



WATTS INSIDE ??

Welcome to the Spring 2015 Edition of Watts News.

- The President's Corner.
- Ongoing maintenance and infrastructure upgrades at the Three Trees Reserve Crossing.
- Without doubt the Watts Bridge highlight for 2015 has to be the Gathering of Eagles - Australia. Relive the atmosphere, the colour, and the excitement of the event with the multi-page photo feature article.
- The Queensland Chapter of the Australian Aerobatic Club are a long time Homebase Group located on the airfield. Read on to find out what the AAC-QC are all about.
- Another year goes by and once again the Brisbane Valley Sport Aviation Club holds their Fun Fly Poker Run. Lots of good spirited fun flying around the valley.
- And on a more serious note: An up to the minute report from the BoM on the progress of the WBMA purchase of the land upon which the airfield resides.

President's Corner

What a great day it was at our annual Gathering of Eagles - Australia which is now very much a local public event. Despite the less than favourable weather conditions the air meet was well attended by the flyers and the general public.

Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield is slowly gaining a reputation as one of the best airfields in Queensland, if not Australia. This is largely due to the considerable efforts of our team of volunteers over the years. These volunteers have been very consistent in putting in time and effort in keeping this airfield so well maintained. Please keep up the good work.

In this edition of the newsletter, there is an article by a board member, Phil Cooper regarding a brief history of this airfield and the opportunity that is now open to us to own this asset freehold. This is a very rare opportunity for an aviation association. Please support the efforts of the association to secure our airfield by contributing either by a loan or by donation. It really does not matter how much you can offer – every dollar helps the association to own this airfield freehold. Thank you!



*Blue Skies
Bruce Clarke*

Three Trees Reserve Crossing

Peter Freeman and the team of volunteers have been busy constructing the Three Trees Reserve Crossing. Peter was assisted by his friend Richard Riedel in preparing and finishing of the crossing drainage and formwork. Interestingly Richard has been working in the building industry for over 60 years. One highlight of his career was his involvement in the building and placement of the formwork for the construction of the Victoria Bridge in Brisbane. We thank Richard for his contribution to the airfield.

Other members including Mark Foy, Mark Purdie, and Nick Potter, have also been hard at work helping to form the road over the crossing. Much of the fill was obtained from the airfield gravel pit.



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The Purchase of Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield

The origins of Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield (WBMA) date back to WW2. During this period the Department of Civil Aviation explored the idea of having an airfield as an enroute emergency airstrip, which could also be used as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme for pilots learning the art of air navigation. In June 1942 the Army Cooperation Squadron started pressing for an airfield near Toogoolawah. The current location of the airfield was deemed the most suitable site and construction of 'Toogoolawah' airfield commenced without delay. Operations were in full swing early in 1943, with No. 5 Squadron operating DH82 (Tiger Moth) and Wirraway aircraft.

After the war the airfield fell into disuse, with all the original wartime buildings removed. The land was used mainly for grazing cattle. During the 80's an enthusiastic group of recreational pilots rediscovered the airfield and decided to re-establish the airfield to be known as 'Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield' a fitting name reflecting its location and past history. The airfield land was owned by the Queensland government under an authority which today is known as Seqwater. In 1994 a 30 + 30 year sub-sub lease was granted to the airfield occupants, with the condition that the airfield be used solely for recreational flying purposes. Through the hard work and persistence of the many volunteers past and present the members of Watts Bridge now have a facility that they can truly be proud of.

The past couple of decades have seen the demise of general aviation, which in part has been the result of the sale of government airport leases, pressure on airfield land for residential or commercial development, and some councils that have imposed unrealistic leases and charges on aircraft owners and operators. Fortunately, Watts Bridge has been somewhat shielded from these pressures mainly because of the airfield's remote location, cooperative council, and because of the long term lease that had been originally established. The one thing, however that members had longed for was to own the airfield. Why? Because it would ensure that this important piece of aviation history would live on as an active airfield, because members, through airfield council's and Board of Management representation, would have a say in how the airfield would be developed into the future, and finally those who had invested into the airfield's buildings and infrastructure would have the security of ownership.

Unexpectedly, this year Seqwater contacted the Watts Bridge Board of Management seeking interest in the purchase of the airfield land. Without delay the Board met with representatives from Seqwater, who were pleased that the Board was interested in the concept of WBMA Inc. purchasing the airfield. A considerable amount of work followed this meeting and important decisions had to be made. It was clear that Seqwater wanted the airfield to be sold to WBMA Inc. and continue as an airfield, however should that not occur the airfield would go onto the open market. The Board in consultation with the airfield's legal team decided on a strategy to move forward that would include equal ownership of the airfield by all members. This was the fairest structure and it was the simplest, as WBMA

Inc. would become the owner of the Head Lease and airfield management would continue as normal.

This plan was put to the WBMA membership at a General Meeting on the 22 August 2015. Overwhelmingly members at the meeting voted in favour of the Board of Management's plan to purchase the airfield. Approximately 35% of the funding would come from WBMA's current savings and the rest would be through loans and donations from the membership. Prior to the General Meeting a large number of leaseholders and members had

expressed an interest in loaning or donating money, however it was at this meeting that everybody was asked to contribute to the purchase of the airfield.

At the time of writing this article, the Board of Management had received 40% of the sum required. Perhaps surprisingly, this money has come from just over a quarter of WBMA's membership and two of the airfield's clubs. The airfield will require further funding, so if you are holding back, now is the time to either enter into a loan agreement or make a donation. By all members making a contribution either small or large, it does help reduce the financial burden on other Watts Bridge community members.

In closing, a big thank you to all those people and organisations that have got behind this project, your efforts will not go unrecognised. The airfield has a great future and this purchase will set an example across the country of how a dedicated group of aviators can make a difference.

Phillip Cooper
Board of Management



Gathering of Eagles Australia



The Gathering of Eagles has been steadily growing in stature as the premier fly-in for pilots in South East Queensland. So the big decision was made to expand "The Gathering" to a two day event and to open up the airfield so that the general public could experience first hand the exhilaration of sport aviation.

Additional attractions saw military re-enactors invited to set up camp on the airfield, along with the Rambler's Parachutists scheduled to drop in from on high. Beautifully presented vintage automobiles are always a crowd pleaser.

But ultimately fly-ins are all about the aircraft in attendance. The less than perfect weather conditions proved to be absolutely no deterrence, with in excess of 100 aircraft in attendance across the weekend. As always the radial engined warbirds were crowd favourites, but there were so many classic aircraft from every era of aviation on show. T28's, Tiger Moths, YAK's, WW1 and WW2 replicas, general aviation, light sports aircraft, homebuilts and experimental aviation.

The local community got right behind the fly-in. The camping area was packed out by Friday evening. Across the weekend near on 1,000 visitors passed the guard hut at the front gate.

Special thanks must go to the tireless volunteers who made the fly-in happen. Without you none of this would have been remotely possible.

What a weekend it was !! And yes - it's all on again in 2016 .







Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield Remembering 100 Years Since Gallipoli

AEROBATICS OVER WATTS

Watts is home base for the QLD Chapter of the Australian Aerobatic Club - we have our club house and we also have an aerobatic performance area - some refer to it as the aerobatic box marked out on the ground by 9 yellow painted "box markers" arranged in a square 1000 m long and 1000m wide. The area is located adjacent and to the south and west of the threshold for 30.

The club holds monthly practice weekends and mini comps through the year and the State titles are held around July These dates can be accessed on the club website.

The club holds a formal approval from CASA which entitles us to operate a separate aerobatic box frequency - the procedure is that after leaving the CTAF aerobatic pilots then switch to this frequency for feedback and comments from observers on the ground while they are practising or competing in the aerobatic area - whenever this is happening the club operate two radios on the ground - one radio remains on CTAF to communicate with transiting and circuit traffic to avoid conflicts and the other on the aerobatic box frequency. Pilots will switch back to the CTAF frequency after they have finished in the aerobatic box and before entering the CTAF.



Aerobatic pilots complete in different categories from the highest grade UNLIMITED through to GRADUATE. Pilots operating in the lower grades will usually be operating down to 1500 ft AGL. Pilots in the higher grades down to a few hundred metres above the ground. So the possibility exists for conflicts with circuit traffic.

"CAUTION: AEROBATICS CAN BE ADDICTIVE"

If you are operating at Watts when the aerobatic area is active - and both frequencies are in use - you may expect a call on taxi or calling inbound from "Watts Advisory" to let you know the area is active. This is an advisory service only. We certainly appreciate the courtesy and cooperation we receive from pilots to manage aerobatics safely around other traffic.

The object of the radio calls is safety and maintaining separation. If you have a difficulty or emergency the usual rules and procedures apply - make any necessary broadcasts as required

The same circuit procedural rules apply to all aerobatic aircraft operating at Watts as to all other traffic. Safety for our members, pilots and all other users on the aerodrome is paramount to us. Minimising noise impacts on residents and flying neighbourly is also treated as critical. From time to time we receive feedback or comments from others -- that feedback is always welcome and where the committee considers it appropriate and necessary corrective action or changes will be made.

New members are, of course, always welcome.

For more info see www.wattsbridge.com.au/homebase/aac_qc.php



BVSAC - Fun Fly Poker Run

Early July sees pilots and navigators from all over S.E. Queensland battle it out to be the champion of the Brisbane Valley Sport Aviation Club's Fun Fly Poker Run. In this game of pure chance the players find their way to three airfields in the district and select a card in an envelope. Last stop is Watts Bridge where the poker hand is completed by the two cards drawn at random by the house.

Perfect flying conditions saw an excellent turn-out with 30 participants enjoying a great morning's flying, culminating in a BBQ held at the BVSAC Clubrooms.

And so the clear winner of the coveted Fun Fly trophy for 2015 was John Nooyan flying his red hot Savannah - Jalapeno.

John was the runner-up for 2014, so it's good to see that he has been hard at work improving his playing skills to elevate himself to the winners circle with a competition crushing hand of three 10's

