



PHOENIX

HISTORICAL AIRCRAFT RESTORATION SOCIETY JOURNAL

September 2026.



HARS CONTACT DETAILS

Front Cover Photo:
The Qantaslink F-100 arriving at HARS, Photo: Howard Mitchell.

PRESIDENT:

Bob De La Hunty OAM

Phone: (02) 4257 4333
Home: (02) 4257 5915
Mobile: 0433 941 306
Email: delahunty@bigpond.com

VICE PRESIDENT:

Maureen Massey

Home: (02) 9522 6028
Mobile: 0499 113 556
Email: maureenmassey@bigpond.com

TREASURER:

David Neaves

Mobile: 0407 200 472
Email: david@neaves.com

SECRETARY:

Ian Debenham OAM

Mobile: 0432 106 157
Home: (02) 9874 0454
Email: ian.debenham@hotmail.com

GENERAL MANAGER ENGINEERING:

William Smith

Email: william.smith69@gmail.com
Phone: (02) 9501 5366
Mobile: 0418 966 273

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

William Smith: william.smith69@gmail.com

John Croll: john.croll46@gmail.com

Jim Marshal: jamarsh@optusnet.com.au

Steve Howson: stevenhowson@gmail.com

Peter Ward: peter_ward777@hotmail.com

Les Fisher: airframes43@yahoo.com.au

John Sims: janddsims@gmail.com

Website: www.hars.org.au

Associated Websites:

Tourism Shellharbour
www.tourismshellharbour.com.au
Destination NSW
www.destinationnsw.com.au
Wings Over Shellharbour
www.wingsovershellharbour.com.au
AussieAirliners
www.aussieairliners.org

PHOENIX EDITOR:

Maureen Massey

Mobile: 0499 113 556
Email: maureenmassey@bigpond.com



PRODUCTION COORDINATOR:

Terry Scanlan

Email: tscanlan@bigpond.net.au

SUB-EDITORS:

Terry Scanlan

Email: tscanlan@bigpond.net.au

Steve Heesh

Email: steve.heesh48@gmail.com

Mark Keech

Email: keechma@gmail.com

Reg Collins

Email: regcol39@gmail.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER:

Chris Hudson

Email: peacockpub2@gmail.com

ALL CORRESPONDENCE:

Secretary
Historical Aircraft Restoration Society Inc
54 Airport Road
Albion Park Rail, NSW 2527
Ph: (02) 4257 4333

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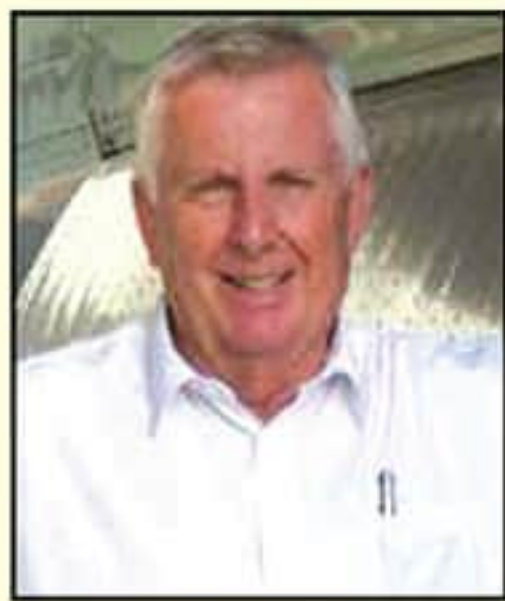
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President's Report

Bob De La Hunty OAM
President and Chief Pilot



WHAT initially started with an application to extend H3 and the need to add the footprint to the site a year ago has led to a full consolidation of all areas used by HARS in new leases. This has resulted in establishing 28,000 sqm of land into our precinct, including the existing 15,000 sqm now under cover. It also necessitated extending our leased area to 20 years, with 3 × 10year leases after the initial term. We requested Shellharbour City Councillors' support for a 50% community notforprofit subsidy, and that is now part of the new arrangements.

What this all means is that the apron area west of Hangar 1, within the parking limit line, is leased to HARS. All the area south of the hangars is also leased to HARS, allowing for the extension to Hangar 3 as well as the future compound area hangar. The area between the HARS and Toll leases will cater for the hangar plan on that site.

The area east of Toll was endorsed by Council some years ago for HARS' future use. We are expecting to relinquish that area to support a hangar complex to be built by HARS friends, and a Development Application has been submitted and is currently being processed. At the appropriate time we will agree to have our position removed. Should that development not proceed for some reason, we will hold on to the site for our own development. The planned development will cater for our 707 and other HARS aircraft from time to time, as well as being a maintenance and hangarage facility for business jet owners.

Our other major activity behind the scenes is the development of our longterm sustainability. We started with sponsor only funds, then after attending a number of airshows over the early years added a contribution to revenue, mostly spent on servicing our aircraft. The next big step was to become a Public Museum, opening our doors to visitors. We now need to consolidate all the work done to support our visitor activities and carefully grow that source of revenue to gradually replace our reliance on sponsorship and airshows. This process also includes succession planning, since we have been unsuccessful in turning back the aging process! This is, of course, a fact of life shared by all other volunteer organisations.

Our membership process has been a strong factor in our success over the years. The formality of the process is not always understood by some, as we are not a club but a serious working aviation museum with overriding regulatory controls, unlike clubs on an active airfield. We continue to review the membership process to support succession planning and sustainability objectives.

Tarmac Weekends are proving to be a major tourist attraction, and with the growing numbers of visitors we need many more HARS members to be present—if nothing else, cleaning and being around aircraft to chat with visitors and also keep a watch on people generally, especially out on the tarmac. We will be adding more rope lines to define the limits on the apron and all other areas in the coming months; however, the key is more HARS members being on site, please.

We have a lot of exciting months ahead, and at our AGM on the 5th of December we will make a full report about what we will be doing next year.

Please stay safe and well and thank you all for your part in saving our aviation history.

Regards, Bob

from the Vice

Maureen Massey
Vice President



THE 707 project is picking up speed, with some serious work being carried out on the Fuselage, Wings and Fin, since its arrival at HARS.

There are reports inside Phoenix covering the retrieval from Port Kembla and the relocation into Hangar # 1 at HARS, a momentous task carried out by all involved.

The process of putting JT707 back together is not to be taken lightly, and my sincere thanks go to every single HARS member who has been involved with the process thus far.

From the arrival at Port Kembla, to the positioning in Hangar # 1, to the work on the restoration, the HARS team has been faultless, another example of the passion that exists within HARS to make things happen.

The next stage will be the arrival on 7th October, of the Worldwide Aircraft Recoveries team from Georgia, their task being the assembly of the wings and fitting of the undercarriage. We look forward to working with them and watching our "beloved " 707 evolving into the glorious machine she once was.

Enormous thanks to Steve Ferris for his dedication to the project and making it all happen.

Cheers.

Maureen

West Wyalong trip in AES

ON Saturday Aug. 15, the HARS DC3 "Hawdon" flew a salute overflying West Wyalong for their static display DC3 that had been donated by Masling Airlines in 1983 and has been recently restored and now on display once again.

The HARS DC3 VH-AES is itself a historic aircraft, having been the first aircraft of the then TAA (Trans Australia Airlines) which operated the first service from Laverton to Sydney on 9th September 1946 — eighty years ago.

The DC3 / C47 at West Wyalong started life in December 1943 and by the end of that year was in service with the RAAF in 36 Sqn. It operated with various RAAF units, including after the war with No. 34 Sqn in a VIP role. In 1950 it started service with the Royal Australian Navy. It was sold to Masling Airlines in 1977 and subsequently donated as a static display to West Wyalong in 1983, where it was displayed in Lions Park.



VH-AES, Hawdon overflying the West Wyalong DC-3 (marked with the arrow).

Ultimately the aircraft needed extensive restoration, and the occasion of the HARS flypast was a salute to that restoration.

The day didn't start out too optimistically since there was rain



Tom Payne doing a pre-flight check on VH-AES.

and low cloud, which would have made the flight a nonstarter. En route weather was fine — it was just the conditions over the Great Dividing Range that were of concern. Fortunately, weather cleared and it was off to make the advertised flyover time. Despite being delayed slightly by weather, a faster cruise had the flyover right on time.

The return flight was slightly faster — we were away for just over three hours. It was interesting to see the ground getting closer and more rugged as we approached the Dividing Range (we were at constant altitude — about 5000 ft, give or take, owing to ATC rules — the terrain was getting higher flying east on the way home).

And then on descent we passed the eastern cliffs of the “mountains” and there was Shellharbour and HARS for an overfly and join the circuit for landing.

Flying along en route it was fascinating to see how the land was being used — with all the changes in society, looking at wind farms and solar farms to generate electricity. An interesting observation during the flight was how cabin crew all those decades ago needed to be agile to move around the cabin as it responded to the turbulence outside.

<https://www.blandshire.nsw.gov.au/Council/Latest-News/Dakota-DC-3-officially-reopens-in-West-Wyalong>.



Tom Payne having way too much fun!

Tony Dak Caribou Crew Member

Photo:
Phill Aberline

TONY has been supporting the Caribou team for many years and has always been there when needed for the ‘dirty’ work.

He has now been formally Invested as an official Auxiliary Crew Member after undertaking some training on general duties that don’t require a LAME Certification.

Tony can now proudly wear his Caribou Crew patch on his flight suit.

Information provided by Martin Hobson and Dick Elliott.



Tony receiving his patch from Bob De La Hunty OAM.

Wings Over Shellharbour Airshow – May 2026



Three iconic aircraft on display-B747-438, Lockheed Super Constellation and B707-338.

WHEN AMDA announced that it would not be holding the Airshow at Shellharbour in March 2026, there was considerable debate as to whether the event would go ahead with another promoter. Fortunately, Paul Bennett Airshows obtained the necessary approvals and set the date for 22–23 May 2026.

Much preparation went into getting the museum ready for the airshow weekend, with the hangar floors scrubbed clean and OJA receiving a thorough clean by Tiger Liu.

The lineup of aircraft planned for the airshow was impressive, although it was disappointing that the RAAF did not provide any aircraft for the aerial displays other than the Air Force Roulettes. It was hoped that the F-35 might make an appearance, but it was not to be.

Paul Bennett did not disappoint, however, and, in addition

to his normal aerobatic displays, included a selection of very impressive stunts:

- Knife-Edge FMX Jump
- Rolling Runway Ute Landing
- Wheels vs Wings Drag Race

Visitors to the HARS static displays, both inside the hangars and outside on the tarmac, once again turned out in large numbers, with long queues as usual. It was a busy and sometimes exhausting time for the volunteers manning the static displays.

The OJA Cockpit Tours and Wing Walk Experience teams were busy throughout the two days of the airshow, as were all the teams manning the static displays.



Paul Bennett's mobile air show office and accommodation.



Wing Walkers enjoying the view from the wing of the B747.

The HARS flying displays were, as usual, impressive, with the Neptune, P-3 Orion and Huey helicopter carrying out their routine demonstrations. The Connie, unfortunately, was undergoing maintenance and was unable to fly, while the Caribou and DC-3 were unserviceable on the day.

Many model aircraft and other gift shop items were sold from the HARS Shop in Hangar One during the two days of the airshow.

The Air Cadets Band put on an impromptu performance in the B747 compound, playing several tunes to the delight of the audience.



The HARS Shop team, Jeanette, Cathy and Mark.



Tiger Liu giving OJA a wash down.



Huey 703.

Wings Over Shellharbour Airshow – May 2026 *continued*

Story: Terry Scanlan.

Photos: Howard Mitchell, Terry Scanlan and Tracee Lea (Qantas Group).



P2V-7 Neptune 273.



P-3 Orion.



Air Cadets from the Riverwood Hornets entertained the crowd in the 747 compound.

AROUND THE HANGARS



The Auster, Victa Air Tourer and Southern Cross Updates



The Auster, Victa Air Tourer and Southern Cross Replica are undergoing their Annual Inspections and should be finished in the coming weeks.



The Auster, Victa and Southern Cross Replica all undergoing their annual inspection.

AROUND THE HANGARS



DHC-4 Caribou Update



Caribou 234's long standing generator issues have finally been sorted out and it is now fully serviceable.

Caribou 210 is serviceable and just waiting on the Maintenance Release to be signed off.

The Bou team would like to acknowledge the financial support given by the RAAF Association who are always willing to give financial assistance when needed.

Lockheed Super Constellation



Work is proceeding on the installation of the replacement #1 engine.

AROUND THE HANGARS



Report from Vampire Village

Story: Terry Wilson.
Photos: Howard Mitchell.



A79-637 Taxiing.

UNFORTUNATELY, since our last report on the restoration to flying condition of ex-RAAF Vampire T35 Jet Trainer A79-637 (VH-FJW) we have discovered an oil leak from the front bearing of its Goblin jet engine, making it unserviceable for flight. Rectifying the oil leak would require almost the complete disassembly of the engine. We do not have the tooling to do this so, unless we can find another

serviceable engine with the necessary documentation, the Vampire will not be getting airborne any time soon. Efforts are underway to source a replacement engine and while we have located one possible source, we are not yet sure whether the engines available are suitable for flight – and what the purchase price may be.

We can, however, still taxi 637 and are endeavouring to start and taxi it at least once every tarmac weekend.

In the meantime, we have been concentrating our efforts on returning our other Vampire T35, A79-665, to taxiing condition. Our current efforts are focused on rectifying a problem with a leaking footbrake master cylinder. To do this we have had to remove the complete instrument panel to gain access to the master cylinder. This has been done, the master cylinder has been removed, and we have now found a spare serviceable item that can be fitted to replace it. Once this job is completed, we will get 665 out for an engine run and a taxi - with the ultimate aim being to have the two Vampires taxiing in formation on the HARS tarmac weekends.



Terry Wilson in the cockpit of A9-637.

AROUND THE HANGARS



HARS Static B707-338 update

Story and Photos
Terry Scanlan.



DAVE Barnes together with his team of Colin Boundy and Bruce Ingliss are progressing the refurbishment of the B707-338 airframe to an extent that it is almost finished.

From the early days in 2015, this was the way the airframe arrived from RAAF Richmond.



Mike De La Hunty started the rectification work in 2015 and it was progressed by other HARS members until Dave Barnes took it on and has done a great job in finding, modifying and making parts that were needed for the cockpit and cabin areas.

Eleven years later visitors to the B707-338 airframe can sit in the cockpit, relax in the cabin and imagine what it was like to fly in this aircraft type in the 60s.



HARS members that are working on N707JT B707-338 get very wary when they see Dave Barnes onboard looking around thinking that he will cannibalise the B707-138 for parts for his B707-338

Photos Left:
The B707-338 airframe in July 2015.



The cabin area looking forward and Flight Attendant Bruce waiting for passengers to board.



The Flight Deck looking ready for the crew to board.

AROUND THE HANGARS



Felix, the CATalina Update

Story and Photos
Les Fisher.



THE Catalina crew have been working hard on the trailing edge structural repairs, and although it may look like nothing is happening, progress has been made.

This has involved removing individual damaged ribs one at a time, placing them into a jig, and replacing or repairing damaged sections by splicing in new rib channel material with a doubler.

Once the ribs are repaired, they are test-fitted back into the trailing edge, checked for alignment, and riveted into the trailing edge.

Other repairs to the trailing edge structure for cracks and corrosion has also been carried out.

So far, repairs have been completed to the left-hand inboard section trailing edge and epoxy-primed, ready for the installation of the fabric.

The right-hand inboard section of trailing edge rib repairs have been completed, and sections of corroded mounting flange extrusion replaced.

After being tested, these two trailing edges were fitted back on the rear spar to check the alignment after the repairs, and the alignment was perfect which is a credit to the team working on them.

The right-hand outboard section of trailing edge repairs has been started. It does not have rib damage but has a lot of corrosion to the mounting flange extrusions, so sourcing more extrusion is underway. As the weather has not really

LEFT: Test fitting a repaired rib.

BELOW: Trailing edge with repaired rib section.

been conducive to the fabric covering process, this has been delayed.

Along with working on the trailing edges, work is also continuing on replacing a corroded wing attach angle, the aileron control rod bearings, and the aileron control rod

RIGHT: Riveting in the replacement mounting flange extrusion.

BELOW: Lefthand inboard and righthand inboard trailing edge sections test fitted to the wing to confirm alignment.



Bringing the HotRod Home



Aerial view of JT707 being transported from the Airport at Brunswick Georgia to the Shipping Port.

WE pick up the story of our B707's journey home from the Phoenix April 2026 edition where Jim Marshall took us through the events leading up to the shipment of the aircraft to Australia in March 2026.

HARS member, Steve Ferris was instrumental in appointing Worldwide Aircraft Recovery Ltd (WAR) to dismantle and then ship the JT707 to Australia and to also ensure that it was safely loaded onto the RoRo vessel Thermopylae.



N707JT being loaded aboard the RoRo Carrier, Wallenius Wilhelmsen vessel Thermopylae.

This exercise was successfully completed with the vessel departing for Australia on 29 March 2026 transiting the Panama Canal then travelling across the Pacific Ocean to Auckland, then Brisbane and finally arriving in Port Kembla on 15 May 2026.

No time was lost in unloading the aircraft from the vessel, Jim Marshall and Wayne Studdert were on hand to advise the crane operators how to safely lift the aircraft off the transporter onto the low loader for transport to Shellharbour Airport.

The aircraft plus the two wing sections were then loaded onto three specialised heavy haulage vehicles and in the early hours of Thursday (21 May 2026) morning, travelled in convoy from Port Kembla to the Shellharbour



Unloading the aircraft from the carrier.



Lifting the aircraft off the Transporter Dolly.

Airport. Fencing at the northern end of the airport was removed and the vehicles were then able to make their way onto the runway after driving over Tuff Mats laid across the grass that prevented the vehicles from getting bogged.

Once on RWY16, the three vehicles then travelled along the runway in a 'line abreast' formation which was very interesting with the fuselage in the middle and it's two wings on either side.

N707JT is now safely parked in Hangar One where it will be prepared for final assembly of wings, undercarriage and all other control surfaces.



The three heavy haulage vehicles travelled line abreast along RWY16.



N707JT safely stored in Hangar One.

707 JT Update



Lifting the fuselage onto the trailer for transporting to the airport.

AS everyone is aware N707 JT arrived aboard the vessel Thermopylae at Port Kembla on 15 May 2026 and was unloaded the same day. Arrangements were in hand to transport the fuselage, wings and fin to HARS Albion Park. This was quite an undertaking, requiring coordination on a large scale.

Firstly, the fuselage was lifted onto a multi wheel trailer from the shipping trailer. Wayne Studdert and I were called to advise on how to lift it, where to put the slings etc, as the crane crew had never lifted anything like it. However, they

were very careful and professional, and all went well.

Much credit must go to Steve Ferris who, behind the scenes, organized the complete recovery, from contracting Worldwide Aircraft Recovery to dismantle the aircraft in Brunswick Georgia, and all the transport and importing of the aircraft to Port Kembla, including clearing Customs and Quarantine.

The next phase was in the middle of the night, when the fuselage, wings and fin reached HARS. There were delays at the end of the runway, resulting in the fuselage being in the



The aircraft now safely in the hangar.

hangar in the early morning hours, and around 0800 two cranes arrived to lift it onto the HARS manufactured supports. Once again the crews from Two Way Cranes were very professional and the job was successfully completed. Following this was lifting the wings off their trailers and placing them alongside the fuselage.

With the aircraft now in the hangar, we needed to source steps to the entry doors, as being without any landing gear, it was an odd height. This done, we needed power on the aircraft requiring Joe Lautier and his crew to make safe all the cut wiring at the wing roots then carefully applying power to the systems one at a time.

With some lighting connected, the doors and windows were all opened to vent the smell of being closed up for so long, a bit of Glen 20 helped! Plastic carpet runner was installed to protect the carpet and some areas cordoned off for protection of the original fittings, as it is important to maintain the aircraft in its original condition. There are no replacements for anything damaged.

Thorough cleaning and rejuvenation of the interior by Deb Farquhar and Ann Maree Morison has been extensive resulting in the aircraft presenting well and enhanced further by some discreet "stage props".

On the outside, the 707 team has been attending to the pax door trims, Captain's window replacement, refurbishment of the tail planes and flight control surfaces, with Jacko supervising the areas needing a touchup of paint.

A lot of effort is being put into preparing 707JT for the arrival of the Worldwide Aircraft Recoveries team in October, to make their job as smooth and easy as possible.



Lifting the aircraft off the trailer and setting it onto supports.



The aircraft sitting on its temporary support.



The wings being unloaded.

707 JT Update *continued*



Ian Poulter starting to work on the vertical fin component.



Don Hindle brings his polishing skill to the team.



Before the cleaning and below, after the cleaning.



Huey 898 Flies to Moruya... Story: Vic Battese. Photos: Supplied by Shayne Borger, Moruya RSL.

for the Moruya Remembers Commemoration Service



Huey 898 with the HARS crew and Veterans with the local Army Reserve.

HARS Huey 898, which was used to train the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (1967–1971) and is the same helicopter type flown by two RAAF crews to resupply ammunition to D Company during the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966, provided a backdrop for the Moruya Remembers commemoration held on Saturday, 15 August. A number of Vietnam veterans and a local Army Reserve unit attended to honour D Company.

At around 1530 on 18 August 1966, D Company, 6th Battalion RAR, was on patrol near Nui Dat. In a tropical downpour, the company was engaged by a VC force estimated at

more than 2,000. In a short, intense battle lasting less than four hours, D Company prevailed but suffered 18 soldiers killed and 24 wounded, out of a company strength of 108. The history is recalled in many books and the film *Danger Close*.

At one of the critical points of the battle, D Company was almost out of ammunition. Two RAAF crews, flying B model Iroquois helicopters, without command approval in foul weather and in the face of a determined enemy presence, decided to carry out an ammunition resupply.

RIGHT: Huey 898 with Mick Haxell DFC, Campbell Rogan and Greg Morris.



LEFT: Huey 898 in a re-enactment of the re-supply of ammunition.



A Work Experience Success Story

Story: Terry Scanlan.
Photo: Supplied by Capt. Mark Wenke.



Captain Mark Wenke and First Officer Connor Finlay.

EVERY year HARS accepts students in their last years of school doing Work Experience. This program is managed by John Croll and it is rare that we receive any information from the students once they have finished their week at HARS.

The photograph shows Connor Finlay (Work Experience in 2020) as an FO with Jetstar about to crew a flight to Cairns and return.

The following text is from his original request to HARS:

Hi my name is Connor Finlay and I would like to apply for some work experience. I am currently learning to fly at fly Illawarra with Ned McIntosh and would like to spend some time at the airport for my work experience this year. If someone was able to organise this I would be incredibly grateful and it would be a massive help in getting me closer to a career in aviation.

Thank you, Connor Finlay.

Tarmac Day Aviation Insights

Story and Photos:
Terry Scanlan.

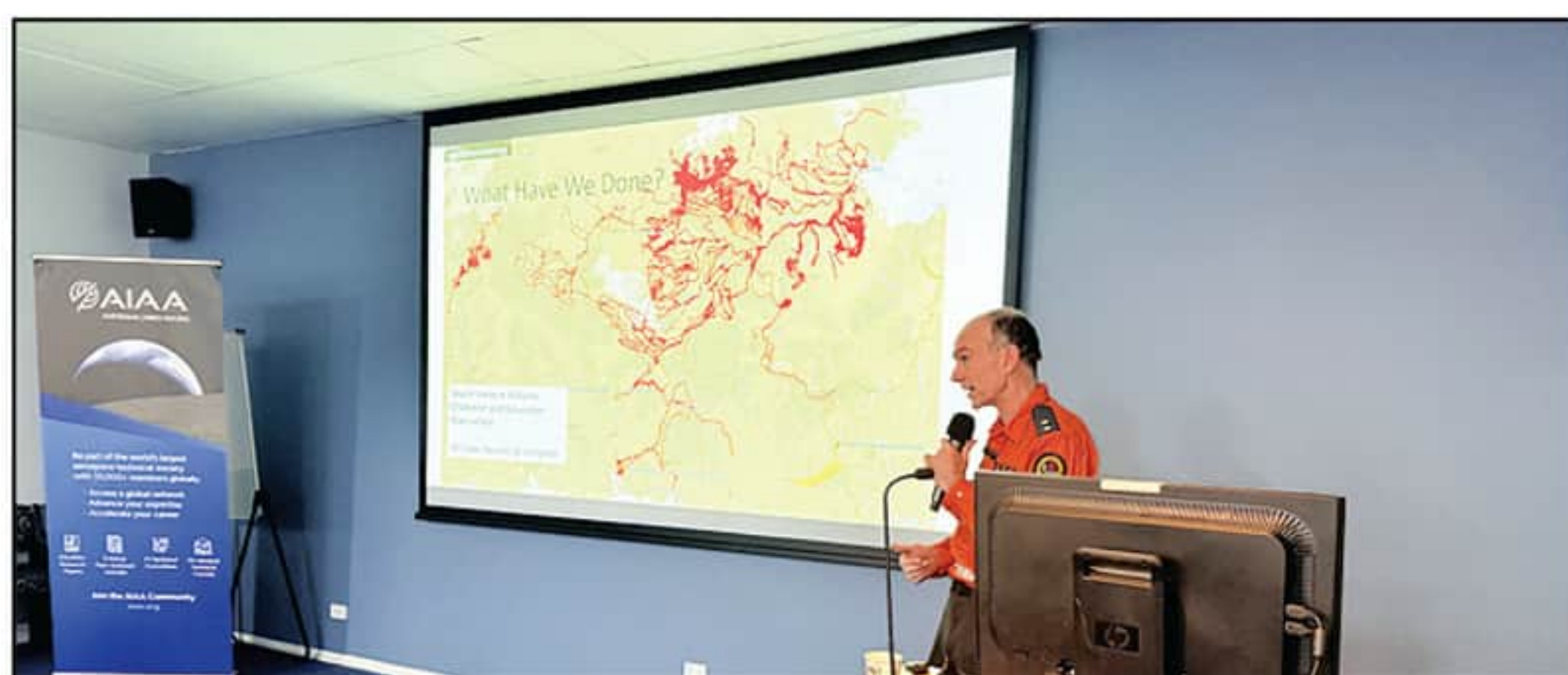
HARS member Stephen Shaw has introduced a series of lectures planned for the Saturday of the Tarmac Weekend. These lectures are centred around all things aviation and so far, have proved to be very popular.

Members of the public booking online can select the option to attend the Tarmac Day Saturday lecture at no cost to them and HARS members are also invited to attend.

The August Tarmac Day lecture was presented by Glenn Horrocks on the subject of the search for VH-MDX and was attended by both HARS members and visitors who showed a lot of interest in the presentation.

You can read about this missing aircraft on the VH-MDX website

<https://vhmdx.com.au>



Glenn discussing the search for VH-MDX.



Members and Visitors attended the presentation.

Federal Member Visit to HARS

Story: Maureen Massey.
Photos: Georgia Roff (Press Assistant).

ON Tuesday 16th June, HARS was privileged to host Federal Member for Whitlam, Carol Berry MP, for a visit to our facility.

Carol was accompanied by her Media and Press Assistant Georgia Roff, who actually took the photographs displayed here.

The reason for the visit was twofold, the first reason being the JT707, which was of particular interest to Ms Berry, and she enjoyed being photographed with "John Travolta" on board the aircraft. We then had an interview regarding the progress and reassembly of the 707 and its future, over a cup of coffee in the lounge area.

The second reason for her visit was to announce that HARS had been successful in securing a Veteran Community Grant. The grant was to fund the purchase of a display cabinet to house memorabilia to honour past and present Servicemen and Women, and First Responders.

Photos show Carol in the cockpit with myself and Nicky Hira, HARS member who assisted on the day, Carol and myself alongside the 707, and again (right), in the Reception Hall, where it is planned to place the cabinet and memorabilia.



Canberra Airport Open Day



The very popular Connie.

CANBERRA Airport Open Day is held every two years and this year HARS was represented by the Connie, Dak and Iroquios.

Held on Saturday 18th April, and knowing the usual weather forecast in Canberra this time of year, HARS aircraft left on Friday to set up early Saturday morning.

Although chilly in the early morning, the day turned out to be a beautiful sunny day, which attracted a large crowd.

The Connie was very popular, as usual, and so was the DAK. People lined up all day to visit both aircraft, and unfortunately, the EFTPOS machines failed during the day, due to bad connections with the Airport Terminal. This was rather unfortunate, as most people today don't have cash and rely on C/C, etc for payment. However, it was towards the end of the day, and somehow the crowd managed to find enough cash to allow entry to our aircraft.

The Iroquios was an additional attraction for HARS, and



The queue for the Dak on a sun-soaked tarmac.



The Iroquios was popular with the younger crowd.

proved very popular with the younger crowd, making the most of sitting inside and playing “make believe”.

Although the event lasted only 5 hours, it was well attended, and there were lots of stalls catering for food and coffee, which was a godsend to the HARS crew.

Paul Bennett was also represented on the day with the Wolf Pitts 360 and the Grumman Avenger.

The Roulettes did their normal opening and closing of the show, and finally all aircraft were closed and made ready for the return home.

The shop was, as usual, busy, and the staff were glad to see wheels up and the nose pointing towards Shellharbour.



HARS staff were kept busy throughout the day manning the museum's shop.



Connie... wheels up.

Qantas Delivers a Second Fokker F-100 to HARS



The QantasLink F-100 touching down at Shellharbour Airport.

ON Monday 17 August 2026, Qantas delivered a Fokker F-100, VH-NPU to the HARS facility at Shellharbour Airport. The QantasLink F-100 departed Perth WA with a stop in Kalgoorlie for fuel and then arrived at HARS around 1500hrs on Monday afternoon.

The aircraft and crew were met by HARS President, Bob De La Hunty OAM and the Shellharbour Mayor, Chris Homer. Many visitors and HARS members were on hand to watch the landing and subsequent arrival at the entrance

to Hangar One.

This is the second of two Fokker F-100 aircraft donated to HARS by Qantas with the first F-100 delivered to the Parkes facility in February of this year (refer April edition of Phoenix).

The press release on page 28 has all the details of the delivery.

FO Billy Peake and Captain Quenten de Vos are welcomed by Shellharbour Mayor Chris Homer and HARS President Bob De La Hunty OAM.





VH-NHU, F-100 arrives at HARS.



HARS members and visitors there to welcome the F-100.

QANTASLINK FOKKER F100 LANDS NEW ROLE

17 August 2026: After its final flight across Australia a QantasLink Fokker F100 jet aircraft has touched down at Shellharbour Airport where it will begin a new chapter at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS).

The recently retired 100-seat aircraft has been donated by QantasLink to HARS where it will join its collection of aircraft as a public exhibit.

VH-NPU "*Meekatharra*" is the second aircraft to be donated to HARS, with another QantasLink F100 [donated to its Parkes Museum](#) in February.

Meekatharra will sit alongside Qantas' first Boeing 747-400, VH-OJA that was [donated by Qantas in 2015](#). *City of Canberra* arrived at HARS following 26 years of service and is one of the museum's most visited attractions.

QantasLink's fleet of F100s are being [gradually replaced with Embraer E190](#) aircraft to improve reliability, fuel efficiency and customer comfort. The first E190 is expected to arrive in Perth next month.

Meekatharra began flying for QantasLink in December 2016 and was the final F100 to be added to the fleet. The aircraft has flown more than 11,250 hours for QantasLink, carrying around a million passengers across regional Western Australia and as a critical support of the resource industry.

Comments from QantasLink CEO Mark Dal Pra:

"*Meekatharra* played an important role connecting regional communities across Western Australia for close to a decade, and we're thrilled it will now be preserved by HARS for the future generations of aviation enthusiasts.

"HARS has become a natural home for some of our retired aircraft, helping keep important parts of Australian aviation history alive.

"As we farewell the F100 and prepare to welcome new aircraft into the fleet, we're grateful to the volunteers who will ensure its story continues to be shared."

Comments from HARS President and Chief Pilot Bob De La Hunty:

"We're honoured that QantasLink has entrusted HARS with another important piece of Australian aviation history.

"Joining Qantas' first Boeing 747-400, and the former Qantas Boeing 707-138, *Meekatharra* will help tell the story of the aircraft that connected regional communities and supported industry across Western Australia.

HARS Parkes Aviation Museum Reports

Prepared from Mike De La Hunty's regular update reports.

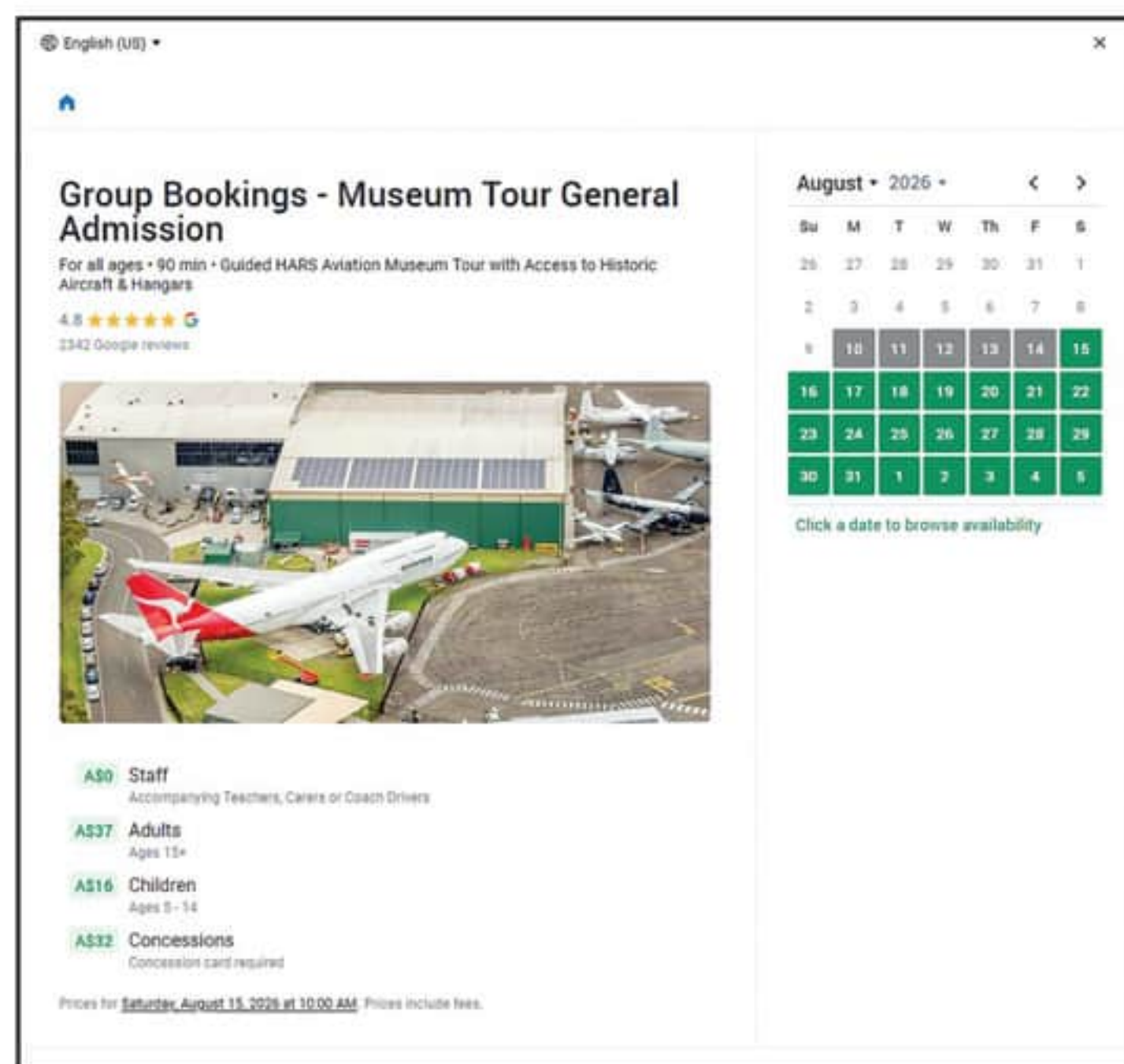
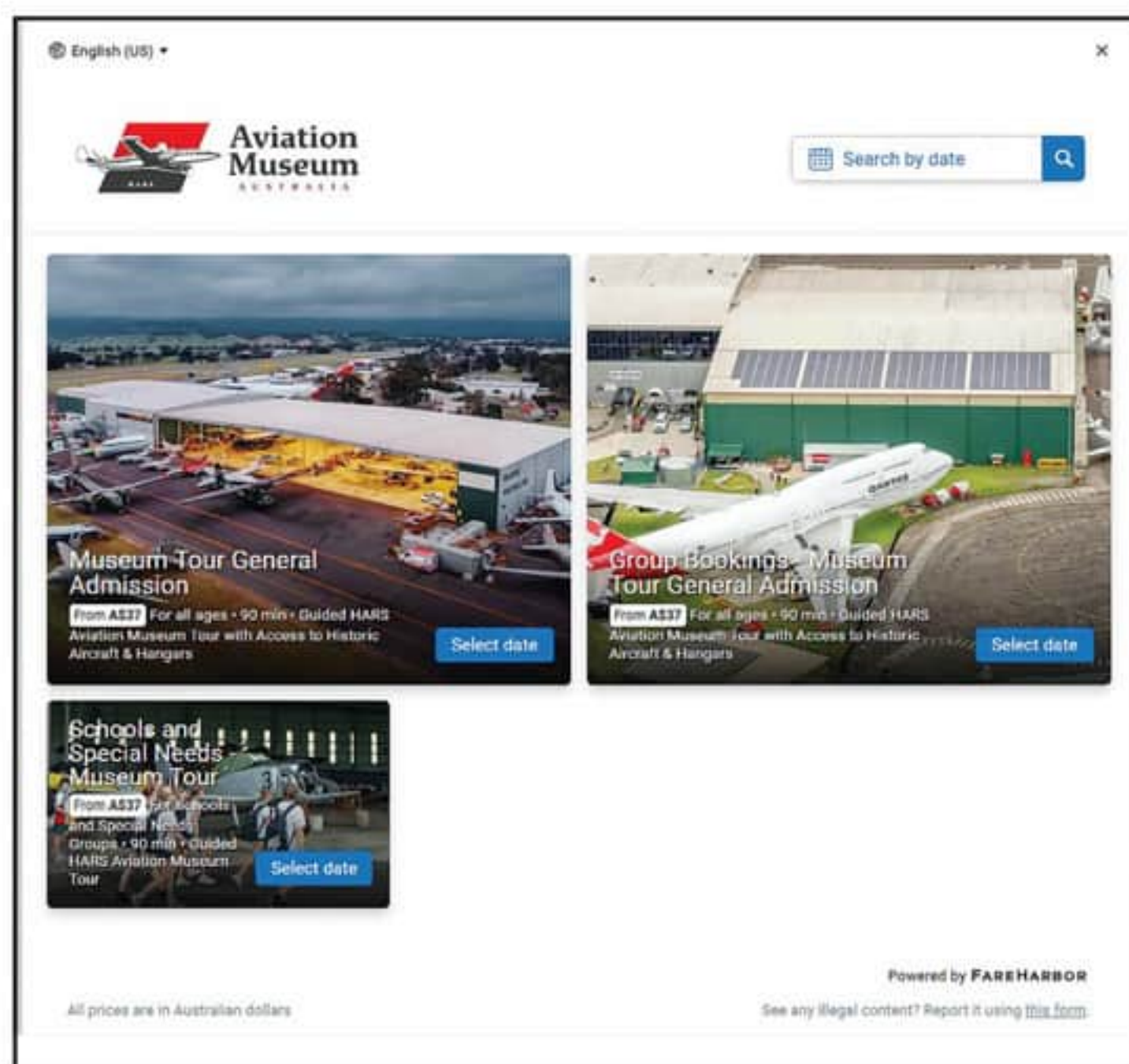
- THE Federal Member for Parkes, Jamie Chaffey paid us a visit, and we thanked him for his support in achieving our DVA grant. He was enthusiastic about our presence and future plans in Parkes and he has confirmed his ongoing support for the museum
- Kitchen Renovation is progressing with plumbing completed, a new benchtop, double bowled sink and kitchen doors.
- The Convair Tech crew were on site to run engines and taxi the aircraft which was a good training exercise for the students
- The Iroquois Helicopter, A2-484 has arrived from Caboolture and has been reassembled. It will be moved into the hangar and sit alongside the Cobra Helicopter
- The RB211 engine has been transported to the Powerhouse Museum where it will be on a temporary loan agreement with its return to Parkes in 2029
- The students have been busy assisting with tasks around the facility. They assisted with restoration work, installing sun protection in the cockpits of our aircraft to prevent damage by the sun. They also carried out preparation for us to erect a tractor and tug shed allowing more room in the hangar for aircraft



Jamie Chaffey MP visiting HARS Parkes.



The New Online Booking System for Visitors to HARS



The online booking portal on the HARS website.

Story and Screen Shots Terry Scanlan.

IN May of this year, an online booking system was introduced that allows visitors to the museum to prebook their tours.

The system now manages Group Bookings with options for Catering, Schools and Special Needs tours, General Admission, OJA Premium, Cockpit tours, and Wing Walk tours.

All bookings are made via the HARS website, where visitors can view and select from all available tour options.

Since its introduction, there has been a considerable increase in specialised OJA tours and other museum tour bookings.

Reception Desk staff can view all bookings via the 'Dashboard' on the reception computer, which assists with planning and managing large prepaid groups. Staff are also able to add, amend, or cancel bookings as required.

Bookings							
Manifest Reports Items Customers Settings							
Grid Setup Calendar All items (No filters) Filter update availabilities							
Start date							
	Mon 10/8	Tue 11/8	Wed 12/8	Thu 13/8	Fri 14/8	Sat 15/8	Sun 16/8
Museum Tour General Admission	General admission between 9:30am-2pm • 90 minutes Guided Tour	General admission between 9:30am-2pm • 90 minutes Guided Tour	General admission between 9:30am-2pm • 90 minutes Guided Tour	General admission between 9:30am-2pm • 90 minutes Guided Tour			
Tarmac Days Museum Tour					Tarmac Days Special! Experience Aviation Up Close • 90 minutes Guided Tour	Tarmac Days Special! Experience Aviation Up Close • 90 minutes Guided Tour	Tarmac Days Special! Experience Aviation Up Close • 90 minutes Guided Tour
Group Bookings - Museum Tour General Admission	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm
Schools and Special Needs - Museum Tour	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm	10am 11am 12pm		
B747 Wing Walk Tour	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm
Add-on: B747 Wing Walk Tour	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm
B747 Cockpit Tour	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm	10am 12pm
B747 Premium Tour	10am	10am	10am	10am	10am	10am	10am
Gift Certificate							
An insight into Aviation					11am	11am	11am

The Dashboard that Reception Staff can view.

The White Spiral on the Engine of Jet Aircraft

Story:
Henry Knight.

WHY was the engine spinner painted with a white spiral on the Boeing 747 Pratt and Whitney powered aircraft?



The white spiral.

This is the real story.

The Pratt and Whitney engine had a problem on some startups where on engine start the fan rotated backward. This was due to a low-pressure valve opening and rotating the fan backwards.

Qantas introduced a procedure on startup that the crew was advised by the departing engineer that the engine had forward rotation.

Under conditions at night in wet weather, an incident occurred at Heathrow, London where the BOAC engineer departing the aircraft, on pushback, had difficulty seeing the fan rotating while concentrating with a low-light torch. He was accidentally run over by the tug and killed.

Back in Qantas line maintenance, various discussions were held to make it easier to see the fan rotating.

I, along with a Line Station Superintendent, went down to Test Cell 3 at Mascot, armed with some white masking tape

to see if we could make it easier to see the engine rotating in low-light conditions. The test cell at that time had just completed an engine test. With area lighting off it was ideal being dark, and test cell personnel assisted by rotating the engine with the starter motor.

After many versions of sticking the tape around the spinner, we concluded one spiral worked a lot better than the other spirals. As the engine fan rotated in the correct direction, when the end of the tape rotated past there was a small blip that could be clearly seen.

A drawing was made and the spirals were painted on all the Qantas engines' spinners. Pratt and Whitney were the only B747 engine at that time operating in Qantas.

The theory in Google is that Qantas introduced the spiral to cut down on bird strikes. A lot of other airlines decided that if Qantas started doing it, then they would start doing it. Spinners around the world were painted regardless of engine type. Regardless of why, most airlines now paint a spiral; it is a safety warning that the engine is turning.

Honouring Their Service

HARS Runs a Very Successful Pre-ANZAC Day Event



Mayor of Shellharbour, Cr Chris Homer checking in for the event.

Introduction

ON 10 April 2026, HARS was honoured to sponsor and run a pre ANZAC Day event titled "Honouring Their Service", at which over 80 veterans and other service personnel were honoured by a well advertised ceremony attended by a significant VIP presence — including the Mayor of Shellharbour (Cr Chris Homer) and the Federal Members for Whitlam (Ms Carol Berry MHR) and Cunningham (Ms Alyson Byrnes MHR).

The concept was initiated by the Kiama/Jamberoo RSL subbranch through a HARS member who is the Junior Vice President of the branch — Mr John Stead.

The concept was then developed to recognise all those who served the community, first responders and those who served in the military.

Accordingly, the event was advertised to attract those recognised for service in the emergency services (e.g. Police / Fire / Ambulance / RFS / SES / Maritime / Rescue) and the Helping Services (e.g. St John Ambulance / Scouts / Guides).

The event commenced with free admission to all wearing medals, provision of a sponsored morning tea, an official welcome and thankyou ceremony, then demonstrations of selected HARS military aircraft, followed by a sponsored lunch at the nearby Albion Park RSL subbranch and Club, at which over 65 attendees were sponsored to lunch.

The fuel costs, morning tea and lunch were sponsored by a range of regional Illawarra and Southern Sydney RSL subbranches and Clubs.

It was a very appropriate recognition of the wide range of

people acknowledged for their service to the community, and we were fortunate that a UoW journalism student volunteered to attend the event. Following is Bianca's report and account of the ceremonies.

Report by Bianca Tasevski

Veterans, serving personnel and dignitaries gathered at the HARS Aviation Museum in Albion Park on Friday, April 10, for the "Honouring Their Service" Tarmac Day, a commemorative event held in the leadup to ANZAC Day.

A collection of historic military aircraft were on display for public viewing and photography. Rather than a formal ceremony, the event unfolded across Hangar 1 and the tarmac, allowing visitors to move directly among the aircraft on display.

Hosted by the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS), the day were held ahead of April 25 commemorations, with speeches and direct access to the aircraft and their history. The event was held inside a working aviation museum, surrounded by ongoing restoration work and operational exhibits.

Coorganiser John Stead said that the event reflects the camaraderie found within the community with those involved. "It's great to be able to get veterans together and commemorate," he said. "A lot of the guys here are exservice."

The opening session was held in HARS Hangar 2, home to the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame and the Lawrence Hargrave Centre. The location placed the official proceedings directly within an aviation heritage space.

Coorganiser Professor Michael Hough said the event was designed to prioritise those who have served, while also recognising the role of volunteers who keep the program running.



HARS Member John Stead addressing the attendees.

Dignitaries in attendance included Shellharbour Mayor Councillor Chris Homer, Federal Member for Cunningham Alison Byrnes MP, and Federal Member for Whitlam Carol Berry MP.

Their presence, alongside veterans and volunteers, placed the event firmly within wider ANZAC commemorations.

The aircraft formed part of a broader showcase of operational military aviation history maintained by HARS volunteers, although strong winds limited much of the planned activity.

Maintaining these aircraft requires significant technical skill and longterm commitment. "There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes," Mr Stead said. "It brings back memories for a lot of people."

Many volunteers involved in the restoration work have a direct connection to the aircraft, having worked on or flown similar types during their service, adding a personal association to the preservation efforts.

Attendees wearing their service medals were granted free entry and welcomed with a sponsored morning tea before taking part in the commemorative activities.

Despite strong community support, organisers acknowledged ongoing challenges, particularly rising fuel costs, which continue to affect flying events and flyovers. Even so, they said the purpose remains to honour service



Ms Carol Berry MP, Maureen Massey VP, Dick Elliott, Chris Homer, Shellharbour Mayor, Ms Alison Byrnes MP and Rev Beaton.

and preserve aviation history for future generations.

Regardless of these issues, volunteers are focused on keeping the event running in future years.

That focus was visible in young engineers working alongside experienced volunteers, showing growing interest in heritage aviation maintenance. "It was just so nice to see their enthusiasm," Mr Stead said. "They wanted to get stuck in and help."

Up to five former Royal Australian Air Force, Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy aircraft were featured at the event, including the C47 Dakota, Caribou transport, and Neptune maritime patrol aircraft — platforms that served across multiple conflicts including the Vietnam War.

The Caribou, in particular, drew attention, with volunteers noting personal connections to aircraft types they had worked on or flown during their service.

Visitors continued moving through the hangars and along the tarmac, with volunteers and veterans forming the main presence throughout the afternoon, while at least one aircraft also took to the air during the day.



The Grumman Tracker aircraft with the Veterans watching on.

TAA The Early Days

Impossible!... Stepping back 80 Years to Remember the Start of TAA

THE year is 1946, the shadow of six years of global conflict has begun to fade. Aircrew and support personnel returning from their wartime roles now searched for peacetime employment. This post-war period was to herald the dawn of a new age in Australian civil aviation. Amidst the political debate, that echoed through the halls of Federal Parliament and the High Court, there emerged a new and significant player in aviation, an airline 'owned' by the people.

The then Labor Government, under Prime Minister Chifley, sought to nationalise airlines. However, a Constitutional challenge in December 1945 by existing airline operators, backed by the Liberal Opposition, resulted in 'a High Court ruling (that) allowed the government to establish a domestic airline, but also ensured that it could not legislate a monopoly.' The government immediately pursued this alternative of creating a strong government-owned competitor to Holyman's ANA, then viewed as holding a monopoly on post-war air services with vested overseas shareholders.

Australian National Airlines Commission (ANAC) was established by the government under the chairmanship of the successful businessman, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne and former Member of Parliament, A. W. Coles. The Commission created the government-owned Trans-Australia Airlines (TAA), which was seen as a controversial move, a view widely echoed in the press of the time. Coles himself was a great believer in competition for business and TAA was to function as a business, unlike other government departments.

A preliminary meeting of Commission Board members took place in February 1946. Coles quickly realised that the imperative was for the airline to be operational before the November 1946 election. Coles announced a date of the 7th October for full operation. A target considered a significant challenge and viewed, with scepticism even by members of the ANAC Board, as an impossible timeframe. "The general consensus of opinion was that Coles would be lucky to get his airline into service under eighteen months". However, several factors were in T.A.A.'s favour: high numbers of experienced aircrew and technical personnel demobilising from RAAF service, potential for surplus wartime aircraft and a shared 'ideal of serving the nation' which resonated with returning wartime personnel. By June 1946, TAA was still only a name; it had no official address, no premises in any city, no booking offices, hangars, or engineering workshops and lacked essential aircraft, air crews and ground transport necessary to operate a service.



Completion of the Inaugural TAA flight at Mascot 9th September 1946.
(N. Louis Collection-Photographer unknown).

Lester Brain from QANTAS took up the position of TAA General Manager on 3rd June. Further appointments quickly followed for executive staff, pilots and air hostesses (now flight attendants). Former Group Captain John Ryland, a highly decorated RAAF pilot had joined ANA after the war.

He moved to TAA accepting the position of Manager of TAA's special training school for pilots; the first intake was in July. One of the first pilots appointed to TAA was Captain James Hepburn, a former Wing Commander, who would later be called upon to be 'pilot in command' of TAA's inaugural flight. 'Over 200 wartime pilots were on the list awaiting consideration as the airline's expansion became viable.' In mid-July Miss Helen Sommerville was appointed air hostess superintendent.

By August the essentials for operating the airline were falling into place and, with the federal election now moved forward to the 28th September, Coles announced on 2nd September that the first flight, Melbourne to Sydney, would now take place in one week, with the full passenger services commencing in October.

On September 9th, 1946, in the early hours of a quiet, dark and cool Melbourne morning, a DC-3 aircraft named



'Hawdon' was parked on the hardstand at RAAF Base Laverton. The silence was broken by the cranking sound of its Pratt and Whitney radial engines, heralding the start of this 'thought impossible' history making flight: the inaugural service of Trans-Australia Airlines, from Melbourne to Sydney.

The 21-seat DC-3, VH-AES, under the command of Captain James (Jim) Hepburn, assisted by Co-Pilot Captain John (Jack) Nickels, with VIP guests and the one paying passenger attended to by senior hostess, Miss Veni Vernon, departed at 6:00 AM for the 2-hour and 35-minute flight to Sydney. Apparently, the flight was at risk of being delayed. Accounts differ, one suggests the late arrival of the mail or, as noted by Gunn, "the bar for the dignitaries and press members had been forgotten".

Facilities for TAA at both airports were limited at the time of the inaugural flight. At Mascot, TAA shared a small space with QANTAS in the old DCA Control Tower. Essendon Airport was to be the base of TAA operations; however, the inaugural flight was required to use two hangars allotted by RAAF Laverton. Essendon was unavailable while a concrete runway and taxiway were constructed.



Mr and Mrs Coles with hostess Veni Vernon.

The inaugural flight pioneered a hot meal service on a domestic route. The menu comprised scrambled eggs on toast, scones and tea or coffee.

Many publications provide detailed accounts of TAA's history and the amazing Hawdon aircraft. Some are referenced at the end of this article.

Often cited are the names of the flight crew underpinning this history making event; their careers and experiences rarely chronicled. Yet their stories resonate with many Australians during this important period of transition from war service to peacetime flying. It is appropriate, as we look back 80 years, to recognise their careers, albeit only scratching the surface. Three aviation career stories that

embody heroic acts, tragedy, and amazing resilience.

James (Jim) Andrew Hepburn commenced his flying career in July 1937 at the age of 18. By 1940 he achieved the commissioned rank of Flight Lieutenant RAAF attached to 13 Squadron flying Avro Ansons and Lockheed Hudsons. Appointed a squadron leader (S/L) in 1942 he moved to flying Bristol Beauforts. In April 1943 he was posted to 100 SQN Gurney base-Milne Bay as Commanding Officer (CO). Now 24 years old he was an experienced pilot and as CO responsible for 44 Officers, 407 airmen and 19 serviceable Beauforts.



Captain James Andrew Hepburn.

Milne Bay has been described as a 'malarial pesthole' and Hepburn suffered severe bouts of malaria requiring hospital care and his deteriorating health required him to return to mainland Australia for reposting in September 1943. Despite his health issues during his time as CO, 100 SQN, under Hepburn's command laid claim to a world record for the number of operational flying hours in a 31-day period, between 21st July and 21st August. The Squadron flew 1615.18 hours on 438 sorties.

The largest sortie on 22nd July, led by S/L Hepburn, involved 10 Beauforts, Bostons and Kittyhawks, for top cover, for an attack on the enemy-held and heavily defended Gasmata airstrip, New Britain. 100 SQN Operations Record Book entry for the day noted it as the largest single RAAF strike ever undertaken. This highly successful, low dive-bombing attack earned S/L Hepburn the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for "his skill, coolness and determination". He was promoted to the rank of Wing Commander on 1st September 1943.

Once Wing Commander Hepburn's health had recovered, he was posted to No. 1 Operational Training Unit (1OTU) East Sale, Victoria as Chief Flying Instructor. 1OTU's role was to train pilots, air observers, wireless operators and air gunners for multi-engine squadrons. Moved from RAAF Nihill in April 1943 to East Sale, 1OTU inventory at the time of the move consisted of 55 Beauforts, 35 Oxfords, 25 Hudsons, 14 Fairey Battles and one Tiger Moth.

On Monday 17th January 1944 the East Sale Commanding Officer received a request to assist in the evacuation of an injured cattleman near the top of Mount Wellington (Victoria). A ground party, accompanied by the RAAF doctor and a pilot, Ray Kelly, were to ride to the accident site. On the Wednesday morning W/Cdr Hepburn did an aerial

TAA The Early Days *continued*



A group of cattlemen, Dr Richard Bligh (RAAF Doctor - white hat), W/Cdr James Hepburn (RAAF rescue pilot) Robert Goldie (on horseback). Wombat Plain Mt. Wellington 19 January 1944. Photographed by Andy Estoppey, Marion Hair Collection. (Original photo edited and coloured to improve clarity).

reconnaissance of the site in a Beaufort, before returning later in the day in a Tiger Moth. After an unsuccessful approach, he managed on the second attempt to land the aircraft on a cleared section of ground 120 yards in length, aided by Kelly and local cattlemen grabbing the wings as the aircraft entered rough ground. Newspapers recorded it as the highest landing ever performed on mainland Australia; the elevation was just under 5000 feet.

Kelly and the cattlemen extended the cleared area, removing rocks and shrubs, to the wall-like edge of Mount Wellington; a distance of 270 to 370 yards based on the varying reports. The injured man, Robert Goldie, reportedly weighing more than 90 Kg, was placed in the Tiger Moth. At 5:15 PM Hepburn commenced his hazardous take-off, downhill and with a tailwind. Reports indicate the wheels left the ground as the aircraft passed over the cliff edge. Goldie was flown to Gippsland hospital and made a full recovery. "For his courage, determination and expert airmanship in completing this extremely dangerous mission" Wing Commander Hepburn was awarded the Air Force Cross.

Demobilised on 31st October 1945 Captain Hepburn initially joined Australian National Airways (ANA) prior to being one of the first pilots to be employed by Trans-Australia Airlines (TAA).

During the war Hepburn had instructed W/Cdr John Kessey, a former CO of 100 SQN, on his conversion to Beauforts. Captain Kessey had also joined TAA becoming TAA's first route captain and responsible for training ex air force pilots

in civil operations. When the time came for TAA's inaugural flight (9th September 1946), "I (Kessey) thought he (Hepburn) would be the ideal fellow to do the first service for TAA, so I appointed him on that and he did the first run – Melbourne-Sydney-Melbourne to open the airline".

Three weeks later, on 7th October 1946, Captain Kessey in a DC-3 flew TAA's inaugural Melbourne to Brisbane service with Co-pilot J. W. Nickels.

Captain Hepburn, operating as either pilot in command or co-pilot, flew other inaugural route extensions, demonstration flights and record setting flights in a variety of TAA aircraft, attaining the position of Flight Superintendent. Seeking a wider experience, Hepburn moved overseas in 1956 to fly internationally. Initially with Middle East Airlines (MEA) operating Vickers Viscounts out of Beirut to London, then after a brief period with Dan Air, he took up his long-term position with Swissair (1959-1977), flying Convair CV-990-30A Coronado and DC8 airliners.

He narrowly escaped death on 21st February 1970. Rostered to fly Swissair Flight 330 Zurich - Tel Aviv, a last-minute roster change for Captain Hepburn moved him to another flight on that day. Tragically Flight 330 was destroyed by a terrorist bomb, killing all 47 on board 22km from the Zurich-Kloten Airport.

Returning to Australia in 1981 Jim Hepburn lived in Ashmore Qld. A keen yachtsman he spent his retirement as a volunteer with Air Sea Rescue on the Gold Coast. He passed away on 5th December 1991, aged 71.



Captain John William Nickels.

John William Nickels, Jack to family and friends, enlisted in the RAAF on 12 September 1941; he was 18 years old. His initial Air Force rank was Leading Aircraftman, a non-commissioned rank in 4 ITS. John began his pilot training at No. 11 EFTS Benalla, before moving to 1SFTS Point Cook. During this period, he topped his flying school class in examinations, graduating with the rank of Sergeant on 22 October 1942. Following additional training, he was posted to 33 Squadron on 21st March 1944, holding the rank of Flight Sergeant

and quickly promoted to a Warrant Officer in May.

33 SQN was a transport squadron operating out of Milne Bay using Douglas C-47 Dakotas to transport personnel, deliver mail, ammunitions, food and medical supplies and return the sick and wounded to care.

As a C-47 Captain, Nickels was assessed by the Commanding Officer of 33 SQN as a person who displayed above average ability and initiative in all aspects of his flying duties, who could always be relied upon to do his work regardless of difficulty and a pilot whose performance was mentioned in despatches during the War



After a year at 33 SQN, John was transferred to 37 SQN in May 1945. 37 SQN had acquired its first three C-47 Dakotas in February that year to replace its fleet of Lockheed C-60A Lodestars. Now a commissioned officer Nickels quickly rose to the rank of Flying Officer by August 1945 and continued RAAF Transport flying until his demobilisation on 16th April 1946.

Captain Nickels joined the newly formed Trans-Australia Airlines in July 1946 as a highly experienced C47 pilot. He was selected to co-pilot the historic Melbourne to Sydney inaugural flight of TAA on 9th September under the

command of Captain James Hepburn.

Then on 7th October 1946, he flew as co-pilot with Captain J.W. Kessey for the launch of TAA's extension of the service to Brisbane. Passengers on both inaugural flights included Chairman of the Australian National Airlines Commission, Mr A.W. Coles, and the TAA General Manager, Lester Brain.

A keen sports person, Nickels was cited in a newspaper in August 1949 as one of the best players in a fast football (AFL) game between ANA and TAA employees played at Olympic Park Melbourne, unfortunately for Nickels and the TAA team, the score went against them 11-7 (73) to 5-5 (35).

August 1950 saw some of the most devastating floods affecting NSW and Queensland. Captain Nickels was called upon to command a TAA Dakota, one of four, participating in what was described as a "mercy fleet" carrying urgently needed supplies to farmers in a 300 square mile flooded area on the Queensland – NSW border. Flying 10 hours a day and at times operating as low as 50 feet above the ground, the team would drop the urgently needed supplies to farmers: food parcels and stock feed. Activating the "No Smoking, Fasten Safety Belts" sign would signal the rear door crew when to drop the packages. They would then circle the area to scan for distress signals from homesteads in the form of bed sheets laid on the ground.

A visit by American millionaire Mr R.J. Reynolds in August 1951, provided a welcome change of pace for Captain Nickels. Reynolds chartered a TAA DC-3 for his 5-day visit to the Great Barrier Reef, North Queensland and the Northern Territory. Captain Nickels with F/O Bennetts provided the flight crew, enjoying the inclusive generosity of the visitors.

TAA's fleet rapidly expanded after the 1946 inaugural flight to an active fleet of 35 aircraft in 1948. All these aircraft were powered by radial engines. TAA's next major step in aircraft procurement was Vickers Viscount 720 Series, a four-engine turboprop. TAA ordered six Viscounts, the first of the order was handed over to TAA representatives in a special ceremony held in Wisley, England on July 22 1954, where it was officially named the 'John Batman'. John Batman arrived in Australia on Wednesday 13th October. Captain Nickels was nominated to pilot the second Viscount's delivery to Australia later in the year.

Two weeks (31st October 1954) after its delivery to TAA in Melbourne, the 'John Batman' was flown to Mangalore airport for the purpose of training senior pilots on this new type of aircraft. Captain Nickels was one of four pilots on the training flight; however, his role was to be an observer in the cockpit. A focus of the training was for the pilots to practise emergency procedures, prior to the Viscount commencing regular services on November 15. While attempting a three-engine take-off, the Viscount became airborne for a short time before rolling to the right and cartwheeling into the ground. Witnesses stated that fire rapidly consumed the

TAA The Early Days *continued*

plane, leading to the tragic death of three pilots. Captain John William Nickels was one of the pilots killed. He was aged 32, married, with two children



Inaugural flight: Hostess Veni Vernon with Mrs Woolnough a relative of Joseph Hawdon.

Veni Vernon commenced her aviation career in mid-January 1943 as an Air Hostess (Flight Attendant) with Australian National Airways (ANA) aged 27. Prior to joining ANA, Veni was employed in a secretarial role.

By mid-March 1943 Veni had accumulated just over 180 hours as an Air Hostess on DC3 aircraft with many flights supporting the movement of military personnel. Veni's 1943 March roster included a Melbourne – Sydney –



Brisbane flight on the Douglas DC-3-232A 'Warana' VH-ACB scheduled for a 6:00 AM departure on the 19th. On the day the actual flight departed Essendon on time with 12 passengers and three crew. On initial climb the aircraft experienced engine trouble, only achieving about 200 ft above the ground before losing altitude. The airplane belly landed, after just skimming over a house, sliding a few dozen metres before bouncing over a fence and coming to rest. While the aircraft suffered substantial structural damage a fire did not develop and passengers were quickly pulled from the wreckage of the aircraft with no loss of life. The injured were treated at the site by an Army doctor, who was one of the 10 military personnel on board. However, the Captain suffered a fracture of the leg and shock, First Officer severe head, hip and thigh injuries and Hostess Veni Vernon suffered a lacerated scalp, extensive thigh injuries and severe shock. The crew were admitted to Royal Melbourne Hospital in a serious condition.

Vernon showed remarkable resilience. After a period of convalescence, she returned to her flying career and joined TAA in 1946 as a senior flight attendant.

While employed with ANA, Veni worked with the very experienced Helen Sommerville, ANA's Senior Flight Training Hostess (1945-46). Helen Sommerville had logged over 5400 flying hours by mid 1946 when she left ANA to take up the position of TAA Air Hostess Superintendent. Veni Vernon joined TAA in mid-1946 and took on the role of Helen Sommerville's assistant in establishing a hostess training school. The first two-week training school opened on 9th September following a nation-wide advertising campaign in August 1946. The initial target was to recruit 50 women with exceptional qualities: leadership ability, confidence, communication skills, ability to mix well and be calm under pressure. The training program was practical and rigorous.

While the immediate requirement was 50 hostesses, there were some 900 applications received. Newspapers reported women from many nationalities, with a wide range of language skills had applied: Hungarians, Norwegians, Dutch, Scottish, French and New Zealanders.

Veni was assigned as the hostess on TAA's inaugural flight on September 9, 1946, where she was the face of the new airline for the VIPs on board. Her career continued with TAA until required to resign to marry in 1947.

Acknowledgements: Relatives of the flight crew; Linda Barraclough Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for her detailed research and advice on the Tiger Moth Rescue; Patricio Bravo -restoration of photos, AAHOF and TAA Museum for their important recording of aviation history; HARS for maintaining Hawdon as a working legend. Important publications: Contested Skies by John Gunn; Challenge in the Skies by Ian Sabey; Hawdon by Nancy Blitz.

Planning for the Future While Preserving the Past

How Professional Succession Planning Can Support HARS

HARS has always been about more than preserving aviation history, it's about honouring stories, legacies, and the passion of those who helped shape Australia's aviation community. Many supporters often ask how they can ensure their love of aviation continues to make an impact long into the future. One of the most meaningful ways to do this is through thoughtful succession planning, including Wills and estate arrangements that provide for loved ones while also enabling a lasting contribution to HARS.

Why Your Will Matters More Than You Think

A Will is one of the most important documents you will ever create. It ensures your wishes are honoured, protects your family and assets, and allows you to direct how your legacy should live on. Yet many Australians still do not have a legally valid or up-to-date Will.

For HARS supporters, a carefully prepared Will provides opportunities to:

- Ensure your estate is distributed exactly as you intend
- Provide peace of mind to your family
- Support the organisations you value, such as HARS, by leaving a bequest or donation
- Honour your personal connection to aviation history

Leaving a Legacy Gift to HARS

- Many long-standing members and aviation enthusiasts choose to leave a bequest to HARS as a way of continuing the preservation of Australia's rich aviation heritage. Legacy gifts, large or small, make a lasting difference by assisting ongoing restoration projects, operational needs, museum enhancements, education programs, and the conservation of aircraft for future generations. Bequests may include a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate, specific assets, or a residual gift after your loved ones are provided for.



Supporting HARS, Supporting History

By engaging in thoughtful succession planning, you're not only securing your own affairs, you're also investing in the preservation of aviation history for generations to come. A legacy gift to HARS becomes part of a story bigger than any one lifetime.

A solicitor experienced in estate planning can ensure your gift is structured legally and in a way that aligns with your personal wishes. To assist members, supporters, and aviation enthusiasts, David Swan, an experienced solicitor at Foye Legal is now offering professional legal services for those wishing to create or update their estate planning tailored specifically for individuals wishing to leave a legacy gift to HARS.

Oak Flats and Shellharbour **Community Bank®** branches



Initially opening in Oak Flats to restore banking services to the community when the major banks moved out, Oak Flats and Shellharbour Community Bank® branches are proud of their evolution from sole local banking provider to their impressive current standing which positions the Community Bank® branches as an alternative, reliable source of income to the local community, its projects and its people.

Now, after 17 years of being opened, Oak Flats and Shellharbour Community Bank® branches have given more than \$2.5 million in support to local community groups, organisations and charities, and continue to support their local communities. We are proud to support HARS and what they do for the local community.

"Bendigo Bank at Oak Flats and Shellharbour have been very supportive with us."



Bob De La Hunty
President and Chief Pilot
HARS

"We support HARS because of the history they're preserving and believe it is a fantastic local attraction right on our doorstep!"
- Geoff Egan (Chairman)



Oak Flats & Shellharbour
Community Bank Branches



Contact
Oak Flats
or
Shellharbour
branches
4256 9511
4295 1544

Oak Flats and Shellharbour
Community Bank® branches



Proud supporters of the
**HISTORICAL AIRCRAFT
RESTORATION SOCIETY**

HOW GREAT IS THIS?

"Bendigo Bank gave us a great deal on our home loan. We even got \$500 to donate to our local club."

- HARS Volunteer



Proud supporter
Oak Flats and Shellharbour Community Bank® branches