



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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August Meeting

Just on ninety members attended the August meeting to hear our two speakers, Bob Ashley and Wayne Parsons.

Mini Speaker:

Bob Ashley led the way as Mini Speaker with his talk on the problems encountered when starting Mosquitos, Lancasters and Vampires in post-WWII years.

For the start, it was necessary to connect the aircraft to a ground power trolley to reduce the demand on the aircraft batteries. He quoted the example of a Mosquito where, if the connection/disconnection was made in a hurry, it was easy to “bark” your knuckles on the sharp metal that surrounded the small hatch in the engine nacelle where the connection was made. Furthermore, it was necessary to gain access to the “Kigass” priming point.

When the engine started, the “erk” was left standing in the slipstream of the prop and his head about a metre away from the Merlin exhaust stack which belched fumes, fire, smoke and noise. To make matters worse, the starts often took place at night in freezing conditions.

Starting a Lancaster was no better. The erk was required to climb up on the undercarriage and reach into the wheel-well to make the connection. When the engine started the result similar to the above – gale force wind, fumes, fire, smoke and noise.

Speaker of the Day:

Wayne Parsons delivered a riveting talk titled: *RAAF Helicopter Operations in Vietnam 1966 to 1972 – Genesis and Development.*

He started with the development of the helicopter as a weapon of war before concentrating on the Bell UH-1 Huey, which he flew in Vietnam with the RAAF.

The first eight RAAF Hueys arrived in Vietnam in May 1966 and became operational on 13 June. A *Staff Directive* informed pilots that they were not to operate in conditions that may incur a loss of the “asset”!

After a slow start and the arrival of additional Hueys that were more up-to-date, the RAAF got busy in the following roles:

- VIP Transport
- Logistic support
- Combat assault
- Medivac
- Reconnaissance
- Gunship attacks
- Crop spraying
- Etc ...



Moving “Grunts” in a “Nui Dat Taxi”.

While we all appreciated that war is a serious business, Wayne made room for some humorous aspects of his involvement in the Vietnam conflict.

Thanks Wayne for a great presentation.

Escape and Evasion Equipment

Members were given an opportunity to view a selection of *Escape and Evasion Equipment* that Delia Parker brought to the meeting. The items came via Delia’s father who was a Wireless Air Gunner (WAG) in New Guinea during World War II. The equipment consisted of:

Silk maps, heliograph and mini telescope.

The package was produced as an aid to downed Australian pilots and crew.

Next Meeting

The Mini Speaker for the September meeting will be Dennis Gorton who will give us the background on a record-breaking glider pilot. You will also hear the story of Sidney Cotton who achieved incredible feats in the field of photographic reconnaissance before and during World War II.

A parking fee exemption has been arranged for the meeting time slot 10.30 to 2.30 on Friday 27 September. So hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club for lunch just before noon.

Brian Hernan