

OCTOBER 2006

Steady growth resumes at Watts Bridge



Just two examples illustrating growth, with more to follow: Derek Robinson's and Jackie Bolsover's Air Chalets. (The AAC clubhouse is featured in the AAC report.)

One measure of confidence in the future is growth in airfield infrastructure. After a period of non-growth, Derek Robinson became the icebreaker two years ago when he submitted plans for his attractive Air Chalet. At that time registration of leases had a long way to go. Nevertheless Derek pressed ahead believing that the new Board of Management would achieve its goals. He has since been followed by others and the change of airfield appearance due to the construction of new buildings, is heartening to see.

Now that WBMA lease registration is imminent, more leaseholders are moving forward in developing their sites. There is an optimism and certainty about the

future. We should look forward to continued growth in sales of airfield sites and also in airfield construction.

As we look to the future, Ian Sganzerla's nostalgic look back to the early days, when it was OK to fly in and out of trees that are no longer there, whilst simply pitching a tent alongside the gyroplane once flying was over, is a timely reminder that the essence of recreational flying needs to be preserved as this airfield develops. We cannot go back to those idyllic simpler times but we can plan, using the Slim Dusty line of always 'lookin' forward, lookin' back', to get the strategic direction right.

Mike Nelson, President, WBMA,

QUA POKER RUN

Lately it seems that if you wish it to rain you organize a fly-in of some sort and it is bound to happen. This year the Poker Run was no exception. Saturday came with low cloud; mist with passing showers. Some people drove to Watts including Keith Broughton who brought his Lea Kestrel on a trailer. Mike and Priscilla Smith flew in with their Jabiru as did John Gilpin from Kilcoy.

Earlier Richard had taken off to distribute the cards at the various airfields nearby but had returned due to the weather without landing at any of them. Later a few folk had taken off for a local flight towards Wivenhoe Dam and returned flying in the drizzle.

To keep in the spirit of the day, the cards were handed out at intervals during the morning with Priscilla Smith having the best hand and winning the Poker Run trophy.



A special thankyou needs to be given to Glenda and Richard for providing the soup and BBQ. **The picture above shows Richard Faint presenting Mike and Priscilla Smith with the trophy.**

Mal McKenzie, QUA

Aerobatic Club Report

Hi all at Watts Bridge . You will have noticed (if you've been at Watts recently) that a clubhouse for the Aerobatic Club has started to appear—Hooray!! It won't be long before you see the club house finished (well the outside anyway).

We have done most of the work to date ourselves (except for the pouring of the concrete!) and thanks to the tireless efforts of the few mortals we are nearly there. Our 'shed' is on site and all that is left to do now is to put the roof on. Once we've done that we can do all the pretty stuff (chairs, tables, beer fridge etc) later.

On current planning we will be having our first BBQ before Christmas (even if the clubhouse isn't totally finished).

We are all very excited in the Aerobatic Club and looking forward to many days and evenings at the club house either watching the aircraft winding their way around the skies or talking over the barbie about how good we are!

Unfortunately, we are very short of Aerobatic aircraft at the moment, for a variety of reasons, and we have had to put the State Championship Competition off until next year. By then most of us will have forgotten how to fly aerobatics and so it should be quite an exciting event.

Not sure when our next practise weekend will be but you can be sure that we will still be at the clubhouse talking about flying even if we don't have an aircraft.

If you see anybody at the clubhouse please feel free to come and say 'hello'. Sometimes we Aviators feel like a dying breed!



See you at Watts,
Clive Tudge,

AAC Website: www.aerobaticsaustralia.com.au



FABULOUS FIFTEENTH: QVAG's FoF



Under near perfect conditions, the Queensland Vintage Aeroplane Group staged its 15th. "Festival of Flight" and it is fair to state that this was the most successful event that QVAG has ever staged! Over the weekend of 26-27 August, Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield was literally inundated with aircraft and people and this created an atmosphere akin to all of the fun of the fair! What a fantastic sight and one that will remain in my thoughts for a very long time.

The Airfield was adorned with aircraft types that spanned eighty years of civil and military aviation in Australia and the aircraft in attendance were second to none in their presentation and indeed, variety! And I am loathe to single out a specific aircraft for special mention so I will confine my comments to a simple statement of fact - all were worthy representatives of their particular marque. As importantly, they showcased the scope of the aeronautical heritage that we have in the South East corner of Queensland and in many respects, throughout Australia.



Figures presented to me, post event, indicated that a total of 209 aircraft were present on the Airfield over the two days and amongst these was a strong contingent of the two De Havilland types that were celebrating their 75th and 60th anniversaries respectively. Eighteen Tiger Moths and seven Chipmunks provided broad-spectrum representation of these much sought after De Havilland designs. Quite significantly, five aircraft types were gracing the grass strips of Watts Bridge for the first time. These aircraft were as follows - Charlie and Ann Morris' Genairco Moth (VH-UOD). This is the only example of type currently airworthy in the world today and it made its Australian public debut at the "FoF" 2006! Ross and Peggy Smith's Lockheed 12a Electra

Junior (VH-ABH). Better known as the "Silver City", "ABH" is one of only two examples currently flying in the Southern Hemisphere! Steve Searle's Grumman TBM-3E Avenger (VH-MML). A former fire-bomber reconfigured to full TBM-3E specifications, it too was making its Australian public debut at the "FoF" 2006. Syndicate owned CA-18 Mk.21 Mustang (VH-MFT) and Russell Mann's De Havilland C.20 Sea Devon (VH-DHI) completed the list of firsts.

This year's event attracted aircraft from as far away as New Zealand, Western Australia, Victoria and far North Queensland. In the longest distance travelled stakes, West Australian based Jan and Penny Ende won hands down. They had flown into Watts Bridge in their immaculate C-180 (VH-FDH) which is presented in original Royal Flying Doctor markings.

As opposed to an Air Show, this event is a pure Fly-In and thus no payments are made to the owners of aircraft that attend the event. To those folk who supported the "FoF" 2006 by bringing your aeronautical treasures for all to enjoy, I will take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt appreciation for your unselfish dedication to the furtherment of Vintage, Classic, Warbird and General aviation in this country. Yours was a commendable gesture and one that is greatly appreciated by the organising body. The "FoF" 2006 continues a long tradition of quality events that has earned the Group an enviable reputation and due respect. And yes, we will do it all again next year so while it is fresh in your memory, please pen 25-26 August 2007 into your diary. Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield will be the place to be on that weekend and I certainly look forward to seeing you there on that occasion. Craig P Justo, QVAG, Rod Mill Pics.



South East Queensland Gyroplane Club (SEQGC)

To my knowledge, gyroplanes have been flying out of Watts Bridge for over twenty years. In the early days, there was no 'official' club with a structured committee of office bearers. It was simply just a group of guys who wanted to fly, and who met at various times for a bit of fun with socializing and flying.

Back then, there were no buildings or other facilities at the airfield. It was just a pair of air strips in an "L" shape, which were occasionally mowed by the council. With only few others occasionally using the place, there was plenty of freedom to fly almost unhindered.

The gyro blokes would pitch their tent wherever convenient, fly when and where they felt like it, and then land in the paddock beside their tent. At that time, the 'camping area' was located somewhere in the vicinity of the 'Commercial' hangar precinct that faces the main runway. On arrival at the airfield, one was "greeted" by two old weather board toilets, and a mixture of birds and animals that also called the place their home.

This lack of early settlement at the airfield provided an ideal environment for some of the more daring gyro pilots. They would fly in and out of the large trees (not me, of course!) which once graced the area now known as the chalet and commercial hangar area. Some may say this had some dangers, but it provided a good training area for a few of the guys who are now involved in mustering sheep and cattle.

However, times have changed. The trees and the old toilets are now gone, new buildings have now arrived, along with a lot more people. Some say this is "progress", but others wish they could wind back the clock to the 'good old days'.

Currently, the SEQGC meets on the week-ends which fall on the 'second' Saturday of each month. We have been an incorporated Club for about 14 or 15 years. Our annual membership usually averages somewhere around 30 or more, and we conduct pilot training in two seat flying machines, either towed or engine driven.

Visitors to our club are always welcome, and trial flights occur on a regular basis. Others may wish to just come and look at how "real" pilots fly. Inquiries can be made to Bruce Layt 32666800, Ian Sganzerla 33416268, or Kerry Keys 55274380.

Ian Sganzerla, SEQGC

Introducing our newest members: Roger and Wendy Beltrame



Roger & Wendy attended the Festival of Flight this year and discovered Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield for the first time. They immediately loved the Air Chalet concept and sense of community. This re-kindled their shared passion for aviation that had been suppressed for many years due to other financial and time commitments such as a mortgage and raising three children. Now their oldest child has joined the RAAF, and the two left at home are more independent, they have decided it is time to again pursue flying.

Roger & Wendy first met at the Townsville Aero Club in 1984, Wendy was a student pilot, and Roger already held his private licence. Roger worked in Air Traffic Control and Wendy for the Australian Public Service, which still applies today. To demonstrate their love of aviation (and their sense of humour), when married in 1987, they entered their reception to the tune of "Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines", also Wendy's engagement ring has "We Fly", wedding ring "We've Landed", While Roger's wedding ring has "Cancel SAR", and Wendy's eternity ring "OPS Normal" engraved on the bands. Their first child born in 1988 was given "N.D.B" as his initials. Commitment to aviation takes unusual forms at times!

They currently are spending time researching aircraft types for purchase and under serious consideration is the Foxcon Terrier 200 and have a trip to the factory in Mackay booked for mid October. Keep an eye out for their motor-home they use when visiting WBMA..

STOP PRESS

A REMINDER TO ALL WBMA MEMBERS

- **TIME** **10AM**
- **VENUE** **JEFF & GERRY UNDERHILL'S AC # 9**
- **DATE** **SUNDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2006**