

# AVIATION MUSEUMS

The Newsletter of the Australian Aviation Museums Association Inc.

## Terminal Icon

When in the mid-1980s the Department of Aviation let a contract for the design and construction of a *Southern Cross* display enclosure at Brisbane's new Eagle Farm airport it had in mind a state-of-the-art facility which would both silence the critics, and overcome many of the maintenance problems associated with the original enclosure.

It mattered little that the Department had—just a few years earlier—been forced to expend considerable funds on refurbishing the Vickers Vimy housed in a glazed “box” of similar design. The warning bells which sounded then, about a seriously flawed concept, went unheard in the north.



*Moisture from this overhead supply duct has been falling directly onto the aircraft. The FAC has revealed that this is just one of several major conservation problems associated with the new Southern Cross enclosure.*

Although the *Southern Cross* was also found to require extensive refurbishment, the Department believed that further deterioration could be slowed by careful attention to design. The design brief therefore contained a number of stringent specifications. Light levels for example, both natural and artificial, were not to exceed 150 lux. The internal temperature was to remain at around 20°C (±2°C) and relative humidity was to remain constant at 50% (±5%). At a cost of more than \$1 million, the new showcase was finally completed in 1987.

Recent advice from the Federal Airports Corporation suggests however that few, if any of these design standards have been achieved. The critical daylight levels have never been attained and in fact, usually exceed the recommended reading by a factor of 4 to 5. Corporation sources also advise that the “access is requiring some rethink as the insects and bugs by-pass any attempt to seal the glass door.” The structure’s northern glass wall is described as a disaster “with (the) fall out of airport environment and bird droppings being a continual source of maintenance”. These sloping glass surfaces

cause constant reflections, making it doubly difficult for the public to view the aircraft with any clarity (except at night).

Of greatest conservation concern however is the positioning of the air conditioning unit and supply ducts, directly over the aircraft. FAC officials have disclosed that the unit, which has been found to deposit moisture on the aircraft, now requires constant monitoring.

In some respects at least these results are hardly surprising. After all, and as any horticulturalist will tell you, greenhouses are ideal for generating high levels of moisture, light and heat...conditions which are anathema to the preservation of vintage aircraft. It is no mere coincidence that Miller's Wackett (Broome) and Butler's Bristol (Minalton)—both displayed in similar showcases—have also had to be completely refurbished in recent years. What does seem truly remarkable though, is that we should ever have allowed one of our greatest cultural icons to be subject to such prolonged and questionable treatment. It's difficult, moreover, to think of another country which would treat a national treasure so offhandedly as to isolate it on

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a tract of lowland swamp, far removed from the people it's supposed to inspire, entertain and educate. ■

## NZ 1994

Association members voted overwhelmingly last November to hold the next national conference in New Zealand. The proposal, which was put forward by the Director of RNZAF Museum (John Barry), reflects the growing international interest in the Association's activities, particularly the annual conference. The inaugural Australasian Aviation Museums Conference is expected to be held in Christchurch in April of next year, coinciding (but not conflicting) with the Wanaka Airshow. Though details have yet to be sorted out, it's likely that the Association will be scheduling a Tasman DC-3 service for those planning to attend. It is expected that many members will find it cheaper to get to Christchurch, than it was to attend last year's Bundaberg conference. Those wishing to present papers at the conference should submit a written outline to the Association's Secretary. ■

## People

- Cdr Mike Leahan has replaced Cdr Spike Campey as Director of the Australian Naval Aviation Museum. Cdr Leahan is a naval helicopter pilot and instructor.

- The WA AFA Museum has (reluctantly) abolished the salaried curatorial position formerly occupied by Graham Home. Graham has since been appointed Curator of the new Energy Museum in Fremantle.
- The Museum of Victoria has created a new curatorial position responsible for its growing air and space technology collections. The move also highlights the Museum's growing input into the NASMA development at Laverton.
- Sqn Ldr John Barry, MBE, is expected to retire next month as Director of

Clayton, NASMA (Committee); David Crotty, AARG (Committee); Dion Makowski, CNAPG (Committee) and Graham Sawyer, Ansett Museum (Committee). ■

## Restorations

- Lockheed L.10A VH-ABV, the one-time flagship of MacRobertson Miller Airways, is again expected to take to the skies.....over Florida. The Australian airliner was returned to America after WWII as



*Robert Greinert's Wirraway, A20-719, being reassembled last November at Classic Aviation's Bankstown facility (R Greinert).*

Wigram's RNZAF Museum. An active supporter of the Association, John was responsible for overseeing the establishment and development of New Zealand's finest aviation museum.

- The following Committee appointments were confirmed at the Association's November AGM: John Matthews, RAAF Museum (President); Kevin Gleeson, Airworld (Vice-President); Judy Pay, The Old Aeroplane Company (Secretary); Mark

N4886V, eventually ending up with the Valiant Air Command. An extensive restoration and modification programme was begun two years ago at Fort Lauderdale, generously funded by an independent benevolent foundation. The aircraft is being reconfigured as an L.10E to represent Amelia Earhart's famous machine, NR16020. The restored aircraft will embark on a nationwide publicity tour when work is completed in about 1995. The Australian connection is being maintained by the

Association's founding President (Mr Laurie Ogle) who has supplied components for the American restoration, in exchange for parts needed to extend the life of his own L.10, VH-UZO.

- ASTA Military Services at Avalon has reportedly offered to refurbish the RAAF Museum's C-130A, A79-214, which has been stored in the open at Laverton since the type was retired in 1978. The Museum is currently assessing the terms of the offer which are thought to relate to ASTA's apprentice training programme. ■

## Acquisitions

- The Fleet Air Arm Museum at Nowra has acquired four RAN Mk.31B Wessex helicopters. These are N7-204, 205, 223 and 224. It's unclear why these machines weren't put up for public tender in accordance with Departmental disposal policy. Auster Autocar VH-BYV has also been added to the Museum's collection.
- The Clyde North Aeronautical Preservation Group (Vic) has purchased Tiger Moth A17-15, now thought to be the oldest surviving RAAF DH82.
- Another *Save the DC-3 Campaign* has been launched, this time to raise funds for the purchase of VH-MMA (contact Penny Bane on 089-854385). It is hoped the Darwin based aircraft—owned by Air North—can be retained as a "living exhibit" in the Darwin Air Museum. Readers might recall that the Mackay Air Museum





Soon to join the HARS squadron is this EC-121K, BuNo. 141311, seen here at Rantoul, Illinois, last May.

embarked on a similar venture back in the early 1980s.

- John Love has added another DC-3 (VH-PQN) to his growing airline fleet. The former RAAF Dakota has been something of a landmark at Essendon Airport for several years, and is expected to move up to Albury later this year.
- Reports of a second Australia-bound Constellation were confirmed last November when HARS President, Bob De La Hunty, revealed that his Society was negotiating to acquire a former US Navy WV-2. The WV-2 is an early warning variant of the Lockheed Super Constellation, distinguished by its prominent dorsal and ventral radomes. This particular aircraft, BuNo.141311, served with the Atlantic Barrier Air Defence squadrons VW-13 and VW-15, and with the Airborne Early Warning Squadron VW-2 which provided heavy AEW services for the Navy's Atlantic Fleet. Based initially at Patuxent River, Maryland, it was later transferred to the Pacific Missile Ranges at Point Magu (Calif) and Kaneohe (Hawaii). Redesignated a EC-121K in 1962, the aircraft is known to

have operated alongside Australian forces at Da Nang during the Vietnam War. The aircraft was placed into storage at Davis Montham in May 1979. In 1983 it was ferried to Rantoul in Illinois where it was subsequently used as a static museum exhibit. It was found to be in excellent condition when inspected last year by HARS representatives. Mr De La Hunty confirmed that the aircraft would also be brought back to Australia once preparations for delivering the Museum of



Queensland's *Sunday Mail* described it as a "HUSH-HUSH salvage operation" involving "more than 100 World War II planes from a secret site off the coast near Brisbane" ...The Planes were now worth millions of dollars...and the salvaging syndicate expected to be swamped with offers to buy from around the world...we've already had offers from the Americans to take over the whole thing. They were talking big, big money. "Sound familiar? This FAA Corsair is the first (and most probably the last) aircraft to be raised by the syndicate. It was landed at Maloolabah (Qld) last November (*Sunshine Coast Daily*).

Victoria's C-121C had been finalised.

- The Museum of Victoria has acquired a rare WWI vintage Sturtevant aero engine. So What! Well that was pretty much how the staff at the Museum felt until, quite by chance, a remarkable connection was revealed involving one of the State's most famous manufacturer's, H.V McKay. It seems that the latter—best known as the inventor of the Sunshine Harvester—had more than just a passing interest in aviation.

McKay wrote to the Commonwealth Defence Minister in June 1917, offering to donate an American Burgess aeroplane (minus rudder and radiator). The offer included a 140 hp Sturtevant engine, one of several that McKay had imported. He is known to have visited the States on a number of occasions and may have purchased the plane just prior to the outbreak of war.

Never one to miss an opportunity, he concluded his letter to Senator Pearce with the suggestion that "Perhaps Australia could before long make the aeroplane complete." Although the aircraft was taken over—that same year—by the Central Flying School at Point Cook, it was only ever used for ground instruction. This may have had something to do with the fact that the type had previously been condemned by the Imperial Government.

This archival correspondence (identified by John Hopton) reveals—for the first time—an Australian connection with the peculiar swept-wing Burgess biplane. It is unknown what eventually became of this unique aircraft. The engine however was later purchased by another well known Australian manufacturer (of tractors), Mr Bob Chamberlain. Like his cousin, Harry Hawker, Bob also had a penchant for motor racing. The modified Sturtevant was used to power his record breaking speedboat – Nautilus – which eventually ended up in Melbourne's *Polly Woodside* Maritime Museum.

Though not widely recognised, the McKay family was to exercise considerable influence over the early development of Australian aviation. John Flynn was one of HV's life-long friends and, shortly before his death in 1926, he donated £2,000 to Flynn's Aerial Medical Services "Experiment". The Commonwealth Government matched this gift and the rest, of course, is history.

HV's son, Cecil, also served with the Australian Flying Corp. The war ended however before he had completed his training at

Point Cook. Cecil later became the President of the Royal Victorian Aero Club while his wife, Marjory, became the first Victorian woman to fly solo (in 1928). ■

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## Theft

Three 20' containers containing a large quantity of Mosquito components (mainly metal fixtures), eight Lockheed Hudson turrets and one Liberator top turret were stolen from Scheyville (Sydney) in a well organised heist. Police are now investigating the theft. Anyone offered material matching this description is asked to contact Dennis Baxter on 02-4116614 (a/h); 02-7081477 (b/h); 018-248740 (mobile) or 02-7071719 (fax). ■

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## AWM Extensions

The Federal Government has abandoned its plan to build a new exhibition facility at the Australian War Memorial. \$315,000 had already been spent on the planning for the extension which began in the early 1980s. The new pavilion was to have housed large technology items, including aircraft. \$5 million had also been appropriated when the decision was made last year to abandon the project. Consideration may now be given to the construction of large shed in the industrial suburb of Mitchell which, like the Smithsonian's Silver

Hill complex, would offer limited public access. ■

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## Storage

Australia's first domestic jet airliner, VH-TJA, has been placed into storage in the Majove Desert. Acquired by TAA in 1964, the B727-76 was returned to the US civil register in 1976. It is now owned by Continental Airlines. The decision to mothball the aircraft highlights both the depressed nature of the world aircraft market, and the diminishing demand for these early Stage Two jets. It is expected that this historic airliner will also be sold for parts reclamation. ■

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## Government Grants

The Airways Museum at Essendon has received a \$10,000 grant from its parent organisation, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The allocation resulted from a detailed development proposal submitted by the Museum's Custodian, Roger Meyer, in late 1989. The monies will be used to carry out urgent collection management tasks. ■

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## Exports

• The CAC Mustang wings (A68-150) advertised for sale last year by the Australian War Memorial have now been sold to a



*Latest acquisition for the RNZAF Museum is this 348th FG P-47D, 42-8066. Displayed for many years at Auckland's MOTAT Museum, the fighter was recovered from Lake Iraguma (PNG) in 1968 by Canadian Robert Diemert.*

collector in Denton, Texas, where they will be used to repair an accident damaged P-51D.

- Some members may also be comforted by the knowledge that the Memorial hasn't as yet applied for a permit to export its B-25, indicating either a lack of overseas interest and/or an unrealistic sale price. The Coalition's spokesperson on AWM matters—Sen. Jocelyn Newman—was quick to criticise the planned sale, expressing the view “that the Memorial should not engage in a “fire sale”, and that unless a satisfactory deal is found for its sale then the plane should remain with the Memorial”.
- From Papua New Guinea comes the disturbing news of an attempt to illegally export the P-38J described in the October 1991 edition of *Aviation Museums* (see *Imports*). The crated airframe was identified at Lae by National Museum personnel, just prior to being shipped to California last May. The incident could seriously undermine the good relations which Australia had previously enjoyed. The PNG Government may now impose even tighter export controls, effectively

neutralising the gains of the last decade won by organisations such as the RAAF and the Liberator Memorial Fund Inc. The impounded aircraft is to be flown to Port Moresby by the RAAF.

- Colin Pay of Scone has been granted export approval for his Nakajima Ki-43 (c/n 750) which is the world's only Mk.1 variant. Only two complete Oscars have survived to the present day. In a decision which is sure to raise a few questions, the National Cultural Heritage Committee (NCHC) decided last November to ignore the majority advice of its expert advisers and recommend that an export permit be allocated. The aircraft is understood to have been sold to a Japanese buyer. The AWM's expert adviser was the only one to support the application. It is difficult to reconcile the Memorial's position on this matter, given its own recommendation (to the 1991 Commonwealth Review of the *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act*) that protection should be extended to “those objects...of which there are less than three other comparable items in existence.”





*Undergoing restoration at Whaleworld in Albany (W.A.) is this former RAAF Kingfisher, A48-2. Engine cowls, flaps and seats are still needed to complete the project. A Catalina is also being reassembled at Whaleworld using parts obtained from a number of eastern locations (John Bell).*

The Memorial rated the acquisition of an Oscar so highly that in 1985, it embarked on its first (and only) international salvage operation in an attempt to try and obtain a suitable example for the national collection. The Mk.1 version is of particular historical significance to Australia, being the first Japanese fighter ever encountered by the RAAF (over Malaysia). Moreover, and as many readers will be aware, all Allied intelligence on the type was gleaned from flight trials conducted at Brisbane's Eagle Farm.

Captured Oscars were also paraded through the eastern capitals as war trophies, and exhibited in prominent public places (such as Martin Place, Sydney) during civic celebrations and War Loan Drives. These were the first and—for most—the only Japanese aircraft ever seen by the homefront population. It seems though that none of these social and historical issues were taken into account by the Committee

when it assessed the application. No consideration was even given to the fact that this aircraft was a war trophy. The "spoils of war" are what underpin some of the world's great cultural collections including those held by the Vatican, the Tower of London, Windsor Castle and, need I say it, the Australian War Memorial. Remove the trophies—the Pfalz, the Albatross, the Me262, the Me163 and the Me 109—and our own national aeronautical collection could no longer be described as world class. This is precisely why the Memorial went to such great lengths to recover its Me109 trophy in the 1980s, after it had been seized by Australian Customs. Why, one has to ask, should the Oscar be treated any differently?

The decision again highlights the impotency of the existing legislation, which has been rendered all the more ineffectual by a Committee whose expertise is confined largely to the fine arts, archaeology, and the built environment. In its present form, all objects

relating to military history after 1920 (including aircraft) are excluded from the Act's protection. And if that isn't cause enough for concern, then consider also that the Committee's expert aviation advice is provided exclusively by a handful of public servants whose interests are—by definition—sectional, institutionalised, entrenched, and governmental. This arrangement is clearly unacceptable in a country like Australia where the bulk of the aviation heritage is owned and controlled by private interests. If the NCHC is serious about protecting the national heritage then it should, as a matter of priority, ensure that there is appropriate aviation expertise at the Committee level. Moreover, it should look towards consulting with a truly independent, representative, and expert advisory body such as the AAMA (or its elected representative). Unlike the Committee's existing "expert advisers", the Association's executive can properly claim to represent the interests of most Australian aviation collectors and collections, both private and public. More importantly though, its representatives are called to account for their actions on annual basis. ■

## AWMB-25

The decision last year by the Australian War Memorial to sell the B-25, VH-XXV, has generated considerable public criticism and highlighted what appear to be serious policy inconsistencies. A number of letters were published by the *Canberra Times* (see page 5)

## AWM must not sell Mitchell bomber

September 4

IN JANUARY, 1984, this newspaper gave considerable coverage to the arrival of the Australian War Memorial's most costly acquisition, a 40-year-old B-25 Mitchell bomber.

That aircraft — maintained in flying condition by a devoted team of volunteers — subsequently became the star attraction at airshows and civic celebrations throughout Australia. It was, in effect, a public-relations windfall, a "good news" story at a time when the AWM was racked with divisiveness and subject to intensive public scrutiny and criticism.

Then in December, 1987, the director announced that the aircraft was to be grounded, adding that "the only way the aircraft can be preserved with certainty for future generations is to make it a static display". He went on to defend his council's decision by stating that "it is virtually irreplaceable and our primary concern is to preserve it for future generations" (CT, December 1, 1987).

Here we are, barely five years later, and already that "concern" is beginning to sound like hollow rhetoric. The memorial's recent decision to try to sell the aircraft by tender (advertised nationally, last month) has again sent shock waves around the country.

One suspects that the aviation heritage community is no longer the only community interest group now struggling to reconcile this latest decision with the lofty idealism being expressed by the memorial's management just a few short years ago.

At issue here is not just AWM's commitment to heritage preservation but also, the question of responsible financial management. This happens to be the only complete B-25 in the country, and it seems highly likely that the aircraft — if sold — will go to a foreign collector. One must also question the wisdom of selling at the very bottom of the market, at a time when world aircraft sales are at their lowest ebb.

Those of us with an interest in this venerable institution, and a commitment to aviation heritage, would prefer to believe that the spectre of financial and collective mismanagement at the AWM had been laid to rest some years ago. If it is increasingly difficult, however, in the face of such questionable practices, to believe that the nation's military heritage is still in good hands.

JON WINTHROP  
Broadmeadows



following the announcement, criticising the Memorial on a range of issues. Former 2 Squadron personnel have also publicly voiced their opposition to the decision.

The matter was investigated at a Senate Estimates Committee hearing last September when the Memorial's senior spokesperson appeared hard pressed to defend his Council's actions. The Committee heard that the sale was consistent with the policy position developed by Air Vice Marshal Barnes in 1983, and later accepted by the AWM's Council. The Memorial's Assistant Director made the point, when responding to criticism that the Memorial appeared to lack a "clearly defined, well-known and continuing acquisition's policy", that the present guidelines provided for the disposal of collection items which are "of marginal significance to Australian military history". One has to ask then, if this is the case, just why the Memorial's Council proceeded with the purchase of the B-25 in 1984, a year after it had adopted the Barnes document as its collection blueprint? And why too, has it continued to diverge from these collection guidelines by acquiring a Jindivik, a Pilatus Porter, and a second Sea Fury? Come to think of it, has anyone else ever heard of the Barnes Report—this master strategy which has been shaping our national aeronautical collection for the last decade?

The Assistant Director explained to the Committee that the AWM's B-25 had never actually seen combat service. No further mention was made of the fact that many of the aircraft in the Memorial's collection—earmarked for



The Essendon Market opened late last year with an impressive array of aircraft exhibits. Suspended inside the hangar are a MAC Mamba, Bell 414, gyrocopter and Cessna 411.

retention by the Barnes Committee—also fell into this category (eg. DH9, Pfalz DXII, SE5, Sea Furies, Mosquito, C-47 and P-51).

The Barnes Policy document describes the following as falling outside the scope of the Memorial's collection criteria: Deperdussin; Avro 504K; Fokker Dr1 replica; Me262; Me163; Sea Vampire; and Jindivik. Presumably then, any one (or number) of these could have been used to offset the Kittyhawk purchase if indeed, there was ever any substance to this notion?

Never before has an Australian national collecting institution been asked to sacrifice one major acquisition in order to finance another? It mocks the very concept of "collection development". Leaving aside the fact that the aircraft

market is at an all time low, can we seriously accept that the public service bean counters would authorise a major purchase (viz. the P-40) on the proceeds of some as yet uncertain, unquantified, and future asset sale?

There is other one other question however which begs to be asked in relation to this matter. It's been suggested that the Memorial obtained its second Sea Fury from the CSIRO on the understanding that it would most likely be used to help acquire a Kittyhawk for the national collection. One has to ask why this option was never taken up, why this alleged undertaking was never honored, and how the retention of this duplicate aircraft was justified ahead of the unique B-25?

Senator Jocelyn Newman (Opposition spokesperson on AWM matters) put forward one possible explanation for these apparent inconsistencies.... "institutions like the Memorial....tend to have a variation in their policy or principles, depending on the whim of the Council or the director of the day. That is why there is a need for something that is continuing and certain and well researched. Would you agree?" ■

## Publications

- *Scotty Allan, Australia's Flying Scotsman*, G U Allan & Elizabeth Shearman, published by Clarion Press, 1992 (illus., rrp. \$26-95).
- *The Last Flight of Bert Hinkler*, Edward P Wixted, self published, 1992 (195pp, hdbk., illus., b&w). Available for \$24-60 (postage included) from the author at: 16 Dickens Street, Norman Park, Qld., 4170.
- *Paths To Freedom*, Bob Kellow, published by the Kellow Corporation (illus., rrp. \$16-95 (Can)). An escape story written by an Australian who served with No.617 "Dambusters" Squadron. Available from the Western Canada Aviation Museum Inc., Hangar T2, 958 Ferry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3H 0Y8, Canada.
- *Failure Of Triumph*, E.J. Connellan, 1992. The first comprehensive history of Connellan Airways available from the Connellan Airways Trust, P.O. Box 2288, Alice Springs, NT, 0870, for \$60-00 (postage included). ■

### MEMBERSHIP & SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

Membership of the AAMA Inc. is open to all at the rates of \$10 (student), \$20 (individual) and \$25 (institutional). Inquiries and remittances should be directed to the Secretary: P.O. Box 286, Williamstown, Victoria, 3016. Ph: 03-6285924; Fax: 03-6285232.