



Watts News

January 2004

*A newsletter issued by the
Watts Bridge Memorial Flying Field*

The President's Report

A happy New Year to all our members! What an eventful year has just passed. One of the last items attended to by the exiting Management Committee was appealing the 250% airfield valuation increase sought by SEQWater. This appeal is still in process and thankfully is being supported by the Council of the Shire of Esk.

In his final report, retiring President Ian Perkins was able to reflect on a term of significant achievement by the Management Committee which has set up a framework for a management system designed to carry the airfield forward through current difficulties which really are birthpangs associated with the next era of development and prosperity for WBMA. I am sure most would join me in thanking Ian and his Management Committee. It is of interest to note

that Ian has been named the President of the Airfield Council. The inaugural meeting of the



Dorothy Pratt - Prior to aerobatics

Airfield Council will be a combined meeting with the Board of Management on Tuesday February 10 at 7pm. The suggested venue is Paradise Homes Woolloongabba. As always, observers are most welcome to attend.

Finally, what a great time was had at the Airfield Council's Christmas Extravaganza. Our local member, Dorothy Pratt, was able to attend

the Airfield luncheon and meet with members at midday. Thanks for sparing us the time out of a busy schedule Dorothy. We hope you enjoyed the front seat view when Bill threw the Tiger around (all this after the luncheon - what a way to treat a guest!). Then on with the activities in the afternoon culminating in a great dinner at Ross Stenhouse's hangar. A quick count would suggest 130 people at least with all homebase

groups participating. And finally, breakfast the following morning for those still capable of making it. Our thanks to Glenda and the team for a tremendous effort. Look out for those party pics on the website.

Let's now look forward to the challenges of the New Year with optimism and determination!

Mike Nelson

Inaugural meeting of the Board of Management

The inaugural meeting was held on December 9. Items discussed included:

1. the good news that Michael McFadgen has sold to WBMA (for a very nominal amount) another Fordson Tractor with a front-end bucket. This second Fordson requires some minor work on the front axle. Jeff Underhill and Rod Mill believe this repair can be done at minimal cost. Rod sees this acquisition as a godsend for airfield maintenance. Our thanks to Michael!
2. Jeff Underhill and Rod Mill are to be the working party for the Permanent Ablutions Block. Once the parameters are established and approval gained from the Council and SEQWater then Mike Nelson will write up a funding application intended to secure a government grant that may greatly assist in cost-sharing.
3. The SEQWater constraints on Airchalets is under investigation by the Board of Management seeking a way through this difficulty.

4. Also the issue of legislative anomalies that make it difficult to buy and sell airfield leases is being looked into.



Board of Management

Rod Mill - Vice President, Mike Nelson - President, Liz Cook - Secretary, Mark Corcoran - Legal Liaison Officer, Cheryl Brown - Treasurer

Personality Profile; Gus de Laat



Born in Holland on the 8th April 1941 his playground was underground shelters, building boats of jerry cans and ducking the occasional grenade. When liberation came all families billeted a foreign soldier so their privilege was going to school in a tank. At school Gus skipped a

few classes and ended up finishing High School at 16 with 3 years School of Economics included.

Gus became a merchant sailor and during that time visited 28 countries. One birthday message to his parents was an SOS as they were in 'deep trouble' in a cyclone off the coast of Spain. He then spent 8 months in Iraq, Iran and Kharg Island. Gus then joined the Marine Corps, basic training, special training, then 15 months in a Demolition Platoon. He also spent time in Aruba, West Indies and in 1962 was involved in the New Guinea conflict being awarded the New Guinea Medal with the Star. He then went back to Barracks as a training instructor, acquired all of the military driving licences and the last 2½ years of the seven he was in service driving Four Star Generals and looking after their families.

Gus was then trained as a Parachutist in Lille, France and also did the advanced course. Gus left the Marines and for two years was still involved in demonstration jumping, usually from a Fokker F27.

By this time Gus already owned a night bar and then bought his own café/restaurant, car yard and other businesses.

With his wife and young family Gus left for Australia

in 1977 as one of the first Business Entrance people.

He went to Geraldton, WA and was soon offered the job as State Manager for Kentucky Fried Chicken should he return from his trip to Queensland. He didn't return and in 1979 bought a 40 acre block at Gregors Creek, Toogoolawah and built a 'dream home', a double storey round house from cavity brick.

So many trees were planted you need to fly over to see the effect. After selling this he bought a riverfront property and started a Kayak/Canoe business but sold this after 14 months as his children found it hard to adjust from a country school to a large urban high school. He then built in Bargara and there was President of the Ratepayers Association and helped set up the Neighbourhood Watch 13 and built a 250 metre foreshore park. Gus then moved to Rockhampton and bought the freehold of the Winsalls Hotel now called Paddy Go Easy, he set up a Real Estate Office and sold the lease of the hotel after a few years. Gus then set up a new Real Estate enterprise with Janny Luijk building homes. Developers asked Gus to go to Brisbane to assist them as a Consultant. He then built two Retirement Complexes and it was also at this time he bought his first aircraft the 'Murphy Rebel'.

Gus became involved with WBMA as he felt there couldn't be a better place on earth for the development of Recreational Flying but the Club at that time (as most clubs) had little money. The idea of airfield development was originally Les Faint's and Tony Hayes'. By collaborating with Tony Hayes and Ross Stenhouse, Gus was able to kick start Airfield development, particularly Airchalet sites. Some of this funding came from his own pocket. In facilitating WBMA development, Gus was nominated for the 2003 Australia Day Achievement Awards and was semi-finalist in Queensland Regional Achievement Awards.



The Christmas Extravaganza!

Coming events

The Airchalet and Commercial Owners next meeting will be held at Tony and Hughes' no.7 at 1pm on Sunday February 2nd. Agenda items are invited. Please contact Noelene Mill with these.