



**Tasmanian Aviation
Historical Society**

Preserving Tasmania's aviation history.



“Roaring Forties”

*OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC,
HANGAR 17, LAUNCESTON AIRPORT.*

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 15 - SEPTEMBER 2023

WEBSITE: WWW.TAHS.ORG.AU

EMAIL: secretary@tahs.org.au

TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Welcome to the 15th edition of our quarterly newsletter "*Roaring Forties*"

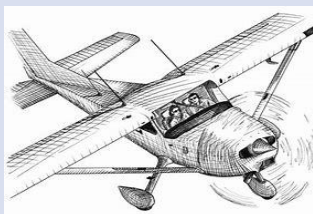
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This edition contains the history and development of Tasmania's West Coast airstrips, Queenstown and Strahan.

This article was advertised to be included in the last Newsletter but somehow the "*Computer Gremlins*" took possession of the item. We have now recovered the document and present it in this issue.

Better late than never!!!



NEWSLETTER 15 SEPTEMBER 2023.

Last newsletter we promised an update on our newest member "Rosie" the Auster J-1 Autocrat. The story of the development of this aircraft type can be found in this issue. Our thanks go to Rob Gard for his generous donation of "Rosie" to TAHS.

Peter Manktelow, AKA Captain Sizzle, presents an extremely interesting article on his early flying days and introduces the Martin Baker ejection seat, an invention that has saved countless lives.

In 1950 both Wynyard and Devonport conducted an air pageant that attracted over 13,000 spectators. An added attraction at Devonport was the official opening of Pardoe Aerodrome as it was called in those days. We reflect on both of those air shows.

This edition also contains information on the TAHS exhibition "Flying by the seat of their Pants" due to open on 01 September through to 19 November at the Q V Museum Inveresk.

Hardly historical, in the true sense of the word, but extremely interesting, is the history of Australia's involvement in the development of the Antarctic aviation scene and the role Tasmania now plays.

Got a bit of a brain teaser about a landing area called Dargan's Flats and a company known as Charter Wing Ltd.

Tasmania's only attempted aircraft hijack is also revisited.

National "do you remember" items, some humour, our upcoming events and stop press make up the fifteenth edition of our newsletter.

Hope you enjoy and remember any articles you would like us to publish or investigate just give us a yell!

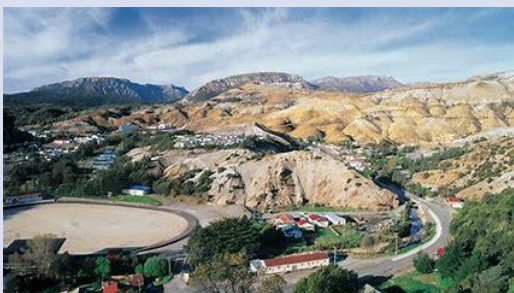
THE HISTORY OF TASMANIA'S WEST COAST AIRSTRIPS

Wayne Dearing

In the days of our early settlers, the opening of the West Coast proved a logistical nightmare. Thick bush, torrential rain and that friendly wind all the way from South America presented problems just surviving, but transportation was another thing. Roads were non-existent. However, as the various settlements were established and expanding, so too was the new mode of transport, "*the aeroplane*". As early as 1930, discussions were taking place to build an airstrip at Queenstown and so commenced the era of aviation that ultimately led to airstrips being constructed at Queenstown and Strahan. Today only the Strahan strip is still fully operational, but the two strips share an interesting history regarding the introduction of aviation to Tasmania's West Coast.

QUEENSTOWN

Whilst discussions relating to an airstrip at Queenstown commenced in the early 1930's, development of the airstrip was not a unanimous decision amongst the township's leaders, particularly when an estimated cost of 2,400 pounds (or approximately \$87,000 in today's terms) was announced. As such, development and construction occurred at a snail's pace, however assisted by Commonwealth grants, a single strip was completed in 1937 on an area known as Howards Plains.



TAHS File photo Queenstown Tasmania.

Problems immediately became apparent, none the least being Queenstown's frequently changing weather conditions that made landings somewhat of a challenge.

This was further highlighted on the 17th February, when a flight conducted by the DH 83 aircraft "Miss Currie", departed Smithton carrying an inspector from the Department of Civil Aviation. The aircraft became bogged after veering off the runway on landing in high winds, breaking a blade off the propellor. It became apparent further runways needed to be constructed to ensure safe take-offs and landings regardless of the wind direction.

(1)

On Saturday 04 June, commercial aviation arrived at Queenstown when Mr R Godsall, of Australian National Airways, flew his de Havilland Puss Moth from Cambridge. Several flights over the town were conducted on Saturday and more flights, including several landings at Howards Plains. were conducted on Sunday. (2)

In response to recommendations following the incident, additional grant funds were secured in 1938 for the provision of two additional runways, ensuring safe landings regardless of the direction of the wind. (3)

By 1939 the two runways had been completed and following the outbreak of World War 2, further works to the value of 1350 pounds were announced to extend both runways that would allow larger aircraft to operate, so as to maintain the area's role in the provision of materials in support of the war effort. (4)

Acknowledgements:

1. *Advocate* 18 February 1937.
2. *Advocate* 15 June 1937.
3. *Examiner* 06 August 1938.
4. *Examiner* 20 November 1939.



An aerial view of Queenstown's airstrip in the 1970's. (1)

Following the end of World War 2, the Tasmanian Government proposed a programme of intra-state aerial services and identified Queenstown as one of the destinations. (2).

A few limited services had commenced with an engineer named Mr Trevor Warner, claiming the right of being the first commercial passenger to alight at Queenstown on a flight from Smithton. (3)

In 1949 further proposals to introduce cargo and passenger flights to Launceston and Hobart from the mainland were contemplated. The aircraft to be used were war surplus Avro Ansons, but again concerns relating to safety were raised.

Despite ongoing wartime upgrades, the ongoing question of safety of Queenstown's airport as a commercial operation was constantly raised. Serious doubts about Queenstown's unreliable weather, high probability of fog and the surrounding high terrain saw the suggestion that Strahan may well be an alternative airport to service the West Coast.

Acknowledgements:

1. *Wikipedia.*
2. *Examiner 01 August 1946.*
3. *Advocate 25 March 1946.*

Queenstown's Municipal Council was split over the decision as to whether to use Strahan as their airport or conduct significant upgrades to the existing Howards Plain airfield. Further discussions resulted in deferring the decision, in 1950, to the commonwealth authorities. (1)

Ultimately the Department of Civil Aviation declined to grant a commercial license citing weather and terrain difficulties. In 1953 the Council sought a conditional license that would allow the airport to be used for emergency medical flights. (2)

By 1963 the Queenstown Municipal Council had taken over full ownership of the airfield and redevelopment work was underway on the runways and buildings under the Aerodrome Local Ownership Plan. (3)

From 1970, both Queenstown and Strahan were used for regular public transport flights, with Strahan being the alternate should Queenstown's weather conditions be unfavourable. Until around 1993 Airlines of Tasmania ran a service in and out of Queenstown to Essendon via Smithton and direct flights to Hobart.

Currently the airfield is still owned and operated by the Council although prior approval from the Council is required. The airfield may be used only in daylight hours at the pilot's own risk and by aircraft weighing less than 5,700kgs maximum take-off weight. As late as 2015, the airfield was used as an event site for motorsport activities. (4)

Acknowledgements:

1. *Mercury 14 April 1950.*
2. *Mercury 28 March 1953.*
3. *National Library 28 August 1963.*
4. *West Coast Council 27 February 2015.*

STRAHAN

In the early part of the 20th century Strahan was the second busiest port in Tasmania, used primarily to transport products mined at Queenstown and Zeehan. Little thought to the development of an airstrip was given until around 1937 when, as discussed in the history of Queenstown's airstrip, lengthy Council deliberations as to the need to upgrade the existing airfield at Queenstown or build a new complex at Strahan were undertaken.

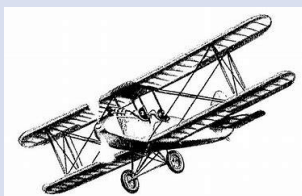
At a Strahan council meeting, conducted in March 1937, Mr E C Butterfield of Australian National Airways, intimated that after conducting a flight over Strahan, the building of an airfield would not be difficult. Its position, unlike Queenstown, would be free from high terrain, fog and unfavourable weather. (1)

In early 1950, Senator R Murray advised that the area west of Strahan could be developed into a first-class airfield. Preliminary surveys and meteorological observations showed that Strahan was the only suitable place for the establishment of an all-weather airstrip on the West Coast of Tasmania. (2)

During December 1950 the Minister for Air (Mr White) promised the Government would provide beacons and navigational aids for the aerodrome at Strahan if local authorities undertook the preliminary construction work. (3)

Acknowledgements

1. *Advocate* 22 March 1937.
2. *Examiner* 17 Jan 1950.
3. *Trove* 02 December 1950.



Around the same time a new player in Strahan's aviation history emerged. It was announced that on December 06 and 07 the Short Hythe flying boat of Trans Oceanic Airways would fly from Hobart, circle over Queenstown, then head to Strahan, where it would land on Macquarie harbour. (1)



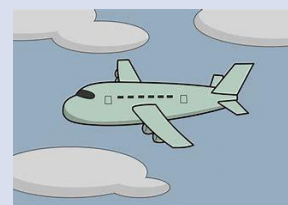
File photo of a Short Hythe the civil version of the Sunderland aircraft used in World War 2.

Significant interest was shown in this project, given the estimate to construct a single runway was approximately 150,000 pounds or about \$3 million in today's value.

Whilst aircraft still operate from Macquarie Harbour conducting scenic flights, flying boat operations at Strahan did not eventuate and the aerodrome was the preferred option. With the days of flying boats becoming limited and more reliable navigational aids being developed, the Strahan airport became a reality.

Acknowledgements:

1. *Trove* 29 November 1950.



The early predictions that an airport at Strahan was the suitable place that could solve the west coasts transportation difficulties, were to prove correct.



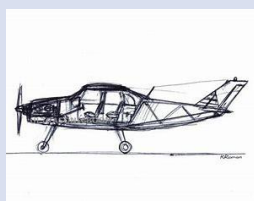
File photo: On short final runway 36 Strahan.

The Strahan airport, located a mere 3.5kms from the Strahan village, now consists of a sealed all-weather runway of 1,220 metres in length running north - south.

Pilot activated runway lighting (PAL), an approved instrument approach (RNAV) and full radio coverage with Melbourne's air traffic control, ensures safe operations can be conducted thus eliminating Queenstown's unpredictable weather and high terrain problems.



File photo of Strahan's Airport facilities facing southeast.



The airport, now owned and operated by the West Coast Council, has provided a facility which allows support for the West Coast.

Royal Flying Doctor Service aircraft regularly operate medical flights and helicopters operate scenic flights over the West Coast wilderness. From 2019 Par Avion commenced a thrice weekly return service from Hobart. (1)



File photo of Par Avion aircraft at Strahan Airport.

The position and weather patterns precluded Queenstown's longevity as a commercial airport. A smaller airstrip at Zeehan closed some years ago. These sites attempted to provide facilities that could at least allow aircraft to fly medical evacuations, but failed to fulfill the role that Strahan now plays.

Aviation has played a large part in opening up Tasmania's West Coast wilderness.

Acknowledgements:

1. Advocate 26 March 2019.



“ROSIE” AUSTER J-1 AUTOCRAT

The history of this aircraft type goes back to the development of a robust and reliable aircraft that became known as the Taylorcraft Auster Model J that was used as an observation aircraft toward the end of World War 2.

Following the war’s end, the aircraft’s name was shortened and the Auster J-1 Autocrat was born. The first production aircraft was delivered in December 1945 and the last in 1952. During that period 400 of the aircraft were delivered and it became the most successful British post war aircraft built. The popularity of the aircraft was proven being used by Aero Clubs, small charter companies, banner towing and photography.



Auster J-1 Autocrat in British military livery. Photo courtesy of Pinterest.

The aircraft were all registered in the UK with 72 being exported to Australia and New Zealand. “Rosie” was built in 1946 and was originally registered in Britain as G-AIGL. The aircraft was shipped to Australia in 1952 and re-registered as VH-AIK in 1953. eventually landing into the hands of Rob Gard.

Rob, a Hobart member of TAHS, has always been an enthusiast when it comes to the repairing and restoration of old aircraft and consequently one Auster J-1 Autocrat, registered VH-AIK, became his property and subsequently became affectionately known as “Rosie”.

Rob’s love of aviation is demonstrated by his membership of the Antique Aircraft of Australia Association and his life membership of the Aero Club of Southern Tasmania.



Photo of VH-AIK taken in March 1970 at Wagga NSW courtesy of Greg Banfield.



The small but neat cockpit of the Auster J-1 Autocrat. Photo courtesy of Pinterest.

Late last year Rob was advised that “Rosie” would have to be removed from the Cambridge Airport hangar she was housed in and subsequently discussions between Rob and TAHS as to the future storage and display of the aircraft began.

The aircraft, due to its age and fabric covering, could not be left outside in the elements and Rob generously donated the aircraft to TAHS so that the aircraft could be stored and maintained and eventually placed on display.

Early this year TAHS purchased a 40-foot container that was delivered to Helicopter Resources in Launceston, who had generously granted TAHS access to and the placement of the container on their property.

Back at Cambridge, the wings of “Rosie” were removed and carefully loaded together with her fuselage and trucked to Launceston. Following her arrival at Launceston and under the guidance of Peter Manktelow and Iain Pinkard, with assistance from TAHS members, the task of storage began.



TAHS file photos of the wingless “Rosie” patiently waiting to be placed into the storage container above and below the delicate task of moving the wings to the container



Above and below TAHS file photos of “Rosie’s” wings being placed in the storage container.



When the aircraft was securely stored in the container, she was wrapped in plastic to ensure no moisture would contaminate the fabric, baits were laid to discourage any pesky rodents and the container was sealed.

Since “Rosie” was placed in storage, Peter and Iain have made regular checks to ensure the security of the aircraft and container. Constant checking has ensured no water or moisture of any kind is present and due to their diligence, the aircraft’s condition has been perfectly maintained and will be kept that way until she is fully restored and on display once more.

MY EARLY DAYS OF FLYING AND THE MARTIN BAKER EJECTION SEAT

Peter Manktelow

I still have more to say about Hookway Aviation and helicopters, but a break from that topic will prove I did actually fly fixed wing aircraft as well.

In 1969 I joined the Navy as a trainee pilot. After some months at HMAS Cerberus learning about the Navy way of doing things, we were bussed over to the RAAF base at Point Cook to undertake what was called Flight Assessment. There were 36 of us, both Navy and RAAF, with the Flight Assessment being an elimination process whilst flying the Winjeel for some 15 hours. At the end of that time, for various reasons but primarily as a result of our performance, we were whittled down to 24. Despite this, flying the Winjeel was fun, flying circuits and aerobatics.



The RAAF Winjeel. Entered service in 1955 and served as its basis trainer for the next 20 years. Photo courtesy RAAF History.

When flying we were equipped with parachutes and briefed on how to exit the aircraft should an emergency arise. About the only thing that sticks in my mind about exiting the aircraft in an emergency was to make sure you released the seat belt and not your parachute buckle. After that you rolled the aircraft on its back and fell out, or trim full forward but holding back the stick. When you let go of the stick the

aircraft wants to bunt (a sudden nose down negative G manoeuvre) and thus throw you out. All very exciting for ab initio pilots aged 19 to 25.

After two weeks and 14.5 hours of flying the Winjeel, I passed the Flight Assessment and proceeded to head off to RAAF Base Pearce in Western Australia for 200 hours on the MB326H Macchi, the Vampires having been retired about a year earlier.



The RAAF Macchi advanced trainer. Photo courtesy RAAF History.

Before we headed off to W A, we had to undergo an Aviation Medical course at Point Cook and it was during this course I was introduced to Martin-Baker.

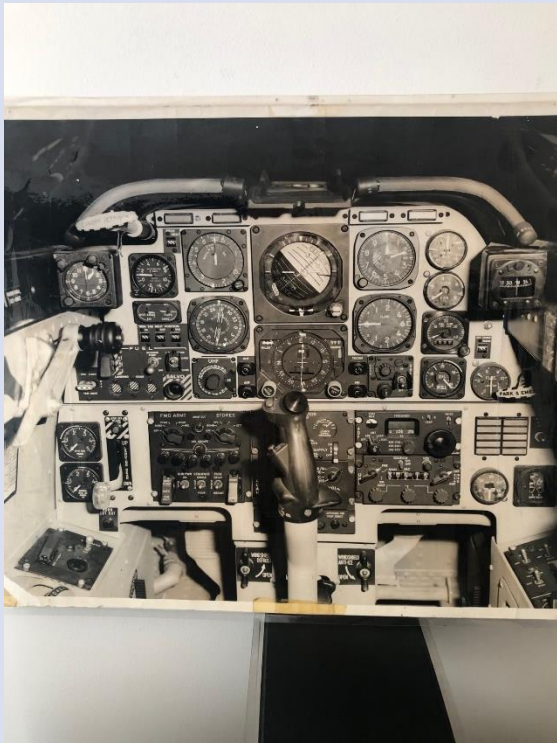
Who or what was Martin Baker?

Martin-Baker is a 70-year-old, family run business, who design and build aircraft ejection seats. The Macchi was fitted with two Martin-Baker ejection seats, and we as part of our Aviation Medicine course, had to do ejection seat training. Of course, we did not get in a real seat and “bang out”; that would be costly and fraught with danger.

Let me digress for a moment and explain the recruitment process. It consisted of a never-ending series of aptitude tests, medical examinations and psychological assessments. Next go sit in a wooden contraption designed to measure your body against the confines of the Macchi cockpit. If you fitted, well and good, if not that ended your aspirations of being a military

pilot. It appeared that very tall pilots ran the risk of being “knee capped” by the cockpit surrounds if they had to eject. Fortunately, at 6 ft 1 inch I scraped through.

Anyhow, to my 20 year-old mind, the idea of bodily damage from ejecting was something that would never happen to me



Cockpit of a Macchi MB 326 showing just how cosy the “office” really is. Photo courtesy of P Manktelow collection.

It didn't, but almost did!!!

Back to ejection seat training at Point Cook. Imagine, if you will, a 100 foot steel vertical trilateral tower with a single rail from top to bottom. Attached to the bottom of this rail was an ejection seat. A RAAF armourer would place a half charge explosive device in the seat. You would strap in “**very tightly**” and at the count of ten pull down on the ejection seat handles above your head. The next thing you knew, you were sitting 100 feet up at the top of the tower with your classmates applauding below you. That was Martin-Baker ejection seat training.

Back to the real thing. The Macchi was a tandem seat aircraft normally flown with the instructor occupying the rear seat. When we did instrument training the seating positions were reversed. A hood was fitted, which was pulled over your head cutting out any outside visibility.

Next time you are at Launceston airport, take a look at the photo on the wall of the QANTAS departure lounge depicting the 1940's 7 EFTS Tiger Moths. You will notice a similar shroud or hood pulled back in the rear cockpit. Some things just never change.

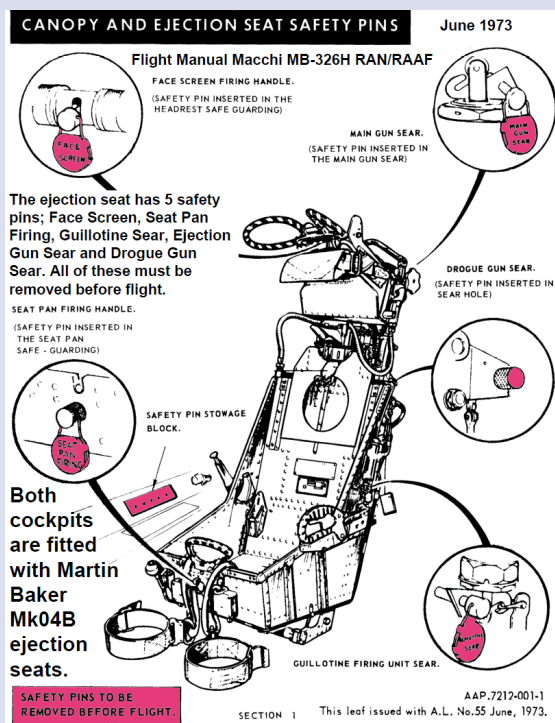
Martin-Baker ejection seats fitted in the Macchi, to the best of my recall, were 90/90 seats that used an explosive charge unlike many modern-day ejection seats that are of the rocket type. The 90/90 was limited to a speed of 90 knots or a height of 90 feet. If your speed and/or height was below 90 feet or 90 knots, a safe and survivable ejection could not be guaranteed.

When you strap into the aircraft, you do so very tightly, effectively becoming part of the aircraft. A single combined seat and parachute quick release fastener (QRF) held you in place. Dressed in a “G” suit, oxygen plugged in, radio plugged in and the BOWYANGS attached and you were ready for flight.

What you may ask are BOWYANGS?!

A brief definition of the word explains it is a thong or string to hold the trouser legs up. A further purpose is to stop dust, seeds, insects or snakes going up the legs of farmers. There is also the thought that in days gone by when workers only bathed once a week, the bowyangs help keep the dust and dirt from going up the legs, keeping the wearer clean!!!

From an aviation perspective, the bowyangs came about as a result of flight testing in early ejection seats. Slow motion camera footage showed the pilots legs flailing about as the seat came out of the aircraft and into the slipstream, resulting in injuries to ankles and legs. The bowyang was designed to still allow the pilot's feet to reach the rudder pedals but were secured back onto the seat. On ejection the bowyangs, which were attached just above the ankles, pulled your feet and legs hard back against the seat preventing injuries to your legs.



The Martin Baker Mk04B ejection seat fitted to the Macchi aircraft. Courtesy P Manktelow collection.

During training we flew long range navigation flights at 30,000 feet, aerobatics at 20,000 feet and low flying was well...low!

So, let us assume an emergency has occurred and you need to eject at 30,000 feet. You could eject the canopy by pulling a yellow lever located on the left upper side of the instrument panel, or ignoring the lever and ejecting, allowing the seat to smash through the Perspex canopy. This

method of ejection was much quicker. You could pull the overhead handles which had a blind attached for protection of your face or pull the handle between your legs.

In an emergency, at 30,000 feet, your instructor would call “eject, eject, eject” and as the old story goes, if you heard the third “eject” you would be sitting in the aircraft by yourself!!!!!!!



Graphic photo of the seat falling away as the main chute starts to open. Photo courtesy of Pinterest.

The ejection process is simple. A charge goes off and you and your seat travelled up a 6 foot telescopic tube, smashing through the Perspex canopy on your way. This was designed to ensure you cleared the tailplane of the aircraft. At the top of the tube the seat disconnects. A small drogue chute deploys and you effectively fall free in the seat. To ensure you do not lose consciousness (at 30,000 feet) the seat has its own little bottle of oxygen to keep you conscious until, at 10,000 feet, the main chute deploys and you fall free of the seat. If you are over water, you can use a small one-man dinghy that is attached to your butt.

Our course graduated 11 RAAF and NAVY pilots. Fortunately, we had no ejections during our training, although one accident claimed the lives of a student and instructor.



The photo above shows the course members at RAAF Base Pearce beside the Machhi aircraft we used for training.

The strange outer trousers, visibly on the photo, are the oft mentioned “G suits” which allowed us to pull higher G manoeuvres without blacking out. I would normally start to black out or grey out at 3 G but with the suit I could go up to 4 maybe 5 G. A negative G caused a “red out” which was most uncomfortable. All your bodily blood rushing to your head! The G suits were only good for positive G’s.

My modesty forbids me to identify myself in the photo above... but...do you see the tall handsome bloke, without a beard, and a good mop of hair, or better still, do you recognise the guy back row fifth from the right?

So, this article not only proves that, whilst I waffle on about helicopters, I did actually fly fixed wing aircraft!!

Additionally, I learnt about that wonderful Martin-Baker invention called the ejection seat that, at last count, had saved almost 8,000 lives.



Aerial photo of Point Cook courtesy of RAAF.

LAUNCESTON AIRPORT’S FIRST JET ARRIVAL SUNDAY 04 DEC 1949.

At 10:47am on this day the first jet powered aircraft to visit Western Junction Airport, as it was known then, touched down.

The aircraft, a RAAF de Havilland Vampire, had flown up from Cambridge Airport in Hobart, covering the 79 nautical miles in 15 minutes at a height of 13,000 feet and a speed of 365 mph. The aircraft, was flown by Pilot Officer “Gus” Goy.

This was the first jet aircraft made in Australia and is powered by a Nene jet engine, built in Australia under license from Rolls Royce. Developing roughly 5000 horsepower the Vampire is able to reach a height of 40,000 feet in 12 minutes and currently holds the world’s altitude record, for a single engine jet powered aircraft, of 59,430 feet.



Photo of an RAAF Vampire courtesy on Pinterest.

Later in the day, watched by a crowd of several thousand, the aircraft’s capabilities was shown in an impressive display of aerobatics that afforded the crowd their first experience of the “jet phenomena”. That is, they saw the aircraft fly by, then “heard” the aircraft fly! ⁽¹⁾

¹Acknowledgements: Launceston Examiner Newspaper Mon 05 December 1949, page 3.

HISTORY OF EARLY NORTH WEST COAST AIR PAGEANTS.

Aviation was alive and well along Tasmania's North West Coast during 1950, with two air pageants held at Wynyard and Devonport in that year.

The first, at Wynyard, on Saturday 25 March, attracted a crowd of 3,500, easily a record for a coastal pageant. The onlookers were treated to a flying display from several types of aircraft in perfect flying conditions. About a dozen aero club aircraft, including Tiger Moths, Wacketts and a twin engine Monospar, took part. The RAAF arrived with five Mustang fighters and an Avro Lincoln bomber while a TAA Convair also took part. ⁽¹⁾



Above a formation of RAAF Mustang aircraft and below an Avro Lincoln bomber of the RAAF. Photos courtesy of Pinterest.



Acknowledgements:

1. *Advocate Newspaper Burnie Monday 27 March 1950, page1*

The pageant was opened by the Warden of Wynyard (Cr L Bauld). Highlights of the afternoon were an aerobatic display by the RAAF Mustangs and a demonstration of the Avro Lincoln's manoeuvrability. The demonstration included high and low speed flying with bomb doors open and one of the aircraft's four engines shut down.



Photo of the twin engine Monospar courtesy Neill Bruce collection.

The air pageant comprised the largest assembly of aircraft seen on the North West Coast, including an aerobatic display by a club Tiger Moth. Demonstrating the capabilities of the small aircraft, the pilot thrilled the crowd with a landing demonstration with the engine shut down.

Included in the programme was a handicap air race for club aircraft, commencing at Launceston's Western Junction airport some 83 miles away. The event was won by N Beattie flying a Tiger Moth with G Brooks in another Tiger Moth and D Morrison flying a Wackett aircraft, second and third respectively.

The combined Roseberry and Burnie Marine Board played musical selections throughout the afternoon and the programme concluded with a fly-past by all aircraft.

On Sunday 05 November, Devonport conducted their own air pageant that was held in conjunction with the official opening of the Pardoe Aerodrome, as it was known in those days. The official opening was performed by the Minister for Air, Mr T W White.

The pageant was also conducted in ideal weather conditions and attracted a crowd of 10,000 people from all parts of the North West Coast.

Eighteen aircraft took part in the pageant and a first for Devonport was the appearance of the Aeromodellers of Tasmania; members who displayed their flying models. All models were powered by miniature petrol or diesel engines and flew attached to a steel line of 70 feet around the operator and capable of performing any manoeuvres of a standard airplane.

The RAAF was again represented by Mustang aircraft of the No 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron, who gave two displays of aerobatic and formation flying and a Dakota support aircraft. ⁽¹⁾



File photo of RAAF Dakota aircraft similar to the one flown to the Devonport Air Show.

Acknowledgements:

1. *Advocate Burnie 06 November 1950 page 5.*

During the day several civilian aircraft arrived. An ANA Bristol Freighter arrived and unloaded 34,000 cans destined for A Wander Ltd and was then opened for inspection, a centre of interest for the large crowd. The aircraft departed later that afternoon loaded with 11,600 lbs of Ovaltine destined for Melbourne.



TAHS file photo of an ANA Bristol Freighter similar to the aircraft at the air show.

Two DC 3s of ANA and TAA paid the airshow a visit and were joined by a TAA Convair that had been diverted from Hobart for the occasion.



Photo of a TAA Convair similar to the aircraft that attended the air show., courtesy of HARS.

An aerial visit was made by an ANA Skymaster aircraft that, whilst unable to land as it was on a scheduled Melbourne to Hobart service. circled the airfield for the large crowd to see and hear Australia's first pressurised passenger aircraft.



TAHS file photo of an ANA Skymaster on final approach.

Crews of the civil aircraft were introduced to the crowd over the loud speaker service and gave information on the aircraft they were flying.

Two displays were given by a glider, the only one in Tasmania, that was flown by Mr Laurie Sodesky. The aircraft was towed aloft by a Tiger Moth and cast loose, subsequently performing various aerobatic routines.

Aircraft, including Tiger Moths, a Percival Proctor, a Monospar, and Wacketts of the southern and northern Aero Clubs were dispersed on the far side of the aerodrome, where club events were conducted. These included an aerial derby for Tiger Moths over the main towns in the four municipalities serviced by the aerodrome.

The race was won by Peter Tanner from the Aero Club of Southern Tasmania.



A visitor to the air show. A Percival Proctor aircraft. Photo courtesy of Pintetrest.

TWO TASMANIAN AVIATION INCIDENTS NOVEMBER 1951.

Fishing boat search: On Saturday 03 November, two aircraft took to the air from Devonport to search for a fishing boat missing from Rocky Cape. A Tiger Moth commenced the search before 7:00pm and a Monospar departed at 7:45pm. On returning and following a broadcast appeal by the Devonport Aero Club, about 100 cars arrived with their headlights lighting the runway at Pardoe to assist the aircraft in landing.

It was later learnt that the fishing boat had put into Stanley. ⁽¹⁾

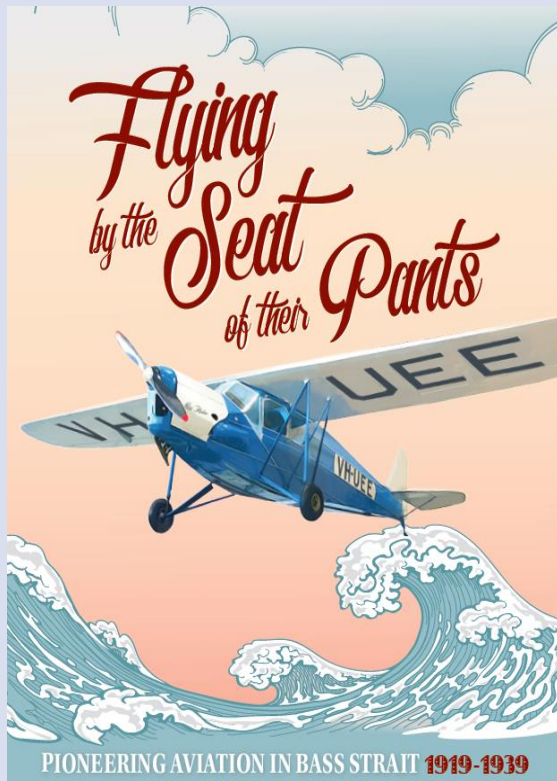
Forced to land in a storm: On Monday 20 November, a freak storm passed over the northern part of Tasmania, forcing a twin engine Monospar aircraft of the Tasmanian Aero Club to land at Bridport. The aircraft, piloted by Mr D G Morrison, was returning from a charter flight to Flinders Island for the Department of Civil Aviation. On board was an engineer with the department, Mr G Hampton, who said conditions were extremely turbulent and visibility was reduced to such an extent that the pilot was forced to fly around for some time to regain his bearings. After landing at Bridport, and waiting until the storm had passed, the aircraft resumed its flight, landing at Western Junction at about 7:00pm. ⁽²⁾

Acknowledgements:

1. *Mercury Newspaper Hobart, Monday 05 November 1951, page 2.*
2. *Examiner Launceston, Tuesday 20 November 1951, page 3.*



“FLYING BY THE SEAT OF THEIR PANTS” TRAVELLING EXHIBITION.

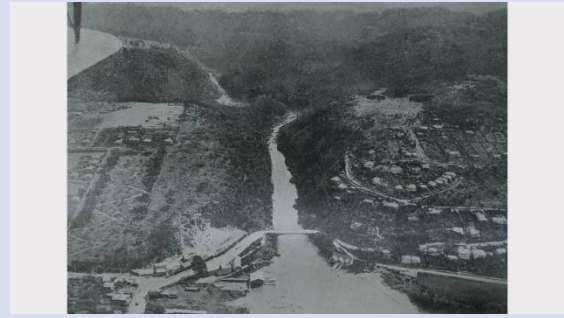


This exhibition, fresh from a successful trip to Flinders Island, is gearing up for its next destination.

The Queen Museum and Art Gallery, Inveresk will be the home for ten weeks, with the official opening, by liberal MHR Bridget Archer, on Friday 01 September and public viewing available from Saturday 02 September until Sunday 19 November.

The museum has allowed TAHS 150 square feet to display the history of Bass Strait aviation from 1919-1939. In addition to the story boards and artifacts that travelled to Flinders Island, new panels are currently in the process of completion.

The new panels depict pilot F G Huxley and photographer H J King's aerial photographic mission of Launceston in 1922, Mathews Aviation history and two smaller panels depicting Arthur Long and Norman Lindsay.



Aerial view of Launceston's Cataract Gorge in 1922 from H J Kings collection. Photo courtesy of Pinterest.

Additional artifacts include the Holyman scrap book depicting their history in Tasmanian aviation, the engine from Miss Flinders aircraft and the compass from the aircraft flown by Arthur Long in the historic first flight across Bass Strait.



TAHS file photo of the first man to fly across Bass Strait, Arthur Long, whose aircraft's compass will be on display at the exhibition.

As with Flinders Island, the exhibition will display the history of aviation's triumphs and tragedies in the pioneering era of Tasmanian aviation.

Flights that we now take for granted were, in the early years from 1919, an extremely dangerous undertaking for man and

machine. These brave and daring pilots flew in aircraft with open cockpits. They were exposed to rain and freezing temperatures. Their faces were constantly splashed by oil whilst inhaling engine exhaust fumes. Flying at low altitudes, they were constantly buffeted by turbulence.

However, pilots developed a feel for their aircraft and the conditions, judging the slip and skid, the turn and bank through pressures on the body rather than instrumentation. Their flimsy aircraft were nothing more than wooden frames covered by fabric, held together by wire and glue, kept aloft by engines that were, to say the least, unreliable.



Map depicting early air routes across Bass Strait courtesy of TAHS.

The courage and determination of these pilots and people like the Holyman Bros, Laurie Johnson and Hudson Fysh, all contributed to the history of Tasmania's pioneering aviators and contained in this exhibition.

It is also proposed that an audio interactive selection of four oral histories will be available for visitors and TAHS will encourage school groups to attend the exhibition to learn more of this fascinating history.

Available, through the QV Museum shop, supporting booklets will detail the events and time frames of the era.



The engine from "Miss Flinders" that will be on display at the QV Museum exhibition. Photo courtesy of the Examiner Newspaper.

THOSE DATES AGAIN:

**OPENING NIGHT 01 SEPTEMBER.
PUBLIC VIEWING FROM SATURDAY
02 SEPTEMBER UNTIL SUNDAY 19
NOVEMBER.**

WHERE?

QV MUSEUM INVERESK.



ANTARCTIC AVIATION HISTORY AND TASMANIA'S INVOLVEMENT

Wayne Dearing

The early days of Antarctic exploration saw some experimentation with the use of aircraft. On 04 Feb 1902, Robert Falcon Scott reached a height of 250 metres in a hydrogen balloon.

On the 16th September 1928, Australian aviator, Hubert Wilkins, successfully carried out the first flight at Graham Land in a Lockheed Vega 1 monoplane. Douglas Mawson relied heavily on aircraft during the 1929-31 British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition, using a Gipsy Moth float plane to take extensive aerial surveys of what was to become the Australian Antarctic Territory.



Above an Auster Mark 6 on the ice-flow circa 1954. Photo courtesy Philip Law and below a Hiller Helicopter on a ship circa 1960. Photo courtesy of P Law.



Australian resource expeditions began to rely heavily on both fixed wing and helicopters, for station resupply, deployment of field parties and science

reports. Over several decades, a range of conventional aircraft operated by the RAAF and commercial operators provided support in Antarctic intracontinental flights and ship to station operations.



DH-2 Beaver over Mt Henderson circa 1959. Photo courtesy R Dunlop.

On 30 September 1964, the first direct flight between Australia and Antarctica took place when a ski-equipped United States Navy LC130F Hercules departed Victoria's Avalon Airport, landing at Byrd Station some fifteen and a half hours later. That first flight introduced the possibilities that intercontinental air transport could provide in the form of logistical services.

From the late 1990's plans were ramped up for a blue ice runway to improve Australia's ability to efficiently move expeditioners to and from Antarctica.

In 2008, history was made by an Airbus A319 aircraft operated, by SkyTraders Ltd, landing on the newly constructed blue ice runway at Wilkins Aerodrome near Casey Station.

It was now Tasmania's turn to add another page to the annals of the state's rich aviation history, but first an introduction to the aircraft used for the direct flights to Wilkins Aerodrome.

In 2016 the RAAF commenced direct flights from Hobart Airport using the Boeing C-17 Globemaster III that makes up to six return flights from Hobart each

Antarctic summer, carrying up to seventy-two tonnes of supplies. In addition, the aircraft is capable of equipment airdrops year-round, including winter, when the stations are usually inaccessible. An aside, the acceptance of this aircraft type by the RAAF in 2006 contains further Tasmanian history as Tasmanian born, now retired, Wing Commander Linda Corbould, oversaw the RAAF's delivery programme.

In March 2020 a newly modified Hercules aircraft, using two additional external fuel tanks fitted beneath the wings, landed at Wilkins after a six and a half-hour flight from Hobart. Carrying 78 tons of supplies, the Hercules aircraft provides additional support to Australia's Antarctic Base.



Above the RAAF Globemaster rotating out of Hobart Airport and on the right the Modified Hercules after landing at Wilkins. Photos courtesy of Australian Antarctic Division.



The intercontinental link is completed by the Airbus A319-115LR aircraft. Each summer season the aircraft moves approximately 400 passengers.

The flight to Wilkins from Hobart Airport commences with passenger's arrival at Hobart's international terminal, where they are checked in, passports confirmed and Australian Antarctic Division kits issued. A special briefing on the flight is conducted and they are on their way. Just like a normal overseas flight. This year the aircraft is scheduled to complete eight return flights.



Above the Airbus A-319 at Wilkins Aerodrome following its flight from Hobart.

Today's Antarctic flights add a further chapter to the history and challenges endured in the expansion of Tasmania's aviation accomplishments.



Final runway surface preparations at Wilkins Aerodrome. Photo courtesy M Ryan.

Acknowledgements: The author acknowledges the information provided by the Australian Antarctic Division in this article.

DARGAN'S FLATS

Recently we received an email from Bill Fletcher, who lives in Darwin, seeking some information regarding an area known in the 1920's as Dargan's Flats. The gentleman was interested in a landing strip at the Flats and an aviation company that used the area. This then started the editor doing some investigation that produced the information detailed below. The material is a bit scratchy and it was difficult to find anything concrete about the incident. So over to you. If any member or reader has any more information about Dargan's Flats and/or Charter Wings Ltd please contact us, we would be appreciative of any info you may have.

The History.

Bill's parents lived in Mayne Street, Invermay, a northern suburb of Launceston. Sometime in early 1929 they witnessed an aircraft land on the area known then as Dargan's Flats. The aircraft was an Avro Avion owned by a Brisbane company Charter Wings Ltd.



Photo above of the Avro Avion after landing at Dargan's Flats. Photo courtesy of Bill Fletcher.

Investigations revealed that Dargan's Flats covered the area that now operates as the Launceston Church Grammar School's, equestrian centre and Faulkner Park sporting ground. If you look carefully at the photograph, you can just make out the Grammar School in the distant background.

Whilst this was the era before Western Junction airport was developed, the only other two landing areas used regularly was the Launceston Show Grounds and Freeland's Farm on the other side of the river.

As for the aircraft's pilot, he did leave this handwritten note, but who is he??

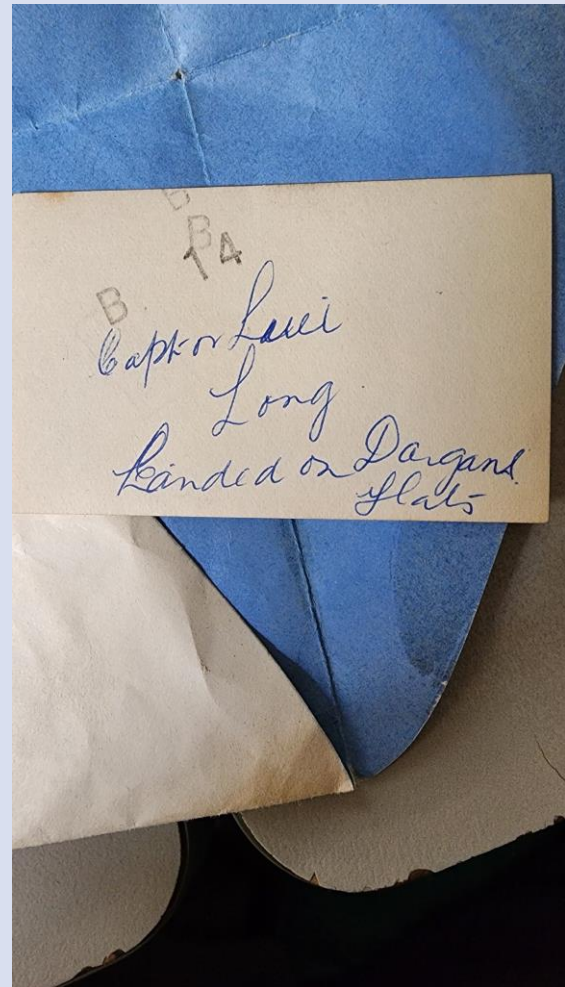


Photo of pilot's note courtesy Bill Fletcher.

As for Charter Wings Ltd, the owner, E J Stevens, came down with two aircraft to undertake joy flights and in April 1929 took the Acting- Minister for Public Works on a flight to Wynyard, but that's it!!

Over to you if you can help, please let us know.

Acknowledgements: Information and photos are presented in the article with the kind permission of Bill Fletcher.

TWENTY YEARS AGO – THE FAILED HIGHJACKING OF QANTAS FLIGHT 1737.

On 29 May 2003, Qantas flight QF1737, a Boeing 717-200 aircraft operated by National Jet Systems, departed Melbourne airport on a routine flight to Launceston. The flight carried 46 passengers and a crew of six and became airborne at two fifty pm.



TAHS file photo of a Boeing 717 similar to the type featured in this article.

About ten minutes after take-off, whilst the cabin crew were preparing in flight refreshments, a clearly agitated and stressed passenger in row seven stood up and commenced to make his way towards the flight deck. As he advanced along the aisle, he produced a pair of fifteen centimetre sharpened wooden stakes from his jacket pocket. Without provocation he stabbed flight attendant Denise Hickson and purser Greg Khan. Despite having sustained severe injuries and notwithstanding repeated blows to the back of his head, Khan tackled the passenger and brought him down in the galley area.

Upon witnessing the struggle, several passengers, including a Canadian paramedic, managed to restrain the passenger, holding him down and tying him up. The individual was then detained in a space behind two seats and the aircraft returned to Melbourne making an

emergency landing at three twenty-five pm. Crew members were treated for their injuries and the passenger was taken into custody.

Subsequent interviews revealed the passenger had intended to crash the aircraft into Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem National Park. He also admitted an intention to hijack aircraft on two previous occasions.



TAHS map of planned track of Boeing 717 Flight 1737.

Following the incident, all Boeing 717 aircraft operated on behalf of Qantas were fitted with cameras and the flight doors were strengthened in line with international recommendations.

Both cabin crew returned to work following the incident, with Khan being awarded a Commendation for Brave Conduct.

As for the aircraft, VH -NXN is still operating Qantas flights although the aircraft type is soon to be replaced by Airbus A220-300s from late 2023. ⁽¹⁾

Acknowledgements:

(1). Courtesy Luke Peters article published 30 May 2022.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

In June 1946 an RAAF Meteor F-4 became the first jet-engined aircraft to be flown in Australia

On 08 December 1957 the first of twelve Lockheed C-130A Hercules transports arrived at RAAF Richmond following a ferry flight from the US.

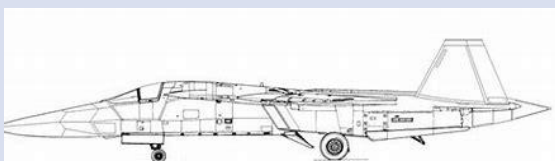
On the 18 March 1959 Ansett-ANA introduced the Lockheed Electra to their fleet with TAA following on the 08 July.

On 01 July 1969 the Prime Minister, John Gorton, opened the new Melbourne Airport at Tullamarine, and all international flights were transferred there from Essendon as of that date.



Above an early aerial photograph, circa 1970, of Tullamarine Airport. Photo courtesy of Pinterest.

On 01 June 1973, the first of six RAAF General Dynamics F-111Cs arrived at RAAF Amberly, Queensland. after a trans Pacific ferry flight from California. On 20 October, at the opening of the Sydney Opera House by Queen Elizabeth II, nine RAAF F-111Cs made a flypast. The last of the twenty-four ordered arrived in December.



In June 1984 the Royal Australian Navy's surviving Grumman Trackers were withdrawn from service.



Above RAN Grumman Tracker. Photo courtesy of RAN.

In March 1993 Lang Kidby and Peter McMillan re-created Ross and Keith Smith's historic flight from England to Australia in a Vickers Vimy bomber. They flew a replica of the original aircraft, the largest replica ever built.



Replica of Vickers Vimy used in this flight courtesy of Pinterest.

On 05 March 2002, after repeated efforts to revive it, Ansett Airlines finally ceased operations. Its last flight touched down in Sydney that morning at 6:42am.



AVIATION HUMOUR – OLDIES BUT GOODIES!!



Not the thing you want to find on your daily inspection!!

Flight attendant's on-board announcement heard on an AlaskaAir flights;

“In a moment we are going to turn off the cabin lights, and it's going to get really dark, really fast. If you are afraid of the dark, now would be a good time to reach up and press the yellow button. The yellow button turns on the reading light. Please don't press the orange button unless you absolutely have to. The orange button is your seat ejection button.

We are glad to have you on board. Thank you for flying Alaska Air and giving us your business and your money -*a short pause is then followed by-* If you all weren't strapped down you would have given me a standing ovation, wouldn't you?”

and another;

“Welcome, to San Francisco airport. Sorry about the bumpy landing. But please remain seated until the aircraft is parked at the gate and remember take care in opening the overhead lockers because, “*shift*” does happen!”

AND FROM THE MOUTHS OF THE FAMOUS!!

“There are only two emotions on an aeroplane: boredom and terror.” **Orson Welles.**

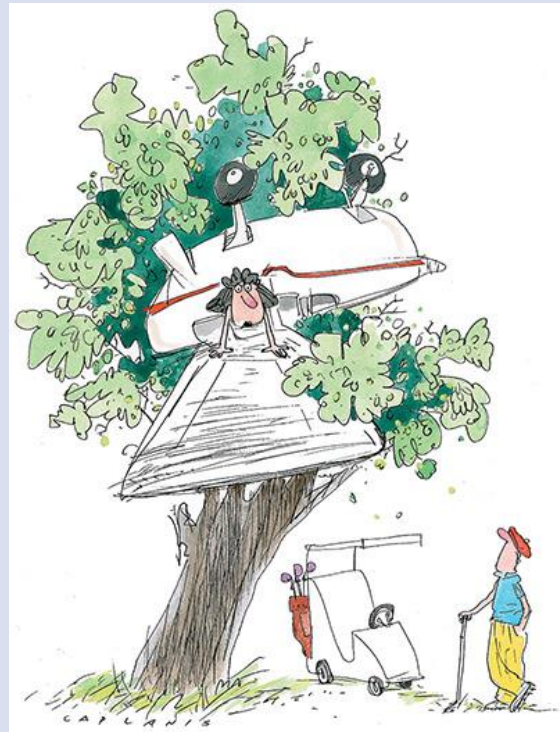
“Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been and there you will always long to return.” **Leonardo da Vinci.**

“I was always afraid of dying. Always. It was my fear that made me learn every thing I could about my airplane and my emergency equipment and kept my flying respectful of my machine and always alert in the cockpit.”

General Chuck Yeager.

“I think it is a pity to lose the romantic side of flying and simply accept it as a common means of transport.”

Amy Johnson.



“OOPS”!!!!!!!!!!

STOP PRESS AND COMING EVENTS

“Sausage Sizzle update”: The “Sausage Sizzlers” continue to cook up tasty “bangers” and onions at Bunnings Kings Meadows once a month.

This exercise has resulted in a real interest in TAHS and what we are attempting to achieve in the preservation of Tasmania’s aviation history as well as assisting our bank balance.



“More happy “Sizzlers” customers. Even Captain Sizzler is happy!!



Remember our future dates:

Sunday 17 September

Saturday 21 October

Look forward to seeing you there.

Flying by the Seat of their Pants.

This is a must visit exhibition at the QV Museum at Inveresk as detailed in our article in this newsletter.

Remember the dates:

Official opening on Friday 01 September, opens to the public Saturday 02 September until Sunday 19 November.



THAT'S ALL WE HAVE!!



***SEE YOU IN
DECEMBER***