

November 2013
Newsletter No. 148

AIRTOURER ASSOCIATION



Dedicated to the preservation and continued airworthiness of VICTA and AESL Airtourer Series Aircraft



NEWSLETTER

<http://www.Airtourer.asn.au>

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| Editor , John O'Halloran | Mobile: | 0411 968901 |
| P.O. Box 778, | FAX: | (07) 54425180 |
| Tewantin QLD 4565 | Phone: | (07) 54476604 |
| | Email | Editor@Airtourer.asn.au |

Articles for inclusion in the Newsletter should be submitted direct to John O'Halloran at the contacts listed above.

The next Newsletter will be published in February 2014. Contributions and or advertisements are to be with JOH by 15 January 2014.

Advertisements are free for current members.

Editorial

Congratulations to Mike Fisher on his first President's Fly-in and thanks to the Events Committee and Deniliquin local Gary Coote for a very enjoyable weekend.

We know that every man needs his "shed" but Lee Gordon-Brown generated a little envy in most of us with the visit to his hangar at Tocumwal.

Once the workload for webmaster's "day" job eases off he will get back to updating the Association's website. Thanks to Doug Stott for scanning old newsletters and Robert Zweck for supplying a number of old photos, particularly of Airtourers in Darwin pre cyclone Tracy. Check the website for the latest updates, major updates will be mentioned on the home page.

New Zealand member Dave Brown is involved with warbirds in NZ including being part owner of the original CT4 and an Airtourer T6. He has a good arrangement with photographer Gavin Conroy of Classic Aircraft Photography. Gavin has kindly allowed us to publish some of his photos, watch the website in coming weeks for updates.

Finally, Jan and I wish you all a great Christmas and a safe and happy 2014.

Safe Airtouring,

John O'Halloran

Cover Photo: Niels Jensen's CND during the visit to Tocumwal on the President's Fly-in weekend.

Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Publishers, the Airtourer Association or the Airtourer Co-operative Ltd.

From the President



I approached the Presidents Fly-in at Deniliquin with some trepidation, this is “The President’s” show and I am the President!

Fortunately my concerns were unfounded, and a good turn up of members helped share a good event.

The choice of Deniliquin proved very good with support from the Aero Club and our member on the ground Gary Coote. With organisation in the hands of the excellent events committee, a well-run event was assured.

I still remember attending my first Presidents Fly-in at Yarrandale, a long time ago. Being introduced to Sonny Rankin the founding President of the Airtourer Association was, in my eyes, no less an honour than meeting the President of the USA; not that I ever have. To Airtourer owners there are significant people in our community of interest, and Sonny, as one of the fathers of the Association, was one of them.

So with that tenuous portrait of historical continuity, safe and happy flying.

Mike Fisher

President's Fly-in 2013

Deniliquin

Mike Fisher welcomed the Airtourer community to Deniliquin in September for his first President's Fly-in since taking office.

Generally the weather was kind with clear skies, although the Queenslanders had to push into 25-30 kt headwinds. On the other hand Doug Dow and the Tilley's were appreciative of the tailwind crossing Bass Strait.

In these days of declining general aviation activity it is good to see an active aero club and it's appropriate that associations such as ours support these clubs. On arrival at Deniliquin we were greeted by local member Gary Coote acting as marshaller. In the clubhouse other Deniliquin Aero Club members supplied refreshments.

Accommodation was in the aptly named Riverview Motel overlooking the Edward River. On checking in, a number of members were found to be sampling the local beverages while enjoying the peaceful scene of the sandy riverbanks shaded by massive gum trees.

The Friday dinner was conveniently located at the hotel's restaurant and once again consisted of unfinished conversations as members attempted to catch up with each others news.

Saturday was intended to be a town tour including a viewing of the Bald Archies exhibit with a stop for morning coffee. The proximity of the coffee shop to the exhibition and the leisurely approach to country life resulted in the town tour be-



Doug Dow, John and Doreen Treble and Col Taylor enjoying the riverview at the hotel.

*Visiting the Co-op's "Bulk Store".
L to R: John Walton,
Gary & Jorga Coote,
Stan and Bonnie
Tilley, Pat Peak, Andy
Morris at the rear
with Jane Morris in
the front. Finally John
Day trying to hide
on the right.*



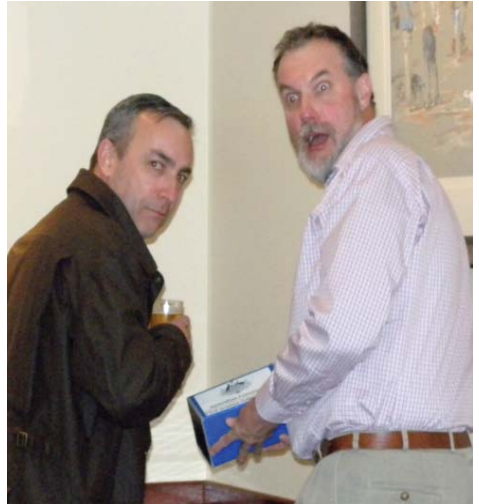
*Examining a control surface
skin: L to R. John Day,
Bonnie & Stan Tilley
with the expert, Andy Morris.*

ing skipped.

The Bald Archies is a spoof of the more serious Archibald Prize for portraiture. Politicians provide rich fodder for this form of satire with the “usual suspects” of Gillard, Rudd and Abbot proving popular. The winner this year was a very unflattering painting of mining billionaire Gina Rinehart. However, it should be pointed out that the winner is chosen by a sulphur crested cockatoo named Maude on the basis that she is as qualified to judge art as any other person in the land.

Lunch was provided by the Tocumwal Golf Club after a short flight to the World War II training field. Lee Gordon-Brown has a hangar there and stores a significant amount of the Airtourer Co-operative’s spares and jigs.

The Fly-in Dinner was held in a private room at the Deniliquin RSL. The highlight of the evening was an auction with the proceeds going to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Items sold ranged from the



Above: *Sign of trouble to come. President Mike Fisher (R) and Vice President John Day (L) looking guilty hatching a plan at the fly-in dinner.*

Below: *Mike Fisher presenting the CASA Brain for auction with consolation prize a scarf displayed by the Beryl “The Sheriff” Marshall*



frivolous, the CASA brain, (a box containing a peach seed, it looked like a brain but was too big to be CASA's), to serious items such as Cliff Tait's books donated by Hector Blemings. "Flight of the Kiwi", detailing Cliff's around the world solo flight fetched \$160 for the RFDS.

On Sunday morning the Association joined the Deniliquin Aero Club for their weekly breakfast. This event attracts visitors from neighbouring towns such as Finley, Tocumwal, Hay, Corowa and Echuca who welcome the excuse to go flying for what the Americans would call the \$100 breakfast. The activity often encourages the locals to take to the air as well, promoting general aviation.

By Sunday afternoon only two Airtourers remained as members headed home to be ready for work on Monday morning. The Victorians had the added incentive of having to beat an approaching front that could have precluded VFR.

Another great weekend with good weather, an appropriate range of activities but most importantly the camaraderie that's characteristic of our group. Well done and thank you to Mike and the events committee for his inaugural President's Fly-In. Also thanks to Gary Coote and the Deniliquin Aero Club.

Attendance List

| | |
|----------------------------|--------|
| John & Doreen Treble | CRK |
| Gerry Pels | DWT |
| George Penfound | MWR |
| Neil & Kath Jensen | CND |
| Stan & Bonney Tilley | MTL |
| Jane & Andy Morris | FVV |
| Mike Fisher & Jackie Brown | BNV |
| Jon & Rebecca Day | VRT |
| Pat Sheil | MWR |
| Andrew & Sharon Clement | KGR |
| John & Marja Walton | SHR |
| Gerry Lawson | MTI |
| John & Jan O'Halloran | COI |
| Liz Matthews | Car |
| Gary & Georgia Coote | |
| Jon & Mon Pels | LVU |
| Bob & Pat Peak | EQG |
| Doug Dow | BQK |
| Beryl Marshall | Car |
| Ian Close & Sue Harris | VVZ |
| Peter Coy | S'Star |

Auction Results

| | | |
|----------------------|---------|-------|
| Cap | Monique | \$10 |
| Restop | Ian | \$23 |
| Folder | Kath | \$25 |
| Flight of the Kiwi | JOH | \$160 |
| Water under My Wings | Ian | \$105 |
| CASA Brain/scarf | Margie | \$31 |
| | TOTAL | \$349 |



The lineup at Tocumwal.

Heard at the Hangar Door

Most pilots have probably heard of the story of the pilot who landed wheels up. When asked afterwards why he didn't notice the lack of drag, noise and buffeting from the landing gear he replied that he couldn't think straight because of a stupid horn going off. The bus driver at Deniliquin was faced with a loud and penetrating high pitched horn indicating the door wasn't closed. Convinced that it was false because the door was confirmed shut, he continued on his next run. Eventually, the noise was too much and he had to pull over and turn off the ignition. About that time it was discovered that the luggage from the last group had dislodged a cover to the emergency exit on the rear door which also triggered the alarm.

John Pels is recovering well under the attentive care of Monique after major heart surgery. We wish him well and hope to see him flying again soon.

Airtourer T6 LVV has been sold. It was owned by the Recreational Flying Company who used it for adventure flights out of Gympie in Queensland. The new owner is from Sydney and plans to put it on line with Air Combat Australia.

The **Hangar House** at Mudgee Airport, the location of the last Convention has honoured the Airtourer by naming one of the suites after the Airtourer. Their website, www.hangarhouse.com.au includes photos from the convention under the Aviation Themed Events menu.

Congratulations to founding Member **Harry Couzin** who was honoured by his local community of Urana who awarded him the title "Citizen of the Year" for his volunteer work.

Overflying Toowoomba on our way to Deniliquin we were passed a friendly greeting from an aircraft in the circuit. **Marilyn Anderson** (Airtourer 115 VH-MVF) has been appointed an instructor at the Darling Downs. Husband Mark Barnett notes that it doesn't pay well but it's good for Marilyn and he wishes that his office had a view like hers.

Briggs and Stratton are the current owners of the Victa lawn mower brand and kindly supported the last convention. The article on the facing page was included in the internal Briggs and Stratton newsletter. It included the photograph of the re-enactment of the handing over of the original weighing paperwork by Alan Wood.

Flying Victas!

Victa Airtourer celebrates 50th anniversary



We all know Victa has mastered the lawns of Australia, but did you know that in the 1960s Victa also mastered the air?

A keen aviator, Mervyn Richardson added aircraft manufacturing to his lawn mower success, forming an aviation division in 1960 to manufacture and develop a two-seat light aircraft. The Victa Airtourer was based on a competition-winning design developed seven years earlier in the UK. The first prototype flew in December 1961, with the first production machine flying in mid-1962.

In March this year, 60 Victa Airtourer enthusiasts along with 20 Airtourers came together for the weekend to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the registration of the first production aircraft. The celebration was held at a private airfield in Rylstone, Victoria.

The star attraction of the event was the Victa Airtourer VH-MVA - the very first production aircraft. Still in peak condition, it is regularly flown for pleasure by its co-owners Bob West and his son David.

Also at the event was Alan Wood who has had a long association with the Airtourer. During the 1960s he worked in Victa's Aviation Division in Milperra NSW, where he built the aircraft. Now aged 90, Allan still works as a licensed aircraft engineer and flies his own Airtourer regularly.

John Day, vice president of the Airtourer Association, says the event was a great success.

"It was great to get everyone together to celebrate the anniversary. We especially enjoyed flying in formation and practising our aerobatics, plus visits to the local winery were a big hit," says John.

Interestingly, the rights to the Airtourer were sold to Aero Engine Services Ltd who went on to produce the CT4 which is to this day a basic flight trainer for the RAAF. Operated by British Aerospace in Tamworth, the CT4 is favoured for its maneuverability and aerobatic capabilities which teach skills that are challenging without being too complicated.

Early advertisements for the Victa Airtourer offer free flying lessons with no cash outlay or deposit - a deal unlikely to be repeated these days!

The success of the Airtourer saw US manufacturers of light aircraft begin to 'price dump' their aircraft into Australia. Victa applied to the Australian Government for protection against this tactic. However, in 1966 after a much delayed Tariff Board Hearing, Victa ceased production. A total of 168 Airtourers were made in Sydney.

Flying the P40

Stan Tilley

I guess it was Kate's fault. We had not been skiing together for some years, so when Kate said that she had a conference to cover in Queenstown NZ and could we fit in a couple of days skiing at Coronet Peak, well I could not say "Yes!" fast enough.

Besides, NZ was on the agenda anyway. It was an opportunity to catch up with our youngest daughter Elspeth and her family in Wellington as well as my niece Bronwyn and family in Auckland. I could also check with Pacific Aerospace in Hamilton, from whom we are ordering Airtourer parts and International Composites in Auckland, who supply our windscreens.

It was great to visit Els. Wellington had just had a rather major earthquake, so when the earth started shaking at 12:02am in the night, I was rather shocked and apprehensive. But as Els and locals commented, "That was alright. It was only 5.2, not big enough to worry us too much."

The skiing was great too - "but am I getting a bit too old? Towards the end of the first day, I fell (in the tow queue of all places!), landed solidly on the ribs I had broken some years before - so had to have a rest day the next day.

The visits to the factories were very helpful and productive and the family visit to see Bronwyn and family was wonderful.

There was also a hidden agenda. Ardmore in NZ has a very active Warbird Association - and it is one of the few places in the world where there is a two cockpit Spitfire and it is sometimes possible to get to fly this machine. (Now who in the flying



fraternity does not want to fly a Spitfire?)

So I did a lot of homework and was able to book a flight in the Spitfire, well almost, because when it came to the crunch the Spit was normally available but there had been trouble with the Rolls Royce Merlin. The required part had been received from England but the motor was still undergoing ground runs.

The two cockpit Spit is interesting. Normally the Spit is very much a single seat aircraft. New pilots would spend some time reading the handbook, sitting in the aircraft and memorizing the controls - then the next step was to fly!

I'm sure it was our old Airtourer mate, Roy Riddel who told me that on his first flight, he had been told to fly a couple of circuits and NO AEROBATICS. Roy of course had to try a few rolls and the engine stopped. Apparently he made a successful return to the field, landed too fast and went through the fence at the end of the runway. Roy then had to face his CO, who is reported to have said,

"I bet it was GR-W. The bloody engine is always stopping and causing us trouble. I hope you wrote it off completely."

Anyway, a few Spits were made with two separate cockpits, complete with full controls. (For the Irish - To be sure, to be sure.) The NZ aircraft is not one of these. It started off with a single seat, and was

modified in NZ when the two seat conversion became available from a crash in the USA.

As compensation for not flying the Spitfire, I was offered a flight in a P40. Now the P40 is also an interesting aeroplane. It was developed from the Curtiss Hawk series first produced in America in the late 1930s. In fact it was the best and almost the only American fighter available when the 2nd World War started. Powered by the Allison V12 of about 1200BHP, it was not as fast as the Spitfire, Messerschmitt or Zero, particularly at altitude, but was a very strong and stable gun platform and flown well could hold its own.

Like all wartime aircraft the P40 was modified many times to improve its performance and range. Many were supplied to England, France, Russia and Australia. Initial versions were called Tomahawks by the Brits and were used extensively in the North Africa campaign. Later improved models were called Kittyhawks.

OK, my first choice was the Spitfire but Roy had flown Kittyhawks when he moved from England to Australia, so I was just as keen.

In fact the aircraft I was offered was a Kittyhawk IV. It had an amazing history and had flown with the No. 75 Squadron RAAF at Milne Bay.

THIS WAS THE VERY SQUADRON THAT ROY RIDDEL JOINED AFTER RETURNING FROM FLYING SPITS IN ENGLAND.

WHAT'S MORE, ROY, WHEN FLYING A P40 WITH 75 SQUADRON, HAD SHOT DOWN TWO ZEROS.

This story is told in the book "Onward Boy Soldiers - the battle for Milne Bay" by James Henderson, who was a very young

soldier at Milne Bay.

My P40 was A29-448, a Kittyhawk IV.

I do not know if Roy ever flew this aeroplane but it was in the squadron when Roy was there. A book titled "The Whole Nine Yards" has been written about the recovery and restoration of A29-448 and Roy is mentioned several times.

The title of the book refers to the nine yards of 0.5 caliber machine gun belts used to feed the six machine guns. Working machine guns are available and at times are fitted to A29-448.

A29- 448 first arrived in Australia in June 1942 and after assembly and testing finished up with 75 Squadron in New Guinea.

It flew against the Japanese, with only a couple of incidents until May 1944. Then, at Tadjai airstrip on the north coast of New Guinea, near the border of then Dutch New Guinea, it had a complete electrical failure. The failure meant a complete loss of hydraulics for the undercarriage and no power for the electric propeller - so it ended up being a "wheels up" landing. Damage was assessed as too great for repair so there it stayed, gradually losing bits to keep other P40s flying, until spotted by a recovery team sometime in the 60s.

In April 1997 Pacific Aircraft in New



A29-448 GAC as found at Tadjai airstrip.

Zealand commenced work on the restoration, however the company folded and work was continued by Pioneer Aircraft Restorations. It was a massive project and took years. Thousands of parts had to be acquired but fifty five years after it last flew A29-448 took to the air again. As mentioned, the restoration has working machine guns available - and ammunition is no problem!



A29-448 Restored and flying again.

The restoration included the addition of a second seat placed behind the pilot in control. This seat is complete with control stick, throttle and rudder pedals and a few basic instruments. Hence I was able to actually fly the beast.

There were problems of course the main one being I couldn't see ahead at all! My mnemonic for my own aerobatic flights is "HOTS", Height, Orientation, Traffic and Safety. Orientation was hopeless as I had only poor sideways vision.

However, it was great. The roll rate is fantastic, the elevator control is nicely balanced but the rudders are pretty heavy. This could have been accentuated by the second cockpit placing which meant the rudder bars were set very high and positioned above a fuselage bulkhead.

Compared to the glamour aircraft of



Not the best position for flying the P40 but fun anyway.

World War two, such as the Hurricane and Spitfire, the Kittyhawk is in fact underrated. Experts say the performance, roll rate and speed is better than the Hurricane. Some pilots even say it is nicer to fly than the Spitfire, but the Allison engine, although reputedly smoother and easier to maintain than the Merlin, was never developed to the degree that the Merlin achieved and so the Kittyhawk was definitely inferior at higher altitudes.

My safety pilot, Frank Parker was excellent and of course did most of the flying including the takeoff and landing but Frank did allow me to follow through his manoeuvres and also allowed me to do a few aros on my own, Thanks Frank!

Frank runs Ardmore Helicopters. He and his wife both own and fly Harvards in formation. For their day jobs, Frank and his wife both fly Boeing 777s.

But I will have to go back.

I still want to fly the Spitfire!

George's First Aircraft

George Penfound found a model of a Hawker Hurricane in Lee Gordon-Brown's hangar and related the following story.

"The Hawker Hurricane was the first plane that I sat in. 1942 and my father was working as an electrician on an airfield at Tangmere and on one Sunday morning he took my brother and I to see the aircraft. A rather jolly gentleman, (I thought), kind of waddled up to us and suggested he put the boys in the aircraft, my brother who was a year and a half older than me was terrified of the idea but I was all for it so my father and this gentleman put me in cockpit of a Hawker Hurricane. I was three years old and the gentleman was Douglas Bader. I next met up with him in 1976 in Perth on the Perth -Sydney Air Race and we spent several evenings together. He even carried all our luggage to Sydney in Max Hazelton's Piper as the Airtourer would have been overloaded."



Committee News

Membership renewals are progressing well. Please check if you have renewed this year, we understand that everyone is busy and it's easy to overlook the renewal. Inability to login to the website is a good indication that your membership is not current.

The Association has been supporting the Royal Flying Doctor Service for some years. The Committee agreed to approach the RFDS about becoming an official supporter and making the RFDS the Association's official charity. More on this subject at the next AGM.

Cooperative News

Windscreens have been an ongoing concern. Three samples have been obtained from a firm in NZ for evaluation.

The test plan for recertification of the usable fuel is in the CASA approval process. The test aircraft, COI, will need to be put in Experimental for the testing. We are awaiting final approval and the availability of the test pilot from his "day job".

The Board continues with it's development of a long term plan to ease the load on Alan Wood. Currently they are conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis and will report progress to the next AGM.

Revisions to the Maintenance Manual and Parts Catalogue have been raised and will be available on the website shortly. Thanks to Lee Grodon-Brown.

Airtourer Co-operative Stocktake

Tocumwal November 2013

Stan Tilley

Most members of the Airtourer Co-operative are familiar with the drama of getting the Airtourer Type certificate, jigs, parts and drawings etc. back from the failed Millicer Aviation – but are we all aware that our member Lee Gordon-Brown has provided free storage in his magnificent hangar at Tocumwal?

Lee has done a power of work over the years, including upgrading the Parts and Maintenance Manuals, plus much racking and listing of parts including material from Alan Wood's hangar at Hoxton Park.

But we have also been aware that we, the Co-op. have needed a full and complete stock-take, so I decided that we would commence this work on the weekend of the 15th and 16th November.

Unfortunately, the 14 days notice given was not sufficient. We had been liaising with Lee and John and Rebecca Day, so with Bonnie and me, this was the team.

Saturday it was on. With each of us doing about seven hours work, we were able to do about 30% of the job. John's comments were. "This included items purchased from Paul Carey's estate and some existing stock. Importantly the actual location (shelf number) is also known thus making finding items in the future easier. It would seem that the amount paid for Paul's inventory was money well spent particularly for T6 support. It should be noted that Jon Pels generously transported the items to TOC."

John also commented that from what we observed and learnt along with

some calculations Bonnie made it should be possible to finish the stock take in a weekend (two full days) with a team of 6 people. This team ideally would consist of:

- 2 people doing data entry on two laptops and then merging them after the job is completed.
- 1 person, with a good knowledge of Airtourer components, to identify items that do not have part numbers. These items need to be labelled for future reference.
- 3 people counting parts and giving the number and location of items to those doing the data entry.

Both Lee and I had commitments on the Sunday.

Bonnie and I departed Hobart/Sandfly on Friday – flying the 470 miles non-stop to TOC in just over four hours. We had booked in to Langford House B&B for two nights, but it was not to be!

Spencer and Corrie had 'messed up' and double booked – but Spencer was wonderful. Initially there was some confusion because for some reason our mobile phones did not work in TOC. (I sent a message – which would you believe was received by *another Spencer* – 48 hours later, who was mightily confused – to be told that S&B had arrived at TOC,) Anyway, the correct Spencer had booked (and paid for) other accommodation for Friday night, where we enjoyed a good counter meal, but Spencer insisted that we have both breakfasts at Langford, but we were definitely booked for Saturday, including dinner. They also in-

vited John and Rebecca to dinner. (Spencer also loaned Bonnie and me a car.)

John and Rebecca had arrived early Saturday (as well as Victa, their new dog) and were staying in the caravan Park. In the meantime Lee, who was holding the air force together, had flown up late Friday from Sale.

Special mention and thanks must be given to Becky who spent all day on the laptop recording results and Lee who is a wizard when it comes to identifying parts.

Lee flew off to Essenden late Saturday afternoon and we flew back to Hobart/Sandfly, Sunday morning, again non-stop in about four hours. We were just in time to join in a final Gospel Concert where I was supposed to be a useful bass.

And John and Rebecca? Well, they both spent a few more hours working on the stock before heading back to Melbourne by car.

Thank you to everyone concerned!

FOR SALE

Airtourer VH-UQX



TTIS 4860,150HP Lycoming 0-320 E2D,

Fixed Pitch Propeller Sensenich 74 DM 6S5-1.5-60.

Both engine and prop have approx 1387 hours to run.

Drawings of 150HP conversion. Cleveland Brakes and Wheels. New TKM Radio.

Fresh 100hrly and always Hangared

\$56,000

David Hall - 08 86833211 or 0428837227 fishall1@bigpond.com

Calendar of Events

Goulburn Valley

7-8 December 2013

2014 Convention & Annual General Meeting

21-23 March 2014
Wentworth NSW.

2014 Victorian Winter Gathering

A return to the John and Monique Pel's very popular Hangar House at Riddels Creek Airfield in the foot of the Macedon Ranges. You can fly, drive or even catch the train to this one. More details and dates closer to the time.

Latest information on the website

Welcome

Welcome back to **Lyn Butler** from Roseville NSW. Lyn has joined our gatherings recently as a guest of Judy Riddel. She was a member about 10 years ago and while no longer owning an aircraft Lyn has fond memories of flying Airtourers in the 1960s.

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and Safe Flying



President Mike Fisher would like to thank the Committee and other members of the Association for their enthusiastic support during the year and wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Safe 2014.

