



## The Old Fliers' Group

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

Coordinator: Stephen Rogers – Email: [henol@bigpond.net.au](mailto:henol@bigpond.net.au)

## Bulletin No 106, October 2013

### September Meeting

About ninety members attended the September meeting to hear about “Tug” Willson, a record-breaking glider pilot, and the famous Australian aviator, Sidney Cotton.

#### Mini Speaker:

Dennis Gorton gave us a short delivery on “Tug”, which covered his background and experience as a pilot. Tug had joined the RAF as a physical training instructor before taking up gliding and later powered flight. After leaving the RAF, he joined Cathay Pacific, where at the time of the Australian record-breaking flight was a 747 captain.

According to international rules, he was permitted to climb the motorised PIK20 glider to 1000 metres over the departure aerodrome; he then would shut down the motor, folder it into a streamlined bay in the fuselage and soar to his destination. On-board equipment recorded his height profile and use of the motor.



*The PIK-20 with the motor extended.*

At the October meeting, Dennis will tell us about Tug’s across-Australia record-breaking flight. Dennis was part of the ground support team.

#### Speaker of the Day:

Your editor gave an account of the exploits of Queenslander, Sidney Cotton (1894-1969). He was an exceptional aviator and businessman who took photo intelligence to a new level before and during WWII.

In November 1915 he joined the Royal Naval Air Service. After qualifying as a pilot, he flew on Channel patrols and later on bombing sorties in France and Germany.

In the winter of 1916-17 he devised the cold-resistant 'Sidcot' flying-suit which was widely used by civilians and the military until the 1950s.

From the late 1920s Cotton was engaged in various business activities which included aerial photography and a French colour-photographic process called, 'Dufaycolor'. While attempting to establish the product in Germany in the late 1930s he came into contact with German aviators and Luftwaffe generals.

In 1938 he was recruited by the British Secret Intelligence Service, in a civilian capacity, to take clandestine aerial photographs of military installations over Europe, Germany, the Mediterranean and the Middle East in the months before and during WWII. His Lockheed L12A Electra was modified and fitted with a variety of cameras secreted behind sliding panels.



*Cotton invented the teardrop window for better visibility.*

After the outbreak of WWII he was appointed to the rank of Squadron Leader and honorary Wing Commander. He introduced camera-equipped Spitfires that consequently improved the RAF photo-reconnaissance capability to the point where photographic intelligence became second in importance to the high level Enigma code-breaking practices that took place at Bletchley Park. He was undoubtedly one of Australia’s greatest aviators and a very devious spy.

#### Next Meeting

The Mini Speaker for the October meeting will be Vern Benjamin. He will give us a unique story about one of his early flights in an aeroplane. The Speaker of the Day will be Dennis Gorton who will tell us about his part in the Tug Willson, across-Australia, record-breaking flight, in January 1983.

A parking fee exemption has been arranged for the meeting time slot 10.30 to 2.30 on Friday 25 October. So hope to see you at the Royal Aero Club for lunch just before noon.

Brian Hernan