



TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY Incorporated

OPENING OF WESTERN JUNCTION AERODROME – 28 FEB 1931

ENORMOUS CROWD WITNESSES FIRST TASMANIAN AIR PAGEANT

These articles and Editorial appeared in "The Examiner", the Launceston newspaper on Monday 2nd March 1932.

TASMANIAN CLUB'S NOTABLE SUCCESS

Crowd of Over 15,000 Views Thrilling Display

MEMORABLE OPENING OF AERODROME AND CLUB HOUSE

The general public of Launceston and surrounding districts were taught a most inspiring lesson on the wonders of aviation at the Western Junction Aerodrome on Saturday afternoon, when the first aerial pageant to be held in Tasmania was conducted by the Australian Aero Club (Tasmanian Section). The fixture was remarkably successful and drew a crowd of spectators estimated at over 15,000. The committee had anticipated a large attendance, and had made its arrangements accordingly, but all the plans were strained to the utmost by the amazing number which assembled. Not for many years has such a crowd been seen at a fixture of any description. The gate receipts cannot be taken as an indication of the size of the crowd, for a big percentage completely over-ran the gatekeepers and climbed through the fences.

The weather conditions were ideal, both for the aviators and for the spectators, who were treated to a display of flying, the like of which has never been witnessed in the State before. The programme was attractive and splendidly diversified, and some thrilling finishes were witnessed in some of the races. Thrilling display of flying in its several phases were given, some of the Air Force pilots engaging in "crazy" flying so clever as to be almost uncanny.

The secretary (Mr. W. J. Manthlei) and a live committee worked splendidly to make the function the success it was. The gate receipts were £230.

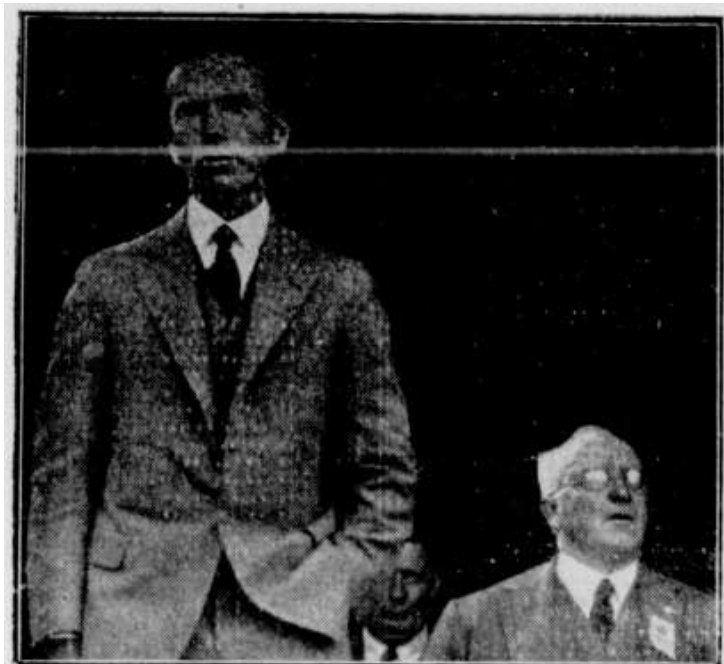
Unfortunately the brilliant success of the pageant was shadowed by tragedy, as just before the last event was scheduled for decision a fatal crash occurred. Mr. L. M. Johnson (Matthews Aviation Company representative), who had flown with success in several of the competitions during the afternoon, was engaged conducting passenger flights in his Moth, "Skylark," when, with Miss Jessie Elizabeth Allen, aged. 37, as his passenger, he crashed in a field near the aerodrome and Miss Allen was killed instantly. The pilot himself was rather severely injured. The accident occurred in full view of a large section of the crowd, and when its serious nature became known the effect was immediately noticeable, a gloom being cast over the whole of the gathering.

Complimentary references were made to the success of the pageant at the dinner held subsequently in the Launceston Hotel, where the handsome trophies won during the afternoon were presented by the Controller of Civil Aviation (Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E. M.C.).



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Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E., M.C. (Controller of Civil Aviation) officially opening the aerodrome, with the President of the A.A.C. (Tasmanian Section), Dr. John Ramsay, in the background



Flight-Lieutenant F. J. B. Wight, of the R.A.A.F., who gave a thrilling and clever display of aerobatics in the R.A.A.F. Moth



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ENORMOUS CROWD

The Aerodrome Besieged

Maze of Traffic

Throughout the week it was apparent on all sides that there would be a very large attendance, but the huge crowd exceeded all expectations. The weather was perfect, a pleasant north-westerly breeze lending itself admirably to successful flying. By 1.30 p.m. there were many hundreds of people on the ground, mostly country residents, and it became apparent that when the city people arrived the crowd would assume enormous proportions.

Parking spaces for cars were quickly taken up, and additional accommodation had to be provided. The main road, practically the only route to the aerodrome, was taxed to its utmost capacity, and by three o'clock, a continuous stream was to be seen creeping in the direction of the 'drome. The congestion became so marked that the cars were compelled to cover a big section of the journey at walking pace. In fact many motorists took two hours to arrive from Launceston, and quite a number who left the city at an early hour in the afternoon missed the best portion of the programme. The crowd is officially estimated at over 15,000, and the number of cars at 3,000.

Gatekeepers Overwhelmed

Gatekeepers posted with strict instructions to keep all but pleasure fliers out of the flying area were quite helpless in the face of the enormous crowd, and hundreds who happened to be checked at the gates forced their way through the hawthorn hedge dividing the two grounds. By 3.30 well over half the spectators had found their way "inside" to get close-up views of the 'planes, as they stood outside the 'drome. So great was the crowd that before the afternoon was far advanced proprietors of ice cream, cordials, sweets, and tobacco stalls, and luncheon booths also, were forced to close up, having exhausted their stocks. By lunch time the Railway Department, which had placed one special train at the disposal of the public, found that this accommodation would not nearly meet requirements, and two more trains were despatched, both being filled. The spectacle of such a crowd and hundreds upon hundreds of cars was unmistakable testimony of the remarkable interest taken by the general public in the first aerial pageant to be held in Tasmania.

Amongst the notable personalities present were Lieut. Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E., M.C. (Controller of Civil Aviation), and Air-Commodore R. T Williams, C.B.E., D.S.O. They flew across from Melbourne in the morning as passengers in the monoplane Southern Sky and were warmly welcomed by the president of the A.A.C. (Tasmanian section), Mr. J. Ramsay. The railway had a "bumper" day. About 2,500 people travelled to the Western Junction, and the books indicate that over 3,000 returned on the trains.



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A Dusty Route

Though the arrangements at the aerodrome for the comfort and safety of motor cars, both in entering and parking on the ground, were practically perfect, many motorists commented on the state of the road between the turn off at the old Woolpack Inn and the entrance to the aerodrome. The clouds of dust raised by the hundreds of motor cars using this road constituted an unpleasant experience, and made driving not only unpleasant, but distinctly dangerous. As, it is intended that the air pageant shall be an annual affair it is suggested that on a future occasion half an hour's watering on the morning of the carnival would largely obviate the trouble.

LOOPS AND SPINS

Spectacular Flying

An Attractive Programme

During the afternoon there were no less than 10 aeroplanes seen in flight at various stages. Great interest was evidenced in the two Royal Australian Air Force Wapitis, which were among the star attractions. The Wapitis are fighting 'planes and have a wicked appearance with their machine guns and bombing equipment. The contribution of these craft to the programme was a brilliant display of formation flying.

A third machine of this type was to have made the trip from Melbourne, but owing to a mishap could not do so. In its place a R.A.A.F. Gipsy Moth was sent with the Wapitis, and the trio, the Moth leading, gave a truly wonderful exhibition. The Moth was piloted by Flight-Lieut. F. B. Wight, and the Wapitis by Flying Officers Carr and Chadwick respectively. After some minutes of warfare formation flying the two larger machines engaged in an exhibition of message picking up.

This manoeuvre is used extensively in aerial warfare, the special object being the collection of written messages from ground batteries. A splendid imitation was given. A message bag was attached to a string about 10 feet long and tied at a height of about four feet to two supports. The 'planes swooped down and, flying low, picked up the message bag by means of a long hook attached to the undercarriage. The work in many cases was beautifully executed and greatly appreciated by the spectators.

A Brilliant Performance

The most thrilling display of the pageant was an exhibition of aerobatics, popularly termed "crazy", flying, by Flight-Lieut. Wight in the R.A.A.F. Moth. Ascending to a height of between four and five thousand feet, the airman put the tiny plane through a number of tricks which brought gasps from the crowd. His control of the machine was uncanny. The display included several flights upside down over a distance occasionally of over a quarter of a mile. Looping



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the loop, slow rolls, spins, half rolls, and fast and slow turns were other "stunts" which delighted the watchers.

Another brilliant exhibition of flying was given by Mrs. F. Jackson, the only lady member of the club to hold an "A" licence, having obtained it at Goulburn (N.S.W.) last year. She showed herself to be a fearless, skilful pilot, having excellent control of her machine, throughout. Both Lieut. Wight and Mrs. Jackson were accorded hearty applause as they taxied their 'planes back to the line.

Competitive Events

The competitive events were keenly contested and were also productive of some fine individual performances. Each race was decided over one lap of the circuit, which was approximately 11 miles. In several races two and sometimes three 'planes took off almost simultaneously, and some excellent finishes were witnessed. In the events in which less experienced pilots were engaged, the contests were decided against time, only one plane flying at once. Captain C. W. B. Martin carried out the duties of aerodrome marshal, and several of the R.A.A.F. officers occupied the positions of timekeepers, starters, and judges.

Considerable promise as an aviator was shown by Mr Cecil H. King, of Launceston, who won the event for Tasmanian Club trained pilots, covering the course in very good time for a novice. The Inter-Club Trained Pilot's Handicap went to Mr. L. M. Johnson, and Captain J. Francis secured "The Examiner" and "Weekly Courier" Cup by winning the Inter Club Pilots' Handicap. Mr. Johnson and Captain Francis were the only competitors in the President's Challenge Shield Handicap, which was won by the former after a splendid contest. Captain Francis had a fairly easy win in the Ex-Service Pilots' Handicap, which also drew only two entries.

Mock Bombing

Considerable amusement was caused by an exhibition of "bombing" a small car, which was driven to and fro across the flying field, with paper bags loaded with flour. Although the pilots engaged, Captain C. W. B. Martin and Messrs. H. Hughes, and T. Pethybridge, found it very difficult to secure a "bull's eye," their performances were creditable.



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OFFICIALLY OPENED

Club House and 'Drome

Interesting Ceremonies

It was fitting that the official opening of the new club house and aerodrome should be performed on such an occasion as the first Tasmanian pageant.

The aerodrome was opened in the presence of a large gathering by the Controller of Civil Aviation (Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E., M.C.), who was introduced by the president, (Dr. John Ramsay). Lieut. Col. Brinsmead said he deemed it a great honour to have been invited to perform the ceremony. He congratulated the Tasmanian section on possessing such a splendid aerodrome in such ideal surroundings. The building and the planes it held were the property of the general public. They were theirs to care for and maintain. The huge attendance at the pageant was an indication of the interest taken by them in aviation. Lieut.-Col. Brinsmead stressed the importance of aviation as a commercial proposition. He had left his home in Melbourne that morning and had landed after a perfect flight at the aerodrome at noon. In conclusion, he trusted that the public would appreciate the value of the aerodrome and the machines at the headquarters of the Tasmanian section. They were supplied by the Federal Government not merely for the Australian Aero Club, but for the public generally.

The ceremony was followed by the president's afternoon tea, the catering being carried out by Miss M. Shields.

THE CLUB HOUSE

The club house of the Tasmanian section of the Australian Aero Club was opened by Air Commodore E. Williams, who was introduced by the president of the club (Dr. John Ramsay).

Air Commodore Williams first congratulated all responsible for bringing the Aero Club at Launceston into existence. He was pleased to learn that there were many people both at Launceston and at Hobart who were desirous of learning to fly. It was gratifying to know that the Launceston Club had provided its own club house. In other states, when times were good, the Government had provided club houses. The fact that Launceston had not been able to get such assistance had not halted the members there. "It might be believed," continued the Chief of the Air Staff, "that in my official position would not be interested in civil aviation. On the contrary, I look upon the Aero Clubs as potential flying schools in cases of emergency, which, however, I hope will never arise. From that point of view they are of distinct value for defence. Aviation has much to offer the Commonwealth, not only from the point of view of defence, but also for its potentialities with regard to the development of commerce and all types of communications. I am sure that aviation will bring this island much closer to the headquarters



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of the Commonwealth. The Aero Club movement is stimulating a very necessary interest in aviation." Concluding these remarks Air Commodore Williams formally declared the club house open.

The Results

The following are-the results of the various events:

Tasmanian Club Trained Pilots Handicap

Open to pilots totally trained by A.A.C., Tasmanian Section, distance 11 miles. First, "Aircraft Challenge Cup," valued at £10 ,10s (cup to be won three times before becoming property of pilot), and two hours free flying; second, two hours free flying.

C. H. King, 6min. 19 1-5sec.	1
B. G. Jones, 6.38 1- 5	2
W. B. Law, 6.40	3

This event was decided against time, each of the competitors using the same plane, a club Moth.

Interclub Trained Pilots' Handicap

Pilot members totally trained by any of the A.A.C. Clubs of Australia. Distance 11 miles. First, "Mercury" and "Illustrated Mail" Cup (to-be won three times); second, two hours' free flying.

First heat.-H. Hughes. Time, 6min. 1 3-5sec., 1; T. Pethybridge, 6.16 3-5, 2.

Both flew. the same plane, so the heat was decided on times. Pethybridge missed the last turn; otherwise the finish would have been very close. L. M. Johnson (L.M.) a bye.

Final	
L. M. Johnson	1
H. Hughes	2
Won by 2secs. Time, 6.12 2-5.	

Inter-club Pilots' Handicap

Pilot members of any of the Associated Aero Clubs of Australia. Distance, 11 miles. First, "The Examiner' and "Weekly Courier" Cup (to be won, three times); second, two hours' free flying.

First heat. J. Francis (L.M. plane), hcp. 8sec., 1; V. C. Holyman (L.N.), scr., 2. Francis' time was 6.12 1-5. Holyman lost his course, and landed several minutes later.

Second heat. L. M. Johnson (L.M.), 8sec., 1; H. Hughes (H.R.), 2sec., 2. A very close finish. Time, 6.1.4-5. T. Pethybridge (H.R.), 2sec., a: bye.



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Final.

J. Francis (L.M.), 8sec.	1
T. Pethybridge' (H.R.), 2sec.	*
L. M. Johnson (L.N.), scr.	*
*Dead heat for second.	

President Challenge Shield Handicap

Pilot members of the Tasmanian section only. Distance, 11 miles. First, President's Challenge Shield (to be held for one year) and two hours free flying. Second, two hours' free flying.

L. M. Johnson (L.M.), 8sec	1
J. Francis (L.N.), scr.	2
Won comfortably. Time, 6.1 1-5.	

Ex-Service Pilots'. Handicap

Pilots in the R.F.C., R.A.F., R.A.N.S., A.F.C., or R.A.A.F. Distance, 11 miles. First, Majestic Theatre Cup (to be won twice). Second, two hours' free flying.

J. Francis (L.M.), 6.16	1
V. C. Holyman (L.M.), 7.2	2

VALUE OF AVIATION

Work of the R.A.A.F.

Aero Club's Foresight

Complimentary references to the success of the pageant were made at the dinner held subsequently at the Launceston Hotel, which was attended by a distinguished gathering. The event of the day was referred to by those best able to judge as one of the most successful of its' kind ever held in Australia. Visitors from the mainland, in responding to a welcome tendered by the president of the Australian Aero Club, Tasmanian section (Dr. J. Ramsay, C.B.E.), expressed amazement at the enthusiasm for aviation shown by Tasmanians by their presence at the aerodrome during the afternoon.

The Director of Civil Aviation (Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E., M.C.) presented the handsome trophies won during the day. In the absence of Mr. L. M. Johnson, the trophies won by him were handed to Captain Matthews. Captain J. Francis secured two prizes. The Aircraft Challenge Cup was not presented owing, to the absence of Mr. C. King, the winner.



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Aviation Epidemic

In proposing the toast of the guests, the president of the Tasmanian Aero Club, Tasmanian section, said that the club was specially honoured by the presence of those who stood highest in aviation in Australia. They had been delighted with the exhibition of the experts. Until Saturday he had not known that Tasmanians had developed such a keen air sense, but it had been proved that this 'state' at present was suffering from an epidemic of aviation. As a medical man he wished that aviation had been invented years before, for with landing grounds in various parts of the state, medical men would save a tremendous lot of time. That was one of the economic points of aviation. The club itself had three objects - to put flying before the people, to train pilots, and issue certificate, and to get suitable landing grounds throughout the state.

Value of the R.A.A.F.

Air Commodore R. Williams, O.B.E. D.S.O., replied on behalf of the Royal Australian Air Force. There was probably not an aero club in the Commonwealth, he said, that the R.A.A.F. had not assisted in some way. If for no other reason, they were interested in the development of the aero club movement because, it gave people an air sense. Undoubtedly aviation offered great possibilities in Australia for defence and civil aviation. The Air Force, which was theirs as much as anybody else's, had a primary duty to look after defence, but he claimed that any money spent on defence aviation or units raised for that purpose was capable of returning something in revenue during peace time.

Apart from assisting aero, clubs, said Air Commodore Williams, the R.A.A.F. had been carrying out duties which had not relation whatever to war, but which, at the same time, gave their pilots and mechanics training which would be of value in case of an emergency. During the last few years, the R.A.A.F. had carried out work for the Forestry Commission of Tasmania, the D. and M. Commission, and the Forestry Commission of Victoria in locating and preventing bush fires. Pilots had dusted forest areas to rid them of pests, and had done other work in oil research, geological surveys, topographical and forest surveys in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

Valuable Savings

The forestry authorities in Victoria, he continued, considered that in any one day the work of the forest fire patrol might easily be the means of saving state resources of value much beyond that spent on air defence in a year. Similarly, the dusting of the trees, which cost £100, certainly had saved state resources valued at over £50,000, and it might be hundreds of thousands of pounds.



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They therefore claimed that, small as they were, they easily repaid the little money that was being spent on them, and that although designed, organised and trained for war, they were doing in peace what they could to apply aviation to civil development.

Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, C.B.E., M.C., chief of the Civil Aviation Department, in responding, described the pageant as one of the most successful that had taken place in Australia, and said it spoke very well for the foresight of those who originated the idea of the aero club and had the energy to carry it out. In this connection he mentioned the pioneers of the movement, Messrs. J. E. Thyne, C. W. B. Martin, V. C. Holyman and Dr. Ramsay. If there had not been an aero club there would have been no excuse for an aerodrome in anticipation of the club and the initiation of commercial services.

Effecting Improvements

The machines themselves, he said, were perfectly safe, and although no scientist could make the human element safer, they were endeavouring to guard against that element. They were trying to eliminate noise and make the machines faster, and he anticipated the day when fast planes would leave Sydney and Melbourne three times, daily, meeting on Wilson's Promontory and transferring passengers for flight across to Launceston in a little over an hour.

'I do not think," said Lieut.-Col. Brinsmead, "that the Commonwealth can give any more aerodromes to Tasmania. It is the policy to buy only terminal aerodrome facilities now. To extend beyond these terminals, is the duty of the municipalities. Those who wish for aerodromes should send in details of likely sites, and we will send over experts to examine them, and see what remains to be done to make them aerodromes.

"At the moment the Defence Department is co-operating with 160 municipalities through Australia in inspection of sites and preparing aerodromes. Western Junction is still only a nucleus, as there must be hangars, a water supply, electric current, fire-fighting facilities, and many other things. The Commonwealth has 50 aerodromes under its control. Facilities must be provided for them all, and we cannot do any more. I congratulate the Tasmanian section on its success."

Helping Tasmania

The response on behalf of the Tasmanian Government was made by the Chief Secretary (Mr. Claude James), who conveyed congratulations on the valuable work being done by the club and on the success of the function. The Government, he said, was particularly interested in commercial aviation, because it was enabling the state to overcome some of the difficulties associated with its insularity. The service was of great benefit to Tasmania, and they hoped that it would be extended. As a Government, they were looking forward to the day when there would be aerodromes in every part of the state.



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The Mayor (Alderman Frank Boatwright) also congratulated the club on behalf of the city. Referring to the provision of aerodromes, Mr. L. K. Broinowski said he was disappointed that Lieut.-Col. Brinsmead had indicated more difficulties than had been expected with reference to the provision of a terminal aerodrome in the south. He considered that the Western Junction aerodrome was actually a central aerodrome and not a terminal.

The health of the president, proposed by Air Commodore Williams, was received with hearty applause.

THE MAIN BUSINESS

Stunting the 'Show Window'

What Aviation Offers

The thousands who witnessed the aero pageant at Western Junction on Saturday were actually peering into the show case of aviation, in which the most outstanding of its possibilities in an unusual form were displayed. In an interview yesterday Captain Frederic W. Haig, chief aviation officer of the Vacuum Oil Co. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, pointed out that stunting is not the main business of aviation. Behind it lies a valuable service which aviation has maintained and will continue to conduct, linking up towns and cities over an inestimable range. "When the history of the present decades comes to be written, one of the most striking chapters will be that devoted to transportation, and the most interesting portion will be that dealing with the carriage of passengers, goods, and mails by air," said Captain Haig.

"It is not generally realised that in Australia we have a regular network of surveyed air routes for which air route maps are available. This is part of the valuable work being carried out by our Civil Aviation Department. We have passenger carrying aircraft flying regularly to schedule over 8,000 miles of routes, and these machines fly 17,000 miles each week. There are 600 licensed pilots and 240 registered aircraft of 56 different species. Looking at the present ground work on which the aviation industry is built, we find a healthy situation. The commercial services are being well patronised, and the aero clubs are obtaining good support.

An Interesting Story

"The continued schooling of the public by the aero clubs and newspapers," continued Captain Haig, "has made the public increasingly air conscious and appreciative of the fact that the aeroplane has proved itself a dependable and necessary unit in our national scheme of transportation and defence. The statistics regarding civil aviation in Australia tell an encouraging and interesting story. They show that during 1929-30 regular air services in Australia included 131,798 flights, covering 3,507,283 miles, and carrying 93,905 paying passengers. During that time 62,159 lb. net weight of letters were carried by air mails in Australia and New Guinea.



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"Like most new forms of transportation, it was necessary for the public to be shown what aviation is capable of by sensational stunts and races such as were witnessed at the pageant on Saturday, but we hope that the public did not get the impression that this stunt flying and display of expert airmanship is all there is to aviation, or even that this is the most worthwhile part. This part is put on in the same manner that a shop window is dressed to attract attention. It should be appreciated that behind all this lies the valuable service that aviation can render.

The Chief Business

"The business of aviation is to transport people, mail, and goods about the country faster than they can be transported on land, and when you are flown anywhere you are not flown upside down, you are not looped, but are taken to your destination quickly and safely," he said. The part of aviation you are invited to use is safe and comfortable.

"There is another reason why the public should show Interest and support our aviation that is for defence. Despite the activities of the League of Nations and disarmament conferences, it is painfully obvious that national greed and those national laws which give nations a peculiar complex will tend to cause more wars, and it is fairly easy to visualise the destruction and moral effect of hostile aircraft carriers with a brood of bombers capable of carrying tons of bombs standing out to sea and carrying out raids on Launceston. We may be justly proud of the Royal Australian Air Force, but It is undoubtedly small.

Machines Do Stall

"Looked at from all angles," he concluded, "there are many reasons why aviation will have a great future in Australia, and the fine work which the aero clubs are doing deserves every support from the community. I would like to see it made plain to the public that races and stunting are only vaguely related to commercial aviation. Unfortunately, we have had a crash, and these crashes demonstrate one thing that aviation, like all other means of transportation, is subject to accidents. Aircraft accidents are generally due to a stall caused by the human element. I received a letter from an aviator friend in Brisbane recently, in which he referred to the only crash they had had there for some 12 months, in which he said 'It is time again to remind all pilots that aeroplanes can still be stalled, and to Inform all purchasers of aircraft that the fitting of slots on aircraft at a cost of about £40 will largely eliminate any disastrous results should the aircraft be stalled.'

"In aviation we pay a high price for nearly everything we learn, and I would like to see placed in a prominent position in the pilot's cockpit of aircraft a sign, 'Aeroplanes Do. Stall.'



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A Tolerant Assemblage

Notwithstanding the great crush and the annoyances attendant upon the accommodation and transport of such a huge crowd of people, good humour and tolerance prevailed. Heads were strained skywards, and, regardless of jostling hordes and clouds of dust, interest was maintained to the end. At 1 o'clock there were several hundreds of persons on the ground, and Aero Club officials looked pleased: at 2 o'clock, when the numbers had been augmented by hundreds more, they looked more than pleased. At 3 o'clock the hundreds had swelled to a compact mass of thousands, perhaps 15,000 perhaps 20,000, no one will ever know, and officials looked anxious, as they saw every arrangement for catering for and accommodating the expected crowd overtaxed. Up till the time officials and police had by some miracle or others, kept all but officials off the 'drome itself, but officials are only human, and after 3 o'clock they succumbed to the strain, and the huge mass roamed unchecked where it pleased.

That is, all except one official. He was stationed at a gap in the hedge, with instructions to let none but officials on to the ground. This he manfully did all the afternoon, despite the fact that there were other gaps bigger and wider than his on either side of him, where people were pouring through from queues. One small boy was noticed to get through the hedge and then boldly march up to the man stationed at the gap and ask for a pass out ticket. "If you want to get back go back through the hedge, the way you got in," was the exasperated reply. About half-past four the crowd was much amused to see him pursue an aged person who had come through the gap under his nose. He touched the offender on the shoulder, asked him if he had a right to be on the 'drome, and when he received a negative reply, he marched him out again, and all the while the masses poured through the obliging hedge.

The gatekeepers had a bad time of it, and the day will surely live in the memory of most of them. When the strain got too great, and the stoppage too serious, the gatekeepers had to allow many to pour through free of charge to relieve the congestion. It was the wisest move under the circumstances.

And the car park. Another nightmare, this time for overworked and perspiring policemen, and to a certain extent a nightmare for car owners. "This seems to be a nice clear space," a driver would say after struggling with gatekeepers, pedestrians, and traffic for about an hour to gain a quarter of a mile, and, lo and behold, when he would come to drive away again, he would, after spending ten minutes looking for his car, see the vehicle jammed in between a hundred other cars, with no hope of release. Quietly resigned to his fate (he had exhausted all his vocabulary hours ago), he would sit in his car till an opportunity presented itself to leave the ground.

"Not dead yet?" one lady was heard to cheerfully enquire of a companion she met in the centre of a dusty throng of a mere five thousand or so. When another lady enquired of her little boy if he had seen his father about, the boy looked intelligent, and vaguely waved his



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hand to one of the thickest portions of the assemblage, supplementing his action with a non-committal "over there."

The titbit of the afternoon was noticed on the way home. It was about half past 4, and about two miles from the aerodrome, towards the city, a perspiring and quite excusably bad-tempered motor cyclist was mending a puncture. His machine was facing towards the scene of the pageant, when a small school boy walked to what he estimated a reasonably safe distance, and innocently, but with devilish intent, enquired of the cyclist if he thought he would get to the pageant that afternoon. The irate one dropped his spanner, straightened up, looked angrily at the mischievous urchin, then he stopped down again, picked up his spanner, and continued his puncture mending. There is an anger which cannot find words to express itself, and it looked very much as if this sorely tried motor cyclist had been provoked to that state.

The populace was en fete to a greater degree, perhaps, than ever before; and who was to know that above the soothing crowd, above the busy mechanics, and even above the throbbing 'planes, stalked the spectre of death?



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A striking panoramic photograph which gives an indication of the enormous attendance at the aerodrome—a section of the crowd in the public enclosure.



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The R.A.A.F. contribution to the pageant—the two Wapitis and the tiny Moth. The trio gave a brilliant exhibition of formation flying



MARRED BY TRAGEDY

The Aerial Pageant

Woman Passenger Killed

Almost immediately before preparations for the decision of the last event on the programme, and just as it appeared that the aerial pageant at Western Junction on Saturday was to conclude with nothing to overshadow its success, a shocking accident occurred which had a most decided effect on the spirit of the gathering. A Moth 'plane and the passenger, a woman, while on a passenger flight, crashed near the aerodrome, was killed instantly. The pilot was rather severely injured.

At 5.45 p.m. Mr. L. M. Johnson, representative of the Matthews Aviation Company, who has been stationed in Launceston for some time, was engaged in conducting "joy rides" in the company's Moth, the "Skylark." He had as his passenger Miss Jessie Elizabeth Allen, aged 37 years, a housekeeper residing in Lytton Street, Invermay. As the plane was turning towards the aerodrome at the end of its flight, the engine stalled, and the plane made a nose spin, crashing into a field of barley about a quarter of a mile from the flying field.

The crash was witnessed by a large section of the crowd, which immediately ran to the scene. The news of the accident spread rapidly, with the result that in less than ten minutes there were several thousands of people around the wrecked plane. It was found that Miss Allen had been killed instantly. Considerable difficulty was experienced in removing the body from the forward cockpit of the 'plane, which was badly smashed. The pilot, who was semi-conscious when taken from his seat, was conveyed to the aerodrome from whence he was brought in the ambulance to a private hospital in the city. On examination it was found that Mr. Johnson was suffering from a fractured left arm, severe facial abrasions, and an injury to his right leg, the extent of which will not be known until after an X-ray examination.

Difficulty was experienced in establishing the identity of the victim, and her name could not be ascertained until late on Saturday night. Captain J. Francis, the Aero Club's instructor, stated on Saturday evening that Mr. Johnson had said that the accident was due to an error of judgment on his part. The plane was quite safe in every way. Miss Allen had requested him to do some stunting. The engine stalled on a turn, the plane developed a spin, and then nose-dived to the ground. Owing to the low altitude there was not sufficient margin to allow the pilot to regain control. It is understood that an inquest will be opened at an early date.

Miss Allen was a daughter of the late Mr. Daniel Allen, and a sister of Mr. T. Allen, of High Street, Launceston.



EDITORIAL

THE AERIAL PAGEANT

Tasmania's first aerial pageant is over. It brought great interest, a considerable amount of popular excitement, its lessons and, we are deeply sorry to say, its tragedy. Probably no one expected to see quite so many people at Western Junction Aerodrome on Saturday afternoon as actually assembled. Aviation is not a sport any more than radio is an amusement. It is an outward evidence of the advance of science in the conquest of distance. To the uninitiated, demonstrations of its powers provide for the time being a large amount of entertainment, but that side of aviation will pass. Its utility must remain and improve with the passing of time. From the point of view of public interest in a new and important feature of social life, the great attendance at Western Junction was very satisfactory. A large majority of the crowd failed to follow the actual contests and would have been hard put to it to say by whom any of the contests were won. That did not matter. The outing served several other useful purposes. It familiarised the people with something that has come to stay, and to enter more every succeeding day into the conditions of their existence. It was a great pity that the exhibition should end in tragedy, but such a happening has to be regarded as accidental more than incidental to the science of flying.

This morning we publish an interview with Captain Frederick W. Haig, chief aviation officer of one of the great oil companies, which naturally are intimately concerned with the doings in the air. He gives a few interesting statistics, of Australian civil aviation. There are 600 licensed pilots and 240 registered aircraft of 56 different species. Over 3 million miles were flown during 1929-30, and 93,905 paying passengers were carried. With these figures the tragic happening of Saturday should, be linked if a right proportion of values is to be gained. It does not matter what the aggregate experience is, the individual disaster always carries its poignancy and widespread regret. There is sympathy for those who suffer, and with those who may be otherwise involved. When all is said, however, it is the newness, comparatively speaking, of the mode of transport that accentuates accidental happenings. Even more tragic things are occurring daily under other circumstances. If, as Captain Haig states, pageants are to advertise aviation to the public, it might be urged thoughtlessly that Saturday's accident constituted a bad advertisement. It is the kind of thing which holds the popular mind and is apt to blur perspective. When, however, all the other happenings of the day are considered, and the nonchalance towards them, which even a short acquaintance can bring about, a better estimate is obtained of the infinitely small part which such occurrences have in the total of aviation experience. This detracts in no way, as we have said, from the sorrow at the tragedy, nor does it affect the circumstances which surround any particular unfortunate happening. From another point of view, accidents have their distinct bearing upon public safety, because when causes are discovered, provision for their elimination can be made. Captain Haig has something to say on this head. "In aviation," he says, "we pay a high price for nearly everything we learn," and he makes expert reference to the danger of the stalling



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of an aeroplane engine. We do not pretend to judge the warrant of Captain Haig's remarks, but we find no difficulty in accepting his dictum as to the high price of experience in aviation. The conditions under which that price must be paid must be a matter for those who control aviation, and the responsibility is a rather serious one. Colonel Brinsmead, at the official opening of the aerodrome, said that the machines were perfectly safe, and although no scientist could make the human element safer, they were endeavouring to guard against that element. In saying so, he probably summed up the whole situation, and the exact methods of guarding against this element are the point of greatest interest to the public.

This matter of aviation hazard and the place it occupies in the advancement of the science was not the only lesson forced on the public's notice on Saturday. It had been commonly predicted that there would be a crowd of 10,000 people at the aerodrome. The estimate was considerably exceeded by fact. The scene at the Launceston railway station was not flattering to the organisation by the Railway Department. Hundreds of people jammed into a narrow space struggled towards two small ticket windows. The crowd was a very good humoured one, but caustic remarks were heard about the railway's failure to rise to the occasion. Evidently the department did not realise the manner in which the aerial pageant had captured the imagination of the people. This must have been borne in upon it fairly early on Saturday, but as far as could be observed, not even a last-minute provision for an alleviation of the crush was attempted. It can be said, however, that the arrangements for the return from Western Junction were more efficiently handled. The traffic branch seemed to have a fair grip on its side of the arrangements but the booking facilities at Launceston were deplorable. Again, there was evidently some co-ordination between the railways and the aerodrome people, for the railway tickets included admission to the aerodrome. When the first of the special trains arrived back in Launceston at a little after 6 p.m., however, there was evidence that co-ordination in another direction was woefully lacking. This first train comprised 16 carriages, and it is estimated that some 3,000 people travelled by rail. Yet, when the railway station commenced to disgorge the homeward-bound crowd it became evident that little or no effort had been made by the city's tramway authorities to gather in a little extra revenue and show the ratepayers that their convenience was its first care. Opportunities appeared to be lost in many directions on Saturday in connection with catering for the public convenience. Much of this was due to surprise, and some of it to inexperience. The Tramway Department is hardly in the position to plead either of these things. Its business is to utilise its facilities to the best advantage for the twofold benefit of the ratepayers. It knew of the crowds returning from the aerodrome, or at least it should have done. The fact remains that hundreds of tired people walked.