



Winter 2023 Newsletter

Good afternoon all. Sunday today, wet, cold and wintertime! A good day for inside activities and newsletters.

Base tours / Morning teas: As mentioned in the Autumn newsletter, we were host to the Belmont Probus group and members of the Forestville RSL for their Base Tours. 84 pax in all and two lovely groups of people, with clear, fine days it was a delight to be at Rathmines.

Our friends from Greenmount Anglicare enjoyed the morning tea at Beresfield and were taken for a walk around the project by our Vice President, Terry Woolard.

More recently two groups have enjoyed the 'Bero morning tea'...men from the Ulysses Motorbike Club and the Hunter Model Club...enjoy the photos.



These visits are a source of fundraising for us, but importantly they allow us to promote the restoration and the RCA goals. We have several bookings for the months ahead.

Whilst on this topic and the end of the 2022-23 FY...in the 12 months we were able to sell 116 books from our 'shop' and tours saw 316 pax pay us a visit.



Cooks Hill boys: We are in frequent contact with the school staff, Sid continues to attend each Wednesday. Unfortunately, Lachlan and Kynan have had to drop out due to transport problems...sadly, Mums cannot be everywhere!

TAFE: Similar story, we are in frequent contact with the teaching staff and looking at ways to develop a working relationship. We have asked them to consider the restoration / manufacture of a few of our internal bulkhead doors and they have taken a sample to facilitate in house discussions.

Membership renewals: My thanks and appreciation for your ongoing support to the 122 members renewing for the 2023 – 24 year. Several of you have been in contact and I have been able to arrange a site visit...we can, by arrangement, accommodate visits in small numbers.

Victory Pacific Day: Occurs on **Tuesday August 15th** and we will arrange to lay a wreath.

Memorabilia: Penny Furner and Laraine Nelson have logged many hours over recent months and the cataloguing, recording and packing of our collection is now complete. Some of the items were deemed not relevant to Rathmines but may have some importance to other facets of the AF (Air Force).

All the boxes are now located at Beresfield, and we are waiting for the AF curator to spend some time with us to take the next steps forward for display and recording.

A very sincere thanks to Penny and Laraine for a job well done.

Beresfield update: I believe we have now acquitted ourselves of any items remaining back at Ridge Rd. Thank you to Terry Woolard for his untiring efforts in this matter. The packing, storing, tidying up at Bero is an ongoing matter, but the place looks better and more organised each week...it was a big move!

As planned, we see WGCDR Rick Dyson as a regular attendee on Wednesdays. Through his efforts we are seeing the delivery of furniture items... chairs, cabinets, tables and a flame proof cabinet to date.

AF conducted a recent WHS (Work Health and Safety) inspection and numerous points were raised that we are progressively attending to. This was a planned and expected activity, with the goal of continual improvement in our safety awareness. It was noted on numerous occasions that we are well advanced in our WHS culture.

I will ask the VP, Terry Woolard to add some restoration comment, but I note that exceptional work is being done.

Important visitor: I have been advised that we can expect a visit from the Director General AF History and Heritage, Air Commodore Rob Lawson. This will occur later in August and will enable AIRCMDRE Lawson to review the project and the inspect the leased premises. His busy schedule has not allowed a visit until now.

Restoration Report:

There has been some impressive progress made on all fronts over the last few months, not just specifically on the "Our Girl" restoration.

We are gradually getting settled into our new premises, still much to be done but we are all agreed that it's nice to have four walls & a roof! Two of our volunteers are worth a mention, Terry Fahey & Brett Ley have devoted a vast amount of time installing essential infrastructure & continue to gradually wear down the numerous jobs to be done. One of the main challenges is finding space to install all the racking & storage units we have on hand. The pallet racking set up including systems that identify all components & where they are stored is virtually completed. Great job John & Wayne.

Work is about to commence on assembling several mobile scaffolding units for use on the fuselage & centre wing. The RCA own this equipment but an authorised company will assemble & certify it. Other work is in hand to bring us up to the required WH&S standards, nothing too critical but still very important.

The restoration itself continues to progress well, albeit with some unexpected obstacles. The main one is the corrosion found in & around the tail assembly. This has involved removing both elevators & stripping the fabric off to access repair areas. Repairs are well in hand, one elevator is under repair off site to assist with the work load. Fortunately, fabric expertise is locally available when the time comes. It is still intended to trial fit the repaired tail unit to the fuselage empennage.

Work on the fuselage continues taking care to get the various items in the correct sequence. The next one about to commence is preparation around the port side hull area prior to resheeting. The bow gun turret is still off site for refurbishment, there has been a delay until correct dimensions were obtained for the manufacture of the turret eyeball. Many thanks to our friends at HARS for their assistance.

It is still intended to set up the fuselage on the main landing gear but that sequence still has to be followed which involves refitting the nose gear but the above preparation & sheeting has to be done first. However, work continues on packing & setting up so that nothing moves during the removal of the shipping frame & the trial refit of the tail.

Work continues on the centre wing, devoted team working on this as nothing has beaten them as yet. Fabulous assistance from external companies, supplying material, folding special stringers as required plus special fabrication work.

Terry Woolard

The months ahead: The transition from RCA to AF for the building lease and the gifting of the aircraft will take place towards the end of the year. Documents and formalities are well underway with more information in the next newsletter.

Our Treasurer has the end of year accounts well in hand. An external audit of the accounts will allow a date to be set for the AGM...more soon.

My best wishes to all.

Bill

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