BOTANY
HISTORICAL
TRUST NEWSLETTER

JULY 2019

THE DAREDEVIL DAIRYMAN
REGINALD ANNABEL

As Kingsford Smith Airport prepares to celebrate its centenary, it is timely to reflect on its exciting and tumultuous history from its beginnings as Mascot Aerodrome in a local bullock paddock.

Reg Annabel's funeral 10 July 1934. Image courtesy of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Sydney Mail* and the Crowther family.

In the early years Mascot was put firmly on the map as pilots from all around Australia, and indeed the world, converged on Sydney's growing airport. But, closer to home, local men and women also dreamed of life in the clouds. One such local boy was Reginald Arthur Annabel, a Rockdale dairyman, whose family owned both a dairy and ice-works in James Street, Rockdale – now part of West Botany Street. He was born in 1902 to Arthur and Louisa Annabel. His sister, Vera was born the following year. In 1924 he married Nellie Phyllis Ainsworth.

It would be fair to say that Reginald Annabel had a need for speed. He began with cars, racing at Maroubra Speedway from its opening in December 1925. But, living on the doorstep of the growing aerodrome, and with the exploits of pilots such as Bert Hinkler and Charles Kingsford-Smith as his inspiration, Reg Annabel began to experiment with a different type of machine. He joined the Aero Club of NSW and by March 1929 had gained his 'A' pilot's license and began competing in aerial pageants around the country in his own Gypsy Moth plane. In August 1929 he competed in the Queensland Aerial Derby and in October of that year he took part in the Parkes Air Jamboree.

By 1930 however, he was ready for a bigger challenge. Described as a 'picnic flight', on 3 April 1930, Reg Annabel embarked on an around Australia trip in three Gypsy Moth planes – with fellow pilots, K. Wedgwood and F. Bardsley and mechanics, A. Lewis, C. Gatenby and N. Lennon. Actually, due to a dust storm, they departed one day later than planned. Mayor of Mascot, Alderman D. Alexander was in the crowd to farewell them.

They were also farewelled by Captain Burgess (NSW Superintendent of the Department of Civil Aviation), Major De Havilland and Aero Club officials. All three pilots were members of the Aero Club and owners of their planes. All had only learned to fly during the previous few years.

When they departed Mascot Aerodrome they were carrying emergency rations for more than a fortnight. Reg Annabel was flying *Miss Australia*, with Charlie Gatenby as his mechanic. After 82 hours of actual flying time across 18 days, they returned to Mascot on 27 April, with stories to tell the thousands who thronged to greet them. To combat the cold, Reg Annabel admitted to wearing 'his pyjamas under his flying togs from Melbourne. Very few of the hundreds who greeted the airmen were aware of the fact.'

According to Bardsley, the Kimberleys was the most difficult part of the trip, finding 'the north-west … is the worst flying country in the world.'

The towns they visited included Bourke, Charleville, Longreach, Cloncurry, Wyndham, Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne. They told of heavy floods near Darwin and their disappointment at failing to visit Tasmania as they had hoped. The Civil Aviation Department denied them permission to fly across Bass Strait, considering the risks of flying over open water too great for their machines. The Aero Club of NSW held a dance in Mascot on 30 April to welcome the returned airmen home.

Just a few weeks later Reg Annabel attended the Moree Aerial Pageant. Twenty-three planes took part in the grand parade. Air Force planes gave exhibitions of bomb-dropping, picking up messages and formation flying. Reg Annabel took part in the amateur pilots' race over a course of 16 miles, competing with seven other planes for a trophy presented by Mr O.H. Jolley. Mr F. Bardsley finished first with Annabel and Broadbent placing equal second with a time of 11 minutes and 53 seconds. After a protest was entered on the grounds that Bardsley did not take a turn in the right manner, first prize was shared between Annabel and Broadbent. This trophy will be on display in Mascot Library and George Hanna Memorial Museum during our new airport exhibition. Reg Annabel also won the 'ladies' bracelet' race over a course of eight miles.

A daring feat took place over Sydney Harbour on Saturday 28 February 1931, when two planes flew under the recently completed roadway of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Reg Annabel, F. Bardsley and K. Wedgwood April 1930. Image courtesy of *The Sun* and the Crowther family.

The Townsville Daily Bulletin reported that 'one of the most spectacular unrehearsed aerial pageants witnessed in Sydney was staged on Saturday, when a big array of aeroplanes escorted the steamer Moreton Bay down the harbour.'

The moth seaplane was piloted by Captain P.G. Taylor MC (later Sir Patrick Gordon Taylor) and the Gypsy Moth was flown by Reginald Annabel. Captain V.W. Burgess, district superintendent of the Civil Aviation Department assured the public that although unorthodox, there was nothing in the air navigation rules to prevent pilots from flying under the bridge and that 'it requires no particular skill. A pilot who could not easily do it should not be flying.'

The Newcastle Morning Herald and *Miners' Advocate* however asserted that it was 'a feat which called for considerable nerve and caused alarm among passengers on ferry steamers.' Needless to say, strict rules were later put in place to prevent pilots from attempting the same feat, but Reg Annabel and Patrick Taylor have the distinction of being the first to fly their planes under the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

In May 1932, Reg Annabel won the Aerial Derby at Hargrave Park, flying a Gypsy Moth named *Spirit of Fun Junior* which he had built at Rockdale. He was, however, disqualified for cutting a corner. It had taken four months to build the aeroplane in his spare time, using Australian materials and the engine of Kingsford Smith's *Southern Cross Junior.* Pilots at Mascot described it as 'the fastest machine of its type in Australia, and capable of exceeding 120 miles an hour.'

'The crowd at Mascot last Sunday swarmed about the machine when it was brought from its hangar, and Annabel took it up and looped five times.' That engine had covered some distance in its previous lives already. In 1930 Sir Charles Kingsford Smith had flown his Avro Avian Sport biplane, *Southern Cross Junior* from England to Australia. In January 1931, Guy Menzies, aged just 21, had flown the same plane from Mascot to New Zealand in the first solo Trans-Tasman flight, crash landing in a swamp near Harihari on the West Coast of the South Island.

Tragically, just a few months later, the *Southern Cross Junior*, its pilot, Mr Leonard J. Palmer and owner, Mr Albert E. James met their untimely end at Mascot in a fiery crash. In a world gripped by Depression, even wrecked engines were re-built.

In March 1933, leaving Hobart for Sydney, Reg Annabel 'gave a spectacular exhibition of low flying over Launceston, swooping on more than one occasion to within a few feet of King's Wharf. He then climbed high and finally landed in a paddock behind King's Wharf.' Alighting, he informed bystanders that he and his mechanic, Mr P. Lewis had 'just dropped in for lunch.'

Reg Annabel continued to build planes at Rockdale and sell them to other pilots. He also spent much of his spare time building a motor launch, using an engine from a plane. Sadly, he never got to test his motor launch's capabilities.

On 8 July 1934, Reginald Annabel was demonstrating the prowess of the Spirit of Fun Junior for a prospective buyer, Clive Robertson, who had travelled from Forbes, when he began to 'loop' too close to the ground. The plane stalled and then nose-dived just in front of the hangar, hitting the ground with a huge crash and explosion. A ground engineer was struck and badly injured by one of the plane's wings. From the dairy farm in Rockdale, Reg's heavily pregnant sister, Vera Crowther saw a flash in the sky from the direction of the airport and knew that something was terribly wrong. Horrified spectators could do nothing to save him, beaten back by the intensity of the flames. An investigation into the crash later criticised the lack of fire-fighting equipment at the aerodrome.

Held just two days later, Reginald Annabel's funeral was an impressive sight. From his home in Rockdale, crowds lined the streets to Rockdale Station as the procession was led by the Professional Musicians' Band. Shopkeepers closed their doors as a mark of respect. Ten planes from Mascot flew over the procession as it neared the Georges River Bridge (Tom Uglys Bridge) on its way to Woronora Cemetery.

According to *The Sun*, Reg Annabel had expressed the wish that if he should ever be killed, that he should be played out of town by a band. In its obituary, *The Daily Telegraph* described him as 'one of the state's best known pilots.' His pall bearers were Mr F. Bardsley, Mr N. Lennon and Mr A. Lewis, all of whom had participated in the around Australia flight during April 1930. The fourth pall bearer was Mr Henrickson of the Shell Co. of Australia who had organised the flight. Just three days after Reg's funeral, his sister Vera Crowther gave birth to her only child, Barry.

On 8 July 2019, Bayside Council's new exhibition will open in the George Hanna Memorial Museum at Mascot Library. **People and Planes** tells the story of Mascot's relationship with the airport that grew on its doorstep. That day will also mark the 85th anniversary of Reg Annabel's tragic death, looping the loop at Mascot Aerodrome. The Crowther family have kindly loaned his personal scrap book, photo album and trophy for display in the exhibition.

Jenny MacRitchie | Community History Librarian

Spirit of Fun Junior flying over the Derwent River, Hobart, 9 March 1933. Image courtesy of J.N.N. Barnett and the Crowther family.

Reg Annabel and mechanic Charlie Gatenby at Mascot 3 April 1930. Images courtesy of the Crowther family.

Reg Annabel at Mascot 3 April 1930. Images courtesy of the Crowther family.

Join us for a talk to hear more about Reginald Annabel's amazing life as a pilot, and an opportunity to see the new exhibition.

Saturday 27 July 2019 | 2:30pm
To book please contact us on 02 8338 0313
or visit online at baysidelibrary.eventbrite.com

FROM BEERSHEBA TO BAYSIDE

THEODORE ROYCE PEPPERCORN MC

On 3 November 2018, a plaque was unveiled at the Light Horse Memorial in Eastlakes to honour the service of those who fought at the Battle of Beersheba, with 31 October 2017 marking the centenary of the legendary Charge of the Light Horse Brigade during World War I. In desperate need of water for both troops and horses, and making no headway at Gaza, Lieutenant General Harry Chauvel, in command of the Desert Mounted Corps, ordered the charge by the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade. Brandishing their bayonets as swords, the troops charged the trenches, storming out of the desert and taking the Turks completely by surprise in an attack that would be immortalised in Australian history and turn the tide of the war in Palestine.

Playing a supporting role at Beersheba was the 8th Australian Light Horse Regiment and a man named Theodore Royce Peppercorn. A surveying student, originally from Caulfield, Victoria he was working in Brisbane with his father when he enlisted in January of 1915. Interestingly, both his father and brother would also enlist the following year. Theodore Peppercorn served at Gallipoli and was rapidly promoted. After the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, he was transferred to the School of Instruction at Heliopolis as Provisional Squadron Sergeant Major. During February of 1917 he was transferred to the 3rd Light Horse Training Regiment.

One month after the victory at Beersheba the 8th Light Horse Regiment went into action at the Battle of El Burj, an engagement of the bigger Battle of Jerusalem. On this occasion the depleted troops fought purely as infantry, and the unit diary noted that 'all ranks displayed great intrepidity and dash throughout.'

Lieutenant Peppercorn obviously showed great dash indeed, as he earned the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. During an enemy attack he held on to his post in the face of greatly superior forces for over five hours, during which period his post was continually bombed at very close quarters, and heavy casualties had been inflicted on his men.

Lieutenant T.R. Peppercorn MC 8th Australian Light Horse Regiment

December 1918, Tripoli, Lebanon

Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial B01126

His courage and determination were of the highest order.' Lieutenant Peppercorn received his Military Cross in Egypt on 6 March 1918, when it was presented to him by the Duke of Connaught.

After the war he married Harriet Littlewood of the Voluntary Aid Detachment at Ismailia, Egypt on 3 March 1919 and together they returned to Australia to settle in the eastern suburbs of Sydney. By the 1930s Theodore Peppercorn had established a building business on Gardeners Road, Mascot. Council archives show that he was responsible for the building of many brick cottages and apartments in Mascot during the 1930s and 1940s, including a number of cottages in Arthur, King, Francis, Linden and David Streets among others. During the building boom of the late 1940s, he also built a number of cottages in Eastlakes.

In 1939 Theodore Peppercorn built a grocer's shop and apartments on the corner of Botany Road and Rolfe Street, as well as the three apartment blocks next door, facing Botany Road. In later life he settled in the Grand Parade, Brighton and died in 1970. Most of his cottages and apartments remain standing in the Mascot district today – a lasting legacy to a local war hero and builder.

Jenny MacRitchie | Community History Librarian

THE FORMER BECKENHAM MEMORIAL UNITING CHURCH

Sunday School Anniversary Beckenham Memorial Church c1946 exterior. Image courtesy of Jean Dunn

Jean Dunn (nee Douglass) with Reverend Horner and his wife, Beckenham Memorial Church, c.1940s.
Image courtesy of *Jean Dunn*

You may have noticed the construction work currently occurring at the intersection of Wentworth Avenue and Botany Road. It is soon due to be finished and is part of a $170 million project to improve the flow of traffic between Wentworth Avenue and General Holmes Drive.

To build this link, a handful of buildings were resumed by the State Government. This included the heritage-listed Beckenham Memorial Uniting Church. Although the building will remain standing, its congregation of 25 to 30 people had to move.

Jean Dunn, who attended the church for 78 years, has many fond memories of the place. 'People think church is dull but in those days that was your fun' she recalled. Before cars became commonplace, the Church hosted a packed schedule of activities that included Sunday School, sporting clubs, picnics and fundraisers. It was through such events that Jean met her late husband Jim. Jean's photos clearly show the sense of community among the congregation.
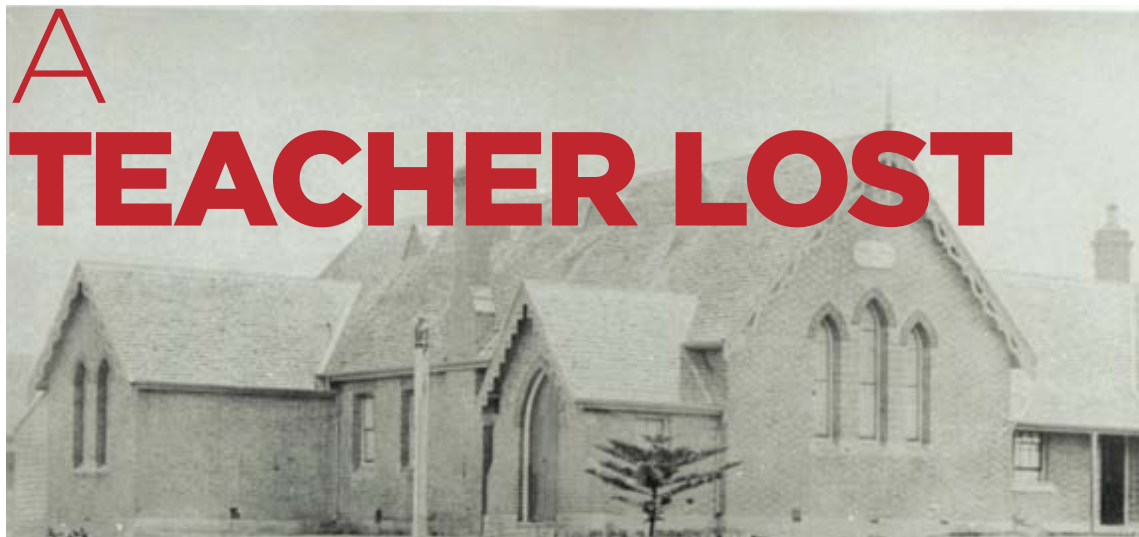
For 26 years, Reverend S.S.W Horner was the Minister of the church and became a well-known identity throughout Mascot. When he unexpectedly died in 1950, over 1000 people, including the then Deputy Premier J.J. Cahill, attended his funeral. According to newspapers, it was the biggest funeral Mascot had ever seen.

Though some might lament the loss of the Beckenham Memorial, Jean acknowledges, 'The church is the people,' not the buildings where they meet.

When the roadworks are complete, a small reserve will remain. Bayside Council and the Geographic Names Board have endorsed the recommendation of the BHT's Executive that it be named Beckenham Reserve after the church next door and its founder, the Reverend John Beckenham. Reverend Beckenham served the Mascot district from 1911 until his death in 1916 and it was during his local ministry that the land at 1293 Botany Road was purchased for £100 in 1912. When the church was opened on 9 September 1933, it was dedicated to John Beckenham.

Samantha Sinnayah | Curator

For more photos please visit History at Bayside blog at: historyatbayside.wordpress.com/2017/03/24/the-former-beckenham-memorial-uniting-church/

A
TEACHER LOST

Botany Public School, 1885. Image courtesy of NSW State Archives, 15051_a047_001556.

<u>Over the years Botany Bay has tragically seen its fair share of drownings. One such sad event occurred on Saturday 24 September 1887, when four lives were lost in the Bay.</u>

Five men of the Permanent Artillery had been sailing on the Bay, from Bare Island, when they were asked by three men at Sandringham for a lift back towards Botany. The civilians were Mr John Whitehead, Headmaster of Botany Public School, Mr Forbes of Redfern and Frederick Chambers, aged 16. It was late afternoon when, about two miles from shore, the boat capsized in a squall.

The lad, Chambers was helped on top of the boat while the others clung to the sides. Mr Whitehead volunteered to swim for the shore and swam off with the rudder and oar. A little later one of the artillerymen also tried to swim for shore, soon disappearing beneath the swell. Two of those clinging to the boat, numbed by the cold, let go and were drowned.

The remaining four managed to hold on until after midnight, when the boat somehow righted itself and they clambered back in, sitting in water up to their waists. Drifting and attempting to paddle with their hands they eventually found themselves in shallow water near Lady Robinson's Beach sometime after 3 am, and were cared for by Mr Huntley of the New Brighton Hotel. Schoolmaster John Whitehead left a wife and three children to mourn his loss. He was aged just 30. The others lost were F. Leslie, David Creighton and Frank Barbour. All four bodies were recovered a week later and the artillerymen were buried with full military honours.

Jenny MacRitchie | Community History Librarian

THE WRETCHED FLU: THE 1919 INFLUENZA PANDEMIC IN BOTANY & MASCOT

To celebrate the National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival this year, a talk was held at the Mascot Library and George Hanna Memorial Museum on Saturday 4 May. This year's theme was **Connecting People, Places and the Past.** Community History Librarian, Jenny MacRitchie spoke about the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1919, and its impact on the local communities of Mascot and Botany. Attendees were particularly interested in the lists of local residents who were inoculated at Botany Town Hall during January and February of 1919.

MASCOT RSL
SUB-BRANCH CENTENARY

Image courtesy of Bayside Libraries (Community History collection)

Congratulations to Mascot RSL Sub-Branch on the celebration of its centenary in late April 2019.

First formed in 1919 with a membership of just ten returned servicemen, the club originally covered the districts of Botany, Rosebery, Daceyville and Mascot.

This lovely photo is of the club's Armistice Ball held at Mascot Town Hall in October 1934.

MASCOT RSL **100 YEARS ANNIVERSARY** DINNER

The Mascot RSL Sub Branch organised a gala dinner at the Stamford Hotel, Mascot to celebrate its 100th Anniversary.

Pictured with the Annniversary cake are (left to right): Pam Richardson President of Mascot RSL Sub Branch, Matt Thistlethwaite the Member for Kingsford Smith, Ron Hoenig the Member for Heffron and Carolyn McMahon.

Bayside Councillor Dorothy Rapisardi pictured with Councillor Christina Curry and General Manager Meredith Wallace represented the Mayor Councillor Bill Saravinovski at the event passing on his best wishes and congratulations on behalf of all the Bayside Community.

A QUAKER TRAVELLER VISITS
BOTANY BAY

Frederick Mackie was a Quaker teacher of natural sciences who was born in Norfolk in 1812. He was also an artist and diarist and first arrived in Hobart in 1852. He spent the next few years touring the colonies, keeping meticulous diaries of his travels. Eventually he settled in South Australia and died there in 1893. His diaries were finally published in 1972 with the title: Traveller Under Concern: *The Quaker Journals of Frederick Mackie on his tour of the Australasian Colonies 1852-1855.*

In 1853 Frederick Mackie visited Sydney and the following is an account of his excursion to Botany Bay. 1st October 1853 'Walked yesterday to Botany Bay, a distance of eight or ten miles from our lodgings. Stopped at the Sir Jos Banks Hotel and returned this morning.

The road lies over low sand hills covered with small scrub and various flowers. The sand in many places has almost the whiteness of snow and so little mixture of earth is there in it that it would doubtless be entirely destitute of vegetation but for the moisture of it; water is found about two feet below the flat surface. The moister places were generally pink with the flowers of Sprengelia incarnate, intermixed with Boronias, Bauera rubioides, Cronea saligna, Hibbertias and many other plants. The inn is pleasantly situated on the edge of the bay and a variety of birds and animals are kept for the entertainment of visitors.

Four emus have a small paddock to themselves, a kangaroo was in another department, a stork-like bird called the 'native companion' [brolga], and a variety of smaller birds in cages. The bay is very inferior to Port Jackson in every respect. The water is shallow and the land around it is low and covered with bush. A pink mesembryanthemum [pigface] forms extensive banks and is useful in fixing the sand. I enjoyed a bathe in its waters though I had the mortification to leave my spectacles at the bottom. We observed La Perouse's monument which stands near the Heads on the north side.'

Jenny MacRitchie | Community History Librarian

Frederick Mackie, Tasmania c.1860s. Photographer Charles Alfred Woolley. Courtesy University of Tasmania

DEAD CENTRAL

The State Library of NSW is currently hosting an exhibition about the Devonshire Street Cemetery that was resumed by the State Government in 1901 to allow the building of Central Railway Station. First consecrated in 1820, the cemetery officially closed in 1866 and the site became abandoned and overgrown. In 1901 the remains of the more than 30,000 people laid to rest there were reinterred elsewhere. Many were moved to Bunnerong Cemetery, the cemetery purpose-built for these remains, next to Botany Cemetery. A tramline was constructed between the Devonshire Street and Bunnerong Cemeteries to expedite the removal of caskets and headstones. These headstones are now preserved in the Pioneer Memorial Park at Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park.

The Exhibition is on until 17 November 2019 at The State Library in Macquarie Street.

It Includes an audio tour and it is recommended visitors bring their own phones and earphones to fully enjoy the experience.

Admission is free.

For further details please visit: Sl.Nsw.Gov.Au/Exhibitions/Dead-Central

Jenny MacRitchie | Community History Librarian

Devonshire Street Cemetery, c.1901. Image courtesy of the State Library of NSW, c15551_0004_c

![Bayside Council logo](Bayside Council — Serving Our Community)

www.bayside.nsw.gov.au

Rockdale pilot, Reginald Annabel c.1930
Image courtesy of the Crowther family

Reg Annabel's Gypsy Moth *Spirit of Fun Junior*, built on his Rockdale dairy farm in 1932.
Image courtesy of the Crowther family