



RAeS HAMILTON Branch Newsletter December 2019.

Hi Folks,

As the Chairman I thought that a final newsletter to wrap things up for the year would be a good idea.

November Meeting:

Thanks for those who came to last month's meeting when Murray McGregor gave us a most informative presentation on the re-engining of the Fletcher aircraft from the origins of the type in the US through to today. As expected, Murray's insights covered all aspects of the modification including, testing and manufacturing. In doing so he filled in some blanks for me and corrected some "alternative facts" presented to me in the last 3 decades. I'm sure that we all learned something new on the night and gained even more respect for this everlasting workhorse of the agricultural aviation industry. He also touched on the latest re-incarnation with the use of a V10 German diesel engine, specifically designed and certificated for aviation applications. This aircraft is due to fly sometime this month.

CLIFF TAIT:

On 28 Nov, Des Underwood and I travelled to Auckland for their Branch meeting. This, was a special occasion, where Cliff Tait was to be formally presented with his Meritorious Service Award. It was followed by a DVD Cliff had compiled news clips of a number of TVONE News clips of some of his exploits. These set the scene

Before the meeting we had a few minutes to introduce ourselves to him, his wife Joyce and son, Cliff Jnr. He shared some experiences with us and his recollection of the details was astonishing. His story is something to be treasured and shared with young and old alike as an inspiration for current and future generations. It was a privilege for us both.

Cliff's achievements would be difficult to imagine if you have not been there yourself, and I am one of those people. I did get an inkling of some of the trials and tribulations one may face during ferry flights when I worked for PAC in the 1980s -90s. I was lucky enough to have met some of the ferry pilots of the time and worked on a number of aircraft conversions. However, some of the best insights were provided by the written reports from the ferry pilots and I was lucky to have read some of them. One particular recollection comes to mind where the pilot describes being airborne for 17 hours ferrying a Fletcher. Imagine that for a second, with no info-entertainment, no air-conditioning, no meal options, no recliner seat, and, you are in control. Perhaps QANTAS and AIRNZ could get some advice from these extraordinary individuals on how to keep yourself busy during long flights.

Cliff recounted a story; during a ferry flight where, at night, he went to operate one of the HF radios, this was one of the old variety models, the type known to release the odd spark or two. By the light of the radio he noted liquid on the cockpit floor which he quickly identified as fuel. He switched the radio off to avoid a potential explosion. He tracked the source of the fuel, which was the connector to the hopper, something he couldn't do anything about whilst flying the aircraft. Realising the magnitude of his predicament, he searched for his tool box and pulled out a screw driver which he then pointed to the cockpit floor and proceeded to make a hole in the aircraft skin to allow the fuel to drain out. This was obviously only a partial solution, as by now his flight time was severely compromised, so he then proceeded to identify a suitable place to land. You could say that this was a way of keeping himself busy during a long flight, personally, and probably like most of us, I would prefer a good book and a comfortable seat with the odd drink or two. Hats off to Cliff and the other NZ ferry pilots.

The photos below were taken during the presentation. The first photo shows Cliff with his wife Joyce accepting the award and recognising the part played by his wife – they have been together 71 years. The second photo is of Cliff with Ade Morris, Chairman of the Auckland Branch presenting the medal.



Glyn Powell:

Warwick and Gina joined about 300 other people at the memorial service where Glyn's ashes were in a wooden urn, made by his co-worker Mike Tunnicliffe, these were set on a table at the front of the service in the no.2 hangar at Warbirds Ardmore. This man should be held as one of the true New Zealander's who overcame great odds to achieve his ambition of building his own Mosquito a/c and making the moulds so other a/c could be made from them. We have 3 a/c currently flying in the USA. The one that Glyn was building for himself is now, apparently, going to the Heritage Trust and will operate out of Duxford in the UK. The other a/c that they are still working on, we think, is going to someone else in the USA, but have not confirmed this as yet. Glyn set out over 20yrs ago on his project and learnt to work with wood and do the lofting, (taking the measurements off drawings and transferring these to the wood with the accuracy of 10/1000ths of an inch using a vernier micrometer, like we used with metal, but doing it in 3 dimensions, on a budget of the smell of an oily rag. A lot of people said he was mad, but he proved them all wrong and went on to achieve his dream. Sadly, he didn't quite make the last part of flying his own a/c but his legacy will live on here with all of us in the aviation fraternity.

Bay Of Plenty, 6 Dec meeting:

Warwick and Gina attended the BOP meeting at Tauranga last Friday where John Mathewson (JC) former pilot and Des Underwood, former Engineer, gave us a very good presentation on the A-4 Skyhawk - Project Kahu, which was well received by all those present. Project Kahu was another major milestone in NZ which brought work, respect and prestige to both the civil aviation and defence industries.

John Scott:

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the passing of John Scott, a Hamilton Branch member. John had been unwell for the last 12 months and lost his fight on the 13th Dec 19. He was a month shy of his 83rd birthday, the 15th Jan. John started in aviation as an apprentice in the RAF, trained as a fitter and eventually moved on to methods engineering. In today's terms, he would have been part of an elite group of operations / manufacturing engineers tasked with developing manufacturing solutions for new designs. In this capacity he worked on transformational projects like the legendary TSR2 and the swing wing Panavia Tornado. He told me once that, after the cancellation of the project, one of the saddest days of his career was when he was asked to destroy the jigs and parts of the wing of the TSR2, something that he and his colleagues had poured their hearts and souls into developing. Luckily some of the engineers didn't follow through with all requests, otherwise we would have lost all of the airframes, drawings and other technical data. John moved to NZ in 1973 with his wife and two sons and started work at PAC. I first met John in 1987 where he worked as the production planner and bid manager for new ventures. Fresh out of university, and like most 20 year old's, at times, as a design engineer, I was full of beans and didn't always appreciate the unknown knowns of taking designs into production. I did, however, appreciate the time that John took to explain to me the practices and benefits of design for manufacture and how to develop integrated manufacturing methods. During our conversations he often referenced back to these and other projects. His thoughts and ideas formed a good grounding for me and have served me well over the last 3 decades. At PAC John was instrumental in developing the manufacturing methods and plans for the "Lockheed Rudders" and during the ASTA days he helped to bring work to NZ and qualify PAC as a manufacturer for Nomad and Airbus parts. Thanks for everything old friend, you'll be sorely missed.

There will be funeral services on Wednesday next week at 11AM at St Joseph's Catholic Church on Clarkin Road Fairfield. This will be followed by the burial service at the Newstead Cemetery.

Please share this information with others that may have worked with John.

2020:

A date for the AGM has not been set yet, but it is likely to follow our usual timing of the last Wednesday of the month, so the 26th February. Please use this time to reflect on the worth of the branch and the value that it has provided to the members and interested parties for the last 4 decades. The branch can only carry on doing this if it is supported by the wider aviation community and we need new blood to continue. The New Zealand division, for example, with the support of the branches would like to expand sphere of our influence where we can contribute to rising the profile of aviation amongst the younger people and bring them into our industry. This is an honourable objective. We, who have lived it, know that this is an industry without parallels when it comes to innovation, job satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Our branches need to be solid and well manned to support this vision. Please feel free to lobby friends and colleagues and tell them about the society.

Thank you to all members for your support this year and a special thanks to Warwick who continues to be the main pillar of the branch, something he has done admirably since the beginning.

FESTIVE SEASON:

On behalf of all of the committee members, please have a safe and enjoyable break, to you, your families and friends. The best wishes for the new year and see you at the AGM.

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