



# A.N.D.F.H.G. Inc. News Sheet

## Issue 69 – July 2015

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### ELECTED COMMITTEE 2014-2015

PRESIDENT	Peter Applebee
VICE PRESIDENT	Ivan Randall
SECRETARY	Margaret Flaiban
TREASURER	Shirley Bulley

### APPOINTMENTS

LIBRARIAN	Gillian Swansson
DOCUMENT SCANNER	Sharon Norman

### GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MINUTE SECRETARY	Tammy Martin
	Helen Stein
	Jeff Cook
	Ian Cowley
FAMILY TREE MAKER CONVENER	Peter Applebee
LEGACY USERS GROUP CONVENER	Shirley Bulley

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## From the Committee

Hello Members,

As stated in our last month's newsletter, and for the sake of repeating ourselves, we are quickly approaching the Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 1.00 pm followed by our usual Sausage Sizzle. If you would like to renew your membership please do so before the 1<sup>st</sup> July at our rooms on a Thursday. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque by posting it to P O Box 32, Elizabeth SA 5112.

Your membership renewal entitles you to nominate and vote for a new committee. In our last Newsletter we attached a Nomination Form, which we ask you to complete and return before the **18th JULY 2015**. You can complete your nomination form either by scanning and forwarding it by email, or completing it and posting it in to our post office box address. Alternatively, you can renew your membership together with your nomination form personally at Ann Street. Whichever way you choose, your nomination will be confidential. The nominations will be handed over to the Returning Officer on the 25th July. Your attendance will be appreciated on that day. Come along and chat with other like minded members.

Many of you may not know that we exchange newsletters with other Groups and Societies, within Australia. If your ancestors were living North, East or West of Adelaide, there may be another Newsletter you can borrow and browse through. Many are also available in the Members area of the Website in PDF form for you to download. There are lots of interesting reading material around, some of which may contain that vital information you could be looking for.

Thank You.

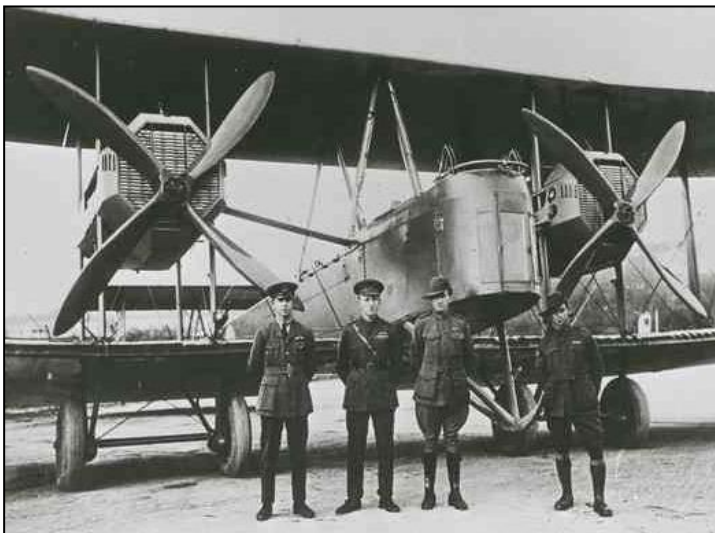
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>2<sup>nd</sup> July</b> Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm		
	<b>6<sup>th</sup> July</b> 			<b>9<sup>th</sup> July</b> Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm		<b>11<sup>th</sup> July</b> Research and Networking Day 1 pm – 4 pm  Committee Meeting 2 pm
				<b>16<sup>th</sup> July</b> Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm		<b>18<sup>th</sup> July</b> 
				<b>23<sup>rd</sup> July</b> Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm		<b>25<sup>th</sup> July</b> AGM Meeting and Sausage Sizzle 1 pm – 4 pm
				<b>30<sup>th</sup> July</b> Mid-Week Open Day 10 am – 4 pm		

## ~ THEY FLEW INTO HISTORY ~

Every generation has its heroes. These days, they tend to be sporting greats and music stars, but in the early decades of the 20th century, the populous idolized the champions of the skies. It was the early days of aviation, records for speed and distance were constantly being set and broken, and the young pilots of these early machines were seen as superheroes – which indeed they were. They risked their lives to set a new speed record or a new endurance record, which earned them the adulation of the crowds. People would flock to the streets in their thousands to see their idols' planes fly overhead.

Inevitably, many of these pilots were destined to die at a young age, often due to the failure of their early aircraft. South Australia was home to many of these famous early airmen.

The first powered aerial flight in Australia can be claimed by South Australia's own **Frederic Cyril Custance**. At 5am on 17 March 1910, at Bolivar, he flew his Bleriot monoplane for 5 minutes and 25 seconds. The aircraft was owned by Fred Jones, who together with several neighbours, were the only witnesses to the flight. As the flight was made before daylight, and due to the lack of further witnesses to the event, the claim was considered suspect by some. The following day, 17 March, the famous Harry Houdini made a powered flight in Melbourne, and perhaps his attempt to claim the "First Flight" record had some influence over the doubt associated to Custance's claim. In WW1, Custance joined the Royal Air Corps where he flew with the No. 1 Squadron in Palestine, setting a flight record from Cairo to Romani in 40 hours. On his return to Australia after the war, Custance obtained the "Caterpillar" tractor agency. He died alone in the South Australian desert whilst walking for help after his car broke down in extreme heat near Olary on 3 June 1923. He was 33 years old.



Probably the most famous of these airmen were brothers **Sir Ross Macpherson Smith** and **Sir Keith Macpherson Smith**. After serving at Gallipoli, Ross had flown with the Australian Flying Corps during the First World War. He was involved in many air attacks on the Turkish Armies, earning the Military Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Force Cross. During this time he also passengered Lawrence of Arabia. Keith joined the Royal Flying Corps in England, and spent the War in the training of pilots. In 1919 Ross and Keith Smith together with mechanics Wally Shiers and Jim Bennett won the £10,000 prize money offered by the Australian

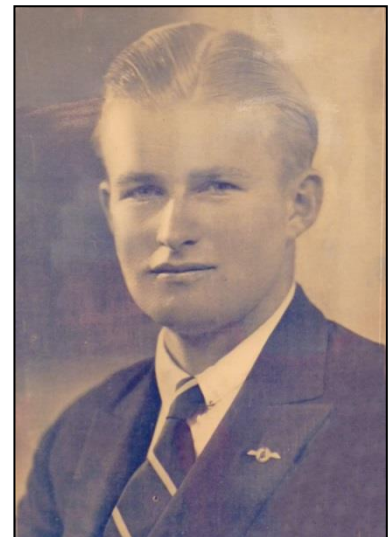
government to the first aviator/s to fly from England to Australia within 30 days. They achieved his feat in just under 28 days in a Vickers Vimy aircraft, which was supplied by the Vickers corporation for the event. This plane is still on display at the Adelaide Airport. Ross Smith was killed in an aircraft accident in England while test-flying a Vickers Viking amphibian plane in preparation for his next record attempt from England to America. His body was brought back to Australia, where Adelaide was brought to a standstill for his State Funeral in 1922. His brother Keith died of cancer at the age of sixty four in 1955.



**Henry John (Harry) Butler** was another home grown pilot, hailing from the town of Minlaton on Yorke Peninsula. His interest in aircraft began after Fred Custance's first flight in 1910, and he began building aircraft models while still at school. He was commissioned in the Royal Flying Corps in 1916, earning an Air Force Cross during his distinguished war service. After the war he returned to Australia with two planes, an Avro 504K and a red Bristol Monoplane aptly named the "Red Devil". Together with Harry Kauper, they established the airfields at Northfield and Albert Park. He converted his Avro 504K plane to seat two passengers and with this they operated as the Captain Harry J. Butler & Kauper Co. Ltd. The Northfield aerodrome was used by the Smith brothers on their triumphant return to Adelaide in their Vickers Vimy in 1910, as the runway at Albert Park site was considered too short for such a large plane.

Butler's "Red Devil" was a well-known sight in the skies over Adelaide, his most famous flight being the first Australian mail service flight over water on 6 August 1919, when he flew from Adelaide to his home town of Minlaton in 27 minutes. He was a notable stunt-flyer, and provided a low-flying escort for Prime Minister W.M. Hughes' train from Salisbury to Adelaide in 1919. On 10 February 1922, Butler's flying career came to an abrupt halt after his Avro 504K aircraft crashed in a field at Minlaton. He suffered head injuries from which he never truly recovered, and died suddenly on 30 July 1924 from a cerebral abscess. He was only 34 years old. His Red Devil monoplane was restored and is proudly displayed in a hangar at Minlaton, and the Minlaton Museum has a section devoted to his memory, containing many of his possessions.

The youngest of the famous South Australian pilots is **Charles James (Jimmy) Melrose**. Born into one of Adelaide's wealthiest families on 13 September 1913, with his blonde boyish good looks, he was the heartthrob of the skies. His father died when he was only 9, and he and his mother Hildergarde had an unusually close relationship, with Jimmy naming all of his planes after her. He was fascinated by the number 13, never regarding it as unlucky. It was twice mentioned in his birthdate, the number on his imposing home on the Esplanade at Glenelg, and the number of letters in the name that he most commonly used – C. James Melrose.



He commenced flying lessons while still attending St Peter's College, and gained his pilot's licence at the age of 19. His mother bought him his first plane, a DeH Puss Moth, which he named "My Hildergarde" (once again, 13 letters). In 1934, he established a new record for a solo flight around Australia, smashing the previous record by almost two days. Other records he held were Adelaide to Hobart in 5 hours, and Hobart to Sydney in 5 hours. He also held the altitude record on 20,000 feet.

In 1934, he flew his Puss Moth to England in record time to compete in the MacRobertson's London to Melbourne Centenary Air Race. He became a global sensation as the youngest entrant and only solo competitor in this race, finishing overall third, and first in the handicap section. After sailing to England in 1936 he flew back to Australia in a Heston Phoenix 5-seater plane which he intended to use as Australia's first flying taxi service.



He was killed on 5 July 1936 at the young age of 22, when his Heston Phoenix plane broke up in bad weather over Melton in Victoria. His mother travelled to Melbourne where his funeral service was attended by over 10,000 people who lined the streets. He was cremated and his mother returned to Adelaide with his ashes. She placed the urn with his ashes on her mantelpiece, and chatted to him every day. When Hildergarde died in 1968, she was buried cradling her son's ashes in her arms.

Sadly, today these names are hardly remembered – if indeed at all. These early pilots risked their lives and pushed the boundaries with their dangerous pursuits, all in the interests of furthering the fledgling field of aviation. They died too soon, leaving us with their achievements to add to our rich South Australian history.

Submitted by Helen Stein 2015

## **Forces War Records' World War One Hospital Registers Collection tops 250,000 Records**

The following announcement was written by Nicki Giles at the Forces War Records:



Forces War Records is delighted to announce that 250,000 records have now been transcribed from our “Military Hospitals Admissions and Discharge Registers WW1” collection, coded MH106 by the National Archives. That’s a long way from the 30,000 records available at the time of the collection’s October 9th 2014 launch, as is being evidenced by a number of reports of families now finding their relatives in the collection. Customer Pete Bailey was intrigued to find out that his grandfather had been shot in the face in WW1 in 1918, and said the medical data was the only record on Harry Mullard that he’d been able to find on websites, and that he’d be interested to find out where Harry had fought.

Luckily for Pete the hospital record notes not only that H F Mullard received a shrapnel wound to the lip on 20/1/1918, and was discharged back to duty of 01/02/1918, but gives his index number of admission, age, rank, Service Number, years’ service, months with Field Force, religion, regiment, battalion and unit, and mentions that he was treated by the 62nd Field Ambulance. From this information, one of our researchers was able to find Harry Mullard’s Medal Index Card from the National Archives, along with the War Diary of the regiment. It seems that Harry Mullard’s Division, the 20th Light Division, was involved in engagements in France and Flanders, including the Battle of Delville Wood, the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, actions on the Hindenburg Line, the Battle of Menin Wood and the First Battle of Bapaume.

Another customer, Rosie Rowley, a member of the Guild of One-Name Studies, has been investigating the Spridgeon family for many years, that being her maiden name. She was delighted to find a hospital record for John Edward Spridgeon, killed in action on 25th April 1917. Although she had already uncovered a great deal of information about this relation, Rosie had not known that he had been injured some nine months prior to his death. The hospital record stated that John had been treated for a 'shock wound' on 2nd and 3rd July 1916 at the No. 2 General Hospital at Le Havre, and the movements of his regiment, outlined on the Forces War Records site, showed that the injury probably occurred during the attack at Gommecourt, which commenced on 1st July 1916. Rosie was also surprised to learn from the hospital record that John had already served with the regiment for 3 years, which meant that he must have enlisted before the start of WW1. So, these records can help people at all stages in their family research.



The original collection, which is stored at the National Archives in Kew, had not been transcribed or indexed before since the records are handwritten, many in faint pencil or with lots of abbreviations, and therefore very difficult to read and interpret. They are also organised by medical unit rather than name, making it extremely difficult to find any relative without doing a great deal of research first. Forces War Records is ultimately planning to release 1.5 million hospital records, and the collection in its entirety should be transcribed by the end of 2016.

Wondering if your own ancestor's hospital record may be included? Find out here:<http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/military-hospital-records>.

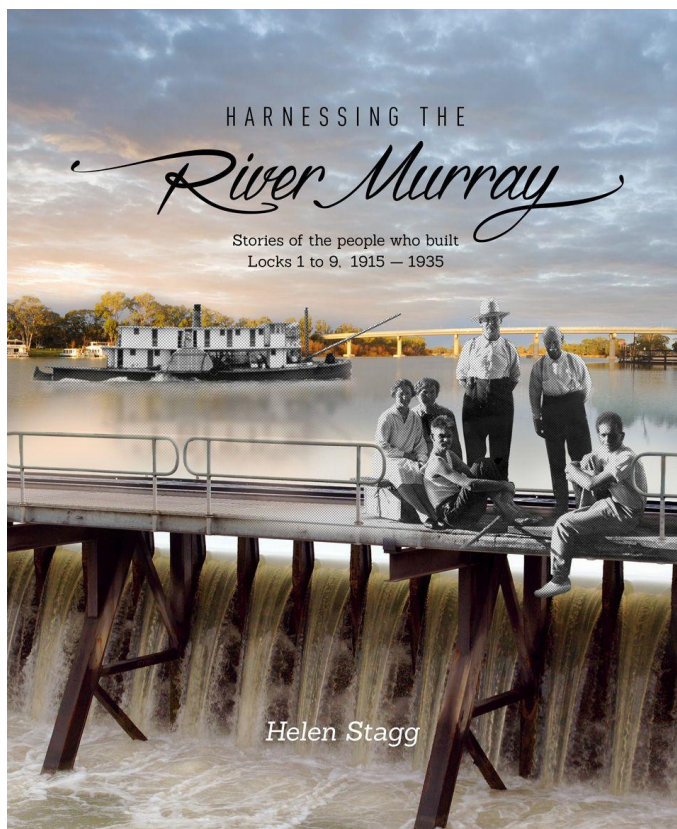
Source: Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter.

### **Border Watch, 10 August 1881**

DULL TIMES.- A commercial traveller from Boston, having had a run of hard luck in prosecuting business on the road, received from his firm the following exhilarating despatch-" If you can't make expenses, come home at once " To which he sent the following reply-"All right, Can make plenty of expenses, but no sales "



## Harnessing the River Murray: Stories of the people who built Locks 1 to 9, 1915 – 1935 by Helen Stagg



Helen is the grand-daughter of one of the hundreds of men who worked on the mammoth engineering scheme to control the waters of the Murray River with a series of locks and weirs. This scheme was part of the River Murray Waters Agreement, 7 April 1914. It was said by Federal Liberal Opposition Leader, Joseph Cook, to be perhaps 'the biggest scheme of development yet projected in Australia'.

As a child Helen was told stories by her mother of her own childhood at the lock construction sites and Helen's dream has been to further explore the stories of the workmen and their families. Over the past five years, Helen has undertaken extensive research at various archives and captured the oral history of some of the few remaining 'lock children' for her book *Harnessing the River Murray: Stories of the people who built Locks 1 to 9, 1915 – 1935* which will be released in June 2015.

The book's focus is on the first nine locks and weirs which were built by the SA Engineering and Water Supply Department and tells the story from the viewpoint of the ordinary people, the workers and the women and children who lived with them in the camps that popped up along the river at each construction site. Helen said,

*"At the beginning of my project, I interviewed Max Pearson from Waikerie, the son of a lock builder.*

*This triggered my interest in further uncovering the lives of this itinerant workforce. What was it like building these huge lock and weir structures in the bed of the river? What 'tracks' had they left of their transient lives? I wanted to pay tribute to men and women like my grandparents."*

June 5 2015 marks exactly 100 years since the Foundation Stone was laid for the first Lock at Blanchetown in South Australia. At 11 am at Lock 1 Blanchetown, there will be a commemoration of the day's events from a century ago. The PS Marion will arrive with the dignitaries, school children will welcome the guests and a re-enactment of the stone laying will take place before the official launch of Helen Stagg's book. All are welcome and lunch will follow at 12.30.

There is a second 'launch' at the State Library of South Australia, Bray Room 1 at 6.30 pm on Tuesday June 9.

Mildura hosts a 'launch' at Mildura and District Genealogical Society Rooms, 74 Deakin Avenue Mildura on Monday July 6 at 2 pm.

A Renmark launch is also being planned.

Helen's book, with a foreword by Professor Geoffrey Blainey, has 258 pages and over 150 photographs. Information about the launch or to purchase the book can be made via Helen's webpage 'Contact Me' tab at <http://historybyhelen.com.au/>

**1.30 pm Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> July.**

# **Annual General Meeting 2015/2016**



Followed by our Members Sausage Sizzle.

Come along and have some input to the future of your group.  
Network with other members in picnic like atmosphere.

## ***All Welcome.***



Adelaide Northern Districts Family History Group Inc.  
Committed in Promoting Family History Research.