



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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NEXT MEETING Friday August 29th

Speakers

Our July meeting was a little unusual in that both speakers talked on the same subject. Alan Powell spoke first and concentrated on the development of the Australian designed and built de Havilland DHA-3 Drover. He was followed by Harry O'Neil who told us what it was like to fly one.

Alan established more than a passing interest in the Drover type when he saw one at Bankstown many years ago. He told us how the Drover was designed in 1946 as a replacement for the aging, pre-war, DH Dragon. The Drover made its maiden flight in January 1948 in the hands of Brian "Black Jack" Walker.



An early Drover over Sydney Harbour.

Although the twin-engine DH Dove was being produced in England at the same time, it was decided to build an aircraft more suited to Australian conditions. The result was the Drover. The major differences were that the Drover had three four-cylinder Gipsy Major engines as opposed to the Dove's two six-cylinder Gipsy Queens. The drover had a tail-wheel while the Dove a tricycle undercarriage.

By the mid-1950s the shortcomings of the Drover had become apparent. Variations to improve its performance included: variable pitch propellers; double slotted flaps; Lycoming engines with constant speed propellers; the introduction of 14° dihedral to the tailplane and a 600 mm increase in wingspan.

In essence, there were five variations of the type, which included the Mk1, Mk2, Mk3, Mk3A and the Mk3B – a total of only 20 aircraft sold.

Harry O'Neil finished the meeting by relating some of his experiences at the controls of the Drover when he was with Murchison Air Services. It was Harry's first tail-wheel endorsement, and he still muses at the entry in his logbook – *it is listed as "dual"*, even though the aircraft had only one seat in the cockpit and one set of flight controls. His instructor, Ted Shaw, stood at the cabin door behind him, barely within reach of the controls!



VH-FDS in the Murchison Air Services paint scheme.

Most of Harry's hours were logged on the Perth - Rottneest run where cross-wind landings were the order of the day – up to eight flights per day in high summer.

An interesting point was his method of synchronising the rpm of the engines. Harry set the required rpm on the centre engine then used the 'strobe effect' on the shiny spinners on port and starboard engines to equalise their rpm.

Of course there were some unusual experiences with simulated engine failures, like take-offs on two engines to explore the performance and handling characteristics.

Mal Yeo expressed a vote of thanks to both of our speakers who, once again, held our interest throughout.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting on August 29th will feature Tom Lofthouse who will speak about his experiences on D-Day. The mini speaker will be Rob Turner, past Deputy CFI and Chief Pilot of the Royal Aero Club. One of his students broke all records in going solo.

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

Brian Hernan