



**TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY Incorporated**  
**WESTERN JUNCTION 90<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
**COMMEMORATIVE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2021**



***LAUNCESTON AIRPORT (WESTERN JUNCTION)***  
***90<sup>TH</sup> ANIVERSARY***

***28<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 1931 to 28<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021***



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***THE FIRST COMMITTEE GENERALLY CONSIDERED TO BE THE FOUNDERS OF  
LAUNCESTON AIRPORT THEN KNOWN AS WESTERN JUNCTION.***



In 1927 a group of Launceston businessmen, led by Captain's V C Holyman and C W B Martin met and in September of that year the Australian Aero Club (Tasmanian Division) was formed. Launceston now we had an aero club but no aerodrome or airplane.

In July 1929 the Home Territories Department acquired a site at Western Junction known as the Valley of the Springs for the development of an aerodrome at a cost of 20,000 pounds. In November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1930 the Commonwealth Inspector of Aerodromes announced he was satisfied with the work and development and on Nov 30<sup>th</sup> the first flight, an aero club Gypsy Moth VH-ULM, took off from Western Junction.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> February 1931, before a crowd of over 15,000 people the airport was officially opened by the then Controller of Civil Aviation, Colonel Brinsmead who offered these somewhat prophetic words:

***"I can envisage the time when aeroplanes will leave twice or three times a day from  
mainland capitals for Launceston."***

"The Examiner" Newspaper [reported](#) extensively on the opening day events.



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**AERO CLUBS FIRST HANGAR, CLUBROOMS AND AIRCRAFT – NOVEMBER 1930**





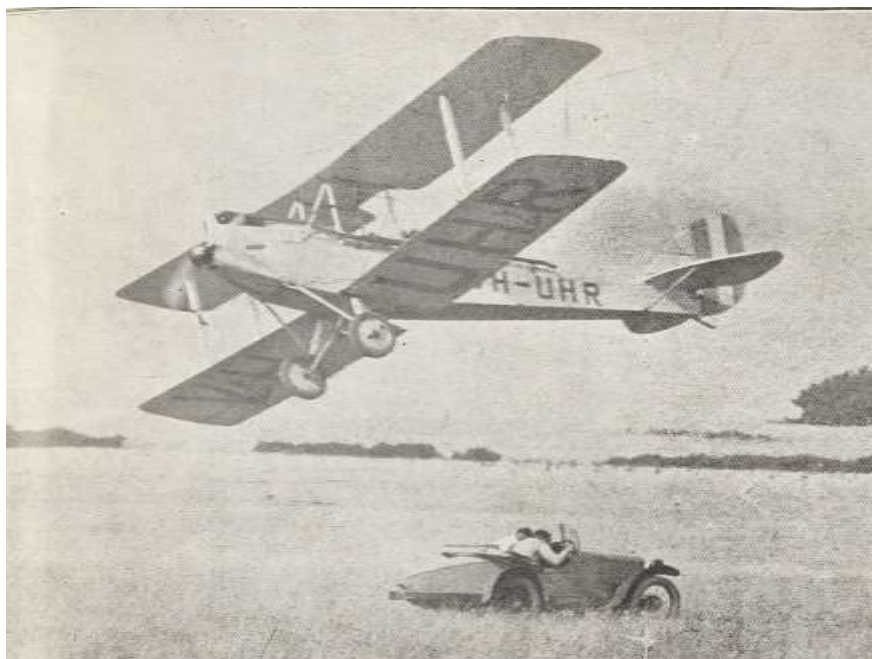


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***WESTERN JUNCTION OFFICIAL OPENING 28<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1931 ACTIVITIES***



A section of the large crowd of 15,000 people who were thrilled by the great display of aeronautics.



A display of "bombing" a small car, which was driven across the flying field.



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***WESTERN JUNCTION OPENING DAY 28<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1931 ACTIVITIES***



Flying-Officer L. A. Chadwick, Flying-Officer A. G. Carr, and Flight-Lieut. F. J. B. Wight, of the R.A.A.F., who gave a thrilling demonstration of wartime formation flying and other aerial manoeuvres.

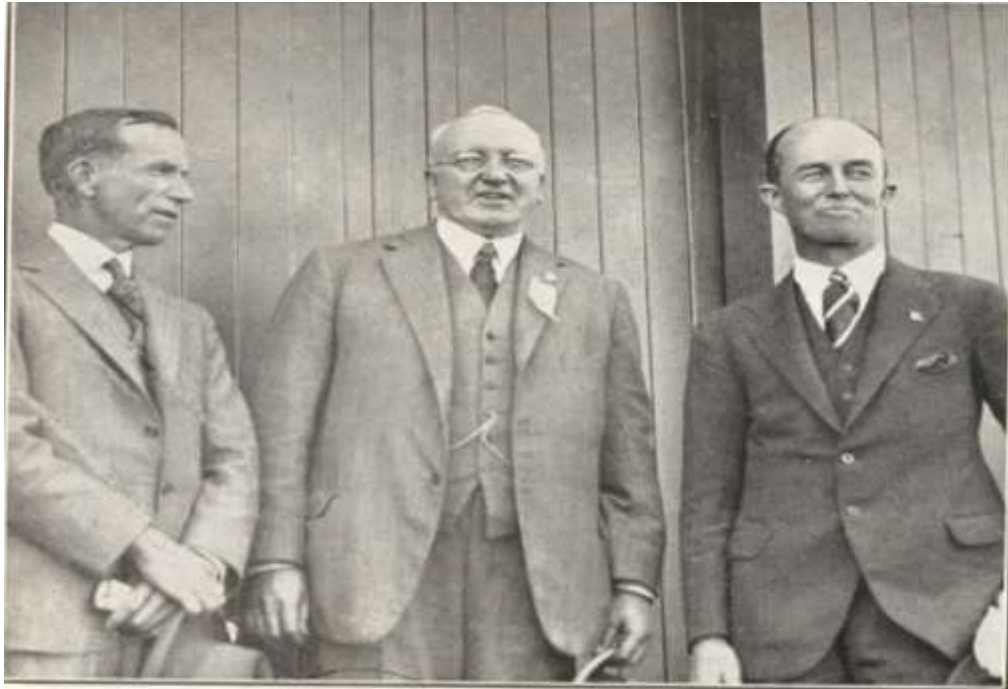


The Clubhouse of the A.A.C. (Tasmanian Section), which was thronged with visitors during the afternoon.  
[Photos by Burrows.]

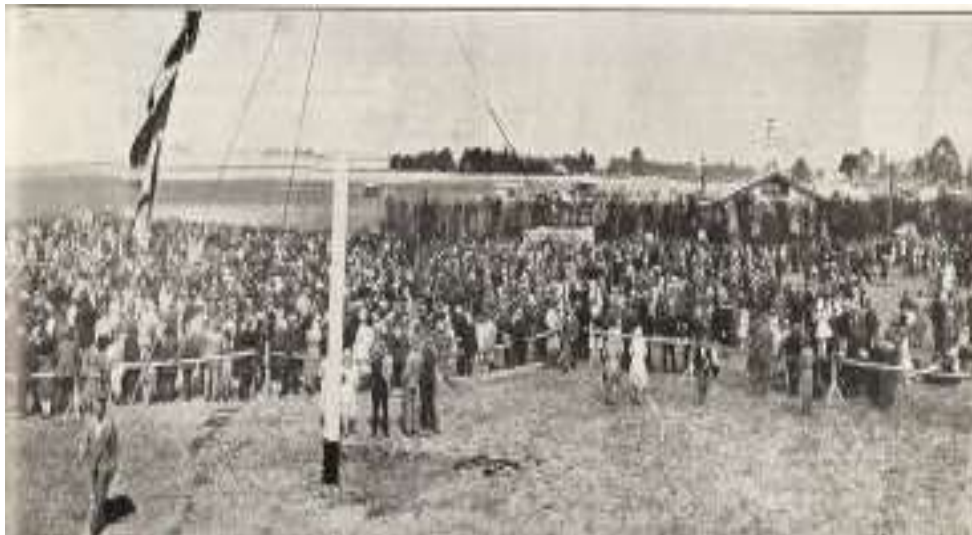


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***WESTERN JUNCTION OPENING DAY 28<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 1931 ACTIVITIES***



Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Brinsmead, O.B.E., M.C. (Controller of Civil Aviation), who opened the Aerodrome; Dr. J. Ramsay, C.B.E., President of the A.A.C. (Tasmanian Section); and Air Commodore R. Williams, C.B.E., D.S.O.



Another photo of the opening day crowd showing, in the foreground, the mast of the Holyman ship "Toroa" wrecked on Rabbit Island in the Furneaux Group. Donated by the Holyman family, the [flagpole](#) is the only structure still on the airport from opening day and can be viewed at the front of the Tasmanian Aero Club clubhouse.





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**COMMENCEMENT OF LAUNCESTON'S COMMERCIAL AVIATION**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 1931 Australian National Airways commenced the first passenger flights from Essendon to Western Junction, with Charles Kingsford Smith piloting the first flight. Regular commercial aviation had commenced. (The service ceased later in the year).

Wednesday, March 4, 1931. WEEKLY COURIER Page 7.



**TO  
MELBOURNE  
IN 3 HOURS!**

**A New  
Epoch in  
Tasmanian History!**

Melbourne is now only three hours from Launceston! Tedious, disturbing sea travel is no longer necessary. The luxurious, safe three-engined air liners of Australian National Airways Ltd. now operate a regular service from Launceston to Melbourne and Melbourne to Launceston.

These giant air liners have proved their perfect safety and wonderful comfort throughout years of regular running between Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane. The Tasmanian service has been inaugurated, and now definitely established in response to an overwhelming demand.

**SAFETY - COMFORT - SPEED - ECONOMY**

**LUXURY AND CONVENIENCE**

All the facilities of Australia's greatest air service, controlled by Kingsford Smith and Ulan, are now at the disposal of the people of Tasmania. Air travel in its most luxurious sense, in saving of time, increase of comfort, and convenience, the new service builds a bridge between Tasmania and Melbourne—a bridge so efficient and reliable that it becomes a real public utility.



A.N.A. Air Liners are kept 98 per cent. airworthy by a staff of over 42 specially-trained experts. All A.N.A. pilots have been personally selected by Air Commodore Kingsford Smith for their experience, skill, integrity, record and courage.

**TIME TABLE**

Monday—Leave Launceston	2.45 p.m.
Arrive Melbourne	5.45 p.m.
Tuesday—Leave Melbourne	1.30 p.m.
Arrive Launceston	4.30 p.m.
Wednesday—Leave Launceston	2.45 p.m.
Arrive Melbourne	5.45 p.m.
Thursday—Leave Melbourne	1.30 p.m.
Arrive Launceston	4.30 p.m.
Friday—Leave Launceston	2.45 p.m.
Arrive Melbourne	5.45 p.m.
Saturday—Leave Melbourne	9.0 a.m.
Arrive Launceston	12 noon

(This Service will shortly be extended to Hobart when a new time-table will be issued.)  
(including comfortable transportation to and from Aerodrome)

**Launceston to Melbourne:**  
**£5/10/- (Return Fare, £10/10/-)**  
Including Comfortable Transportation to and from Aerodromes.

Book your passage with: Messrs. C. W. Smith & Co. Ltd., Charles St., Hobart; E. J. Connor Pty. Ltd., A.M.P. Buildings, Hobart; Messrs. Johnson & Wilson Pty. Ltd., King St., Devon; Messrs. F. H. Stephens Pty. Ltd., 41 John St., Lion; Tasmanian Aero Club, Western Junction Aerodrome; W. J. Peirce & Co. Ltd., 28 Charles St., Launceston; Whalley & Townsend, Astor House Ltd., 115 Collins St., Hobart.  
Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Hobart; Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Launceston; The Tasmanian Motor Services, Hobart; The Tasmanian Motor Services, Launceston; Wm. Holroyd & Sons Pty. Ltd., Launceston.

**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AIRWAYS LTD. SYDNEY — MELBOURNE — BRISBANE — LAUNCESTON — HOBART**



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***EARLY AERO CLUB HISTORY AND ACTIVITIES***

**Second Aero Club Air Pageant February 1932.**

A Gala Day at the Aerodrome



A remarkable aerial photograph taken at Western Junction on Saturday, when the Australian Aero Club (Tasmanian Section) held its second annual pageant. The aerodrome can be seen immediately below. (By courtesy of H. J. King)





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***COMMENCEMENT OF LAUNCESTON'S COMMERCIAL AVIATION***

In March 1932 Lawrence Johnson purchased a Desoutter monoplane named the aircraft "Miss Flinders" and commenced [regular aerial services](#) from Western Junction to Flinders Island.



***"Miss Flinders" soon to be returned to display status at the passenger terminal of Launceston Airport.***

In September 1932 Holyman Bros purchased a De Havilland DH-83 "Miss Currie" and commenced regular island services. Holyman Bros and L M Johnson amalgamated and formed Tasmanian Aerial Services.

In February 1933 the Holyman Hangar was erected for Tasmanian Aerial Services. Commonly known as Hangar 17 it still stands on the original site as is now the home of Launceston Distillery and Tasmanian Aviation Historical Society.



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**COMMENCEMENT OF LAUNCESTON'S COMMERCIAL AVIATION**

Early Holyman's Air Service advertisement highlighting the Launceston - Flinders Island route and the forthcoming Launceston - King Island route using De Havilland DH 83 aircraft.

**HOLYMAN'S AIR SERVICE — FOR PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT**

LAUNCESTON TO FLINDERS ISLAND TWICE WEEKLY.

The Launceston to King Island Service will be inaugurated as soon as the Civil Aviation Department sanctions the use of a landing ground there.

Available for private air taxi hire to any licensed aerodrome in Victoria or Tasmania.



Air service in charge of Capt. V. C. Holyman, chief pilot. 'Phone 178 (at night 565).

**BRITAIN'S LATEST**

The first unit of the aircraft necessary to maintain the services is a Fox D.H. 83 aeroplane with passenger accommodation for three. This machine is the latest type of passenger aeroplane to be perfected by the British de Havilland Company, and is a biplane with a single engine. Probably the most striking feature of the 'plane is the interior of the cabin in which the three passengers are accommodated. Entrance is gained by stepping on to the lower wing of the 'plane and then into the cabin. The cabin itself is large and roomy, with ample foot room. The fittings have been carried out in toned leather. Two of the passengers are seated on a hammock-like seat against the back wall of the cabin, with the third passenger in a "dicky" type seat facing the

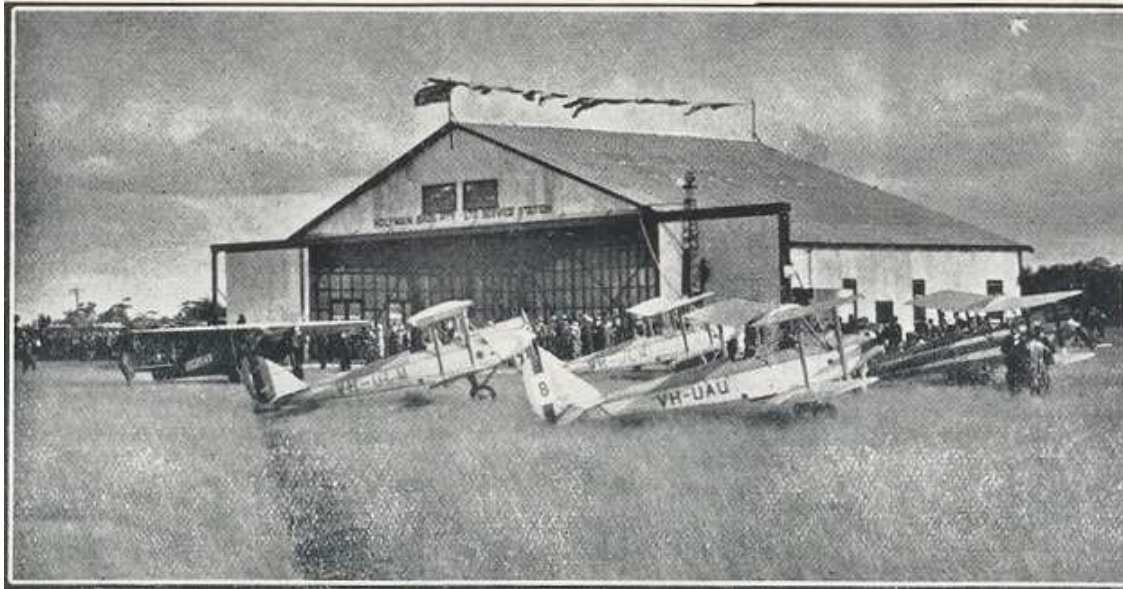
tail of the 'plane. A rack for luggage is situated above the back seat. The cabin is fitted with sliding windows, and from these a good view of the country can be gained, particularly directly in front. The pilot's cockpit is situated directly behind the passengers' cabin, the two parts being entirely separated. Communication between the passengers and the pilot may be made by a speaking tube or by passing notes through an opening porthole above the passengers' heads. The machine is a biplane fitted with a de Havilland Mark III. inverted type engine. The 'plane is fitted with air wheels (or "doughnuts"), which considerably improve the ground performance, while wheel breaks shorten the run on landing.

**By Sea or by Air, Holyman's Modern Transport Service is Cheapest and Best**



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***COMMENCEMENT OF LAUNCESTON'S COMMERCIAL AVIATION***



***Holyman's Hangar (Hangar 17) shortly after construction in February 1933  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Air Pageant at Western Junction)***

Tasmanian Aerial Servcies commenced regular flights from Western Junction to Essendon with "Miss Launceston" in late 1933.



***De Havviland DH.86 Dragon "Miss Launceston", flying over Inveresk in November 1933***





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***THE WAR YEARS WORLD WAR 2***

***7 Elementary Flying Training School***

During World War 2 Western Junction Airport (as it was then known) was home to Tasmania's only R.A.A.F. [Flying Base](#). Established at the site of the current Launceston Airport on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1940, No 7 Elementary Flying Training School commenced training in September of that year. By the time training ended in late 1944, over 1,800 pilot trainees had passed through the base as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme before the base was disbanded on 31st August 1945.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00956.009

***Pilots and Tiger Moth Aircraft of the 7 EFTS, with the Aero Club hangar in the background***



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***THE WAR YEARS WORLD WAR 2***

***7 Elementary Flying Training School***

Western Junction from the air, showing the extensive range of buildings of the 7 Elementary Training Training School.



Western Junction from the air, showing the wartime huts.  
Facing South towards Evandale.

c 1940.

Approximately one third of pilots trained at 7 EFTS died on active service or whilst training. Consequently, the Evandale Historical Society, in conjunction with the RAAF Association, Launceston Branch, built a [memorial](#) in Evandale dedicated to all those who trained and served at Western Junction.



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***DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION 1949 - 1966***

In 1946 commercial aviation resumed at Western Junction with facilities amounting to an all-over grass runway for light aircraft and a sealed 1,158 metre runway with a second 1,585 metre completed in 1949.

At this time, there were [proposals](#) for opening a second airport at either Longford or Prospect, but these did not eventuate.

Trans Australian Airlines (TAA) was formed in 1946 and operated from Hangar 10, (currently occupied by Virgin Freight), north of Hangar 17, occupied by Australian National Airways (ANA), both airlines operating flights to Essendon and beyond.

One notable change was the renaming, in 1953, of Western Junction Airport to “Launceston Airport”.



***Douglas DC 4 and DC 3 with the Holyman Hangar (Hangar 17) in the background at Launceston Airport in the 1950's.***

In 1962 work commenced for a major upgrade of the airport facility that included strengthening all pavements and runway and the provision of a new terminal building. The airport was officially reopened in the same year as Launceston Airport a name it still bears today.





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**AVIATION DEVELOPMENTS 1949 – 1966**

The airport developed at a rapid pace with the Royal Flying Doctor Service forming a Tasmanian Division in September 1960. In their first year of operation, they made 137 flights.

The Australian Aero Club (Tasmanian Section), now known as the Tasmanian Aero Club, occupied new premises (the 7EFTS hospital) and air cargo hangars appeared catering for the extra demand provided by commercial aviation.

The mid 1960s heralded the prop jet era services to Launceston.



***TAA Vickers Viscount***



***TAA F27 Friendship***



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**DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION 1966 – 1982**

An aerial view of Launceston Airport around 1968, with the new terminal in the northern end (top). Note on the right-hand side of the main runway 32/14 is the gravel runway used by commercial aircraft during the upgrade of the main runway allowing only aircraft the size of DC 4's and F 27 Friendships to operate during that period.





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***COMMERCIAL AVIATION 1982 – 2021***

In 1982 the runway was further upgraded and in 1998 the airport was privatised. In 2004 with the introduction of low-cost airlines the passenger numbers dramatically increased resulting in a multi-million-dollar redevelopment that was completed in 2008.



***A Virgin 737 AND Jetstar A320 – Regular Visitors to Launceston***





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***COMMERCIAL AVIATION 1982 – 2021***

As to the future? Who would have thought that ninety years ago, when a group of men formed an aero club, that aviation would evolve at the rate it has done so.

As such Launceston Airport has continued to ensure facilities, safety and equipment keeps pace with the changes. In July 2020 approval was gained for the Launceston Airport Master Plan to ensure the longevity of the airport.

Unlike many other airports throughout Australia, Launceston is unique in several ways, not the least being an airport that is not subject to a curfew thus utilising the night time freighter operations

A newly strengthened freight apron accommodates the increase freight requirements of both Qantas and Virgin.

The Royal Flying Doctor Service now operates in excess of 2,300 flights annually from its dedicated Launceston airport base.



***Launceston Airport Today***



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***LAUNCESTON AIRPORT 1982 - 2021***

**But some things never change, and Launceston Airport is no exception!**

When the Australian Aero Club (Tasmanian Division) was formed the first two buildings constructed was the clubrooms and hangar. The Club was renamed as Tasmanian Aero Club in 1936 and has occupied a place on Launceston Airport since 1930. Today it still conducts flying training in their own aircraft with flagpole from the "Torora" still flying outside the club's main entrance.



***TAS AERO CLUB CLUBROOMS***

***SO, THERE IS A BRIEF OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THE FIRST  
NINETY YEARS OF LAUNCESTON AIRPORT.***

***WONDER WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE IN ANOTHER NINETY  
YEARS?***