



**Tasmanian Aviation  
Historical Society**

*Preserving Tasmania's aviation history*



## ***“ROARING FORTIES”***

***OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN  
AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED***

**NEWSLETTER NUMBER 26 – JUNE 2026**

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Welcome to the 26<sup>th</sup> edition of our quarterly Newsletter “Roaring Forties”.

## TAHS OFFICE BEARERS 2026

<b>Patron:</b>	Robin Holyman	<b>Vice President:</b>	Peter Manktelow
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### *In this issue:*

We commence a series of articles on the history of helicopters, their development and operations throughout Tasmania.



*Tasmania's Westpac Rescue Helicopter.*

We continue with stories of the 7 EFTS pilots and their careers in aviation.

Ray concludes his history of Tasmanian aviation crashes and incidents.

We welcome a new arrival in Tasmania in the form of a Jet Provost and say hello to an old work horse in the form of the Aero Commander VH – EXP.

Some national news, including the closing-down of the Temora Airshow, a major engine failure of an Ansett DC 6 and “Do You Remember?” concludes this edition.

**REMEMBER:** *if you have any stories or history, drop us a line and we will endeavour to print it in future editions.*

## History and Development of Helicopters in Tasmania

By Wayne Dearing

Whilst researching information regarding the history of helicopters in Tasmania, it struck the author that these machines are significantly more complicated than fixed winged aircraft, both in their development, operational roles and how they fly.

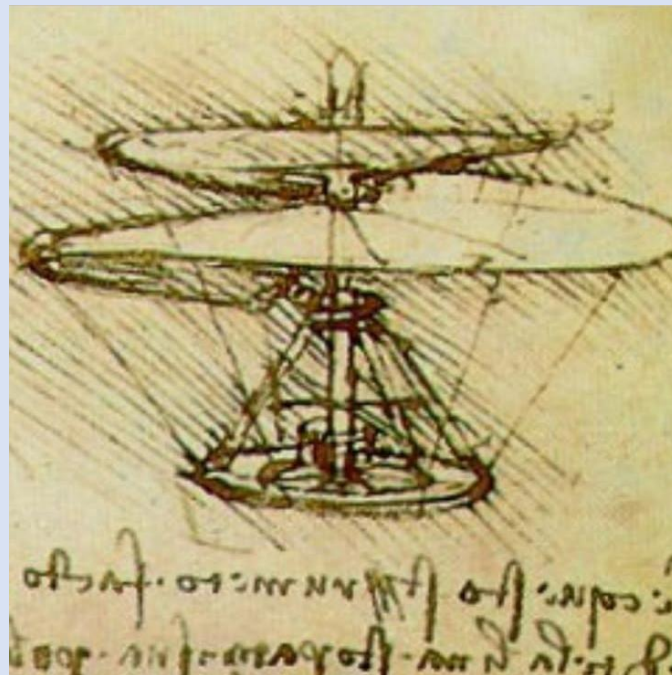
The easiest way to overcome this predicament was to talk to the TAHS Vice President Peter Manktelow, a retired helicopter pilot with some 15,000 hours flying for both the Navy and commercial operators. His answer was simple; give the readers a brief history as to who invented them, how they fly and what roles they can fulfill.

### What is a Helicopter?

A simplistic definition is an aircraft that can be moved laterally (fore, aft, left and right) and vertically, under human control and which can, more importantly, hover.

### Who Invented the First Helicopter?

Leonardo da Vinci designed a conceptual helicopter, known as the “aerial screw”, around 1485 - 1493, marking one of the earliest concepts for vertical flight. Although he never built or tested it, his sketches proposed a 15-foot linen rotor, intended to compress air to generate lift and powered by four men.



*Early da Vinci sketch of a “aerial screw” courtesy of Pinterest.*

## Who Invented the First Helicopter? continued

Nazi Germany produced a tethered tandem rotor helicopter flown by Hannah Reitsch, at an indoor stadium during World War 2. It had the two rotors on left and right lateral arms. No doubt to the Allies great relief, no further development occurred.

The first practical helicopter was the Vought-Sikorsky VS-300, invented by Igor Sikorsky and which made its first successful flight on September 14<sup>th</sup> 1939. His design was the first to use a single main rotor and a tail rotor, which became the standard configuration for modern helicopters.



*Above Sikorsky in flight and below awaiting take-off. Photo courtesy of Pinterest*



## How do you Fly a Helicopter?

Unlike a traditional aircraft, the helicopter tends to be a little more complicated for the pilot to fly and involves mastering three main controls: the Collective, Cyclic and pedals.

The Collective control is operated with your left hand and adjusts the pitch angle of the rotor blades, subsequently increasing or decreasing lift that allows the helicopter to ascend or descend.

The Cyclic control is managed by your right hand and changes the pitch angle of the rotor blades cyclically as they rotate, allowing the aircraft to move forward, backward and sideways.

The pedals, as with a conventional aircraft, controls the helicopter's yaw. Push the left pedal you will turn left and conversely with the right pedal.

Helicopter pilots acknowledge that flying the aircraft is a complex and rewarding experience, requiring practice and precision.

## Helicopter Development

As with most inventions made during times of war, following World War 2, helicopters began to be continually developed, refined and used extensively throughout aviation in a variety of roles. The military was quick to develop helicopters as a tool of transportation for troops, medical evacuation and ground attack aircraft. The most visible helicopter during the Vietnam conflict was the Bell UH-1 Iroquois "Huey". Some 5,000 machines were deployed with in excess of 3,000 being lost.



*A formation of Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopters. Photo courtesy Pinterest.*

## Modern Day Roles of the Helicopter

The ability of the helicopter to hover and land on a moving surface and take off and land vertically, opened a Pandora's Box for the aircraft. From medical extractions, fire-fighting, Search and Rescue (SAR) roles, aerial photography, re-supply of oil rigs to passenger transportation, are just a few of the roles that this workhorse fulfills.



*Firefighting and medical extraction roles of the helicopter Photo courtesy Pinterest.*



So with this brief introduction of helicopters, their history and development, we are now ready to look at the roles they played out in Tasmania.

Our next two Newsletters will see Peter Manktelow and Hoey Stobart discuss the aircraft's arrival in the state, their initial use and their gradual development into a highly professional aviation arm that safeguards our state and forms an important part of Tasmania's aviation history.

## Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction 1940-1944

By Wayne Dearing

We continue the series of Tasmanian born pilots trained at the 7 Elementary Flying Training School at Western Junction, with Hobart born George Gilbert.

### George Raymond Gilbert (Flying Officer)


Born in Hobart 19 January 1922, George was posted to 7 EFTS in October 1940. After graduating, he was posted to 7 Service Flying Training School (SFTS), Deniliquin before joining No 2 Operation Conversion Unit (OCU) at Mildura to fly the Wirraway and Kittyhawk.

Selected to train as a Spitfire pilot, George joined 79 Squadron at Laverton in 1943. As there were no dual control Spitfires, he trained solo. In June 1943, his squadron was deployed to Vivigani Airfield on Goodenough Island in the Solomon Sea, where he participated in fighter escorts for B-24 Liberators attacking Rabaul.

Following his ten-month tour, he returned to 2 Operational Training Unit (OTU) as an instructor on Wirraways and Kittyhawks until his discharge in October 1945.

### Ambrose Haley (Flight Lieutenant)

Born 1920 in St Helens, Haley was posted to 7 EFTS and after graduating, was posted to 5 OTU, then posted on attachment to 93 Squadron RAF. In December 1942, whilst flying an operational sortie in a Spitfire, he was shot down and ultimately taken prisoner. He remained a POW until the end of hostilities.

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Haley's POW ID Card from Stalag Luft 3 courtesy NAA's.

## **Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction** continued

### **Frank Deryck Ward (Sergeant)**

Ward was born in Hobart during 1918 and joined 7 EFTS in December 1940. After graduating he was posted to No 1 SFTS and was later sent on attachment to the RAF in Heliopolis, Egypt. He joined 267 Squadron RAF in September 1941, a Hudson equipped transport unit.



*RAF Hudson aircraft similar to one that crashed on takeoff killing Frank Ward Photo courtesy Wikipedia*

In October 1941, whilst flying as second pilot near Cairo, his Hudson was involved in an accident that claimed Ward's life.

### **Geoffrey Lawrence Hiller (Squadron Leader)**

Born in 1912 at Devonport, Hiller was posted to 7 EFTS in January 1941 and on graduating was posted to 1 SFTS on 07 April. He returned to Western Junction in October as an instructor until March 1943, when he was posted to 4 SFTS, then to 5 OTU again as an instructor, amassing 992 hours on Tiger Moths and 533 hours on Ansons.



*Geoffrey Lawrence Hiller Photo courtesy NAA*

## **Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction** continued

He then joined No 30 Squadron (a Beaufighter unit), beginning his tour on 05 June 1944 and completed it on 23 February 1945. During this time he flew 54 operational sorties, amassing 182 hrs. A total of 271 hrs between the Beaufort and Beaufighter was achieved by Geoffrey.

On 28 February 1946 he was awarded the DFC, for outstanding leadership, skill and coolness in the face of heavy odds.

### **Raymond Sydney Green (Flight Lieutenant)**

Born 1919 in Hobart, Green was posted to 7 EFTS in February 1941 and then on to 1 SFTS in April. Following additional training, he was posted to No 100 Squadron in March 1942 for Beaufighter training, before being posted to Milne Bay.



*Flight Lieutenant Raymond Sydney Green courtesy of AWM Canberra.*

Throughout September 1942, Green took part in several attacks against Japanese cruises and ships. In November he was posted to No 1 Base Torpedo Unit, Nowra as an instructor.

On 14 April 1943, Green was killed in an accident, when two Beauforts from Nowra collided while practicing dummy torpedo runs over Jarvis Bay. The crews of both aircraft perished.

## **Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction** continued

### **Wesley Leonard Morgan (Sergeant)**

Born at Wynyard in 1917, Morgan joined 7 EFTS in February 1941 and following graduation, was posted to 1 SFTS on 07 April. His next posting was to No 2 Squadron at Laverton on 08 December, flying Hudson bombers. Four Hudsons were sent to Koepang on 07 December and then on to Penfoei on the 11th December. The detachment provided cover to Australian troops moving within the island and attacked Japanese shipping landing troops at Manado and Kema, in the northern parts of Celebes Island on 12 January 1942. The fleet consisted of four cruises, four destroyers and two troop ships.

His Hudson was attacked and shot down by three Japanese flying boats and five Zeros. Witnesses saw his aircraft catch fire and spin into the ocean from 12,000 feet. No parachutes were observed.

### **JEC “Shorty” Arthur (Warrant Officer)**

“Shorty” Arthur was posted to 7 EFTS on 06 February 1941, then posted to 1 SFTS and commenced flying on 19 April. He was then posted to 1 Wireless and Air Gunners (WAGS), training wireless operators from 05 September 1941 until 06 January 1942. From 12 January until the 27 February he was posted to a flying instructor’s course and on completion, returned to 7 EFTS as an instructor until 21 September.



*Enlistment photo of “Shorty” Arthur Courtesy NAA.*

He was again posted to training wireless operators until 20 January 1943 and finally following training, he was posted to 2 OTU, flying Wirraways and Kittyhawks. In April he was posted to 77 Squadron until 21 January 1944. A few days later he was forced to bail out of his Kittyhawk and spent 48 hours in a rubber dingy, before being picked up by Air Sea Resue.

From 11 April 1944 until 26 June 1945 he flew test and ferry flights, mainly within Australia. He logged a total of 1,561 hours.

## **Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction** continued

### **Wilbur David Parsons (Flight Lieutenant)**

Born in Burnie in 1919, Parsons joined 7 EFTS on 06 March 1941, before being posted to 1 SFTS on 05 May. He was then sent to the UK via Canada on attachment to the RAF and joined 114 Squadron RAF on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1942, flying Blenheim's

On 24<sup>th</sup> August he was posted to No 464 Squadron, which was initially equipped with the Ventura, before converting on to the Mosquito.

Parsons logged 982 flying hours during his career - 197 on the Mosquito, 164 on the Ventura and 132 on the Blenheim - completing two tours in the process.

He was awarded the DFC on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1943, when his aircraft was attacked by German fighters and badly damaged. Despite many difficulties, Parsons flew the damaged aircraft back to base displaying great courage, determination and skill.



*Wilbur David Parson DFC Courtesy IWM UK.*

### **Huon Tasman Nation (Sergeant)**

Born 1915 in Scottsdale, Nation was posted to 7 EFTS on 06 March 1941.

After graduating, he was posted to 1 SFTS on 02 May. He was attached to the RAF on 18 September, joining No 457 Squadron and served in the Middle East flying Hurricanes.

He died in a flying accident near El Ballah on 23 October 1942 whilst flying a Spitfire for No 1 Middle East Training School and is buried in the Moascar War Cemetery, Egypt.

## **Tasmanian Trainees at 7 EFTS Western Junction** continued

### **Cyril Charles Viney (Flight Sergeant)**

Born in Hobart during 1915, Viney was posted to 7 EFTS on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1941, moving to 1 SFTS on 02 May. He was then posted on attachment to the RAF on 18 September and after operational training, joined No 460 Squadron, equipped with Vickers Wellington bombers, on 05 April 1942.



*Cyril Charles Viney and his Headstone at Dalfsen Cemetery, Overijssel, Netherlands, courtesy of AWM*

Viney's Wellington bomber was shot down by enemy fighters over Kassel Germany on 27 August 1942. All but one crew member perished including Cyril Viney.

### **Donald James Jennings (Flying Officer)**

Hobart born in 1917, Jennings was posted to 7 EFTS on 03 April 1941 and trained at 2 SFTS from 15 July to 25 September. Next day he was posted to No 1 'Y' Depot RCAF at Halifax, Canada awaiting transport to the UK.

He was then, on 08 August 1944, posted as a second pilot to No 461 Squadron, based in the Shetland Islands, Scotland. The squadron flew Short Sunderland flying boats on anti-submarine operations at night, using radar and 'Leigh Lights' (powerful searchlights named after inventor Wing Commander Humphrey de Verd Leigh).

Jenning's aircraft was posted missing on the night of 01 October, whilst on a mission off the Norwegian coast west of Bergan. The crew, including Jennings, missing presumed dead.

*The author wishes to acknowledge George Ashwood for his kind permission in allowing the use of his book "The RAAF Pilots of Western Junction" as a reference to this and forthcoming articles.*

## **Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6 1987-2025**

**By Ray Mudway**

### **02 Feb 1987 Cessna 172N - VH-BAC Private Flight, Cox Bight, Tasmania**

Before commencing a fishing expedition, the pilot had determined that a particular section of beach was frequently used by light aircraft. An uneventful landing was made on the beach and later, the pilot made a takeoff and circuit of the area before landing on another section of the same beach. The group had no success with their fishing and the pilot decided to fly to another beach on the opposite side of the bight. During the landing roll, the pilot discovered that the left brake was not operating. The aircraft subsequently ran through a shallow water run, entered an area of soft sand and overturned. The pilot had no previous experience in operations from beaches and the operator of the aircraft was not aware that a beach landing was intended.

The section selected was not used by other pilots who operated in the area. The reason for the brake failure was not determined, however the left brake unit had a recent history of malfunctions, possibly related to defective seals. There was no on-scene investigation and aircraft was recovered by helicopter. Pilot & passengers were not injured.

### **29 Jun 1987 Jones Aviation Transavia PL-12 AirTruk (crop sprayer), VH-MLJ**

Crashed near Gretna, Tasmania and was written off.

### **04 Jan 1995 Hughes 269C Helicopter VH-OBK, Sassafras, Tasmania**

Nil fatalities.

### **13 Jan 1995 Hughes 269C Helicopter VH-MHM, 5KM south of Deloraine, Tasmania**

One fatality.

### **16 Jan 1998 Hughes 269C Helicopter VH-DGD, Private Aircraft, 1 KM West of Abbotsham**

One fatality.

## **Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6** continued

### **28 Oct 2012 Thruster T500**

The ultralight crashed into Bass Strait, 10 miles NE of Waterhouse Island, Tasmania, whilst en route from Bridport to Flinders Island. Both occupants were rescued, but the aircraft was destroyed. Cause of crash attributed to engine power loss.

### **04 Jan 2013 Virgin Australia Airlines Boeing 737 VH-VUZ**

Aircraft was operating a scheduled passenger service from Launceston to Melbourne, Victoria. Aircraft departed airport and started to climb out. The flight crew selected standard mode for the auto-flight system for the climb to FL260, intending to switch to a better mode above FL260. However, they failed to do so and the aircraft speed slowly fell until at FL350, a buffeting alert indicated an impending stall. Noticing the low airspeed of 201 kts (6kts below minimum maneuver speed), the crew reduced pitch to a shallow descent to gain speed and then re-commenced a climb to FL350. It was not established what distracted the crew's attention.

### **19 May 2013 VH-ARW Launceston**

Private flight of a home-built light aircraft (1926 design) from a field near St. Leonards (east of Launceston). Aircraft caught the top strand of an electric fence recently installed. Aircraft slowed and landed heavily from 10ft, flipping onto its back, breaking the propellor. Pilot and passenger exited without injuries.



*Pietenpol Air Camper Photo courtesy Pinterest*

### **23 Feb 2014 Hughes 269 Helicopter VH-HAK, Private Aircraft, Legerwood, Tas.**

No fatalities.

## Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6 continued

### 29 Dec 2014 Cessna 172, VH-PFT, Port Arthur, Tas

Private flight. Maingon Bay (9km south of Port Arthur), Tasmania.

At 5.48pm daylight-saving time, aircraft departed Cambridge Airport to photograph yachts participating in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race as they made their way around the southern coast of the Tasman Peninsula. On board the aircraft were the pilot and a photographer.

At about 6.15pm, the aircraft commenced a low level photographic run on the yachts to the east of Cape Raoul. Shortly after completing a run on one yacht, at a height of about 50ft (the pilot was only cleared down to 150ft), the aircraft entered a steep climbing turn and had almost completed a 180° turn when the upper (right) wing dropped sharply, while the aircraft's nose pitched down to almost vertical. The aircraft impacted the water's surface in an almost vertical nose down attitude. The aircraft was seriously damaged and the occupants, a 29yo pilot and a 61yo passenger, were killed.

A mayday call from a race competitor, "Mistral", as she rounded the Tasman Peninsula bound for the finish line, sparked an aerial search for the plane. Up to nine race yachts and two helicopters diverted to help search for the plane and were joined by police launches throughout the night. An oil slick had been found in the area but there was no sign of the aircraft or the two people who were aboard. Co-ordinated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, sonar equipment was used to locate the Cessna.

At the time of the crash, the area experienced westerly winds gusting up to 32 km/h. The search was hampered by rain since the crash. There had been increased air traffic in recent days around the Tasman Peninsula to monitor the progress of race yachts as they made their final turn toward the Hobart finish line. Tasmanian entry; "Mistral" crossed the line just after 11.30pm. Local divers, were called upon to participate in the sensitive search process.



*Aerial view of Cape Raoul courtesy of Pinterest*

## **Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6** continued

### **20 Jul 2016 Schweizer 300C (Hughes 269) Helicopter VH-NTZ, Southern Heliwork Pty Ltd.**

At 12.37pm, emergency services were advised there had been a helicopter crash in a paddock near Deloraine (in the Montana area). Police arrived and sighted a white Schweizer 300C Helicopter, which has been completely destroyed after clipping power lines whilst spraying crops. Debris was scattered over a large area.



*Schweizer 300C (Hughes 269) Helicopters. Photo courtesy Pinterest*

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau, Forensics and Work Safe Tasmania were all notified. The pilot and sole occupant, a 37-year-old man from Bridport, was conveyed to the Launceston General Hospital in a serious but stable condition, with non-life-threatening injuries, broken bones and facial lacerations.

### **29 Dec 2016 (Unknown type of ultra-light aircraft)**

Police received a report of a small plane upside down on the beach at Peron Dunes, near St Helens. It appears that the single engine small plane, which was being piloted by a 61yo Launceston man, had attempted to land on the beach the previous evening, after thick fog prevented him from landing at Bicheno. The man had flown north until he could see a clear area and landed the plane as he was running low on fuel. The plane flipped on landing, due to the soft sand. Pilot was not injured and walked from the area shortly after landing. The matter was referred to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau and Recreational Aviation Australia.

## **Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6** continued

### **07 Nov 2017 Eurocopter AS350BA Squirrel Helicopter VH-BAA Rotorlift Helicopters, Hobart. (Loss of control and collision with terrain)**

The 57yo male Chief Flying Instructor and 33yo male pilot under instruction, were conducting practice emergencies under visual flight rules at Hobart Airport. During hydraulic system failure practice, control of the helicopter was lost. The crash happened at around 5.20pm, the aircraft nose-dived from 200m above the runway. It crashed on the grass verge on the edge of the runway, with one occupant declared deceased at the scene and the second occupant was transported to hospital in a serious but stable condition.

Hobart Airport was temporarily closed whilst the investigation took place. At least one Mainland bound flight was diverted to Launceston and other airlines cancelled flights. Hobart Airport returned to normal next day.

### **20 Jan 2018 Cessna 182P VH-TSA**

Aircraft departed Vale Airstrip, Sheffield, for a private airfield at Tomahawk, Tasmania. On arrival, the pilot conducted a number of orbits prior to approaching the strip. The aircraft touched down more than halfway along the strip before bouncing several times. In response, the pilot commenced a go-around, but the aircraft collided with a tree beyond the end of the air field and impacted the ground. The passenger was fatally injured and the pilot sustained serious injuries. The aircraft was substantially damaged. The ATSB identified that the selected approach direction exposed the aircraft to a tailwind that significantly increased the ground-speed on final approach and resulted in insufficient landing distance available. Additionally, the final approach path was not stable. Combined with the tailwind, resulted in the aircraft being too high and fast with a bounced landing well beyond the threshold. The go-around was initiated at a point from which there was insufficient distance remaining for the aircraft to climb above the tree at the end of the runway.



*Aerial view of "The Vale" airstrip Sheffield Photo courtesy of Pinterest*

## **Tasmanian Aircraft Crash Reports – Part 6** continued

### **14 Feb 2022 Garlick Bell UH-1H Helicopter VH-UHX**

Supporting the Tasmania Fire Service on a bushfire at Lebrina, north-east of Launceston, the pilot lost partial drive to the rotor system. The pilot dumped the load of water and headed towards clear ground, but the aircraft then suffered a total loss of drive. The pilot was unable to complete a safe auto-rotation and the aircraft collided with the ground. The pilot suffered fatal injuries.

The investigation found that the helicopter's engine-to-transmission main KAflex drive shaft partially failed due to fracture of an attaching bolt or flex-frame element and entered fail-safe mode. The ATSB issued a safety advisory notice to all UH-1H operators. A rapid increase in vibration or noise from the transmission area (especially a distinct howling or shrieking) may signify the KAflex has entered fail-safe mode and could imminently fail.

### **Jul 2024 McDermott Aviation Bell 214B-1**

The yellow and blue helicopter, operated by McDermott Aviation, had departed a private airfield at Cressy, Tasmania for an external sling load operation at Tullah, with the co-pilot flying. At Tullah, it descended and dipped into a lake, due to the pilots "disagreeing" about landing options at Tullah due to significant fog over the town. The disagreement distracted them regarding their height and descending to 1.5 metres, they realised they would hit the water and that it was too late to avoid impact. Applying throttle, the aircraft's belly hit the water before they ascended to 500ft, with no apparent damage. The other pilot took over control from the co-pilot who was flying.

The incident was not reported to safety authorities, in breach of regulations and only came to light after a tip-off to the ATSB by a member of the public who saw a video on Facebook, filmed on a phone by a witness on the ground. The ATSB concluded the helicopter crew did not follow effective communication and decision-making protocols.

### **02 Aug 2025 Bristell S-LSA Aircraft registered 23-2810 George Town Tas**

A 70yo man, a 60yo woman and a dog departed George Town aerodrome in the afternoon, headed for NSW. They were supposed to stop in Victoria, but failed to arrive. Searches commenced Sunday morning but to date, no evidence of the aircraft has been found.

## National Incidents and History-ANSETT-ANA VH-INA

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1964, just after take-off from Essendon, ANSETT-ANA DC-6B, VH-INA, (Flight 216) lost the entire propeller assembly from its number 3 engine just after rotation. A blade broke off the propeller due to metal fatigue, causing the rest of the propeller blades to tear away and almost rip the one-ton engine from its mountings. Suddenly the aircraft was experiencing severe drag, power loss and a dangerous yaw to in one direction, requiring some immediate action from the crew.

Oil sprayed the fuselage as lines ruptured and propeller debris rained down on North Essendon. One blade pierced the roof of a house with other debris landing in the back yards of other houses. Fortunately, no injuries were sustained. Now Captain Keith Hants and his crew, together with the 57 passengers on board, faced an aviator's test of calm and skill.

With the damaged engine barely hanging on, the DC-6B struggled to climb and just cleared the suburbs of Melbourne, as it headed out to Port Phillip Bay. It began to circle and dumping fuel to lighten the aircraft in preparation for an emergency landing. A second aircraft, a DC-3 VH-ING, was dispatched to assess the damage from the air. On board were Captain's John Blair and Peter Gibbes, (the latter being the ANSETT-ANA Director of Operations), DCA personnel and ANSETT-ANA maintenance personnel.



*VH-ING the chase aircraft Photo Courtesy Pinterest*

The crew decided that landing with the engine barely attached was too risky and after some tense maneuvers, they managed to shake the engine free and allow it to drop into Port Phillip Bay. Now significantly lighter, they returned and landed safely back at Essendon, ninety-four minutes after their departure. Even Reg Ansett was on the tarmac to greet their homecoming.

A classic case of calm professionalism and a little luck in the skies over Melbourne almost 62 years ago.

## National Incidents and History-ANSETT-ANA VH-INA continued

*A series of photos courtesy of Pinterest of the damage sustained to the DC-6.*



## Gone but not Forgotten – VH-EXP!!!

Saw this photo recently and it certainly brought back memories of a golden era of the Tasmanian Aero Club. The then CFI/Chief Pilot, Terry Mulholland, managed to negotiate the aircraft's purchase and, on its arrival, it was placed on line flying night freighter runs and some charter trips.



*Aero Commander 680FL – VH-EXP*

Affectionally known as the “*P*”, the aircraft was built in 1966 and purchased from an operator in the Northern Territory. Powered by two geared supercharged engines, the “*P*” had quite a few owners before finding a spot in the Aero Club’s fleet.

For those of us who flew her, or flew in her, the memories still linger strongly. An incredibly stable aircraft that could carry almost 1000kg of newspapers from Launceston to Hobart. She was used four mornings a week for freight runs for some years.

The challenge of the “*P*” was to manage the engines. Those geared super charged engines provided enormous power, but like some people, were known to be difficult to manage.

Unfortunately, the aircraft was sold when the freight run was withdrawn. Purchased by Par Avion in Hobart, she was used as a spare parts aircraft for Par Avion’s fleet.

The “*P*” certainly caused some headaches, but left some great memories.

## A New Addition to Tasmania's Aviation History



Pictured above is a Jet Provost T5, VH-JPV; a model of the Jet Provost aircraft that at one time had been a significant part of Devonport's aviation history.

In the mid-nineties, a stablemate aircraft registered VH-JPP, found her way into Devonport's Skywise Aviation Hangar for restoration, prior to racing during Skyrace Tasmania at Valleyfield, in the world's first all-jet pylon race.

Fast forward to 2026 and Jet Provost VH-JVP arrives at Devonport after being flown from the LaTrobe Valley by its new owner. It will be hangared at the Devonport Aero Club and it is hoped that in the not too distant future, the public may be offered an opportunity to take a joyride in the aircraft.



## **Southern Cross Fokker FVIIIB Arrives at Sydney Airport**

Southern Cross is a flying replica of the famous record breaking Southern Cross Fokker FVIIIB of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith fame, from the 1920s and 1930s.

The replica was built as a tribute to Smithy in South Australia by a team led by John Pope OAM, during the period 1980 to 1987. The aircraft toured Australia during the 1988 Bicentenary, raising money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

She is a faithful replica built to modern standards, using the traditional aircraft construction of steel tubing and timber, with heat-shrunk and doped polyester (Irish Linen on the original) for the fuselage and an all wooden (spruce and plywood) wing. She is the largest “close replica” aircraft in the world and has the largest one-piece wing ever made here in Australia.

On the 25th May 2002 at Parafield South Australia, she lost a main wheel strut on takeoff. Landing on the one good wheel and the tail, the pilot kept the damaged undercarriage off the ground by keeping its wing high in the air. Eventually, the high wing came down and broke approx. 3m of the wing tip.

The aircraft was dis-assembled and stored for a number of years.

After considerable negotiation, HARS (Historical Aircraft Restoration Society) acquired the aircraft from the SA Government in 2010. It was delivered to HARS via semi-trailer and since then, a dedicated team of engineers has successfully returned it (after re-design of components and a complete painstaking rebuild) to full airworthy status.



*Fully restored and flying again Southern Cross Replica Photo courtesy Pinterest*

## **Southern Cross Fokker FVIIIB Arrives at Sydney Airport continued**

On Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup> 2026, the Southern Cross replica touched down at Sydney Airport, marking a historic moment in Australian aviation.

The landing was joined by Alex Kingsford-Smith, great grand-nephew of Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm, the grandson of Charles Ulm, in the lead up to the 100-year anniversary of the world's first trans Pacific flight. Dick Smith, who has long supported the restoration project, was also on the flight.



*Touchdown in Sydney 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Photo courtesy of Travelweekly.*

The moment honors the legacy of Kingsford-Smith, Ulm and their crew, as well as the many volunteers at the HARS Aviation Museum based at Albion Park, who restored this iconic aircraft.

Seeing the Southern Cross back in the skies is a powerful reminder of how far aviation has come and the role Sydney Airport has played in connecting Australia to the world for more than a century.

## National Airshow News

### WARBIRDS OVER SCONE 2026

The weekend of March 28 and 29 this year saw the largest assembly of warbird aircraft in the Southern Hemisphere gather at the scenic Hunter Valley town of Scone.

A highlight of this year's event was the promise of the largest gathering of Spitfires in Australia since World War 2 and for one lucky visitor from Victoria, a once-in-a-lifetime flight in what will become Australia's only two-seat Spitfire.



*The two-seater Spitfire featured in this year's airshow. Photo courtesy of Warbirds Over Scone*

A Southern hemisphere first, BS548 is a stunning success of restoration. Originally built as a Mk V and upgraded to Mk IX standard by Rolls Royce in 1942, the aircraft fought with the Free French with No 340 and 341 Squadrons before being shot down in 1943.

Restored in the U K by the Aircraft Restoration Company, it arrived in Scone as Australia's only airworthy two-seat Spitfire.

## **National Airshow News continued**

Other aircraft featured included Mustangs, Kittyhawks, the only flying F4U-1D Corsair in Australia, a Sea Fury, Trojans and Harvards. Other notable aircraft included the de Havilland T55 Vampire, a Strikemaster, Grumman Avenger and a CAC Wirraway. The airshow spanned almost six hours each day, showcasing both historic and modern warbirds and included world-class aerobatic displays

Attendees could also experience an aerobatic adventure flight, visit the Hunter Warbirds Museum, view military cars or visit a variety of food and coffee stalls.

Across the weekend, a record crowd of over 15,000 people attended, in perfect weather, at what is becoming one of the largest displays of warbirds in the Southern hemisphere.



*Australia's only airworthy F4U-1D Corsair Photo Courtesy Warbirds Over Scone*

## **National Airshow News continued**

### **SAD NEWS FROM WARBIRDS DOWNUNDER**

Sadly, the Temora Aviation Museum cancelled their 2026 Warbirds Downunder Airshow, as the museum shifts to Showcase Days. This was after more than two decades as a biennial highlight in Australia's aviation calendar. Announcing the decision, the Temora Aviation Museum (TAM) cited rising costs, safety considerations and the ongoing challenges of running a large-scale airshow.

While the decision will disappoint people, it represents a positive evolution for aviation at Temora and they remain committed to celebrating Australia's aviation heritage.



***Opening Hours are 10.00am to 4.00pm seven days per week excluding New Years Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.***

## An International Visitor

On March 12 this year (2026), an American registered DC-3, N8336C, flew into Sydney's Bankstown Airport as part of a World Tour. Named "Spirit of Douglas", she departed America on August 25 and has flown through North America, Canada, across the North Atlantic to England, through Europe and Indonesia to Darwin and then down to Sydney.

Next stop Norfolk Island on March 14 and from there departing for Wanaka on March 15 (her final destination), for the Warbirds Over Wanaka Airshow. Truly a beautiful aircraft and below are some interesting facts about her.



*"Spirit of Douglas" at Sydney's Bankstown Airport. Photo courtesy Art History.*

The "Spirit of Douglas" first took to the skies in 1942 as a C-53 and was later converted to a VIP DC-3 with AIRsearch Maximizer speed kit in 1955. She has flown under a variety of identities, including as a C-53 military transport, a civilian airliner and later as a cargo aircraft. During World War 2, she flew the "Hump" over the Himalayas between India and China. Powered by Twin Wasp Pratt and Whitney engines, her cruising speed is around 145 knots.

Seating is for 13 very lucky passengers. What a way to see the world!!



## **Trans Australia Airlines A Brief Look at the Airline's Significant Australian Firsts.**

- 1960** First Australian airline to carry one million passengers in a year.
- 15 August 1967.** Excluding helicopters, TAA's DC 9 VH-TJJ was the first aircraft into Melbourne's Tullamrine Airport.
- 19 July 1971** The airline's Friendship VH-TQR, flight 205 Sydney to Melbourne, was the first scheduled domestic flight into Tullamarine.
- 1974** A TAA Fokker F27 was the first aircraft to arrive in Darwin after Cyclone Tracey.
- 1975** First to carry four million passengers in a year, in Australia.
- 24 August 1974** TAA used a DC-9 VH-TJL as the first aircraft in the world to be painted and used as a promotion for a holiday destination.
- 04 February 1981** TAA was the first major Australian domestic airline to employ male flight attendants.
- 22 July 1981** TAA introduced the first "wide body" aircraft on Australian domestic routes with the Airbus A300.



## Do You Remember?

- On the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1917, No 4 Squadron AFC - the last AFC Squadron to serve over the Western Front - arrived in England to undergo training.
- In January 1920, the Australian Flying Corps became the Australian Air Corps under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Richard Williams.
- On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1921, the Australian Air Corps became the Australian Air Force and then 11th May, became the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- As at 12<sup>th</sup> December 1941, RAAF front-line strength included 101 Wirraways, 53 Hudsons, 12 Catalinas and 11 Seagulls. Reserve strength included 72 Fairey Battles, a further 108 Wirraways and 126 Avro Ansons.
- In January 1961, the first radar navigation charts were published.
- On the 16th October 1967, the Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) formed at HC723 Squadron, Naval Air Station, Nowra, NSW, arrived in Vung Tau, South Vietnam.
- In July 1969, at Williamtown after ten years-service in Malaysia, the Sabre jet fighters of 77 Squadron RAAF were replaced by Mirage Jet Fighters.
- On 14<sup>th</sup> September, the first five of twenty-four McDonnell Douglas F-4E Phantoms arrived at RAAF Amberley.
- In 1974, Christine Davy became the first women pilot of a passenger airline when she was appointed Senior Captain with First Class Air Transport License with Connair, based at Alice Springs.
- On the 13th June 1979, the Australian Army's last Bell 47G-3B-1 Sioux helicopter in service (A1-404, piloted by Colonel R R Harding and Major J D Campbell), arrived in Canberra from Oakey, to be presented to the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.
- In 1989, Gaby Kennard became the first Australian women to fly solo around the world in a single-engine Piper Saratoga, covering 29,000 nautical miles in 99 days.

## ***TAHS Coming Events (June to August)***

**Sunday 28 June** – Bunnings Kings Meadows Sausage Sizzle

Volunteers required to keep this important fund raising event going.

**Sunday 19 July** – TAHS and RAAFA meet in Hobart – All day event

0730hrs – Northern members meet at Helibase

1015hrs – Morning Tea at RAAFA

1100hrs – Replica Spitfire viewing

1230hrs – Lunch

1400hrs – RAAF Speaker Presentation

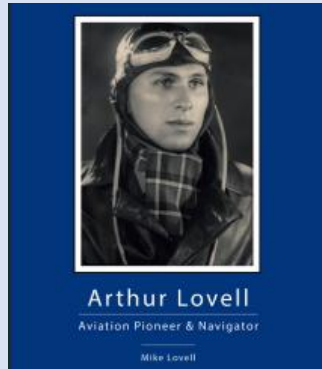
1445hrs – Northern members depart

Please Email [President@tahs.org.au](mailto:President@tahs.org.au) to secure your spot/enquiries.

**Tuesday 04 August** – Guest Speaker Night at Helibase 6:30pm

Details to be advised

## ***2026 WEB SHOP SPECIALS***



***TAHS CAPS \$25.00. Arthur Lovell from Smithton to Chief Pilot for ANA \$50.00.***

***The Forgotten Giant the story of Australian National Airways, \$50.00***

***Postage \$15.00 per item \$25.00 for two or more items.***

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***SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER!!***