

Stories From the Hangar

AUTUMN 2023 EDITION



A9-141 UPDATE

The Beaufort restoration continues to make steady progress. Ralph has been working on the paperwork to build us a complete records data base with volunteers diligently working on sub-assemblies & Structures

FIGHTER PILOTS BBQ

A great evening shared with the QLD branch of the Royal Aeronautical Society. Thanks to Brad Bishopp opening his hangar to view the spectacular P-51D Mustang and L-39 Jet Fighter.

WESSEX RESTORATION

Alan Whitten - Project Lead has started on the Wessex restoration and it's now inside the Hangar. A trip to Philip Island to the Vietnam Veterans Museum to source parts was a winner!!



VOLUNTEERS

A big THANK YOU to our Volunteers. Without you there is no restoration. We can always do with more and if you can spare a few hours a week to help out, get in touch,

We Need You!!

Wessex Restoration

From Alan Whitten - Project Lead.

Starting 2023 and our Wessex N7-214 has been moved into hangar 104. Initially positioned across the front of the hangar to allow use of the overhead gantry to facilitate MR Blade removal, the helicopter will be moved further inside at a later date. Currently the MRB's are in the stowed position. Once removed they will be given a refreshment including installation of tip caps.

Work is now moving forward with removal of panels, doors and windows prior to paint removal. We have much skin work to carry out prior to painting. N7-214 was used for battle damage repair by the RAN, so there's a number of these 'repairs' to be inspected, temporary patches replaced, and holes properly filled with skin insert repairs.

SPARE PARTS

At the beginning of March, I made a visit to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum (NVVM) on Phillip Island, VIC. We have been in contact with the restoration team to re-open lines of communication due to a change of volunteer members requiring refresh information. AAHC had previously assisted NVVM with parts for a Bell Kiowa that is a project, yet to be started, to add the type to the impressive ex-Vietnam Huey, Air Cobra and Bell 47 display. My mission was to access the Wessex spares cache for items required for the restoration of N7-214 at Caboolture as a return of favor arrangement.

There is also a complete Wessex sister helicopter acquired by NVVM after the fleet was retired in 1989 and now part of the display is available for the paying public to view.

The remaining Wessex spare parts inventory was transferred from Nowra to Williamstown and the cache was eventually handed over to NVVM. Following identification of a number of required items, I was able to physically sort cockpit windows, cabin transparencies, a couple of cockpit instruments and various useful parts from inventoried parts boxes. There remains a large number of steel stacking cages stored in a 40' container currently with a large quantity of uncatalogued Wessex parts.

Next action is to arrange road freight of the parts from Phillip Island to Caboolture.

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

During my visit to NVVM at Newhaven to see this large and comprehensive collection, founded and built by Vietnam Veterans, family members and volunteers, I was able to observe the daily business of allowing the public to view the history and artifacts collection from the Vietnam War period. The museum seeks to remember, interpret and understand the experience of the veterans during Australia's longest war and the enduring impact of the war on society.

A unique and impressive museum preserving Commonwealth, Ministry of Defence Army, Navy and Air Force history in a clear and engaging exhibition during a period many of us remember. Please take the time to visit when in the Melbourne area, you will be glad you did.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

ROD THIESFIELD

As you are no doubt aware, no “Not for Profit Organisation” can operate successfully without its fair share of Volunteers. Australian Aviation Heritage Centre (Qld) Inc., which was previously known as Beaufort Restoration Group, a not incorporated identity, is no exception to this rule.

Back in those “Heady” days of Beaufort Restoration Group, when it was domiciled at Nudgee Road in Hendra, the Organisation was very fortunate to have mentors who could relate their working skills from Commercial Aviation to new and existing Volunteers. Unfortunately, when Beaufort Restoration Group relocated to Caboolture Airfield, some of the mentors did not relocate with us, due to the amount of travel involved and their years of aircraft experience were lost.

Fast forward to 2011 when Australian Aviation Heritage Centre (Qld) Inc. was formed and incorporated for the purpose of supplying a labour force for the restoration to flight of Bristol Beaufort A9-141.

Unfortunately, Volunteers come and go as lifestyles change, skills are lost and new skills gained. At this point in time, Australian Aviation Heritage Centre (Qld) Inc. has 20 active Volunteers and is always looking for more. At the Organisation’s 2022 Annual General Meeting, the Secretary advised that around 199,800 man hours of labour had been provided to the various projects being undertaken in and around the hangar.

Current projects being undertaken by our Volunteers are:

1. **Beaufort A9-141:** Attachment of starboard wing, Reconstruction of the port wing, Glazing of the cockpit and navigator’s areas, Reconstruction of the fuel tanks & Reconstruction of the upper turret.
2. **Bell Kiowa Helicopter:** Now completely statically restored, absolutely superb and a credit to those involved in the restoration.
3. **Westland Wessex Helicopter:** Now relocated into the hangar and refurbishment to a static display has been commenced.
4. **Caribou A4-228:** Maintained as a static display.

Regardless of how small you think your contribution to a project is, your effort as a Volunteer is a valued part of the grand scheme of things, to get that project completed. None of us as Volunteers are looking for accolades for the work we do, merely the sense of satisfaction that the job was done to the best of our ability.

Volunteers, Australian Aviation Heritage Centre (QLD) Inc. is indebted to all of you and salutes you as a valued part of the Organisation.

Committee.

The committee is the backbone of the Heritage Centre and has many vacancies. It’s rewarding work pulling together the resources, events, restoration projects, and seeing these old aircraft given a new lease of life.

If you would like to join the committee, there is never a bad time to put up your hand and be part of a rewarding working group. Please contact Rod if you can help fill a position.

MEET THE COMMITTEE - RALPH CUSACK

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

1964, I saw my first World War II aircraft in Anthony Hordon's shop window in Sydney city soon found out it belonged to a Sid Marshall of Marshall Airway at Bankstown, at this era I was 16 years old, from this grew into a love of these type of aircraft.

From here I committed to being a volunteer every weekend from then until in the middle 1970 when I left Sydney to go to Brisbane to start a brake business for my employer at the time. In the early days I actually lived with Sid at the George's Hall home just on the edge of Bankstown airstrip. At Sid's passing in 1974. Sid had in his collection:

- a) **3 x Douglas DC-2** (1 off VH-CDZ this initially was used for joy flights over Sydney, the second one A30-14 VH-RED, which is the one I bought, this aircraft was then bought by the Dutch Dakota Association and returned to Holland. The third one was one of the "Great Silver City" fleet which is the one at Albury Wodonga now A30-11.)
 - b) I bought the remains of **3 x Avro Anson's** the Anson and restored was VH-AZU. This was the aircraft originally owned by Brown & Deauro from Melbourne, this aircraft is now displayed in the RAF Hendon Museum just out of London. I would have to do a lot of tracking back for the other two Anson's serial numbers.
 - c) **2 Complete Spitfires Mk 8 LF**, (MV239 & MV154) MV239 is the one currently at Temora and MV154 was the one smuggled out of the country by the UK people as scrap aluminium, out of Darwin which is now flying disguised as a Mk9 in the UK. Being brand new in business with no track record I tried buying this aircraft off Jack, but I couldn't raise the \$40G's necessary to acquire it.
 - d) **1 x Japanese KI43-C Hayabusa** (Code name OSCAR), this was sold by Jack Davidson to Col Paye at Scone who on sold it to New Zealand then bought by the Americans.
 - e) 1 x **Comptor Swift**, no sure what happened to it.
 - f) 1 x **Avro Cadet**. I believe this is still in country and suspect it's owned by Howard Jones.
 - g) 1 x **Messerschmitt ME109-G6**, after Sid's passing it was caught being smuggled out of the country as a Mustang by the Americans and from here it was acquired by the Australian WAR Memorial in Canberra
 - h) **Westland Widgeon**, not sure of its whereabouts or Rego.
 - i) **Henderson Baby**, the only thing I know of interest that someone bought it with the intension of making it operatable, it was unique because it was at that time the smallest aircraft ever. Its engine was out of a Henderson motorcycle.
 - j) **Auster** VH-EOI. Jack Davidson had totally built the aeroplane.
 - k) **Lockheed Electra 10B** VH-ASM, that ended up at Wodonga, lost track of it then once Dragges World had been sold up.
 - l) **DH Puss Moth** not sure of its whereabouts or Rego. This was also use as a joy flight aircraft. Possibly went to the Willey Roberts collection.
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While my working life began 1964 at Motor Trades (a Repco Company) in Sydney, while living at Liverpool in the Southwest area of Sydney. My employer put me through Business college, any many types of Mechanical TAFE courses.

Sid had left his collection to his L.A.M.E and after Sid's passing, I purchased off Jack Davidson all the remains of the Avro Anson's, then a short time later Douglas DC-2 (A30-14) VH-RED. Then moved them all to Brisbane, that was a true effort.

"I don't know what had come over me, talk about taking on large projects on!"

After moving to Brisbane, I came by a CAC built Boomerang A46-165 then had to buy a shed to house the growing collection. Then again, a short while later another aircraft found its way to me, that was Percival Proctor, the original owner as R.G. Casey one of the NSW Premier's and a wartime ministers.

Meanwhile my working career had started, in my own right, it meant I needed a larger shed that I would need to own.

A year or so later we had heard of some Beaufighter aircraft remains at Drysdale in Northern West Australia. We went on the trail and ended up bringing them back to Queensland then onto Sydney.

Meanwhile along the track came another aircraft which I shared ownership with, a complete CAC Wirraway A20-502 which was already in a museum at Ballarat in Victoria. Plus, another Wirraway found its way to me a complete fuselage but without covering which had come out of RAAF Museum at Point Cook Victoria.

It was at this stage in my life while managing all these events, I found myself confronted with a marriage breakdown and the downside or upside side depending on your way of looking at this, caused me to the divergence of all my collection except for one and that was my newest of the collection the Bristol, DAP built Beaufort.

After all this another aircraft project found me, an Auster MK7 which had served with the Royal Singapore Air Force, I ended up selling that into New Zealand which is being readied for flight.

After collecting from all over Australia and PNG every single bit of Beaufort I could put my hands on, plus the learning of the history of the Beaufort and just how important it is to our nation in many facet's. I soon realised that this project had to take front and centre position.

Now 2 other aircraft have found their way to me:

- **Chris-Lea Super-Ace - VH-BHA**
- An Australian designed **Fisher Kola**, this a competitor for the then Cessna C150A

I will add the Beaufort hasn't been easy since the collection in December 1984, it has been an incredible adventure full of ups and downs.

I will also add I have had a lot of good people help along the way with moving the Beaufort project towards the ultimate day, it takes to the skies again.



The Australian Aviation Heritage Centre located at Caboolture, Qld is dedicated to preserving the history of both military and commercial aircraft for this and future generations and to create a flying memorial to those who served as aircrew and ground crew in the RAAF during World War II. AAHC Qld is currently restoring DAP Beaufort A9-141 to an airworthy condition and have it fly for the first time since World War II. Through the acquisition of historically important aircraft, it is expanding its Warbird collection to preserve for future generations, significant examples of Australian achievement in aircraft manufacturing and engineering.

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OUR MISSION - Nine Objectives define our Mission

- 1) To preserve the history of both military and commercial aircraft for this and future generations.
- 2) To restore Bristol Beaufort A9-141 to airworthy condition and have it fly for the first time since World War II.
- 3) To create a flying memorial to those who served as aircrew and ground crew in the RAAF during World War II.
- 4) To preserve for future generations, a significant example of Australian achievement in aircraft manufacturing and engineering.
- 5) To remind Australians of the critical role of women in areas such as manufacturing munitions required for the defence of Australia.
- 6) To establish the aircraft as a focus for Australians to express their pride in past achievements.
- 7) To highlight the foresight of those industrialists and political leaders of the pre World War II era in recognising the need to build aircraft in Australia when war seemed imminent.
- 8) To demonstrate the gratitude of those who have benefited from the efforts and sacrifice of those Australians who participated in World War II.
- 9) To attend air shows throughout Australia thereby allowing an increased number of Australians to take pride in an historically important aircraft and in those who flew, serviced and built Beaufort's.