

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

by

Derek P. Woodhall, President

The Aviation Historical Society of New Zealand was formally constituted on 1st January, 1958, and this report covers progress during our first year. We started off with plenty of faith, a few members, and a lot of ideas. The faith and the ideas have multiplied, as has the total of members. In January, 1958, we could count on five definite subscriptions - now we are running into the sixties. This may not sound a great deal to those societies whose membership runs into thousands, but for the population and the size of the interest therefrom, it is reckoned a reasonable figure for the first year. We hope, of course to spread the word even more so during 1959.

It was decided before the Society actually started, that a monthly Journal would be produced, to cover past and present events concerning aviation in New Zealand. Aviation as we know it today started towards the end of the nineteenth century with many balloon flights, and of recent years it has been suggested that a New Zealander was the first person to fly a powered aircraft! While I do not want to bring a hornet's nest about my head I would like to mention that point; there is plenty of scope for such a Society as this to undertake research into our own pioneer efforts. At all events, the Journal of the A.H.S.N.Z. has now run into twelve issues and a supplement, and every Journal has been mailed before the due publication date. Whether or not we shall be able to keep up that standard remains to be seen. There have been 110 pages of reading matter, plus about 48 pages of New Zealand Civil Register "gen" and coverage of the latter is going well. We hope to cover the complete Register in due course. This is not so big an undertaking as it sounds, for there have been under 1,500 aircraft civil-registered to date here. The Register covers such details as type, constructor's number, previous identities, owners, fate and other miscellaneous details.

In May, 1958, it was decided to form the first Branch of the Society, in order to hold regular meetings so that members could get together for the inevitable natter sessions, and also hear interesting guest speakers on aeronautical subjects. We planned film evenings, quizzes, and slide projections. Monthly meetings were held on the fourth Thursday of each month, and the attendance at these meetings has been very good. I should mention that the meetings so far have been in Christchurch, the other centres in New Zealand so far not having started their own branches. We hope that it won't be long before they do, for half the fun of belonging to a Society of this nature is in being able to meet other people of the same peculiar tastes as one's self.

Our Patron is Mr. George Bolt, O.B.E., F.R.Ae.S., Chief Engineer of Tasman Empire Airways Limited. Mr. Bolt has been a foremost figure in aviation for over fifty years. He has shown a great interest in our work, and in September last we had the privilege of hearing him address a Royal Aeronautical Society meeting in Christchurch. At the final 1958 meeting a film evening was held, and at this we saw the film 'Fifty Years of Powered Flight'.

We look forward to 1959 with confidence, with the knowledge that plenty of support will be forthcoming from our members. In closing, I would like to convey greetings from all members of A.H.S.N.Z. to all members of A.A.H.S. We look forward to an exchange of ideas and information, and may our respective societies flourish.

D.P.W.