



The Old Fliers Group

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

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Bulletin No 165 April 2019

Report on our last meeting

Once again we had about ninety people attended our March meeting – and it was pleasing to see the number of new members and visitors.

Free Raffle

We held a 'free' raffle for a flight in the one of the Club's new aircraft – the Sling. Barry Douglas was the lucky winner. Later he advised us that he intended to transfer his win to a 17 year old who has just completed High School and is keen to start a career in aviation – currently he is packing shelves at Woolworths to pay for lessons.

Speaker of the Day

Tony McGrath was our Speaker of the Day; he gave us a brief historical coverage of the Cocos Islands. Starting with the Clunies Ross administration in 1826, and concluding with the full integration with Australia in 1984.

Tony told us that the air link between Australia and the islands began eighty years ago. The first flight was made in 1939 by Captain P.G. Taylor in a Catalina flying boat named *Guba*. The flight was made to determine the feasibility of an alternative airmail route between Australia and England. It was felt that if war broke out the link through the Middle East and South East Asia could be broken. The alternate route is shown with the broken line in the map below.



Links with England.

Cocos became an important allied centre during WW2 and in later years became an important staging post for flights to Europe, Africa and Asia. Post-war historic visitors to the island have included the Queen Mother, President de Gaulle and Prime Minister Menzies – and many more.

Mini Speaker

Next, members heard the story of the beginning of Western Australian Airways with the first airmail service between Geraldton and Derby in Bristol Tourer aircraft. On Sunday 5 December 1921; G-AUDK flown by Norman Brearley with passengers M.P. Durack and G. Jacoby; G-AUDG with Len Taplin as pilot and Jack Trestrail as mechanic; and G-AUDI with Bob Fawcett at the controls and Ted Broad as mechanic, took off on the first flight of the great enterprise.

Disaster struck in the first hour. Taplin encountered engine trouble near Murchison House Station and carried out a successful forced landing. Fawcett circled the downed aircraft, and while making a low pass his machine stalled and crashed, killing himself and his passenger, Ted Broad.

Brearley, who landed about a mile away, was given the dreadful news. Arrangements were immediately made for the internment of the two unfortunate crew members.

The air service was resumed in February of the following year after improvements had been made to aerodromes and emergency landing grounds. Pilots were encouraged to fly near the main telegraphic link to the North West. Each aircraft carried a field telephone which could be temporarily connected to the main line.



An early photo of the aircraft that crashed.

Members also heard how emergency communications were carried out and how encryption of sensitive messages might be handled.

Next Meeting

The next OFG meeting will be at the Royal Aero Club, starting at noon on Friday, 26th April. Our Speaker of the Day will be Jan Ende with stories of his work in aviation – initially with the RFDS. Also we will hear from Shelley Yeo with stories of unfortunate Western Australian pilots in World War 1.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan.