

AVIATION MUSEUMS

The Newsletter of the Australian Aviation Museums Association

Conservation Breakthrough

Conservation is one of those words which, in lexical terms, has evolved well beyond its literal definition. While nowadays it is most often used in relation to the natural environment, those of us interested in museums will have seen it applied, or heard mention of it at least in this last context. Like most new professional disciplines, conservation has had to deal with resistance on a wide ranging front that includes the aviation museum community. There are clear signs however that the processes of education are beginning to undermine this resistance with individuals like the Australian War Memorial's (AWM) David Hallam, playing an important role in this respect. While most of us pay lip service to the conservation ethic (by putting a roof over our aircraft), few of us have been able to proceed much beyond this point. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly, while conservation remains chic and par for the course in those mainstream (and well resourced) cultural circles, few of us in the aviation museum community will have had any first-hand experience of conservation practices. Secondly, like most professional services, conservation treatments can be extremely expensive.

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The Munter M120 Dry Air dehumidifier being demonstrated at last year's highly successful national conference in Wangaratta.

Overcoming these obstacles might have been a long and difficult process, were it not for a recent innovation developed by the Swedish engineering firm, Munters. The Munter Dry Air Dehumidification unit is affordable enough to make conservation both intelligible and accessible to many small museums and private collectors. The company's Dry Air method of dehumidification allows you to maintain optimum relative humidity levels inside of an airframe, in either external or

sealed environments. This in turn, allows you to minimise the impact of corrosion and the harmful activity of micro-organisms (e.g. mould and dry rot). On this basis, the Munter's unit can be applied with equal effect to both metal, and wood-framed aircraft. The system provides environmental control of the whole internal airframe, thereby allowing for greatly extended maintenance and restoration cycles. Suitable for both static and operational aircraft it has, not

surprisingly, found a ready market within the NATO alliance countries. Its effectiveness in all climates, its low cost, its ease of installation, its reliability and its low maintenance and supervision requirements make it ideal for the aviation museum environment. Similar systems have been fitted to the Concorde and Comet aircraft at Duxford, and the Beverly at Flemington. Significantly, the AWM have now followed this lead by installing a Munter's unit in their B-25J.

The logic for investing in a system of this kind becomes particularly compelling when one compares the initial outlay (as little as \$1990) with the total value of a collection (which must include the labour and material costs associated with upkeep). Undoubtedly though, the most attractive feature of the Munter's system is its cost-effectiveness. This is to say that a single unit like the bottom of the range M50 (which costs \$1990) allows you to provide constant, state-of-the-art protection for a whole airframe while a larger (yet still portable) system like the M120 (illustrated), costing just \$5600, will allow you to "pickle" six small aircraft. Thus, for just \$5,600, an organisation like the Moorabbin Air Museum could stabilise most of its covered display collection. In other words, for an average unit cost of \$930, you can stabilise half a dozen of your museum aircraft regardless of whether they are on covered, or uncovered display. This argument becomes critical when set against the asset value of a single collection item, be it a Tiger Moth (\$60,000) or

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Kittyhawk (\$250,000). Munters markets a range of 26 Dry Air dehumidifiers, the largest of which is capable of supplying dry-air volumes of 25,000 cubic metres per hour (one very large hanger). Hopefully, this remarkable innovation will cause some of us to reassess our priorities and question our commitment to preservation (as opposed to collecting). **Product enquiries:** Peter Schultz, Munters Aust. Pty. Ltd., 4 Remont Crt., Cheltenham, Vic., 3192 (03-5637055) ■

News Briefs

- A casualty of the Casey Field closure has been the **International Airliners Museum**, which will now have to dismantle and relocate its DH Dove, VH-DHE.
- From Laverton comes the sad news that the RAAF's first **Hercules**, A97-205 (pictured in *Flypast* Vol.2 No.2) will almost certainly have to be destroyed during fire practise. Although the Air Force have made strenuous efforts to try and preserve the heavily gutted airframe there have (understandably) been few expressions of interest from the aviation museum community. The vertical stabiliser will be retained for the RAAF Museum Inc.
- The National Air & Space Museum of Australia (NASMA) has received a \$200,000 grant from the



Three of the world's last operational Argosy's were reduced to scrap metal at Essendon on December 3rd, 1990. IPEC's General Manager later remarked, that "It is an unfortunate comment on our society that expressions of concern for preservation are made only when it is too late to do anything of substance".

Victorian Government to allow for detailed project planning. The project was officially endorsed by State Cabinet in February 1990 and a full-time Executive Officer was appointed the following September. Exhibition master planning is scheduled to commence in April 1991.

- A portrait of the flying doctor, **Clyde Fenton**, was recently purchased by the N.T. Museum of Arts & Sciences for \$15,000. The huge oil painting (120 x 90 cm) which was on display at Melbourne's Adam Galleries, was part of a retrospective exhibition of

works by the well known war artist, **Vernon Jones**.

- Haven't you ever wondered what happened to that other 35th FG **P-39** which was recovered from Cape York in the late 1970s, in company with Syd Beck's 41-6951? After eighteen years of intermittent activity, it seems that work on 41-7215 is soon set to get underway again. Having completed the fuselage and engine restoration and transferred the project from Mt Isa, to a cane farm near Mossman, the former Cairns Aircraft Recovery Team (CART) members are planning now to

recommence work on the wings. The finished Airacobra will remain on static display in North Queensland.

- The official launch of the **Ansett Museum** at Hamilton (Vic.) on February 17th was an opportunity for the Council to showcase its longer-term plans for an ambitious \$5 million to \$10 million Ansett Museum complex housing memorabilia relating to Ansett's air and road transport empires. Preliminary drawings on show at the opening provide for a 5.4 hectare site to be developed near the shores of Lake Hamilton (and to include seaplane operations). Phase One of the Project was officially launched by Lady Ansett, 55 years to the day since the first ever air service between Hamilton and Melbourne. Key features of the initial displays are the replica Fokker Universal, housed in the original Reg Ansett hanger.
- The Australian War Memorial has made its first aircraft acquisition in more than five years. The 100 Sqn. **Beaufort** A9-557 QH-L (formerly owned by Ian Whitney), was recently purchased from Robert Greinert of Sydney,

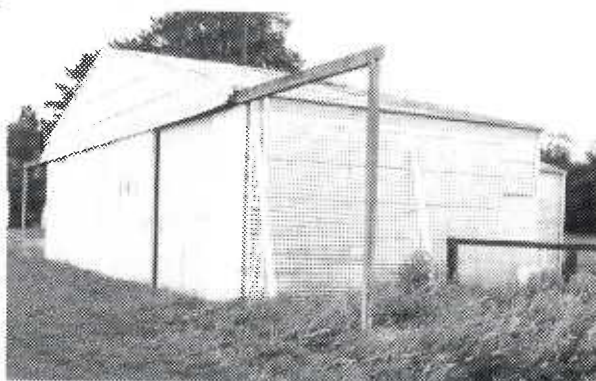
The Casey Hangar at Berwick was another casualty (see News Briefs) of the decision to sell the privately owned Casey airfield.

Purchased by Lord and Lady Casey in 1938, the hangar was thought to have been

Australia's oldest example of a privately owned, purpose built aircraft hangar. Built as a prefabricated unit by the well known Sidney Williams Company (of Come! windmill fame), it was also considered to have been the oldest production example of an Australian designed aircraft hangar. The fact that Lord Casey is thought to have been the first Australian to have ever flown in a powered aircraft (while studying in Europe), further enhanced the structure's historical importance.

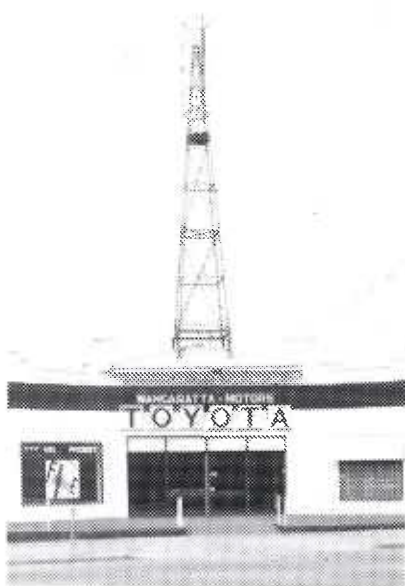
The hangar's forced removal, last February, highlights the very fragile nature of our national heritage.

The dismantled components are now held by the Moorabbin Air Museum.



and is thought to have been moved to the Memorial's Mitchell annexe.

- The RAAF Museum Inc. has exchanged its Sioux A1-140 for a substantial quantity of Walrus spares, previously held by the Camden Museum of Aviation.
- The recently completed Darwin Aviation Museum has reported 20,000 visitors in the period June to October, 1990.
- In a remarkable development the Queensland Air Museum have secured a Phantom F-4C from the USAF's Davis-Montham storage facility in Arizona. The Phantom (64-777), which will become the second example preserved in Australia, will be maintained in its present USAF livery. As with the B-52 in Darwin, the 64-777 has been made available on a long-term loan basis from the USAF Museum. Having earned accreditation status with the people at Wright-Patterson, the QAM now has the option of applying for further, surplus military airframes from the States. QAM are now investigating options for bringing the aircraft back to Australia.
- Accreditation is also paying dividends for the South Australian Historical Aviation Museum which is set to become the beneficiary of some of the National Motor Museum's (Birdwood Mill) important aviation holdings. The initial loan, which was authorised by the South Australian History Trust, is thought to involve a number of aero engines and propellers, with the DH60 airframes (VH-ULJ & VH-ULO) possibly being considered at a later date.
- The Liberator Memorial Fund Inc. are continuing with their negotiations to acquire the Alaskan LB-30, N92MK. At the same time, it is investigating the possibility of salvaging a second airframe closer to home. Committee President, Bob Butler, is

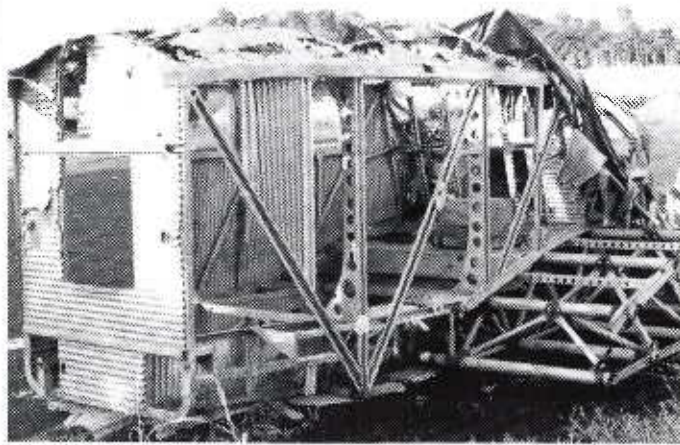


One very significant artefact, easily overlooked during a visit to Wangaratta, is this steel light tower which dates from the 1930s. The Civil Aviation Board of the Department of Defence erected a network of these high-intensity Claude neon beacons at country centres in Victoria and New South Wales, for the visual guidance of night flying aircraft. Swan Hill and Mildura are also known to have formed part of the Victorian network. Illuminated at the top of each tower was the first letter of the town's name, which then allowed pilots to identify the centre over which they were flying. The beacon planned for Melbourne was 100 feet high, with four 20' high "M's" pointing north, south, east and west. The Wangaratta tower is now thought to be the only surviving example of this early navigational aid.

hopeful that the Moe fuselage will be transferred to Laverton later this year.

- Delegates at the second national aviation museums conference decided, last November, to proceed with plans to formally establish an Association, to be known as the Australian Aviation Museums Association Inc. To this end, an interim Executive was elected comprising the following: Laurie Ogle, *Chairman* (Yesterday's Air Force Pty Ltd); Mark Clayton, *Secretary/Treasurer* (NASMA); John White,

Committeeman (Australian War Memorial); Bob Alford, *Committeeman* (AHSNT) and Ron Cuskelly, *Committeeman* (Queensland Air Museum). A draft Constitution was discussed and, once amended and ratified, will form the basis of the Association's application for Incorporation. This process should be finalised well before the 1991 conference planned for Melbourne, in mid-November. The Association's membership accounts for most of the country's aviation museums and collections. ■



Restoration or Vandalism?

One of the world's last remaining Junkers W34S (VH-UIW) has deteriorated markedly since it was recovered from the jungle at Alexishafen (New Guinea) in the late 1980s. Incredible though it may seem, this "restoration" at Lae is sanctioned and monitored by the PNG National Museum.

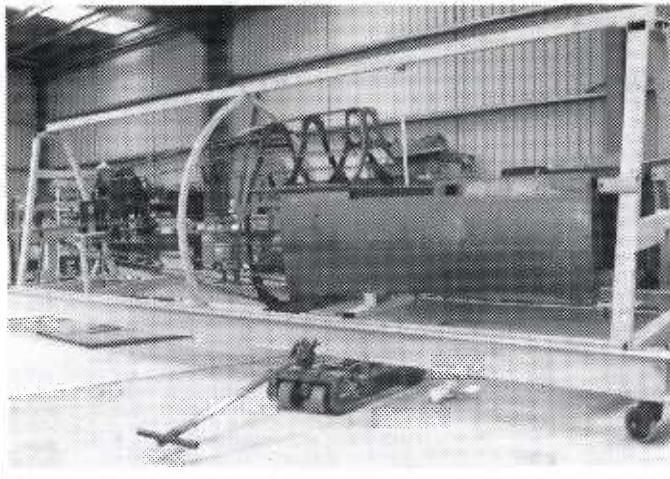
Our Architectural Heritage

Our last cover story sought to advance the idea that aircraft were just a single facet of that, which we collectively refer to as our aviation heritage. This was to suggest that there were other cultural, aesthetic and social legacies of our aeronautical development which are equally at risk - and vital to our understanding of Australian aviation history - and as such, also deserve to be properly documented and preserved. To concentrate our efforts on just the glamorous technologies (viz. aircraft) when it is well within our means to document and preserve some of these other cultural dimensions, would seem both short-sighted and pointless. What in fact have we achieved if, in years to come, all that we've left behind us are a lot of well preserved aircraft which, being functionally and culturally isolated, can offer little insight into the people and places that gave them meaning. To pursue this one-dimensional view of history is to altogether overlook the many profound ways in which aviation and society have influenced and interacted with each other.

Having said this, it is pleasing indeed to see that our architectural heritage at least, is finally beginning to attract the attention which it properly deserves. The Northern Territory has been particularly active in this regard, its oldest hangar (1930) at Daly Waters having already been included on the Register of the National Estate. It is pleasing too, to hear that the QANTAS hangar at Parap (1934) has also been nominated to the Australia Heritage Commission (AHC). Many of the Territory's wartime airfields have now been listed by the National Trust and signposted by the N.T. Museum of Arts & Sciences.

A number of airforce sites in Victoria have attracted National Trust attention including those at Point Cook, Mallacoota and Laverton. Significantly though (for a state which has played such a leading role in the development of Australian aviation), civil air operations remain largely overlooked in this regard.

The diversity of this architectural heritage was most clearly defined when, in 1976, the National Trust (Qld) undertook to record Mount Morgan's magnificent Queensland National Hotel. A plaque near the QN's entrance commemorates the fact that the hotel tower was formerly used by the VAOC as a plane observation post. Although hundreds of these stations were established after 1942, this is thought to be the only officially recorded example. Elsewhere from Queensland comes the news that the Trust has recently (September 1990) listed the USAAC's former No.7 hanger at Eagle Farm (Brisbane). This arch hanger is best remembered for its association with the Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit which restored and evaluated captured Japanese aircraft. In many ways too, it serves to highlight the dilemma which characterises most efforts directed towards preserving elements of the built environment. The fact that a building or object is recorded or classified by the Trust, or Registered by the AHC, does not in fact place any lasting legal obligations on the property owners or occupiers. The only restraint in force here is a moral one which, experience has shown, has little deterrance value. It must be remembered therefore that recognition by a heritage agency (be it municipal, state or national) is simply a means to an end and not an end in itself. All that classification and registration can do, is focus community attention on the fact that a structure has special importance as a component of the national heritage. These are, in effect, just *passive* forms of protection which fall a long way short of guaranteeing longevity, unless of course they are backed up by *active* lobbying.



Association member, Judy Pay, is making significant progress with the Tyabb-based restoration of her rare, 13th Air Force P-40F.

Thus, the news that Eagle Farm's No.7 hanger has been listed by the National Trust is an occasion for little joy as there is now the very real possibility that it will be demolished in the redevelopment planned for that area. Hanger No.7 is just one of many historic aviation structures under threat at this point in time (Newsletter No.1 refers). It is all too clear, moreover, that this threat is likely to widen in the near future as those structures erected during aviation's formative years begin to approach the end of their economic lives.

Against this background, the Casey (illustrated) and Eagle Farm hangers might be seen as just the latest casualties of a continuous cycle which calls into question the very nature of our commitment to preservation. At issue here is not the fate of few rusty buildings but rather, just what it is that we mean by aviation heritage, and how much of that heritage are we wanting to leave for our descendants? Why do we bother spending all this time, energy and money when (on present indications) all that we can hope to pass on is a taxonomic array of flying machines preserved in clinical isolation, far removed from their original contexts? The world's greatest aviation museums (e.g. Le Bourget, Wright-Patterson, Duxford, Hendon and Vigna Di Valle) have all learned to transcend this one-dimensional view of history by adapting and incorporating the built

environment into their displays. Here in Australia though, we continue to lavish vast capital expenditures on Colourbond sheds when all around us, the real things are biting the dust. Individuals and organisations (e.g. Hinkler House Memorial Committee and the National Trust) have shown us that historic buildings can be protected and interpreted in a manner that makes both intellectual and economic sense. Maybe its time that we too, thought about redirecting some of our preservation efforts? ■

Book Notes

- *Connellan Airways, Outback Airline*, Peter Donovan, 1989 (55pp, sbk, colour illus., \$16-00 approx.). Published by History & Historic Preservation Consultants, PO Box 436, Blackwood, S.A., 5051. Lots of nice pictures, minimal text.
- *That's That*, Robert F Honan, 1989 (118pp, hbk, b&w illus.,

\$20-00). Wartime reminiscences of an 11 Squadron Catalina pilot based in North Queensland-good stuff. Copies available from the author at 54 Hereford Avenue, Trinity Gardens, S.A., 5068.

- *Western Wings Of Care*, Dr Timothy O'Leary, 1989 (110pp, hbk, b&w illus., \$25-00). A personal memoir (published posthumously) of aviation development and clinical life with the RFDS in north Queensland. A sequel to *North & Aloft* (1989, \$25-00) by the same author. Both copies available from the publisher, Amphion Press, Dept. of Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Brisbane, Qld., 4029.
- *My God It's A Woman*, Nancy Bird (1990, Angus & Robertson, sbk, b&w illus., \$16-99 RRP). Great effort by a well known AAMA member. Cheques payable to "Nancy Bird", PO Box 136, St. Ives, NSW, 2075.
- *A Guide To Aviation Museums In Australia*, Graham Potts, 1990 (65pp, sbk., colour illus., \$14-95). One of those must have titles. Yet another outstanding effort by an AAMA member. Copies available from the publisher, Australian Academic Press Pty Ltd., 32 Jeays Street, Bowen Hills, Qld., 4006.

- *Proceedings of the Inaugural Australian Aviation Museums Conference*, Mark Clayton (Ed.), 1990 (92pp, sbk., b&w illus., \$12-50). Orders to AAMA, 8 Packington Place, Prahran, Victoria, 3181. Very favourably reviewed in the March 1991 edition of FLYPAST. ■

Membership/Subsription Enquiries:

Membership of the AAMA is open to all at the rates of \$10 (individual) and \$15-00 (institutional). Enquiries and remittances should be directed to: Secretary, AAMA, 8 Packington Place, Prahran, Victoria, Australia, 3181 (Ph. 03-6503273 b/h. 03-5104213 a/h).