



As many members will already know, our long-serving librarian, Peter Williams, has had to stand down due to illness. Gordon Lasslett has gallantly volunteered to step into the vacancy left by Peter. We send our best wishes to Peter, and will arrange for the transfer to the library to East Lindfield in the near future.

**d) Membership Numbers/recruitment**

Alex Stewart reports that membership is still relatively static: there were 11 new members in 2012, and 2 in 2013. Various strategies are being considered for obtaining new members. The remainder of Alex Stewart's report is summarised in the Treasurer's report below.

Mike Garside is investigating advertising for members in "Defence News", either paid advertising or perhaps in return for an article. Gareth Morgan has arranged for links/references to the society in the online newsletters of the UK-based Western Front Association and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and the committee is looking at advertising in other publications.

**e) Barry Videon Database developments**

David Perkins provided a comprehensive update in the second part of the meeting, short summary set out below.

**f) May General Meeting**

Alex Stewart explained that it is intended to have three mini debates at this meeting on topics of general interest, to be decided with the volunteer debaters, who are to contact Alex after the meeting, in person or by e-mail/phone. The meeting in general considered this proposed format a good idea.

**g) August General Meeting**

Gareth Morgan has proposed that this meeting be held at "Fighter World" (brochure circulated) at Williamtown airbase. The World War I interest is a two thirds scale Fokker and Norm Forrester's handmade models, but the rest of the museum is of great interest to aviation enthusiasts generally. A Museum leaflet and some photographs were circulated, after which the members voted to have the August meeting at Fighter World. Gareth Morgan will contact the Museum to confirm our attendance.

**h) NZ Trip in November and other events**

Andrew Smith has ascertained that likely dates for departure and return are 8 and 13 November 2013 (Christchurch). This allows for attending the Masterton Air Show (North Island) on 9 November, a visit to the NZ Force Museum and on 12 November visit Peter Jackson's display and enormous World War I aircraft

collection at Omaka (South Island). Members complimented Peter Jackson's display and collection. The trip needs nine or more participants to be viable, however it is likely that there are sufficient numbers already. A minibus option is being explored. Members are recommended to contract Andrew Smith as soon as possible if wishing to enquire or participate.

Proposed visit to Qantas Heritage Museum: arrangements for a group to attend an outing in the future are being followed up by Andrew Smith. Parking is expensive and possibilities of a minibus are being considered, depending upon parking access.

**i) Mark Lax Literary Award for 2012**

The award, judged by the members of the committee, was presented by Gareth Morgan to Derek White for his most enjoyable article on W O Bentley and his engines, in the 2012 Journal.

**4. Correspondence and Reports.**

**a) Correspondence:**

Letter of condolence (from Gareth Morgan, President) to Ms Patricia Webster, the widow of member Peter Webster.

Letter to Prof Maurice Brearley (from Michael Garside, Vice President) asking whether he would like to be the guest of honour at the November annual general meeting.

Correspondence to and from "Defence News" from Michael Garside, Vice President.

Form from Australia Post changing our Printed Postage number

**b) Reports:**

**j) President (Gareth Morgan):**

Andrew and I visited the Australian Aviation Museum at Bankstown in January, and finally obtained a receipt for the Society goods stored there since May 2012. The Museum still plans to move to Camden this year, and we will be involved in the setting up of a dedicated Great War section in the new premises.

With Andrew, I will address a meeting of the Mosman Historical Society in March on the Great War in the Air, and the roles of Australia and, in particular, Mosman.

The Society was mentioned in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission online Newsletter in January, and we can expect another mention in the Western Front Association Newsletter in the next month or so. With luck, these will lead to some interest in us from around the globe, though the present high Australian dollar may be preventing some international colleagues from signing up.

I propose at some stage, for today's purposes at the conclusion of the formal part of the meeting, to open the floor to members who wish to bring to the attention of members anything of interest that they have found, research they are doing, or useful information. The meeting indicated general agreement.

#### ii) **VP Administration (Michael Garside)**

I have written to Prof Maurice Brearley asking if you would like to be our Guest of honour at the main (November) general meeting.

The Society is still looking for an appropriate patron, Angus Houston is being considered, and views on other appropriate patrons, or approaches by members, would be welcome.

#### iii) **Webmaster (Andrew Smith)**

I have now set up a new website which is much easier to manage as previously there were 1400 separate pages. There are now 17 photographic collections online, and it is hoped the links to all the information on the site are now easy to make. I am still working through downloading 20 hours of interviews with airmen carried out by our former president Eric Watson, but this is a time-consuming task.

I'm also working towards a database for the library which would have full search ability. A separate link to a modelling page, with reviews, is being established. An important aspect of the website is that it is now interactive, and thus readers can respond to articles.

An effective spam filter has now been obtained, spam being a significant problem previously.

In January 2013 there were over 1500 new visits to the site, and since the site was set up in August 2009 have been 36,000 visits, 24,000 of those being new.

Average perusal was 18 pages per visit. It is planned to also enable members who have previously submitted articles to the Journal to update their articles in a format to be downloaded.

Members complimented the Webmaster on his outstanding work on the new site, and his plans for the future.

#### iv) **Treasurer/Membership Secretary (Alex Stewart)**

I have previously reported on membership details. There is over \$5800.00 in the bank, which has been changed to Westpac with better fee arrangements. The financial situation of the society is comfortable. A draft budget has been provided

the committee. By the time of the meeting 88 members have paid for 2013, and membership payments continue to come in regularly.

**v) Newsletter Editor (Peter Chapman acting)**

Reported by Gareth Morgan on behalf of Peter Chapman, as above.

**vi) Liaison Co-ordinator (Greg Mullens)**

I am planning a Saturday night dinner in Chinatown following the May AGM. Members should telephone me to see how many would like to attend. I will be making arrangements to assist transfer of the library to Gordon Lasslett.

**vii) Librarian (Gordon Lasslett)**

I'm very happy to take over the management and care of the library. I have an area in the house where people can visit and if necessary carry out research, and I will make my home welcome to members.

**viii) Journal Editor (Peter Chapman)**

Reported by Gareth Morgan as above.

**ix) Secretary (Des Sheehan)**

Nothing to report as extremely new.

**Acceptance of Reports:** (m) Stephen Drew (s) Gordon Lasslett

**5) General Business:**

Mike Crisp donated magazines to the library. Jerry Weingarth gave his apologies for the remainder of 2013, as he will be returning to live in Catalonia (northern Spain), noting that members are welcome to visit him there.

Three books were donated to the Library:

*Ilya Muromets Type Veh* by Harry Woodman, was donated by Margaret Travers;

*Australian Flying Corps* by Ian Hodges, was donated by Steve Drew; and

*White's Flight* by Fred and Elizabeth Brenchley, was donated by Jerry Weingarth.

**6) Raffle Draw**

The new Raffle procedure was outlined by Derek White and Gareth Morgan. Derek White has tokens for each financial member, which will be drawn for first and second prizes at each meeting. Winning members will be recorded, and the prizes sent to them from The Book Depository in the UK directly, as that company offers free postage anywhere in the world. The selected books are significant prizes which should be of universal value to any winning member.

First prize (drawn by Alex Stewart junior): *No Empty Chairs* by Ian Mackersley was won by Mark Gasper (United States);

Second prize (again drawn by Alex Stewart junior): *Somme Success* by Peter Hart was won by David Solosy in Western Australia.

### **7) Next Meeting:**

**Venue:** Building 96, Victoria Barracks      **Date:** 18 May 2013  
**Time:** 13:30

**8) Formal meeting close:** 2:15 PM

## **Report on the remainder of the meeting**

### **General Information Session**

Gareth Morgan reported on two recently read books:

*Operation Kronstadt* by Harry Ferguson, about British efforts to operate intelligence agents inside Petrograd in 1919 and the consequent establishment of a clandestine naval base in what was then Finland. The book climaxes with the torpedo boat raid on the Bolshevik Fleet in Kronstadt harbour – where the RAF provided air cover.

*Engines of War* by Christian Wolmar about the significance of the railways in military history, especially the Great War, including the speculation that the German request for an armistice was agreed to by the Allies as their forces were, by then, more than 50 miles from the nearest supporting railhead. There were considerable logistic difficulties in advancing further.

Alan Cook has recently been to the Oakey Aviation Museum on the Darling Downs in Queensland. He found that there were five World War I aircraft in the museum, including a Bristol Boxkite, a Bristol Tourer, a Deperdussin, a replica Fokker Dr.I, plus a Maltese cross (perhaps one of many) said to be from von Richthofen's crashed aircraft. Clearly a museum worth visiting.

Mike Abbott, a new member, has been to Wanaka Airshow and Omaka (reported as very good). He is researching and writing on Daimler engines from 1888 onwards and would appreciate any information that members may be able to provide him. He has carried out

research in archives in Germany and elsewhere, and was wondering if there are any articles or other references (perhaps in the Society Journal) to which he can be referred. As an example he was referred by a member to the storehouse for the Powerhouse Museum, in Castle Hill, which holds some engines.

Des Sheehan reported on a recent book seen, "*The Past From Above*" editor Charlotte Trumpler, text by Georg Gerster (publisher Frances Lincoln UK 2005), which is a magnificent book with photographs of all the world's ancient ruins taken from the air by pilot Gerster over 30 years, up to the present day. The preface points out that the earliest sets of aerial photographs of archaeological sites were in fact taken by the German squadrons in World War I in what was then Palestine (opposing the British and number 1 Squadron AFC -- comprehensively reported in Michael Molkentin's book "*Fire in the Sky*"), commissioned by a German archaeologist described as the "general inspector of monuments in Syria and Palestine" under the command of Gen Ahmed Pasha. A number of photos are included, taken by airmen described as from German Air Force Squadrons 2 and 304. This was apparently part of their training, but the (many more) photographs in fact ended up as an important archaeological resource used by a range of later archaeologists, and capitalised on by the English archaeologist Osbert Crawford (formerly himself an observer with the RFC on the Western front), who then went on to document many further sites from the air.

### **David Perkins' summary of the current status of the Barry Videon database**

David described how he came to take over management of this database, consisting of a record with full details of all Australian airmen who served in World War I (including all personnel with the four Australian squadrons -- and two Australians who served with German squadrons!)

The database currently has 5638 names with over 50,000 details of those airmen recorded. Financial members have to seek a password from the database manager, e-mail is easiest, and the database can then be accessed. Members can access the full information on the database, but there will be an ability through the Society website for guests to access an airmen's name and basic details.

There are many portals to the database, and a range of groupings can be accessed using the site. Andrew Smith has been of great assistance with all of this.

David Perkins showed how an online portal can be opened to access, for instance, all airmen from Victoria, or those who were classified as "deserters" (anecdotes described) and, surprisingly, the airmen who flew with the German forces, having been originally born in Australia but returned to Germany prior to the war. There are many such portals.

The database manager would appreciate receiving individual photographs and information provided and verified by members, and these will be added to the database information. The website is interactive and these details can be provided through the site. Further names and information is constantly being supplied.

The database manager is currently finalising all individual photographs, or putting a group photograph with the nominated person where possible, together with a mountain of information on each airman. When the database is fully operational, we will seek reviews by our overseas counterparts, so that members of Cross & Cockade and Over the Front will be aware of the resource.

This is a work in progress, and is being set up so that management can be passed on. It is clearly already a magnificent resource. It is an astounding testament to Barry Videon, and David Perkins' work in putting it in an online form and with a variety of access is stupendous. The on-line demonstration at the meeting was particularly effective.

### **The Aeroplane Recognition Quiz**

Seven teams consisting mostly of three members participated in the quiz, prepared and run by Gareth Morgan, with David Perkins operating the on-screen images.

Teams had to identify aircraft shown on the screen in a colour side view from the R N Pearson series of drawings (over four rounds), specifying the manufacturer and the type of aircraft, and in round five, the aircraft type and the pilot who flew them.

Out of 92 possible answers, Bill Renfrew and John Baker scored 72, and were the winning team. Derek White, Andrew Smith and Alec Stewart (senior and junior) scored 62 and came second. The rest of us were some distance behind. Everybody present agreed that the quiz was challenging but great fun, and members attending looked forward to another at some later meeting. Congratulations to Gareth Morgan for preparing all the drawings for display and David Perkins for running the slide show.