



The Old Fliers' Group

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

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****NEXT MEETING****

Friday October 27th 2017.

Speaker of the Day

Nearly eighty people attended our last meeting to hear John Wager tell the story of Laurence J. Hartnett (1896 – 1986), a pioneer of the motor and aviation industries in Australia. He created the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and was the first manager of General Motors-Holden – he was also responsible for building the General Motors plant at Fisherman's Bend near Melbourne.

At an early age Hartnett developed an interest in aviation and all things mechanical. In 1914 he worked at the Vickers factory on cutting edge projects. In March 1918 he enlisted in the Royal Naval College at Greenwich as a Probationary Flying Officer. He flew solo after eight hours dual in a Maurice Farman.



The Maurice Farman.

Later, he chased Zeppelins over London in a DH9 and later still flew the twin-engined Handley Page bomber.

After WWI he moved into a number of positions in automotive engineering in England, the Far East, Sweden and in the USA. By 1933 was the managing director of GM-H in Australia.

Prior to WWII he teamed up with Lawrance Wackett to establish the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation plant at Fisherman's Bend and during WWII he was Director of Ordnance Production and was responsible for the production of guns, torpedos, land mines, and much more.

After WWII he was involved in the design of the first Holden car, but resigned just before the first model rolled off the production line. His next move was to develop the Hartnett car, a small model with a two-cylinder horizontally opposed engine.



The Hartnett production line.

Members appreciated John's meticulous presentation and showed their appreciation in the usual way.

Support Speaker

Your editor spoke of high altitude aerial photography in the early 1960s where it was planned to use a Beechcraft Queen Air in place of the DC-3s that had previously done the job.

During a test flight at 17,500ft there was an oxygen malfunction which resulted in the pilot and two others on board becoming hypoxic. Their condition was recognised by the navigator who noticed that the pilot's ear lobes and finger-tips had turned deep reddish-blue. Furthermore, he showed signs of vagueness and drowsiness so the navigator suggested a rapid descent to below 10,000ft. to more dense air. This was carried out and all ended well.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at the Royal Aero Club, starting at noon on Friday October 27th. John Park, manager of the RAAFA Aviation Heritage Museum at Bull Creek will talk on matters related to the museum – past, present and future.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan.