



Spring 2023 Newsletter

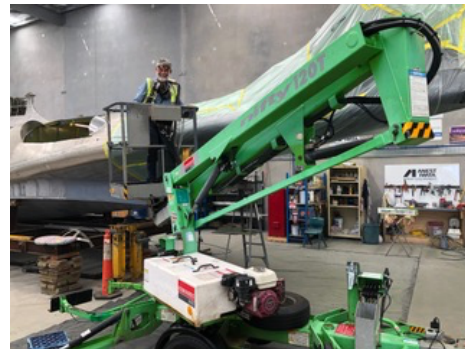
Good afternoon everyone...the last day of October!

Canberra Curator's Course: Two of our committee recently attended a 5-day training session in Canberra, hosted by the History and Heritage Branch — Air Force (HH-AF). I will ask our Secretary, Graham, to provide a little background:

HH-AF conducted a **History and Heritage Museum Practice Fundamentals Course** at the Defence Establishment, Fairbairn, ACT. Course co-ordinator was WGCDR Terry Ryan, Deputy Director Air Force Heritage Centres (AFHC) and AFHC Curator, Sebastian Spencer.

The course was attended by AF Curators, as well as international curators from New Zealand, Singapore, and Malaysia. The well-structured course promoted networking and exposed attendees to the importance of preventative conservation and heritage museum best practice.

September long weekend: By arrangement we picked up a 'cherry picker' from Kennards Hire on the Friday morning. Several of our volunteers gave up a day or more over the three days to complete work on and around the upper fuselage (see the photo) and the machine was returned on the Tuesday morning. We thank Kennards for their continuing support.



On a sad note: We received a call early Sept, advising **Steve Wenban** had unexpectedly passed away. Steve was an extremely well qualified sheet metal worker and a valued member of the restoration team. A number of RCA volunteers attended the funeral and we have been in contact with his wife Heather, with offers of support. **Pat Henry** - another past volunteer from the Ridge Road days also succumbed to health issues and passed away last week.

RIP STEVE and PAT.

TAFE Students: a group of the TAFE lads spent a few days with us through September and added some muscle power to begin de-skinning the outer wing and leading-edge wing sections...they were supervised by a TAFE teacher and our volunteers. We appreciated their help and of course this hands-on work experience supports their theory lessons back at TAFE.



Restoration Report: An update from our restoration supervisor – Terry:

Several volunteers spent most or all of the recent long weekend protective wrapping the new paintwork on the rear fuselage & empennage plus both MLG assemblies. The exterior of the pylon was also cleaned up & painted. Further prep work is planned for the higher sections of the fuselage soon depending on special scaffolding availability. The centre wing work deck scaffolding has also been brought up to an acceptable standard.

Work continues on the interior of the fuselage & the refurbished bow turret was returned from restoration at Amberley on Saturday 28th. After sorting the mounting of the turret, work can continue on re sheeting the bow area plus the refit of the nose MLG.



Both pilot's seats are nearly completed minus the lap & shoulder harnesses. These are included on the Cat parts list submitted to AF via our on site POC. There also should be an update very shortly regarding progress on the plexiglass/perspex blister panels.

A timber frame to set up the tail section vertically to allow work on upper & lower sections has been completed. One elevator is on site & only requires minor repair, the other is off site for more major repair.

Involvement with TAFE is still progressing, discussions & planning are taking place regarding repair of the centre wing leading edges plus the rework of two interior bulkhead doors. Hopefully TAFE can also deal with the fabrication of the navigator's hatch. Location measurements have been taken plus we have a detailed drawing from our digital files.

Research has taken place regarding an appropriate sealant to use where applicable. Unfortunately, the Butyl rubber product we were initially looking for is no longer available but suitable alternatives have been identified. Once again, our AF POC has been consulted on what best to use.

Cooks Hill High School: Our ongoing partnership with Cooks Hill continues, with Roland and Harry now attending each Wednesday...the school staff describe it as an 'invaluable experience' for the students.



Base Tours: In September two bus groups travelled from Tuncurry to join us at Rathmines for a tour and a morning tea. A men's Probus group from Warners Bay joined us for morning tea at Beresfield. The details of what we offer are on our website, if you know of a group that might be interested in joining us. <https://www.rathmines-catalina.com>

HH-AF: You may recall from the Winter newsletter that we were expecting a visit from HH-AF...this visit took place in mid-August with the Director General HH, Air Commodore Rob Lawson (Retd) - centre, and WGCDR Terry Ryan - left. On the right is our RCA / HH-AF liaison WGCDR Rick Dyson. They were on site for a couple of hours and were able to inspect the premises, the project and meet our restoration volunteers...more on this shortly.



Beresfield update: November chucks up the first 12 months at Beresfield. Within the conditions of the lease there are numerous recurring annual maintenance works to be carried out. Most recently a 'Fire Audit' was completed by an external contractor. In-situ extinguishers, fire hoses and main hydrant were checked, the 'emergency exit signs / lights' were tested for 90 minutes on their internal batteries.

The audit was successful and all items...bar one...were signed off. We flagged some months ago a design flaw in the safety exit door / gate set up. The owner agreed and work is scheduled for early November to rectify the matter.

As our 12-month lease is about to end, it will be reassigned, by previous arrangement to HH-AF. This matter was agreed to by both ourselves (RCA) and HH-AF well over a year ago. The options clause will now be invoked, and HH-AF will become the new tenant from mid-November. Over recent months a lot of work has and is being completed to have supporting documentation in place.

I am delighted to advise that we now have a Memorandum of Agreement in place, signed by the Director General HH-AF and myself. A 'Statement of Works' document will be finalised this week, all of which underpins the agreement and conditions for the RCA volunteers to continue with their restoration work.

Our Girl Handover: With the changeover of the lease HH-AF will join us at Beresfield in a few weeks to complete the handover...with a handshake. We know from earlier research that 'Our Girl' was a late 1943 build by Consolidated (the manufacturer) for the US Navy. We do not have any specific dates / months and plan to use the Handover as a suitable occasion to wish her a Happy Birthday...80 years young.

RCA AGM: Our Constitution is clear on the matter that Financial Year accounts must be audited and available to be presented at our AGM. Our Treasurer submitted the accounts to the audit firm in early August. Recent advice from the auditor is to expect the work to be completed by the end of November, somewhat later than we hoped. The RCA finances are in a very strong position, and we do not expect any issues. So, the Committee has agreed to hold the **AGM on Saturday December 9th, 1400hrs (2pm)** at our Beresfield facility - *confirmation of the date will be circulated*. For many years we have used the Rathmines Bowling Club as the AGM venue but took the view that in mid-December the Club would be very busy...noisy. As is the tradition you, our members, are invited to join us at the AGM.

I see a bonus in having the AGM at Beresfield...should you be able to attend **please allow some extra time and we will be delighted to take you around the premises and the project**. It would assist with our planning if you could call myself (0418 770 400) or the Secretary, Graham (0479 053 123) if you are attending and would like to 'take the tour'.

Final matter...you may recall that post the 2022 AGM, I indicated that I would step down as your President. I did this to encourage interest in the role from other committee members. They have told me that they are happy with the status quo, so I do intend to re-nominate. Can I express that I enjoy the work and there is plenty of it! The RCA team are great folk and we continue to work to get the best outcome for you, the members, and the aircraft.

Christmas: Our restoration team have decided to take a break over the Christmas period, effective December 20th and returning on January 8th.

I can see a busy few weeks ahead and a newsletter before Christmas may not eventuate...from the committee, we wish you a happy Christmas and New Year.

Bill

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