



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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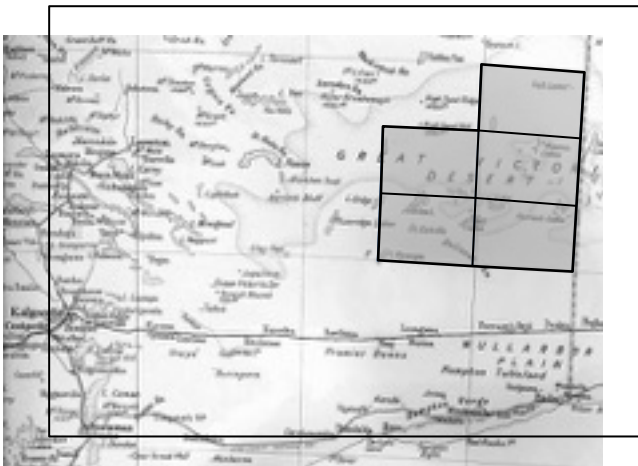
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****NEXT MEETING****
Friday August 26th

Last Meeting

After the normal formalities at the start of the meeting, your editor gave an account of his time as an air survey navigator.

In the early 1960s a 54,000 sq km block of remote territory near the South Australian border was assigned to the Western Australian Lands and Survey Department for aerial photography. It was the first block to be photographed and mapped as part of a national mapping project. The Lands Department had an efficient aircrew consisting of an air survey navigator and an aerial photographer, both of whom were WWII trained. However, the management felt the need to expand the aircrew by the inclusion of an *assistant navigator*. Your editor, a qualified cartographer with five years' experience in aerial mapping, was surprised and shocked when he was assigned to the position.



The five map sheets covered 54,000 sq km.

The new navigator faced a steep learning curve as he came to grips with the art of dead-reckoning navigation. The Lands Department had a contract with MacRobertson Miller Airlines (MMA) to provide a Douglas DC-3 for its high altitude photography – up to 20,000 ft. The aircraft was equipped with oxygen and was modified to accommodate two drift sights and a state-of-the-art precision air survey camera. Photography could only be carried out on cloud-free days. The special project got under way with eight crew being posted to Forrest on the Trans Australian railway line – there were four MMA pilots, an MMA engineer and the crew of three from the Lands Department. During

that project, over 16,500 kilometres were flown on photography, plus transit to and from the project area.



The Douglas DC-3, VH-MML.

In the early 1960s Western Australia was experiencing the first signs of development in the Pilbara and Kimberly regions. Aerial photography and mapping was needed for the assessment and/or development of projects such as the Ord River diversion dam, Lake Argyle catchment, Nor West Cape radio station, mining leases, ports, roads, railways, flood control and coastal studies, etc. Also, in the south of the state there were many projects, including townsites, forestry and agriculture, which needed aerial photography and mapping as development took place. For flexibility, MMA converted two DC-3s, VH-MML and VH-MMF, for medium to high level photography and an Avro Anson, VH-MMH, for low level work (1500 to 6000 ft) As each project came to hand it was fully prepared so that photography could take place as soon as the weather conditions were suitable in the project area – crews were virtually on permanent standby. In 1962 a Sydney based firm, Ad Astra Aerial Surveys, won the contract and provided a DC-3 VH-AGU. A year later Murchison Air Charter won the contract with a twin engine Cessna 411, VH-TDB. Judging from the number of questions at the end, the talk was appreciated by the eighty or so members who attended.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting will be at the Royal Aero Club, at noon on Friday August 26th. Gordon Hamilton will return to finish off the story of his time with Fiji Airways and Hilly Rostowsky will talk about his time as a jet fighter pilot in the Fleet Air Arm.

Brian Hernan.