



Watts
News
A newsletter issued by the
Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield

JUNE 2009



STAGGERWING'S WATTS BRIDGE STOPOVER

On May 9th Bill Charney paid a visit to his old friend, Bill Finlen in his beautiful vintage Beech Staggerwing which he flew across the Tasman. Bill C. is on his way around the world so it was an opportunity to invite him to tell his and the Staggerwing's story. The heading picture is taken outside Bill Finlen's hangar. Bill Charney's story is published below:

Ladies and Gentlemen of Watts Bridge Aerodrome:

I want to convey my thanks to all of those that helped me during my visit to Watts Bridge with the "Red Rockette", my Beechcraft Staggerwing. My visit there was one of relaxation and also the time and place to complete many little projects on the aircraft. It took an entire week to clean, degrease, and wax the aircraft...with a little time out to enjoy the quietness of your beautiful aerodrome.

I wish especially to thank old friend Bill Finlen for his hospitality. And you, the volunteers who keep the aerodrome in such good condition. The runways were a joy to operate from. You folks keep them in great condition. The grounds all around the aerodrome are very well kept and you should be proud to be part of an organization that has such volunteers.

Now a little history of this particular Staggerwing and it's journey through life.

It was born in January of 1944. It was built originally under a contract for the US Navy but was diverted, under the Lend Lease program to the UK. It served with the Royal Navy in Scotland at Royal Naval Air Station Abbotsinch, which is today's Glasgow airport. It was returned to the US after the war and has been in civilian hands since.

I purchased it in 1993, wore it out, and shipped it to the Croydon Aircraft Company at Mandeville, New Zealand. I had rented Tiger Moths, etc from them and was impressed by their workmanship and dedication. They did a wonderful job of restoring this, their first Staggerwing

and I'm extremely pleased with their effort. After 3 years of "test flying" in NZ, I recently flew it from NZ to Norfolk Island spending several days there, then to Lord Howe Island and the following day to Gold Coast.

Now I'm wandering the smaller aerodromes of Australia visiting friends, making new ones, and sharing the beauty of Mr. Beech's first design in his new company, Beechcraft, with them. The journey home the "long way 'round" will take about 3 years or so. The plan is to fly up through Indonesia, Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East and onwards to Europe, spending several summers attending airshows there. Then finally over the North Atlantic and back home to Reno, Nevada via Oshkosh.

Again, thank you Watts Bridgers. You have a wonderful aerodrome.

Bill Charney



Photo taken by Gavin Conroy NZ

QUA REPORT

Peter Ratcliffe and crew have been working on the QUA Inc Clubhouse plumbing. A council inspection was done and the toilet installed on Friday 29th May. It now flushes nicely. Other work is planned on the 14th June.

An area on the tank side of the clubhouse has been paved in readiness for the pergola to be installed. Materials have been donated for this, and are stored in the hangar. This is planned after planning approval has been obtained.

The QUA hangar has seen some changes of aircraft recently. New member Graham Hewitt has his Trike in the hangar now. We see Graham flying from Watts at times. Robert Shaw has relocated his Tyro to Nanango. Rob moved up to that locality last year to build a house. Rob's hangar position has been taken by my new blue X-Air. When my yellow Himax has been sold another vacancy will be available.

Mal McKenzie

ANZAC DAY 2009



ANZAC Day at our airfield dawned fine and clear. It was warmer than usual and no sign of fog. Around 40 folk attended. Many observed that there is a significant ambience, and feelings are stirred, when the clear notes of the last post are sounded in the open space of an old wartime airfield.

Mike Nelson led the ceremony. The ADF representative this year was Group Captain Paul Hislop of RAAF Base Amberley. His speech reminded us of that ANZAC spirit of self-sacrifice; a spirit that lives on in the hearts and minds of young Australians serving in the ADF in so many dangerous places worldwide.

Richard Faint of the Airfield Council responded by saying that Watts Bridge Airfield will never forget that spirit of sacrifice; particularly as WBMA's beginnings were born in the dark days of WW2.

Wreaths were laid by Group Captain Paul Hislop on behalf of the RAAF and Tony Hughes on behalf of WBMA. Rod McNaught recited the ANZAC Ode while Mal McKenzie of QUA read the scriptures. Ed de Laat was responsible for the lowering and raising of the colours.

ANZAC Day at Watts Bridge is for everyone and so it was pleasing to see more attending from the immediate community around the airfield. Members made them most welcome.

Finally, a big thankyou to Noelene and Rod Mill for making their air chalet available and providing a hearty breakfast for all.

Next year is the 95th ANZAC anniversary and we are planning something special for this occasion – stay tuned.



AAC REPORT

The AAC has had a busy first half year, with our AGM in January, a mini comp in March to prepare our competitors for the nationals held at Parkes over the Easter long weekend. To cap that off, we have just run our State titles over the Queens birthday, long weekend. The weather gods were good to us, although the rain leading up to the weekend had a few competitors from Victoria pulling out of the contest.

We ran two categories, graduate, with new members, Ben Brazier in first place, William Dyer in second place and Duncan Greer in third place, all three being first time competitors.

In the Sportsman category, Mark Galletly first, Ian Close from Victoria second, and Danny Robinson in third place.

Mark Galletly also took out the Tony Gordon memorial trophy with the highest overall percentage of 81.6%. This caps off an exciting year to date, as Mark, also won the National sportsman overall trophy, first time highest sportsman percentage trophy, and the highest overall percentage trophy for all grades, a fantastic effort, well done Mark.

Yes, we have been active with our flying, but also have had a few additions to our clubhouse.

We have our clubhouse signs up front and back, with a larger sign to be erected at the front gate. Keith and Flo Hinchliffe kindly donated a lovely polished prop, mounted on a stainless steel and mahogany shield, proudly overlooking our future bar area.

It was a disappointment with the cancellation of the All-In Fly-In due to weather, as a lot of work organizing the day had been done by the home based groups, but at least we have the format in place when we decide to run it again.

That's about all from the AAC, see you at the Xmas in July.

Brendan Scilini



Sportsman L to R - 2nd place Ian Close
1st place Mark Gattely, 3rd place Danny Robinson



Wheeling 'em out on a nice day for Aerobatics at Watts

DATES TO REMEMBER

Leaseholder's meeting:

QUA Human Factors Course:

SEQGC Training and Flying weekend:

QUA Poker run and Christmas in July:

QVAG Festival of Flight:

June 21st

June: 28th

July 11-12th

July 25th

August 29-30th