

# WATTS NEWS

*A newsletter issued by the Watts Bridge Memorial Flying Field Air Chalet and Commercial Owners Group*

**January 2003**

## Welcome to the new year

Welcome to the new year. We hope Watts News will play a small part in making it a good one. The last two months of the old year were lively enough with the publication of the Abnett Draft Report and the way it focussed all our minds on the preferred Watts Bridge future. As this is being written differing viewpoints are being energetically tested in discussion. You will notice some of these processes in summaries of several meetings held over the

November/December period recorded in this issue. Our Personality Profile is Jeff Underhill who shares some of his rich experiences in life. Janny and I are wondering whether you'd be happy to pay an annual levy of five dollars to cover the costs of this newsletter. We will ask you at the next meeting.

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## A summary of Watts Bridge meetings held in November and December

### **Airchalet and Commercial owners meeting at Ross Stenhouse's no.32, Sunday November 17**

Gus spoke on the need for small groups involved in developing the Esk Shire Region to meet and to be able to speak with one powerful voice on advancing recreational projects here. Large public groups and bodies, at times, stifle the voices of small recreational groups such as ours. Also, concerns that the Abnett Steering Committee had regarding the unworkable nature of the current WB constitution were discussed. Finally there was agreement by all attending that the WBMA preferred future was tied to the Esk Shire Council rather than SEQWC. Next Airchalet and Commercial owners meeting will be at Ed de Laat's Airchalet no.1. on Sunday February 2 at 1pm. Please contact Janny should you have items for discussion.

### **WBMC meeting, Ipswich, Tuesday November 19**

There were a number of 'housekeeping' matters discussed; however the major points of interest were: Bill Finlen has endorsement to complete the airfield plan. Mike Coad tabled a letter from the Aerobatic Association regarding a sub-lease for a clubhouse. Gus is proposing (and will put it in writing) to Esk Shire Council that water be

connected to the airfield with a fire hydrant so that water bombers can operate out of Watts Bridge when bushfires are in the region. He also indicated that ESC is investigating the possibility of raising a loan thus enabling WBMA to purchase the airfield at unimproved value using present repayments. On the matter of public liability, Bill moved that all groups submit their operating procedures to WBMC for approval together with evidence that WBMC is included in their insurance cover.

### **Special meeting, Watts Bridge, Sunday December 1**

17 WB members attended of whom 8 were also members of the WBMC. Three members of the consulting team spoke to various aspects of the proposal. Bob Abnett asked if there were errors of fact or errors of interpretation in the report. Apart from some minor reservations there was no negative response. Bob Abnett then asked that the report be accepted. The 8 members of the WBMC present agreed to accept the broad thrust of the report. In all, 16 attendees voted to support the report with one abstaining. Our thanks to Glenda and Jennifer who put in a great effort in organising the barbeque. Considerable community attendance ensured its success.

*Continued Page 2*

*Continued from Page 1*

### **WBMC meeting, Watts Bridge, Sunday December 7**

This meeting was held at Bill Finlen's Airchalet. Ross Stenhouse presented the DCP to Ian Perkins. The Abnett report was discussed and the WBMC affirmed the decision taken the previous week. It was agreed that Gus be nominated as the Airfield Contact officer and an approach to Telstra will be made to get a permanent airfield number. Barry Hempel raised the matter of fundraising suggesting it was timely to look at the possibility of an airshow in 2003. He also saw it as a priority to remove the current obstacles in getting more Airchalets built so that the financial base of Watts Bridge

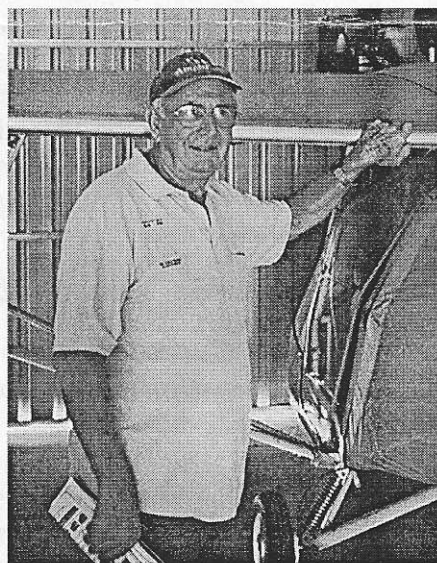
could be improved. QVAG have advised that a formal request will be made to hold the '100th Anniversary of Flight' next August. Contributions will be sought from airfield groups towards the new facilities block (\$50 000). Bill saw the expenditure priorities as 1. tractor 2. storage hangar 3. facilities block. Also the finalising of the plan for precinct 1 (area nearest the strip) was seen as important. Regarding the layout of the present Airchalet area, Bill raised concerns regarding inaccuracies of survey pegs. It was agreed that present inaccuracies would be accommodated for existing buildings but the new alignments have to be followed from 2003. The next WBMC meeting will be held at Paradise Homes, Woolloongabba, February 18th at 7,30pm.

## **Personality Profile: Jeff Underhill, Airchalet No. 9**

Originally apprenticed as a toolmaker, Jeff went to sea as a steam maritime engineer and later became a diesel maritime engineer. Among his many experiences Jeff transhipped bauxite from Venezuela to northern Canada. The next move was working on 25000 tonne grain carriers on the Great Lakes situated between Canada and the USA.

Jeff started building laydown supercars in the early sixties. For ten years he built and raced these in the USA. He brought the first laydown Go-Kart into Australia in 1973 and raced these here for ten years.

Six years ago Jeff trained for his ultralight licence on an Aerochute (which he still has). He transferred to the microlight which has been sold recently. Currently he is flying the Xair, hangared of course in Airchalet no 9. He and Gerry built their Airchalet two years ago having transferred to Watts Bridge from Caboolture.



## **Memory Lane continued...**

Around 1987 a local engineer, Don MacIntosh, a member of the Vintage Aeroplane Group applied for the reinstatement of the airfield for sports and recreational flying in the Wivenhoe Recreational Management Plan. From the late eighties onwards GA and Ultralight aviators used the airfield. It was in these formative years that the distinctive flying groups based at the airfield began to develop. One attractive feature of Watts Bridge in those days was the absence of any significant operational cost. You could fly in and out for nothing. The practice remains to this day. In 1996 the Esk Shire Council formally granted an official lease on a 30+30 year basis. The ESC leased the airfield from the Southeast Queensland Water Board. Contingent to the lease was the submission of a management plan by Watts Bridge Airfield. (to be continued...)

## **A note about runway cones**

Most are aware of the good work done by Rod Mill on the runway cones. Recently on night exercises the ADF, who rely on these, got into a bit of difficulty. Investigation revealed that some cones had been re-aligned. It must be stressed that no one has the right to interfere with the location of runway cones without the direct permission of the Works Chairman, Bill Finlen.



*Nice WACO at QVAG event*