



Watts
News
*A newsletter issued by the
Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield*

MARCH 2010

VALE – TONY HAYES



*Charles Anthony (Tony) Hayes
26 Dec 1943 – 9 Nov 2009*

Tony Hayes was born in the UK in 1943. Tony's father was a member of the Royal Air Force (RAF), and as a result Tony grew up living on or near many different air force bases in the UK, and for a time in Rhodesia. After leaving school, Tony followed in his father's foot steps and joined the RAF. His original goal had been to join as aircrew, but failing the colour blindness test led to Tony joining as ground crew in the telecommunications speciality. After training, employment in the telecommunications field soon saw him moved sideways into what Tony vaguely described as “cold war security work”. I never did find out what Tony's actual involvement in the cold war was – he adhered to the official secrets act, even 40 years later.

Tony's career with the RAF took him to a number of bases in the UK, and to Germany. Tony's last posting with the RAF was to have been to Bahrain; an unaccompanied posting. Having married Kay only six months earlier, going to Bahrain on his own (leaving his new Australian wife on her own in England) was not something that Tony considered desirable. So he had great pleasure in returning the Bahrain posting papers, along with his RAF discharge papers.

Tony had set his heart on a career in aviation, and as the RAF had not provided that career, he had been seeking out alternatives. He had been involved in gliding for some years at that time, and already had an instructor's rating, so a career as a Commercial Gliding Instructor became the target.

That career as a Gliding Instructor commenced at Camphill Soaring Club in the Peak District, in the UK. Camphill had a normal weekend gliding operation for club members, and operated week day full-time gliding courses during the warmer seasons of the year. Tony job was to run the full time gliding courses. Jobs with other major UK gliding centres such as Lasham, Gliding Club and the Airways Gliding Club soon followed.

In 1972, whilst working at Lasham Gliding Club, Tony was approached by a representative of the Gliding Club of Victoria (GCV), which is located at Benalla, in Australia. GCV were then, and still are, one of the largest gliding clubs in Australia, operating both weekend club gliding, and week day commercial gliding operations. Tony was offered a job with GCV. Kay was due to return to Australia to visit her parents, so the decision was made to emigrate from England to Australia.

Tony worked for some years at Benalla as a Gliding Instructor, before making the decision to move to Queensland. For a few years, Tony worked away from the aviation industry, but maintained contact with the Gliding community as a voluntary weekend gliding instructor.

That involvement was initially with the Maroochy Gliding Club, which operated from the Maroochy Airport until the late 1970's when the airport became too busy. The Maroochy Gliding Club then moved north and inland to Belli (near Eumundi) and started the creation of a new air strip on grazing land. After a few hard years trying to establish and maintain an airstrip that was carved out of fairly rough land, the Maroochy Gliding Club amalgamated with the Gympie Gliding Club, and both clubs continue to operate as one club from the Gympie Airfield.

In the mid 1980's, a new airfield was being established at Caboolture, where Tony and Kay lived at that time. Tony immediately saw the potential for creation of a new Gliding Club close to Brisbane. It took quite a few years to build the base of members, and to raise the funds to purchase some aircraft. In 1989, the first Caboolture Gliding Club was formed and three training aircraft were bought; one Blanik, and two Schleicher Ka4s. Unfortunately, the first five months after the club gained possession of airworthy aircraft were some of the wettest on record, with Caboolture airfield being too boggy for operations for many months. As a result of poor cash flow due to not being able to operate, the first Caboolture Gliding Club had to close its doors.

In 1992, Tony and Kay moved to Toogoolawah. Watts Bridge Airfield had been created during the Second World War but had not been completed in time to see it's original war time service use. By the mid 1990's the airfield was still usable, but there were no facilities on the airfield, and no permanent operations from the airfield.

In October 1992, Tony organised an invitation gliding weekend at Watts Bridge Airfield. Around ten gliders from Caboolture, Gympie, Kingaroy, and Warwick attended. That was my first visit to Watts Bridge. From memory, the airfield facilities were limited to; one large shady gum tree (located roughly in the north west corner of the Air Chalet area) which made for a handy camping site, and one tumble down "thunder box", located roughly where the caravan parking area is now. Somewhat different to the airfield development we see today.

A great weekend's gliding was had by all, with many recognising the great soaring potential that the Watts Bridge area provided. The location of the Watts Bridge, with the Mount Brisbane Range located within easy gliding distance, made the gliding site unique in Queensland, and possibly in Australia.

In 1993, Tony drew up the original concept drawings for the development of the Watts Bridge Airfield as a centre for recreational aviation. Between 1993 and 1995 Tony, working together with Les Faint, prepared the Development Plan for the airfield and the airfield committee gained a long term lease on the property. Development commenced in 1993 with the first hangar being completed in 1994.

Tony established the Brisbane Valley Leisure Aviation Centre (BVLAC) at Watts Bridge in 1995, and commenced training pilots. Initially, that training was provided to Glider Pilots using a Hoffman Dimona H36 Motor Glider. Around the same time, Tony developed an interest in the emerging Ultralight Aviation movement, and gained his Australian Ultralight Federation (AUF) Instructor's rating.



Operations with the H36 Dimona ceased in 1996, and Tony built up BVLAC as a training centre for ultralight pilots. Tony conducted his pilot training using Thruster aircraft, and built an active sideline business refurbishing and trading used Thruster aircraft. During its period of operation, BVLAC, by a conservative estimate, trained around 200 people including Pilots, Instructors, and Senior Instructors, and in so doing made a significant contribution to Watts Bridge membership. During the late 1990s, Tony was also a board member for the Recreational Aviation Association of Australia (RAAus) – then called the Australian Ultralight Federation (AUF).

As Tony used Thruster aircraft at BVLAC, many of his students went on to buy and operate their own Thrusters. In the late 1990s, when the Australian manufacturer of the Thruster aircraft range closed down, Tony formed the Thruster Operator Support Group (TOSG), as a way of providing Thruster operators with the information and parts they needed to be able to safely maintain and operate their aircraft. TOSG had over 100 members in the late 1990s, and continues to operate now with a membership of over 50. The coordination and operation of TOSG were transferred by Tony to Bob Llewellyn in September 2009.

In 2004, Tony decided to retire. BVALC was sold to Wally Rudin, and after a period of operations at Watts Bridge, Wally relocated the business to central NSW. Tony continued to be involved with Thrusters, and turned his involvement to refurbishing used Thrusters for the re-sale market.

In 2006, Tony was presented with the inaugural Certificate of Appreciation by Watts Bridge Board of Management for outstanding service to the airfield.

In 2009, the RAAus recognised Tony's contribution to Recreational Aviation in Australia, and presented Tony with the inaugural RAAus Meritorious Service Award, recognising Tony's significant contribution to recreational aviation.

Honouring the life of one who gave so much to the field of recreational aviation, the updated Watts Bridge Naming Map appearing on page 5 of this issue, shows Tony Hayes Drive adjacent to the Catalina Reserve.



On the 9th November 2009, Tony died peacefully at home, after a short illness caused by a brain tumour. At Tony's request there was no funeral. On the 6th February 2010, Kay, accompanied by Ken Ayres in his Lightwing, departed from Watts Bridge, to scatter Tony's ashes over Mount Archer, in accordance with Tony's wishes.

Our condolences go to Tony's wife Kay.

Story: Roy Gilby, Photos: Rod Mill & Roy

INTRODUCING BRUCE AND MARY CLARKE OUR NEW CARETAKERS

Bruce's heart has always been in Aviation ever since he was introduced to aeroplanes at Edzell Bomber Base in Scotland where his father was the Station Warrant Officer at the end of WWII and has been in this industry for the last 53 years. He did his initial aircraft engineering training with DeHavilland Aircraft Company in the U.K. where he started flying with the DeHavilland Flying Club. He has also been a L.A.M.E. with several airlines and helicopter companies, carrying out restoration and maintenance work and has worked in countries such as England, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Singapore. In New Zealand, Bruce and Mary started a small company - Heritage Aeroworks and carried out aircraft maintenance and aircraft construction and restoration.

In New Zealand, Bruce was a maintenance co-ordinator for the Bay of Islands Aero Club. He was also the President of the Bay of Islands Chapter of the Sports Aircraft Association of New Zealand (SAANZ) and was inspector for Recreational Aviation Association of New Zealand (RAANZ) and inspector for Sport Aviation Corp Ltd (SAC). Bruce also holds a Private Pilots Licence and a Pilot Certificate with maintenance level 1 2 4 endorsements with RAA.

Other than restoring, building and flying his planes, Bruce has also built a 43ft boat and did some sailing around the Pacific. His other interest is his music - he plays the drums, guitar and piano. He also loves red wine and holds a bar managers licence (which is the most important of all his qualifications he says).

As for Mary - her background could not be more different from Bruce. She spent 15 years teaching in different schools in Singapore - from mission schools to government schools, from students who were fully sighted to those who were partially blind. She also spent 8 years in the Ministry working as a Gifted Education Officer. Her job includes recruiting and training teachers, designing, implementing and evaluating the Geography curriculum.

In New Zealand, besides running the small aircraft maintenance business with Bruce, she was also the secretary for the Bay of Islands Aeroclub. During her stay in New Zealand, she co-wrote a series of geography textbooks and assessment books for schools in Singapore.

She enjoys travelling and sailing and loves watching Bruce build his planes.



When Bruce and Mary arrived at Watts Bridge the positive effect was immediate. Apart from building and test-flying his Nieuport 12, Bruce showed a lively interest in the way this airfield was run. Both he and Mary, without being asked, would happily show visitors around, contribute to the upkeep of infrastructure and report to management any issues of security concern.

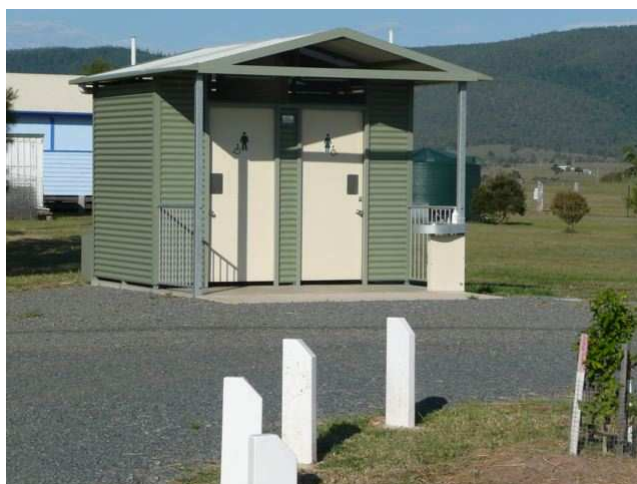
For the Board of Management, Bruce's unfortunate leg injury became a blessing in disguise. Allowed to remain in the air chalet whilst recuperating from his injury, the presence of Bruce and Mary served as a deterrent to mischief-makers.

A Sopwith Pup is now being built in the hangar – and will no doubt grace the skies of Watts Bridge in the future. We are sure all members will make them welcome in their new official capacity.



SRC SUPPORTS WATTS BRIDGE

Somerset Regional Council has generously donated the cost of the Development Application Fee for Toilet Block 1 through a Community Assistance Grant authorised at Council's meeting on October 2009. A cheque has been received for \$1,122.00 in December 2009 (\$1020 plus GST). The new building plus the car park are shown below. Watts Bridge thanks Somerset Regional Council for its support.



AROUND AND ABOUT THE AIRFIELD



QVAG's President Frank Ragonese has advised that he, Karen and Joanne are stepping down from their respective positions on the QVAG Executive. In Frank's all too short term as President they have made a significant contribution to QVAG and also to Watts Bridge. There is a sense of sadness as they relinquish these positions.

ANZAC Day on Sunday April 25th will soon be upon us. Preparations are already underway and opportunity is provided for home base groups to lay wreaths during the ceremony. ANZAC Day at Watts Bridge is of particular significance given its wartime beginnings. LEST WE FORGET.

And now for a word about our wildlife: Readers will have noticed in the February maintenance report Peter Freeman's picture of what we think is a frogmouth owl.

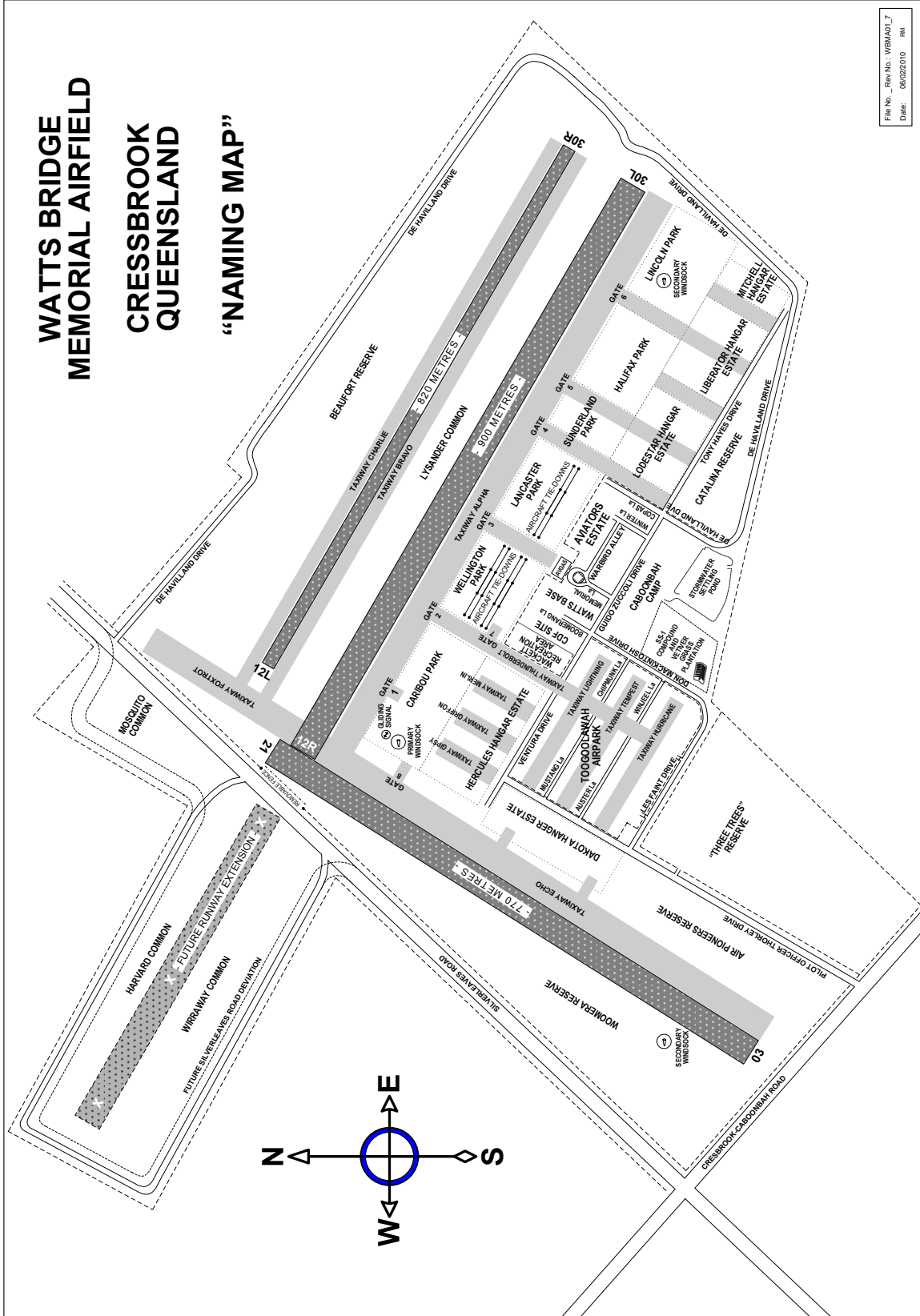
Other wildlife events need to be noted. Frog urine is a terrible thing. Particularly when sprayed over electronic switching gear which activates the pump in the sewerage holding tank that services the clubhouses and the public toilet block. This occurrence left these facilities inactive for a week. A manual backup switch has been fitted in the meter box so that should it reoccur, the tank can still be pumped out. Rumours that a toilet training program for frogs is about to begin

are untrue. However the switch will be regularly inspected.

Back up the food chain now: Large red-bellied blacks and browns have been seen across our traffic pathways. One small red-bellied black snake managed to get inside the Aerobatic clubhouse. This raised the level of excitement considerably. Members are asked to be careful when walking around the airfield. Pilots of aircraft with open cockpits take note.

UPDATED NAMING MAP

WATTS BRIDGE MEMORIAL AIRFIELD CRESSBROOK QUEENSLAND “NAMING MAP”



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WATTS BRIDGE MEMORIAL AIRFIELD INC.



All-In Fly In Airfield Open Day 22nd May 2010 9:00AM - 5:00PM

All pilots and aviation enthusiasts are invited to attend the Watts Bridge Airfield Open Day celebrating the diversity of recreational aviation.

***If it flies -
It's welcome at Watts Bridge !***

Vintage Aircraft
Aerobatic Aircraft
Recreational Aircraft
War Birds
Gyroplanes
Homebuilts

***All day catering by
Brisbane Valley Christian Church***

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