 to 1934 period when Major Norman Brearley led the way in the development of Australia's first air service. After spending eighteen months barnstorming around WA, Brearley became the successful tenderer for the air mail contract which required him to operate a weekly service between Geraldton and Derby – calling at Carnarvon, Onslow, Roebourne, Port Hedland and Broome on the way.

Most people with an interest in Western Australian aviation history have a general appreciation of Brearley's operations in those early years. Those who have read Brearley's book, *Pioneer Aviator*, have gained an idea of the problems that confronted him. But, in his book Brearley conveniently swept a number of incidents "under the carpet".

While giving full credit to Brearley for his pioneering work, Ted took us "behind the scenes" and told us about some of those controversial incidents.

One major problem involved an order from the Civil Aviation Board (CAB) which requested that the main spars on two *Airways* Bristol Tourers be replaced forthwith. Over a number of months, Brearley ignored the succession of orders until the one that announced that the spars be replaced "immediately" – or his operating licence would be withdrawn. On receipt of the ultimatum Brearley informed the CAB that he had recently sold the aircraft and it was no longer his problem.

Ted went on to tell many more interesting stories that showed how Brearley was prepared to "push the envelope" to achieve maximum profit for his company. Two aircraft were built by Airways and paid for out of the maintenance account, which was financed by the CAB. A prop failure was blamed on a bird strike; overloading on joy flights occurred on a regular basis; aircraft were operated without a C of A ... and the list went on. Not mentioned was the problem when the CAB attempted to establish the tare weight of the DH66 *Hercules* – they discovered that water was "accidentally" left out of the radiators! Tut tut.

Special thanks go to Ted for a most illuminating and often humorous delivery on that early history of commercial aviation in WA.

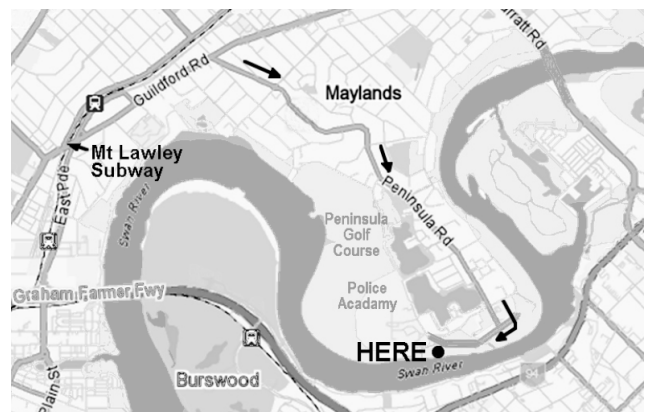
Prior to Ted's talk, your editor gave a brief coverage of the first eighteen months of Brearley's barnstorming days. After assembling his two Avro 504s at Belmont Park he made a good living from a well-organised joy ride operation. He flew on nearly every weekend, not only in Perth and the suburbs, but in country towns as well. He had many satisfied customers

Maylands Commemorative Park

On Saturday morning, 10th November about eighty people attended the official opening of the Maylands

Aerodrome Memorial Park on the river bank adjacent to the old Maylands Aerodrome. After an introduction by the Mayor of the City of Bayswater, Terry Gaunt of the Maylands and Peninsula Historical Society gave a brief history of the aerodrome. His talk was interrupted four times by a low-flying Tiger Moth flown by Kevin Bailey who, by arrangement, flew over the gathering. There was much cheering, waving as each pass took place.

It was a nostalgic morning which was enjoyed by all who attended. The centrepiece of the memorial is an outline of a Bristol Tourer set in a seven metre concrete circle. A path around the centrepiece contains by fifteen information plaques that refer to organisations and the notable people who flew out of Maylands between 1924 and 1963.



If you are interested, make the effort and visit the site. It reflects a lot of history. It is a credit to the City of Bayswater and the Maylands and Peninsula Historical Society.

Next Meeting

The last Old Fliers Group meeting for this year will be held on Friday November 30th at the Royal Aero Club. The *Speaker of the Day*, John Webb, who is a visitor to WA, has an amazing collection of photographs which record the aftermath of cyclone Tracey in Darwin.

Parking

The latest news indicates that parking will be free for our OFG meetings – details on Friday. As usual, lunch will get under way just before noon, so I hope to see you then.

Brian Hernan