

A RECENT HISTORY Peter Fenton

The 1980s saw a very active Aero Club of Southern Tasmania, with training and member hire producing very good results in flying hours and the Club's commercial arm Tasair undertaking the expanding business of aerial photography and the South West bushwalking/tourist flights including Bathurst Harbour and Melaleuca.

However with the complexity of an Aero Club owning a business entity to conduct its commercial arm led to two major decisions being taken by the then committee. Firstly, the decision to transfer the employment of all staff to the company, and later, the decision for the Club to sell its controlling interest in the company.



L: Fred Lakin, committee mid 50's , David Prince, Instructor 69-77 Graham Norman, member 69-79. B: Mike Townley solo 1951, Greg Walker solo '57



The resulting sale of Tasair effectively changed the role of the Club to owning the aircraft fleet and sub-contracting all maintenance and flying instruction services back to Tasair. This decision caused some concerns with Club members and were subsequently aired at a series of Special General meetings. For some time the hours flown in Club aircraft dropped, and social activities at the Aero Club slowed.

The early 1990s recession with an ensuing further drop in flying hours were amongst various issues that confronted the ACST for several years. One highlight however was the Club's return to the Australian Light Aircraft Championships thanks to the efforts of Graeme Saunders, which in turn led to a renewed interest in Club ac-

tivities based mainly around Summer competitions.

With 1998 seeing the end of our Clubhouse



Almost 70 people dropped in for the informal 60th ACST Birthday drinks. L: Gail & Peter d'Plesse, R: Penny Dyer.

location at the Western end of Cambridge, the ACST eventually secured a long term lease at what used to be the original Cambridge Meteorological Briefing Building. It would be fair to say that the late 1990s until mid 2001 proved to be a challenging time for the ACST with our long term service provider Tasair making the decision to form their own training organisation independent of the Aero Club and its fleet of aircraft.

The ACST was fortunate in 2001 to form a new business relationship with Wayne McMahon proprietor of "Freycinet Air". Our immediate concern was the ongoing provision of services to Members, who had shown great support, whilst offering a continuation of flight training to new students. The Aero Club combined it's fleet of aircraft with the expertise of "Freycinet Air's" Instructors, and there emerged a flying organisation that has gone from strength to strength in a very short time.

The Club and "Freycinet Air" immediately formulated new directions and innovative ways to attract new students and re-stimulate interest in aviation that had become somewhat "tired" in Southern Tasmania. The ACST was the first organisation in Australia to introduce Adult Education Classes (practical and theory) through TAFE Tasmania which is still at the top of the list of most popular courses.

Along with the re-introduction of annual Open Days, the staging of the 100 years Centenary of Flight, the promotion of Formation Flying at special events and the very successful 2005 Australian Light Aircraft Championships being held in Southern Tasmania for the first time, has seen the ACST increasing it's GA flying hours over the last

two years.

The Australian Light Aircraft Championships have become a yearly event for the Aero Club with as many as 22 competitors and supporters travelling all over Australia to compete in various forms of Aviation disciplines. This event has also been the vehicle under which Students can arrange navigation exercises interstate.

Not to be complacent with the achievements over several years the ACST took the decision that it would have to involve itself in Recreational Aviation which was growing interstate but was only present in the Northern part of Tasmania.

After prolonged negotiations with CASA , Air Services Australia and input from the Ra Aus (formerly the AUF), the ACST created history by becoming the first organisation in Australia to receive an exemption under Section 308 of CARs to train and allow solo flying of Recreational aircraft within a Controlled airspace. This exemption has now prompted applications in all the other States to do likewise and it has become an important point in the history of Recreational Aviation in Australia.

The introduction of Recreational Aviation into Southern Tasmania, with the purchase of a Jabiru J160C has seen nearly 500 hours



L;Stan Tilley, Peter Groombridge & Ian Rosevear

amassed in the first year of operation and has fully justified the initial decision to progress down that path.

The Aero Club of Southern Tasmania is proud that it is an enduring organisation whose reason for existence is none other than to provide a facility to share the enjoyment and thrill of being able to fly, and have our founders like Lloyd Jones MBE, Jack Koerbin, Barry Valentine and many others to thank for their efforts dating back to 1947.