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# AIRTOURER ASSOCIATION



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



# NEWSLETTER

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

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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 2016. Contributions and or advertisements are to be with JOH by 15 January 2016.

Advertisements are free for current members.

## Editorial

Please accept my apologies for the delay in receiving this Newsletter. There is a lot going on with the Association, the Co-op, my day job and of course we're now into the silly season.

It was a pleasure to meet the extended Millicer family at Temora and Wagga Wagga and to see Henry honoured by being inducted into the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame. I had the privilege of meeting Henry on a couple of occasions and, not surprisingly, always managed to learn something. Well done to Deb Evans for her nomination published on page 14. It is very detailed and obviously the result of some careful research.

After the event Doug Stott suggest a special edition of the Newsletter with Deb's nomination and the AAHOF citation. Unfortunately I didn't have the time but after reading Deb's work anything else would be redundant.

One reason for my time being constrained has been Co-op business, especially with CASA issuing an Airworthiness Bulletin. Doug Stott is also working with CASA regarding AD/VAT/28. The Co-op will contact members shortly with more information but in the short term keep an eye on the website for the latest updates.

This has been a busy year for me in a number of ways. It would be impossible for me to manage what I do achieve without the help of Jan, particularly her 'school teacher' editing skills. Thank you, Jan.

Merry Christmas and have a great and safe 2016,

*John O'Halloran*

*Cover Photo: Millicer family with a very original Airtourer 115, BQK.*

*L to R: Henry's son and daughter Richard and Helen, grandson Albert, great grandson Marcus and grandson Sebastian.*

## 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

## No.10

Since I last wrote to you the Association Winter Lunch attracted 22 members and friends with a number of apologies. This year's theme, which was an Indian lunch, was something of a new experience for some. By weight of numbers we were able to have our own room which must have been appreciated by the other diners given the volume of noise from our group. After an enjoyable and filling long lunch the group made its way down the street for coffee and cake. Some even carried on into the evening and were seen roaming the streets of Kyneton the next morning.

Congratulations to David Wearne in company with Beryl Marshall, and Andrew Clement who were able to fly in to Kyneton Airfield. Also welcome to Ivan and Nola Porteus who attended their first Airtourer Association event.

On another subject, did you ever watch the science fiction TV series "Star Trek Next Generation"? While over 25 years old the sets and special effects are still convincing. Take the control displays in the Star Ship Enterprise, just a wipe of the hand is all that is required to activate a function, just like today's iPad or smart phone. Surely an example of art predicting the future. As with every series there has to be a frightening enemy, in this case the BORG, a race of beings half human, half machine and lacking any individual intelligence or initiative are intellectually linked together as a collective via their space craft, a featureless black block. BORG are created by forcibly assimilating



others into the collective, their mantra being "to resist is futile"

In a similar style another brilliant CASA project in collective intelligence, the Part 61 Aircrew Licence, designed to harmonise our rules, with who or with what and to what advantage has never been explained. If you now have a Part 61 licence have a good look at it and wade through the many pages to section XIII Conditions/Licence Remarks; Photo Identification: "The Licence holder must carry at all times a valid form of photo identification when exercising the privileges of the licence". There being little use for either an Aircrew Licence or ASIC when shopping for tomatoes at ALDI you obviously must carry the useless AVID or equally obscure ASIC with you when flying.

Up until now the ASIC, or what I call the NAZI Card, has been to us GA pilots something associated with airports that have an over inflated view of their own importance, such as Mildura, where if one were seen on the tarmac without the NAZI card created immediate and justifiable grounds for imprisonment.

This overly oppressive regime at so called security controlled small airports has caused some concern when organizing events. We rejected Mildura in favour of Wentworth but a sensible approach at Bathurst allowed the Association to visit for the first time this year.

Clearly “to resist is futile”, the AVID is not a serious option and until common sense prevails in Canberra (stop laughing) if you want to be a pilot get an ASIC.

And to close on the subject of Star Trek predicting the future “a race of beings half human, half machine and lacking any individual intelligence or initiative that are intellectually linked together as a collective” must surely be a job description for anyone in CASA head office.

On a far sadder note two stalwarts of the Airtourer Association are no longer with us, and although a much fuller tribute to John Treble and Bob Peake will be found elsewhere in the newsletters I would like to make one small observation. Bob rang me just prior to the Winter Lunch to give his apologies, and in conversation I expressed a wish to attend Oshkosh. Bob and Pat must have attended Oshkosh more times than anyone I know, so they are experts on the subject, Bob's reply was to please go.

I guess what he was saying was go while you can.

The 2015 Presidents Fly-In for this year was a very aviation centred event with visits to two aviation collections/Museums, an Airtourer formation and display flying by lesser aircraft types at Temora, a failure of RAAF aircraft serviceability preventing participation in our event, a visit to the RAAF base at Wagga, visiting Wagga Aero Club and of course the Asso-

ciations participation and representation at the annual AAHOF awards where Dr. Henry Millicer was inducted into AAHOF. Despite the considerable complications of trying to coordinate our activities with a number of other organizations and sub entities spread over two locations the event was a great success.

Anyone who attended the AAHOF dinner and Induction ceremonies could not come away anything but impressed.

The Association Committee, in keeping with our policy of supporting aviation standard bearers, has agreed the Association become a member of AAHOF.

Keep checking the website for event updates.

Given we cancelled the Dubbo based event to attend AAHOF, the Events Committee have elected to use this preparation to conduct the 2016 Convention at Dubbo.

A ground party will be visiting as soon as possible to complete arrangements.

The Yarra Valley region has also been selected for the 2016 Winter Lunch.

## For Sale

### Overhauled Lycoming 0-320 160 HP

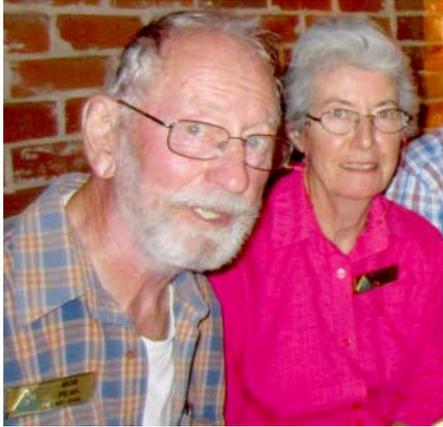
New Slik mags, rebuilt 10-5217 carby. New Skytec lightweight starter, motor is set up for constant speed prop with governor gear drive.

Aircraft is sold so must sell.

Reduced to \$28,000 or Make a reasonable offer & Ph Col 0429 328 598.

Located @ Mallacoota Vic.

## Vale Bob Peak



In July the Association learned the sad news that long time and very active member Bob Peak had passed away suddenly.

Born in 1934, Bob found responsibility thrust upon him at an early age when his father went off to fight in World War II leaving him to help his mother bring up two younger brothers.

He showed an early interest in aviation and at age 17 won a scholarship to RAF Cranwell for officer training. Unfortunately his father, who had just returned from extended service in Germany, declined to sign the papers. Instead Bob turned to Civil Engineering, a field he remained with for the rest of his working life.

Bob and Pat grew up within a half a mile of each other in Hendon in the north west of London and even attended the same primary school. They met up again in 1952 at Hendon Tech where Bob was studying for his National Certificate in Engineering and Pat was doing a secretarial course. They married in 1955 and celebrated their 60th anniversary in April this year.

The UK was still struggling post WW II and Bob and Pat, now with eldest son Jon, moved to Australia in 1962 as “Ten pound Poms”. The move was made easier as the extended family, including Bob’s parents and brothers had made the move years earlier.

Bob continued his civil engineering professionally with construction companies and privately by building a house in Gympie. They used second hand convict made sand stock bricks mostly from terraces demolished in Redfern. Pat, being the “chief builders labourer”, cleaned the old mortar off 27,000 bricks estimating she moved each one at least six times.

Bob returned to his interest in flying in early 1970 and at one point took the whole family to the Narromine Soaring Centre’s week long “learn to fly a glider” course.

His first introduction to flying the Airtourer was RQL at the Royal Aero Club of NSW. He owned a number of Airtourers working up in engine size from MOA, a 100, through MRE, a 115 and finally EQG a Super 150. 'Erica' (EQG) was his second love (after Pat), and he looked after her like she was part of the family. Erica was always well polished and shone brightly. In recent years he bought his 'third' love, a Rover 3500. The rover (which didn't have a name) was built in England in 1969, the same year as EQG first flew in New Zealand.

Bob was also active at Hoxton Park airfield and was a member of the NSW Sport Aircraft Cub at Wedderburn where he owned a couple of hangars in the early days.

One interest outside aviation was traditional tools which he collected from a very early age having purchased his first chisel with pocket money from his grandfather at 11. Bob and Pat were founder members of Sydney "Traditional Tools Group", dedicated to the preservation and continued use of tools and trades. With this group they set up a stall at the "Working with Wood" Shows and the Milton markets (South coast NSW) buying and selling old tools for many years. Pat now has a shed full of old tools neatly arranged on a number of workbenches. One of these benches was presented to Pat as a birthday gift, much to Pat's delight and Mother-in-law's horror. Both Pat and Bob enjoyed restoring and making furniture.

Bob served the Airtourer community by joining the Board of the Co-operative and acting as custodians of the drawings for many years. Pat continues to assist Phil Usher with the drawings today. Bob, Pat and EQG were always to be seen at our fly-ins and he went out of his way to share the joy of the Airtourer with the locals by taking them flying.

Bob will be missed at our gatherings but it was great to see not only Pat but sons Jon and Chris and grandson Josh at the President's Fly-in in September. Our thoughts go to Pat and the family and we hope to see them at our future gatherings.



*Bob and Pat just airborne in the beautifully maintained Airtourer Super 150 EQG.*

# President's Fly-in 2015

*John O'Halloran*

The flexibility of the Events Committee was tested with the initial plans for the 2015 President's Fly-in being amended after an email from the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame (AAHOF). AAHOF was formed in 2011 with an aim to recognise people and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to civil aviation in Australia and Australians who have made an outstanding contribution internationally. Not only outstanding contributions of the past, but to also inspire future generations to achieve excellence in all they do and further develop aviation for all. Airtourer designer Henry Millicer was being inducted into the Hall of Fame over the same weekend and of course it was appropriate that the Association be part of the event.

Special acknowledgement must go to Association member Deb Evans for nominating Henry. Her nomination is published elsewhere in this newsletter.

The AAHOF activities included the Temora Aviation Museum's flying display on Saturday before moving to Wagga Wagga for the gala induction dinner that night.

The Association's fly-in activities commenced on Friday at Temora. Unfortunately the aircraft numbers were less than normal with heavy rain in Queensland but more significantly two regulars, CRK and EQG missing with the passing of John Treble and Bob Peak. It was good to see Pat Peak with sons Jon and Chris and grandson Josh joining in with our activities.

After the usual noisy first night it was a reasonably early start at the museum for a slow look around followed by the flying display. Before the display we were treated to an interview with one of the museum's pilots, Paul Simmons. Paul is one of Australia's most experienced F18 pilots and an "A" Category Fighter Combat Instructor. Paul was also involved with Airtourers and was flying MTP when it suffered an oil loss leading to an engine failure. Despite limited experience on the Airtourer Paul successfully force landed it without any damage in a challenging wind.

The flying display was of course quite impressive but the highlight of the day was meeting the Millicer family. Their enthusiasm for the Airtourer matched my memories of their father. It was quite a treat hearing first hand from someone who flew in the early Airtourer, not the



*It was good to see John Sheehan able to make it to the fly-in, seen here at the Museum with his daughters Cindy and Alyssa.*



*Above: Formation between Temora and Wagga Wagga.*

*Below: "There we were!", every formation flight requires a debrief with ample use of hands. L to R. Jane and Andy Morris, Doug Dow, Mike Fisher (rear), Richard Millicer, Andrew Clement, John O'Halloran, Helen Millicer and David Wearne.*





*Pre Induction Dinner drinks:*

*Above: L to R, Becky and John Day, Mike Fisher, Jan O'Halloran.*

*Below: L to R, David Wearne, Sharon Clement, Monique and Jon Pels.*

*(Photos courtesy of AAHOF and John Egan, [www.johnandmariaegan.com](http://www.johnandmariaegan.com))*



Victa but the original wooden FMM.

Since we had to fly to Wagga Wagga for the dinner it was appropriate to do so in formation and let the city know something special was happening. Even more special, the Millicer family once again experienced the joy of flying in the Airtourer, this time in formation.

The evening commenced with cocktails in the gardens of Charles Sturt University before being piped to dinner by bagpipes. The dinner itself was punctuated by a number of inductions with Henry in the good company of other Australian aviation greats such as Charles Ulm and P.G. Taylor. Henry's induction was acknowledged by his daughter Helen with the following address.

*Mayor, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, members of the AAHOF Board and Sponsors of AAHOF, on behalf of my family, those here today and those unable to be here, a big thank you.*

*Dad would be very proud and delighted to receive this award. Thank you for the honour.*

*Today, Rick and I had the joy of flying in a formation of Victa Airtourers from Temora to Wagga Wagga. It was a superb experience, plus we shared in the camaraderie of the Airtourer Association. These are people who love and delight in the aerodynamic beauty of this plane.*

*The flight took me back to my childhood flights with Dad. As a refugee im-*



*The Millicer family and AAHOF Board Members with the Certificate of Induction. L to R: Jennifer Graham (Board Member), Albert and Sebastian Hempel (Henry's grandsons), Helen Millicer (daughter), Marcus Hempel (great grandson), Richard Millicer (son) and Jeff Boyd, (Board Member and Chairman of the Board of CASA.) (This photo and facing page courtesy of John Egan and the AAHOF)*

*migrant he loved this country, this big country, and he loved flying. He was a passionate man, a larger than life character. He had a big picture vision for the future and was determined to achieve it. Indeed he needed this to overcome so many obstacles in his life.*

*He could see the future, he could picture the future, the possibilities. He would be delighted with the establishment of the Hall of Fame. He dared to envisage and pursue aeronautical production in Australia, aeronautical design in Australia. He saw Australia as part of an international canvas. If Dad was here today, he would challenge us, he would say 'Celebrate the past and create the future'. Create a great future, of industry with design, fact and science not doubt or evasion, of smart policies with the right programs and frameworks. He would call for a Minister for Science, for Industry, for Manufacturing. He would say 'Think Big!! Celebrate the past and create the future.' It is indeed up to us.*

Sunday morning was off to an early start with a visit to the RAAF School of



*Helen Millicer presenting the acceptance speech with Geoff Boyd, Chairman of the CASA Board looking on.*

Technical Training (RSTT). We had access to the hangars where the apprentices are introduced to working on real aircraft that have been retired from service. In typical RAAF fashion the hangars were spotless and all tools well arranged on shadow boards. The aircraft were most Macchi jet trainers with some Iroquois helicopters and even a Metroliner. We also saw a glimpse of 21st century training with a generic aircraft based on the BAE Hawk. The training aid would allow instructors to introduce various faults into the computer controlled simulated aircraft.

The next treat was a close look at a F-111 bomber. When the F-111s were retired a small number were allocated to museums around Australia, the RSTT Wagga museum being one of them. The aircraft is currently not on public display so we were privileged to be given close up access. The morning ended with a visit to the museum and, for the editor, a nostalgic look around a Mirage III fighter at the front gate.

The official events for the weekend concluded with a BBQ hosted by the Wagga City Aero Club. Another very successful and interesting weekend full of history.



*Alan Wood in the front seat of the Macchi jet trainer.*



*Above: Rebecca Day and Mike Fisher in a Macchi jet trainer at the RAAF School of Technical Training. Who is the student and who is the instructor?*

*Below: Graham Wood receiving instructions on flying the Metro from Monique Pels. Monique spent time in Darwin on the Metro building up her turbine hours before being hired by Qantas Link.*





*The business end of the F-111 bomber. It's easy to see how it can do Mach 2+.*



*The editor enjoying a little nostalgia. Iroquois helicopter 455 was the first RAAF aircraft he flew in. That was as an Air Training Corps cadet in 1972 at RAAF Amberley.*

**Attendees**

Jon & Mon Pels	DWT
Gerry Pels	DWT
Jane and Andy	FVV
Lyn Butler	Car
Pat Peak	Local
Jon Peak	Car
Chris & Elliot Peak	Car
Doug Dow	BQK
John and Rebecca Day	Car
David Wearne	WAU
Stan Tilley & Don Praire	MTL
Andrew & Sharon Clement	KGR
John & Jan O'Halloran	Car
John, Cindy & Alyssa Sheehan	Car
Alan & Graham Wood	MGM
Barry McCrow	TPY
Garry Coote & son	CKE
Bob West	Car

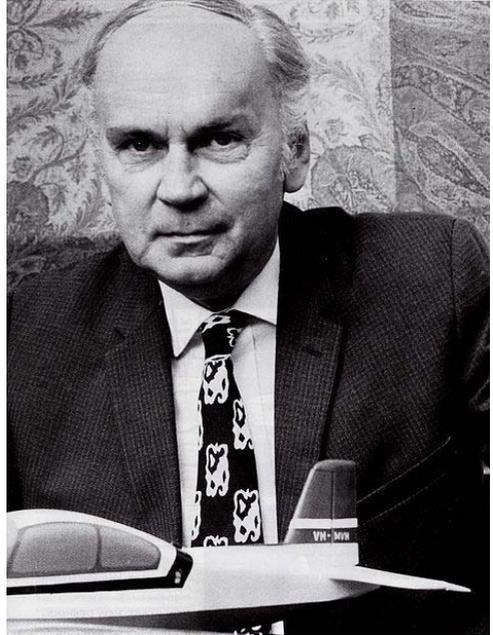
# The Australian Aviation Hall of Fame Nomination

## Dr. Henry K. Millicer AM

Henry Millicer is a worthy nomination to the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame as his contribution to Aviation and aeronautics from his arrival in Australia in 1950 until his passing in 1996 has been significant and without equal. His passion for flying and his expertise in aircraft design has left a legacy of pilots and aeronautical professionals in Australia that continue to enjoy the fruits of that passion.

Henry Kazimierz Millicer was born in Warsaw, Poland on 11 June 1915, the son of Kazimierz Millicer, a university professor whose family was descended from Baron Karl von Miltzer. Henry developed an early interest in aviation. At the age of 9, he won an aeromodelling competition with his prize being a flight in a former Polish Air Force rotary-engined, Henriot biplane of World War I vintage. The young Henry Millicer then went on to build a successful primary glider but, still too young to fly himself, he lent it to the Warsaw Aero Club. At 17, Henry qualified as a glider pilot and later set a new distance record in Polish gliding whilst, achieving his Gold C distance simultaneously. In 1935 Henry joined the Polish Volunteer Air Force Reserve and gained his pilot training. He was selected to represent Poland as a member of the Polish Gliding Team to compete in the 1940 Olympic Games, which were abandoned due to World War II.

Henry qualified with a Degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Warsaw



Polytechnik. He became a junior designer at the PZL national aircraft factory. During World War II, Henry flew army observation aircraft against the German offensive for a time, and was awarded the Polish Air Force Cross.

After being taken prisoner in Romania whilst taking delivery of Hawker Hurricanes and Fairey Battles shipped from England, Henry escaped and then served for a time in a squadron of the French Air Force. When France fell in 1940, he escaped across the Channel to England. There, he joined the Royal Air Force as a pilot, in 1940 flying Blackburn Bothas and Vickers Wellingtons. He was awarded the Polish Military Medal. In

October 1941 Henry lost his flying status due to medical reasons and then served as an interpreter and studied at the Imperial College in London until his discharge from the RAF on 6 August 1947.

After gaining his Master of Science in Aeronautics in 1945, he took out British citizenship. He joined Airspeed as an aerodynamicist and worked on the design of the Ambassador airliner. In October 1947 Henry joined Percival Aircraft Ltd to work on the Prentice and became a member of the design team as the project aerodynamicist which developed the Provost Military Trainer utilized by the RAF and other airforces as a basic trainer.

During 1950, Henry was offered a position as a Senior Aerodynamicist with the Government Aircraft Factories (GAF) in Melbourne. Joining GAF in August 1950, he worked there for 10 years, becoming responsible for the aerodynamics of the Jindivik Mk.2 and 3 and the design of the Malkara anti-tank missile. He was subsequently promoted to Chief Aerodynamicist.

During this time Henry maintained his participation in gliding and flying as a member of Victorian Motorless Flight Group and the Royal Victorian Aero Club. During the early 1950s he devoted his spare time to the development of an advanced two-seater sailplane. When the Royal Aero Club in London announced a Commonwealth-wide design competition for a light aeroplane "suitable for air touring, economical to construct, operate, maintain and easy to fly". The specification seemed made to his order and, with two GAF colleagues, Henry entered the competition. Following many hours of work, the detailed design was submitted

and when the results were announced three months later, it was Henry Millicer's 'Air Tourer', a wooden, low-wing, tricycle undercarriage, 2-3 seater powered by a 100hp (74.1kW) Blackburn Cirrus Minor engine for the touring version and a 75hp (56kW) Cirrus Minor for the trainer variant. As well as the £100 prize, the terms of the competition provided finance for the building of the winning design in England.

With the win widely acclaimed, and industry offers in Australia to help put the aircraft into production, Millicer wrote to the Royal Aero Club seeking financial assistance for the construction of two prototypes. However, there was no reply, nor to further follow-ups despatched by registered post. Meanwhile, Henry and other aeronautical engineers and enthusiasts who shared his vision of an economical personal aircraft met in Melbourne to plan the formation of a group similar to the Popular Flying Association in the UK. In October 1955 their efforts culminated with the formation of the Ultra Light Aircraft Association (later to become the Sports Aircraft Association of Australia). Eighteen months later in the promulgation of the Department of Civil Aviation's historic 'Ultra Light Aircraft' Air Navigation Order, authorising the construction of amateur-built aircraft in Australia.

The new ANO provided the opportunity Henry Millicer required. An Air Tourer Group was formed within the ULAA and, with encouraging support from Australian industry, the (then) Aero Club Federation of Australia and the DCA; construction of a prototype commenced in a rented garage. By the

time the Millicer Air Tourer was ready for its first flight (performed at Moorabbin on 10 April 1959 by RAAF Test pilot Flt Lt Randall Green), East-West Airlines had agreed to produce the aircraft commercially at Tamworth as the aero club movement was viewing it as a potential replacement for their ageing fleet of Tiger Moths and Chipmunks. The granting of the Air Tourer's Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) in July 1959, the first Australian design to achieve that status since pre-war days, brought more favourable publicity.

In the winter of 1960, while weather-bound at Mangalore Airport in central Victoria, Henry got talking to another pilot in the same plight. It was Garry Richardson, son of Mervyn Richardson, chairman of the great Australian success story, Victa Consolidated Industries Ltd, best known for its range of motor lawn mowers. The chance encounter at Mangalore led to further talks with the outcome being that in August 1960 'Victa Consolidated Industries' decided to put the Millicer Air Tourer into production. Appointed Chief Designer of Victa's Aviation Division, Henry Millicer resigned from GAF and moved to Sydney. He set about redesigning the Airtourer as an all-metal and fully aerobatic aircraft powered by a 100hp (74kW) Continental 0-200A four-cylinder engine.

Deliveries from a new aircraft factory being built at Milperra were expected to begin in June 1961, and production was being scheduled, initially for a run of 125 aircraft. The first Victa Airtourer (s/n 1) made its first flight at Bankstown on 12 December 1961. The first customer aircraft (s/n 3, VH-MOA) was delivered to

the Latrobe Valley Aero Club on 17 July. Apart from the prototype, Victa retained two Airtourer 100s as demonstrators (s/n 2 VH-MVC and s/n 4 VH-MVD), which were deployed far and wide for potential customers to evaluate.

The Airtourer was unique in the market place at the time as it was the only low cost and fully aerobatic two-seat civil trainer available. Good sales promotion and a continuing enthusiastic press kept Airtourer orders coming in. In March 1963, the Royal Federation of Australian Aero Clubs announced the award of the Oswald Watt Gold Medal - its highest honour - to Henry Millicer "for his outstanding contribution to the Australian aviation industry."

Due to the success of the Airtourer, Victa instructed Henry to investigate the design of an economical, non-aerobatic and fast four-seater aimed at the Australian market but with good prospects for export. So began the development of the Aircruiser, which flew in 1966. In January 1965, Victa had completed its' 100th Airtourer, an occasion marked by displaying the aircraft at a Council of Industrial Design dinner in the ballroom of the Menzies Hotel and attended by the Duke of Edinburgh. A marketing campaign in the United Kingdom was launched with the formation of a Victa UK subsidiary. From the start, the Airtourer created a sound impression, attracting favourable reviews from the British aviation press. "Its arrival in England this year is especially welcome" commented Air Pictorial magazine, "for not only does it seem to be the long-awaited 'Tiger Moth replacement' but is a Commonwealth product imported into the UK by Victa (UK) Ltd, the English sub-

sidiary of Victa Ltd, Sydney." Hitherto, the nearest approach to a Tiger replacement was the Chipmunk, also a Commonwealth product, having been designed and first built by De Havilland of Canada.

Within days of the launching of Victa's UK campaign, the initial import quota was sold and the waiting list continued to grow. During 1964-65, with the Airtourer holding a steady 67 per cent of the market, imports of other two-seat trainers amounted to only 40 aircraft. Late in 1965, realising that its American competitors were out for blood and that the local industry could well be at stake, Victa's management got together with two other struggling Australian aircraft manufacturers, Cropmaster and Transavia, the latter especially confident it had a winner in its Airtruk agricultural aircraft.

In mid-January 1966, Victa's application for temporary protection on imports of competitive aircraft was turned down and Trade Minister John McEwen announced that the company's bounty application had been referred to the Tariff Board with no date set for the hearing. Immediately, and with no hint of warning to the industry or to its 170 aviation employees, Victa shocked the entire Australian aviation community with its announcement that Airtourer production would cease on 15 February 1966. Work on the Aircruiser, which was under construction, continued at least until a Type Certificate was obtained, and there were hints that Airtourer production could possibly be resumed if and when a favourable decision was received on the company's bounty application. On the eve of the decision to close the Aviation Division, Victa had received an order

from Glos-Air in the UK for no fewer than 72 Airtourer's - a seeming windfall that under Board pressure, Garry Richardson declined to accept.

With its reduced staff, Victa's Aviation Division settled back to its work of completing the prototype Aircruiser. The Airtourer production line was a saleable asset but the Aircruiser in its then state of development was worth almost nothing. Work on it had to continue until the aircraft had completed its certification flying and been granted its Type Certificate. Even the Victa Board could see that. Millicer himself, under contract as Chief Designer, stayed on to see it through.

Victa completed 168 Airtourer's - of which three (166, 169 and 170) were not fully assembled at the time of the shutdown and subsequently completed by AESL in New Zealand. Another two incomplete airframes (s/n 171-172) were also finished by AESL, with NZ serial numbers starting at 501, building the prototype Aircruiser 210CS meanwhile continued.

Although bearing a strong family resemblance to the earlier design (a modified version of the Airtourer's wing was retained) the Aircruiser was in fact a new and slightly larger design with a solid cabin roof, entry doors on each side of the cabin, dual control wheels, substantially increased operating weights and a 210hp (157kW) Continental IO-360 six-cylinder engine driving a constant-speed propeller. A four-seat utility version powered by an 180hp (134kW) Lycoming O-360 engine had been planned along with a two-seat variant with a 150hp (112kW) Lycoming O-320 for training but these naturally came to nought. The sole Aircruiser (VH-

MVR) had its 'official' first flight on 18 July 1966 with the company's chief test pilot, Vic Walton at the controls. He had, of course, flown it the day before away from the prying eyes of guests invited to the official occasion. Flight tests revealed exceptional performance for a fixed undercarriage aircraft. After completing a 200 hour flight test programme, the Air Cruiser was awarded its Type Approval Certificate in March 1967. At least it was now an asset and a saleable commodity.

With the Tariff Board hearing completed, but with month following month without the slightest sign of its outcome, Victa formally closed its Aviation Division in January 1967 and sold the Airtourer design, together with all jigs, tools and manufactured parts, to maintenance organisation Aero Engine Services Ltd of Hamilton, New Zealand. "We have finished with aircraft production completely," Chairman Garry Richardson declared to the press. Privately, the Victa directors told Henry Millicer, "We could not afford to put the Air Cruiser into production." Just over a year later, the same Board announced a company profit of almost \$5,900,000 after tax - an earning rate of 74 per cent on the company's ordinary capital. With all hope of the company resuming aircraft production now gone, only the fate of the prototype Air Cruiser remained to be decided.

Millicer and the last remaining employees of the Aviation Division completed the final modifications to the Air Cruiser for the issue of its Certificate of Airworthiness, and left Victa in September 1967 - bitterly disappointed to a man at the sad end of an enterprise, which, only a short time before had seemed so

full of promise.

But even the manner of Henry Millicer's going was not without its trauma. Barred by his contract from leaving Victa when he was offered a promising academic post with a NSW university, and with his Airtourer royalties already signed over to the company to protect the jobs of his Aviation Division staff when the closure had first threatened, Millicer had to resort to legal measures to be paid what was due to him. Later that same year, the former Aero magazine, concerned that the Air Cruiser project might be bought by foreign interests, ran a review of "this best seller aircraft which is now in danger of being lost to foreign capital," adding some biting comment on "the apathetic Government which would not lift a finger to assist."

Meanwhile, AESL in New Zealand was rubbing salt into the wound by doing just what Victa said could not be done successfully - putting the Airtourer back into production and selling it in Britain and Europe. In 1968, Henry Millicer made a last-ditch stand to save the Air Cruiser for Australia — he approached the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation to see if it would consider producing the aircraft. With a favourable response from Chairman Sir Lawrence Wackett, Millicer wrote a complete production program, based on a new CAC factory to be built for the purpose on vacant land adjoining Moorabbin Airport. But before the project could be pursued, Wackett met with a serious accident, was forced to retire, and the proposal lapsed. Three years later CAC took over Rex Aviation, Cessna's Australian distributor.

Victa sold the Air Cruiser prototype

to AESL in late 1969 and subsequently also the design and manufacturing rights for an undisclosed price. This was not the end of the story for Henry Millicer's designs, AESL ultimately adding 80 aircraft to the Airtourer's production tally between 1967 and 1974 and then developed the CT-4 military trainer from the Aircruiser. AESL built several versions of the Airtourer starting with the 115, this was joined in 1968 by two others powered by a 150hp (112kW) Lycoming O-320. The Airtourer 150 and Super 150 differed in that the latter had a constant-speed instead of fixed-pitch propeller. One AESL Airtourer achieved some fame in 1969 when Cliff Tait (Test and delivery pilot for AESL) flew it around the world, travelling over 53,000km in 288 flight hours. At that time the Airtourer was the smallest aircraft to have achieved that feat.

When AESL purchased the Airtourer line it also retained first option on the Aircruiser design and manufacturing rights, an option taken up in mid-1971. But instead of putting the Aircruiser into production, AESL instead took the basic design and transformed it into the CT-4 Airtrainer for military use and promptly sold the aircraft to the RAAF. If nothing else, this showed something of what might have been had circumstances been different. Today the CT-4 continues to be used for military flight training and many former RAAF CT-4A's are owned by enthusiasts who continue to display the aircraft at airshows.

To Henry Millicer's great credit he was not embittered by all the dramas. Rather, in the best tradition of a visionary, he continued to look enthusiastically to the future, accepting the influential post of

Principal Lecturer in Aeronautical Engineering at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and head of Australia's three aeronautical engineering faculties. In 1978, following the announcement of a further Royal Aeronautical Society competition, Henry saw the possibility of repeating his earlier success. With fellow aeronautical engineer, Peter Carr, who had worked with him on the original Air Tourer, he again embarked on a major design project. The result was the Kite, to be produced not only as a two-seater ab-initio trainer as required by the RAeS specification, but also as a four-seater to make production more commercially viable.

The design won third place out of 40 entries. Henry Millicer retired to Anglesea, Victoria in 1981, but his passion for light aircraft design never waned. Not only did he continue to supervise the work of final year aeronautical engineering students, but went on to develop a detailed design for a turbocharged, high speed and long range tandem two-seater, intended for amateur construction, which he called the Swift.

He continued to derive much satisfaction from the fact that, of all Australian-registered Airtourer's, most were the prized possessions of members of the Airtourer Association, formed in 1977, of which Millicer became Patron and participated in their activities until his passing. The prototype Aircruiser returned to Australia from New Zealand in 1978. In 1984 the RMIT awarded Henry Millicer an Honorary Doctorate in recognition of his industrial and academic work, and in 1992 he received the Member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to avia-

tion. He continued to act as an advisor for aeronautical graduate projects on a part-time basis. Henry Millicer died suddenly on 28 August 1996 at the age of 81. After his funeral, his ashes were scattered from the air off the coast, close to his home at Anglesea. He is survived by a son, Richard Maciej, and two daughters, the author Joanna Millicer Hempel, Helen Millicer, and eight grandchildren.

*Congratulations and thank you to Deb Evans for the effort in compiling this successful nomination. Deb and husband Rick live in Cairns and have owned Airtourer 115 IOF for close on 30 years.*



## For Sale

### AESL Airtourer Super 150, VH-CRK



Manufactured in 1969 this aircraft has been beautifully restored and equipped to IFR standard. Total Time Airframe: 4133 hours. Engine 2036 since overhaul, all compressions very good. Prop, constant speed, 59 hours since overhaul. 30L Aux fuel tank.

Hangared at YBSS.

Will be sold with fresh maintenance release.

\$53,000

Ph: 03 5367 5450

# Australian Built Aircraft and the Industry by Keith Meggs

## Victa Aviation

### Millicer and Pacific Air Tourer, Victa Airtourer

*This is the second part of a series of articles written by Keith Meggs on the history of the Airtourer. Published here with the kind permission of the author. See Newsletter 155 for the first part and more about Keith's encyclopaedic, four-volume work on every aircraft type proposed, designed or manufactured in Australia from 1884 to the mid 1980s!*

A 65hp Continental engine replaced the Cirrus Minor, with a further alternative nominated as well, namely the 65hp Czechoslovakian Walter Mikron, which was to cost £500 landed in Melbourne. The third-seat provision was eliminated it had been re-stressed for semi-aerobatic use, and single-leaf main undercarriage legs, from Pioneer Springs Pty Ltd, with a car shock-absorber unit for the nose wheel, costing £10 had been incorporated. The wing was redesigned to eliminate the original fabric covering in favour of a full ply skin.

By September 1956, it had been decided to buy a new Walter Mikron, which was to be financed by contributions from the Group members. For those workers who were pilots, the joining fee was £8, with a contribution of 10/- per week for eight months, while non-labouring pilots could join for £54. Flying was then expected to be available for £1 per hour once the aircraft was available to members, as against the £2 then being charged by the RVAC.

Design checking by DCA was initiated as data and drawings were presented, with Peter Langford as the Senior Structures Engineer, assisted by Ken O'Brien and Max Weston. By dealing with the Air Tourer, the Department gained considerable experience applicable to the ultra-light airworthiness category, for which ANO 100.18 had been promulgated to meet the needs of the ULAA and its aims.

After preparation of full-scale loft drawings, templates were made up from them, jigs were made, and actual construction began on the wing ribs and wooden box spars late in 1956, with Ellis Walker as the construction manager, (making the main spar on a professional basis) and GAF inspector Syd Knight acting as Chief Inspector for the task. By April 1957, 23 members, working on weekends, had finished approximately half of the wing construction, and many of the metal components, which were mostly made by Peter Carr, Cyril Jeffries, Bill Cooper, Chester Jones, and Ian Sharp.

The engine mount was fabricated by a GAF welder, the fuel tanks were rubber bags by Dunlop Aviation Division, and the spinner was based on the nose cowl of Malkara, the GAF missile project.

Consultation with DCA over crash-protection features led to a double-skinned fuel-cell bay with a 25g crash-absorption capability, fail-safe undercarriage attachment structure, an instrument



*Tom Webb and Trevor Sloane sitting in the partially completed fuselage.*

panel which would move forward under a 6g load, and a very strong cockpit structure incorporating impact-absorbing features.

Wood fixing was initially with casein glue, although Ellis Walker was then experimenting with Resorcinol glue, which had completed a 10-year program of testing in England, and had his own test samples on the roof of his Newport workshop. External surfaces were covered in Madapolam fabric and polyester resins.

With initial major component work on the main spar under way, lofting of the plywood fuselage frames was begun soon after, so that its structure reached the initial assembly stage (mainly by Tom Webb and Trevor Sloane) at about the time that the wing structure had been completed, and had been sanded to the standard required for application of the ply skin. It was then decided that the latter task would be done on a paid basis by Perfectus, so that it could be completed in

a working week, with four or five accomplished full-time workers engaged on it. Although such was done, the subsequent bill for £400 was not well received by the Group, and the remainder of the project was transferred to a disused carpenter's workshop at 88 Elizabeth St Newport. It was considered that a rented workshop would provide more flexible working periods for Group members, and would remove some disruption problems in the Perfectus factory, e.g. the components had to be hoisted up and down from the rafters to make room for the regular company work activities. Walker then left the Group, under the impression that any future production program was being denied him.

Early interest was shown in the Air Tourer by the Latrobe Valley Aero Club, based in Morwell (Vic), which had begun operations from a paddock west of Morwell during 1947. Instructor Doug Leckie and his Avro Cadet -AFW, Tiger Moths

and a Wackett Trainer (-AGP), began operating the first of five Chipmunks in 1956. Maintenance costs of the latter were of great concern, and the Committee considered that the Air Tourer showed promise as a future replacement and on 1st September 1957, it voted £30 towards the cost of the prototype. Another factor contributing to the need for a reduction in operating costs was the Government's withdrawal of the subsidy scheme previously applicable to flying schools and clubs, and based on the number of hours flown.

There was considerable interest in the project as it was expected that the Air Tourer would have sufficiently low operating costs to curtail the financial difficulties then being experienced by the aero clubs as a result of diminishing Government subsidy and of aircraft replacement problems. This took a practical form at the 1958 annual conference of the Aero Club Federation of Australia, in Launceston (Tas). At that meeting, from 16-20 April, it was announced that a £1,000 grant would be given to the group as a contribution towards prototype completion, but, in return, 100 hours of evaluation time was to be made available to member clubs throughout Australia, on the basis of an hour of flying for each £10 donated by a club.

In addition, DCA contributed £400 to the project, while the wheels, tyres, and brakes were donated by Dunlop Aviation Division (through Manager Ted Faggeter), instruments by GAF and Wilmor Aviation, reinforced plastic parts such as the wing, fin, and tailplane tips, cowling, and tailcone, by Jack Cox of Reinforced Plastic Products, and shock absorbers by Arm-

strong York of St Albans. Seat cushions came from Dunlopillo off-cuts at GAF, aileron mass balances were ex-Lincoln, the new Continental A65 engine was donated by E.L. Heymanson Pty Ltd, which brought about cancellation of the Walter Mikron order. Various other parts were donated by companies and organisations interested in encouraging the project. Bob Skinner of Coburg made up exhaust pipes and augments tubes, and Balm Paints donated all the finishes, while, through Sir Lawrence Wackett's interest, CAC made up the canopy transparencies as a donation.

Many design changes were made as work progressed, including the introduction of wedges to clamp the undercarriage legs more securely to the spar, and a change to the aileron structure, after completion of the first set.

Although early discussions were held with LVAC President Des Kelly, who was interested in the possibility of the club undertaking production, more positive negotiations were initiated early in 1957 with East West Airlines, of Tamworth (NSW), following an initial contact in Melbourne between General Manager/Chief Pilot Archie Smith and Millicer. East West Airlines interest was subject to the results achieved with the prototype, and, to assist in the latter's completion, the company donated the services of three licenced engineers. They were sent down to Newport to assist for a period of about a fortnight - two airframe men with Tiger Moth experience, and Harry Frost, a highly-qualified sheet metal worker to attend to the complicated canopy and windscreen framing, and the gull-winged door frames, East West paid their trans-

port, accommodation, and labour costs for the period.

A production contract was signed by Millicer and East West representatives on, it is thought, 11 November 1958, and it was announced that the anticipated selling price would be less than £3,000 at Tamworth. To produce and market the aircraft, a subsidiary company, under the name of Pacific & Western Aviation Co Ltd, was formed, and sub-contracting arrangements were made with Perfectus, which was accordingly to supply wooden components, and with Glidair Sailplanes (Reg Todhunter) of Bankstown, to supply some plastic parts.

Regarding Perfectus work after the

original falling-out, it's been stated that there might have been an attempt to heal the wound, as Walker had thought that he'd eventually take over any production arrangement for the wooden aircraft, and the later arrangement was part of the making-up process. The Group members expected Perfectus to be involved.

A second prototype was to be built at Tamworth, with a metal main spar, and a Continental 95hp engine - 12 were to be completed in 1960, and 50 per year thereafter, with a total of 300 envisaged, to satisfy aero clubs and private owners. The No 2 hangar at Tamworth was to be used for the project, and additional production workers were to be recruited from Sydney and elsewhere.

## Calendar of Events

**2016 AGM and Convention**

**18th to 21st of March**

**DUBBO NSW.**

The program has almost been finalised and full details will follow soon but the weekend will have something for everybody. There will of course be some great venues for eating and drinking, some arts and cultural activities, the Western Plains Zoo and the two AGM's. We will also be visiting our nominated charity at the Dubbo RFDS Base.

### 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 2016.



### Welcome

**John Lodge** from Boronia in Victoria who has purchased the Airtourer 115/A1 project advertised in the last Newsletter.