



THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH



AIR ACTIVITIES BASE CAMDEN AIRPORT



**Scouts**  
Air Activity Centre

*1972—2022*  
*50 Year Anniversary*







1972—2022

50 Year Anniversary



**Scouts**  
Air Activity Centre

## THE FIRST DECADE

*(Edited from material originally prepared by Reg Thompson and Ken Partridge)*

Air Scouts had been a specialist section of the Australian Scout Movement since 1946, although in NSW (and indeed, other Australian States) there were only a small number of specialised 'Air Scout' Groups. In 2022, only three Air Scout Groups are listed nationally.

In 1966, the "Australian Boy Scouts Association", as it was then known, set up a committee comprising representatives of all Branches (States) to review Scouting programs to bolster their relevance in the 1970's and through to the turn of the century. This committee was called the "Design for Tomorrow Committee".

In 1970, this committee submitted its recommendations to the National Executive Committee for consideration, and implementation of the new programs – grouped under the title "New Design" – commenced in 1971.

The new programs provided for three major activities paths : Campcraft, Water Activities, and Air Activities.

The free choice offered in the New Design programs meant that training in Air Activities and Water Activities became an intrinsic part of the scheme rather than specialist training previously offered after basic Scout training within Air and Sea Scout Groups.

Scouting then faced the challenge of making training in these specialist areas available to all members of the Scouting Movement in Australia.

The following pages summarise how practical Air Activities programs were introduced to Scouting in NSW by three dedicated and persistent Scouting individuals.

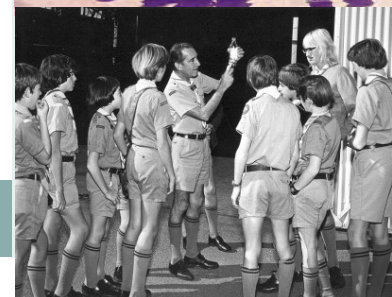
### AN IDEA IS BORN

Initially, the NSW Branch of the Scouts Association considered that Scouts wanting to undertake Air Activities training would seek the services of suitably qualified persons to provide such training. Indeed the 'New Design' scheme provided for the recruitment of specialist 'Resource Advisors' to provide training in specialist areas. It was considered that existing Aero Club and Gliding Clubs could and would provide the practical flying requirements for the Scouts Air Activities program.

In late 1971, Mark Munro, the Group Leader of 2nd Manly and coincidentally also Club Captain of the Camden Aero Club, took a patrol of Scouts to Camden and went for a fly. Some weeks later at a Manly Warringah area conference he mentioned this 'activity' to the Area Commissioner, Reg Thompson. Reg was also aware that John Jarman, Assistant Scout Leader at 1st Mona Vale, was also a pilot, and he suggested they should all get together to discuss ideas.

A little time later, the newly formed Manly-Warringah Scout Area (responsible for the administration of Scouting in the Northern Beaches area of Sydney) formed an Air Activities Flight Committee to investigate the detailed implementation of practical Air Activities programs.

The committee comprised **Keith Jones, Ken Partridge and Reg Thompson.**





**Ken Partridge**—a founding member of the AAC

## TRIAL AIR ACTIVITIES DAY — FROM A TENT !

Initially, discussions were held with the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) regarding the formation of a Manly-Warringah Area Scout Flying Club, based at Camden. The DCA provided guidelines for what would be required for Scouts to operate their own flights and ultimately a flying school. The DCA also suggested Mr Bob Curtis (a schoolteacher at Camden and flying instructor with Camden Aero Club) could provide support in preparing an Operations Manual for a Scouts flying 'club'. Interest amongst Scout groups for access to such an operation was canvassed and arrangements made with the College of Civil Aviation to

provide aviation theory lectures. An Art Union fundraiser raffle with a Kawasaki 100 G4TR motorcycle as the prize was used to provide seed funding for the venture.

Ultimately a trial "Air Activities Field Day" was conducted at Camden Airport on **26<sup>th</sup> March, 1972** when about 40 Scouts, Venturers, Rovers, Leaders and parents from the Manly-Warringah area assembled outside Camden Aero Club. Operational Headquarters was a lean-to 'auto tent'. Two borrowed aircraft were used in the trial – a Cessna 150 (VH-KPO) from Rex Aviation Bankstown, and a privately owned Piper PA-22 Tri-Pacer (VH-ROB).



Where it all began—Piper PA-22 Tri-Pacer VH-ROB in use during the trial Air Activities Field Day, 26 March, 1972 (photo J.K. Jarman)

### A trial Air Activities Day was conducted at Camden Airport on 26th March, 1972

Scout members attending were given a series of aviation-oriented lectures, and everyone had a 15-minute flight in one of the aircraft after a donation of \$2/head. Despite the Cessna 150 experiencing radio malfunctions and the Tri-Pacer having battery troubles, the trial Air Activities Field Day proved an outstanding success. Some participants chose to fly more than once on the day, with one participant taking three flights !



A.R. (Bert) Gardner, Mark Munro & Reg Thompson in front of C150 VH-KPO, Camden, 26 March, 1972

The Air Activities Flight Committee carried out further discussions with the Department of Civil Aviation and representatives of various aero clubs. The outcome resulted in the committee recommending that the Scout Movement should set up its own Air Activities Centre. This base would provide familiarisation flying programs for all members of the Movement, flying training for members over 16 years and private flying facilities for graduating Scout pilots. It was considered the development of such an Air Activities Centre would not take business away from existing flying organisations but would introduce a new group of people to the General Aviation industry. As with all Scouting activities, it was considered that the staffing of the Centre should be qualified volunteers who would become uniformed leader members of the Scout Movement.

It was decided that the Scouts NSW, Air Activities Centre or Base as it was then known, would be established at Camden Airport— one of Sydney's secondary airports, approximately 55km south west of Sydney.....and that the Scouts Association should acquire its own aircraft.



## WELCOME 'SKIPPY'!

Arrangements followed with Rex Aviation Sales (NSW) Pty Ltd at Bankstown airport to enable Manly-Warringah Scout Area to purchase a secondhand 2-seat Cessna 150 aircraft. A suitable aircraft was located and repainted in the Manly Warringah Scout Area's colours of green and white. At an impressive ceremony with media attendance at Bankstown Airport on Saturday morning, 3rd June 1972, the Cessna 150F VH-ROO was handed over to Area Commissioner, Mr Reg Thompson by David Irons, General Manager of Rex Aviation Sales Pty Ltd. Thus VH-ROO became the first Scout-owned aircraft in the world. The cost of the aircraft was \$4,890 and funds came from a special grant made to the Manly-Warringah Scout Area by Warringah Shire Council, hence not drawing at all on Scout Association funds.

Cessna 150F VH-ROO (affectionately named 'Skippy') was flown to Camden after the handover ceremony and put into service for Scout familiarisation flying programs on Sunday 4th June. Twenty four Scouts were each flown a circuit in the newly acquired Scout aircraft. The cost for participating in a full Air Activity Day was \$4/head.

Within the first three months of operations, over 170 Scouting members had one or more flights at the Camden base.

*"The first Scout-owned aircraft in the world!"*



*Saturday 3rd June, 1972. Scouts Manly-Warringah Area Commissioner, Mr Reg Thompson, accepts the keys to VH-ROO from Mr D. Irons, General Manager of Rex Aviation Pty Ltd, Bankstown.*

## FIRST TRIAL AIR ACTIVITIES FIELD DAY PARTICIPANTS

Scout Member	Formation
I Higson	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
K Jones	1 <sup>st</sup> Harbord
R G Longley	1 <sup>st</sup> Mona Vale
I Frazer	1 <sup>st</sup> Mona Vale
F Sehlmeier	1 <sup>st</sup> Mona Vale
I W Oastler	1 <sup>st</sup> Harbord
D Ireland	2 <sup>nd</sup> Beacon Hill
G Troy	Mackellar District Rovers
B Engert	Mackellar District Rovers
I Thomas	1 <sup>st</sup> Harbord
T. Lane	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
J. Gaal	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
B Lees	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
M Stott	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
P Walmsley	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
M Sharpe	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
M Deacon	1 <sup>st</sup> Bayview
B Cooke	1 <sup>st</sup> Belrose
P White	1 <sup>st</sup> Fairlight
P Barnes	1 <sup>st</sup> Fairlight
I Humphrey	1 <sup>st</sup> Fairlight
G Cooke	2 <sup>nd</sup> Narrabeen
G Wilkes	2 <sup>nd</sup> Manly
R Greenwood	1 <sup>st</sup> Forestville
R Hasling	1 <sup>st</sup> Forestville
K Wass	1 <sup>st</sup> Forestville
A Partridge	1 <sup>st</sup> Forestville
P Cornelisse	1 <sup>st</sup> Frenchs Forest
G Bolton	1 <sup>st</sup> Frenchs Forest



## NEED FOR A FLYING SCHOOL EMERGES

Scout familiarisation flying proved to be incredibly popular so the next logical step was to establish a flying school for Scouting members.

Despite the early hectic pace of organising weekly Air Activity Days on both Saturdays and Sundays, the Air Activities Flight Committee worked towards the acquisition of a Flying School (Air Work) Licence.

This second stage of the Base development was completed, when the Base occupied a small annexe to Hangar 57, and the issue of Flying School Licence #NSW127 occurred on 1st February, 1973 with flying training commencing on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1973.

The issue of the Flying School Licence required the Base to review its flying programs. Saturdays were set aside for flying training, while Air Activities days for Scouts continued every Sunday.

The flying programs were under the supervision of the Bases' new Honorary Chief Flying Instructor, **Mr R. G. (Bob) Curtis** who was the Chief Flying Instructor of Camden Aero Club. Mr Curtis was assisted by another honorary flying instructor **George Kierle**, who had been recruited. Flying Instruction costs were set at \$8/hour.

Members of the Air Activities Flight Committee, including the Area Commissioner, became the Base's first student pilots.

## THE FIRST OFFICIAL AIR ACTIVITIES DAY



The first Air Activity Day makes the front page

Sunday 4th of June 1972 was the first 'official' day of Scout familiarisation flying. During the following months, Air Activity Days were conducted for Scout Units each Saturday and Sunday, with 24 members flying each day as well as receiving instruction in such subjects as basic principles of flight, aircraft controls, aerodrome layout and operations, and aero modelling. An 'auto tent' continued to be base HQ. Costs for a 15-minute familiarisation flight (comprising a single circuit) was initially set at \$2.00/Scout with an additional 20 cents payable for admission to the Camden Aviation Museum.

Some of the known participants in the first official Air Activity Day were :

M. Mitchell	1st Mona Vale	P. Webster	1st Manly
D. Ireland	2nd Beacon Hill	R. Kofman	1st Mona Vale
C. Cowper	1st Bayview	A. Cole	1st Elanora Heights
G. Wilkes	2nd Manly	J. Reid	1st Forestville
Ken Partridge (Leader)		Manly Warringah Area	

The Scout Familiarisation Flying programs were under the supervision of the honorary Base Chief Pilot, **Mr Graeme Tisdell** who was assisted by a small team of pilots recruited specially from Sydney-based aero clubs.



Scouts inspect a Hawker Sea Fury at the Camden Air Museum as part of their Air Activity Day



RECEIVED  
9 FEB 1973  
Ans'd.....

LICENCE No. NSW 127



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION

AIR NAVIGATION REGULATIONS

# AERIAL WORK and FLYING SCHOOL LICENCE

I, ARTHUR WILLIAM DOUBLEDAY, Delegate of the Director General of Civil Aviation, in pursuance of regulation 196 of the Air Navigation Regulations hereby license the use by THE SCOUT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH, of SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, of Cessna 150 aircraft on the following aerial work operation within New South Wales:-

Flying training at Camden Aerodrome and such other centres as are expressly approved in writing from time to time by the Director General for use by The Scout Association of Australia, New South Wales Branch, to the standard required for the issue or renewal of a Private Pilot Licence.

This licence is granted subject to the conditions that the licensee and the aircraft used in that aerial work operation shall comply with the provisions of the Air Navigation Act 1920-1971 and the Air Navigation Regulations.

Subject to the Air Navigation Regulations this licence remains in force for the following period:-

1st February 1973 to

31st January 1974

DATED this First day of February 1973.

Delegate of the Director General of Civil Aviation.

As demand rapidly increased from Scout Units wishing to participate in the Familiarisation Flying Programs, arrangements were made to cross hire Cessna 172 VH-DJG from Camden Aero Club on a regular Saturday and Sunday basis, this increasing the programs flying capacity as well as freeing the Cessna 150 for full-time weekend flying training.

In the first year of operations, the Base flew a total of 153 hrs and 15

mins flying 358 Scouts and qualified two Restricted Private Pilots.

The first restricted Private Pilots Licence to be granted to a member of the Scout Flying School was issued in March 1974. The first unrestricted Licence holders were Reg Thompson after passing his flight test on Christmas eve 1974, Ken Partridge in the early weeks of 1975 and Keith Jones in February of the same year. (the three original Air Activities Base founders from the Manly Warringah Area).



Flight operations were managed from an annexe to Hanger 57 leased from the Camden Aero Club



*Raoul Mondon became a revered flying instructor at the Centre*



*Cessna 150F, VH-ROO in 1971, prior to purchase by Scouts and being repainted in the green and white colours of the Manly Warringah Scout Area. 'Skippy' was used for flying training on Saturdays and for Scout familiarisation flying on Sundays*

When the Scout flying school first opened in February 1973, flying instruction was charged at a rate of \$8/hour while commercial organisations were charging up to \$24/hour. The administration of the flying school in the early days was at a more leisurely pace than Scout familiarisation flying. However, every student pilot well and truly contributed time and effort to the Centre.

By mid 1974, sixty Scouting members had registered for flying training. Three student pilots had completed their first solo flight, and two had gained their Restricted Private Pilots Licence.

The first Venturer solo flight was by Wayne Sinclair from 1st Leichhardt Unit in February 1975.



In June 1975, **Raoul Mondon** joined the Base as a flying instructor from Jim Hazelton's Navair Flying School at Bankstown. Raoul was to become a revered flying instructor and mentor for many Scout student pilots over the ensuing years. One of the huts at the Air Activity Centre was subsequently named in Raoul's honour.



*Student pilots, Venturers Neil Millican and James Mabbutt (1977)*



## A GLIDING WING IS FORMED

At the beginning of 1974, the Air Activities Centre Operations Committee commenced investigations which led to the purchase of an all-metal Blanik L-13 glider aircraft VH-GUI, and the formation of a Gliding Wing. The intent was to offer both glider pilot training and familiarisation gliding programs, similar to those which had been developed by the light aircraft wing over the preceding few years. The Centre's Gliding Advisor, **Mr Harry Whelan** took delivery of a new Blanik Glider VH-GUI at Tocumwal on Saturday 23 June, 1974, test flew, de-rigged and towed the glider to Camden where it undertook its first Scout flight on Sunday, 24 June,



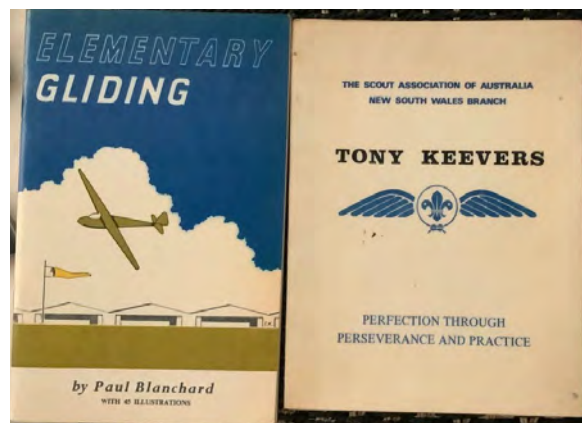
*The NSW Chief Secretary and Minister for Sport, Mr Ian Griffith cuts the ribbon on the first Scouts glider at the inauguration of the Scout Gliding Activities on 3rd November 1974*



*The Scout Blanik glider being launched –circa 1974*

The costs for a Gliding Air Activities Day including a 20-minute familiarisation flight in 1975 was \$4.00, with admission to the Camden Aviation Museum costing an extra 20 cents. Glider launches were provided by the Concordia and Southern Cross Gliding Clubs which limited launches to a maximum of 12 per day.

The first Glider solo for a uniformed Scout leader was Mal Ayrton in December, 1974.



*Each gliding student was given an instruction manual and a personalised log book. Tony Keevers commenced his glider training at the Centre in September, 1974.*

A similar arrangement to the 'power' wing was established, whereby Glider Pilot training was offered on Saturdays with Scout familiarisation flying occurring on Sundays.

Gliding instruction was delivered by a panel of eight Gliding Federation of Australia qualified Gliding Instructors and familiarisation flights were provided by six passenger rated Glider Pilots.



## THE BASE GETS BUSY!

During the 1973 calendar year, 26 Scout groups and 4 Districts from the Sydney metro area visited the Camden Air Activities Centre. The first country air activity for ~70 Scouts members of the Newcastle and Hunter Area, was also undertaken at West Maitland in November of that year. The base flew Skippy and two hired four seater aircraft to West Maitland for the weekend. This first country activity coincided with National Aviation Expo '73 and the Scouts Air Activity team also participated in the associated air pageant.

In October of 1973, the base entered the Light Aircraft Championships organised by the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs at Camden. Despite challenging conditions including 45 kts winds, base pilot and Manly District Commissioner Mark Munro, achieved third place in the spot landing competition.

Further growth in Scout participation and some significant milestones were recorded at the Centre throughout 1974. During the year, 27 Sydney metro Scout Groups, 1 country Group, 11 Districts, 2 Areas, 1 Girl Guide Division, 1 Ranger Unit, and 1 Girl Guide Company all visited the Centre for Air Activity Days. Additionally, there was a weekend visit to Cooma with three aircraft where 139 Scout members were flown.

During Easter of 1974, the Scout aircraft were flown to Wollongong to fly the flag at the South Coast & Tablelands Area Jubilee Regatta and Air Pageant.

In May, 1974, the Scout Air Activities Base applied for and received full membership of the **Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia (RFACA)** and in June, the **Gliding Federation of Australia (GFA)**. The RFACA appointed Mr Reg Thompson as its Councillor to the Federation.

The granting of membership to the Base by these two national aviation organisations completed the initial development of the Scout Air Activities Base at Camden Airport, and its recognition by the General Aviation industry as both an Aero and Gliding Club. The Scout Movement in NSW also thus became the first youth organisation in the world to achieve membership of any national aviation body.

During the Scout year to 31/3/1974 1,467 Scout members were flown in addition to a total of 270 training flights being provided. By the end of calendar year 1974, 25 student pilots were on the register with three having achieved first solo and two awarded their Restricted Private Pilot's Licence. Air activities of some sort were conducted on 46 weekends of the year.



## Country Air Activities introduced

Since its inception, the Scout Air Activities Base had recognised the need to provide for country as well as metropolitan Sydney Scouts to have access to the Base's programs. Accordingly, the Base regularly took aircraft and crews to country aerodromes to provide Air Activities programs for country Scouts. These country activities were usually over a weekend, and the Base visited up to 18 country centres for Air Activities weekends each year.

The first country activity for ~70 Scouts was at West Maitland in November 1973 to coincide with the National Aviation Expo. In early 1974, the first 'stand-alone' country activity was to Cooma for the weekend of 9-10 February where 139 Scout members were flown in Skippy and a cross-hire C172, VH-KPO. The pilots for this country activity were Bob Andrews, Graeme Tisdell and Bob Bannerman

Also in 1974, the Canberra-Monaro region was served over the weekend of 21-22 September with both flying training and Scout familiarisation flying delivered at Goulburn airport. Skippy and two cross-hired C172's VH-DJG and VH-KOT were utilised.

The first involvement at a national Scout activity was at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Venture, held in Canberra over a 6-day period in January 1976. This Venture was attended by approximately 1,600 Venturers (15 to 18 years of age) from all States of Australia. 458 of those attending the National Venture participated in the Air Activities program including 163 activity flights and 45 glider launches

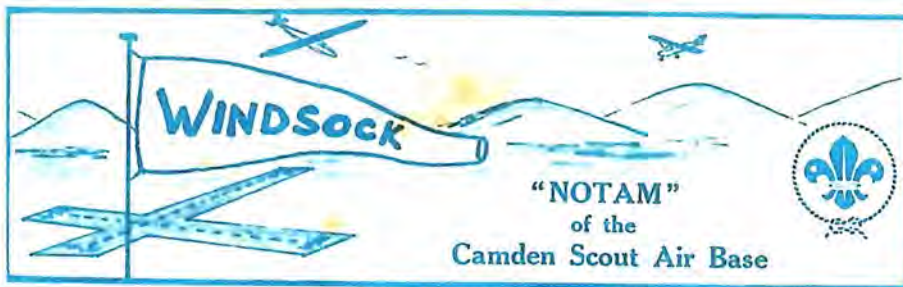


*VH-GUI seeks the shade off the private airstrip at Currandooley used for the 4th National Venture gliding operations*

*Pilots Bob Andrews , Keith Randle, Graeme Tisdell & Reg Thompson on the Scouts flight line—4th National Venture, RAAF Base*



## BASE 'WINDSOCK' NEWSLETTER TELLS ALL



With the substantial and growing amount of activity associated with the Air Activities Base, publication of a monthly member newsletter entitled "**Windsock**" commenced in November, 1974 to keep the membership informed of activities, key events and social items. The first editor signed off inconspicuously as simply 'Delta Hotel Alpha' but was eventually revealed as Don Austin. Don was also a talented cartoonist and presented cartoons of monthly happenings in the newsletter.

*Windsock* became an institution and its arrival into member's letter boxes each month was eagerly anticipated.

Its existence has indeed been fortuitous. Much of the day to day camaraderie of the characters and the history of the Base' early days was revealed within its pages which would have otherwise been unknown to latter members.

Editor: Delta Hotel Alpha. November, 1974.  
P.O. Box 240, DEE WHY. 2099.

### Base Commissioner's Frequency:

The introduction of our own Air Activities Base Magazine is a welcome addition to our air activities Programme. The operations carried out at the Scout Air Activities Base at Camden Airport are becoming quite varied, and the opportunities for regular and close communication between all our members have unfortunately lessened as we have expanded, and we look forward to strengthening the bonds between all members involved in Air Activities through the pages of "Windsock".

Our Scout Air Activities are in a unique situation not experienced by members of other Aero and Gliding Clubs, in that our involvement in flying is just a part of our overall Scouting activities. While we expect keenness from our flying members, we must make special efforts to programme our flying activities so that they do not prevent us from undertaking a balanced scouting diet.

Venturers and Rovers must continue full participation in their unit activities, while all Scouters must ensure that their flying activities do not interfere with their prime Scouting responsibilities.

These requirements will throw additional duties and responsibilities onto those Leaders who have been recruited specifically for Air Activities, and we will look to these people to often undertake duties additional to those they might be expected to undertake in their flying with other Aero and Gliding Clubs.

The future success of our Air Activities programmes will depend upon everyone doing their bit, with the Scout Spirit prevailing through a practical application of our Scout Law and Promise. I know that I can rely on YOU to play YOUR part. "Good flying to you all".

Reg Thompson.

### The Scout Pilots' Prayer.

Lord may we fly in clear blue skies  
with friends and fellows and open eyes.  
May we always find fair Cumulus cloud  
and shout our praise of Thee aloud.  
But should we stray from position or track,  
let Thy goodness and mercy direct us back.  
What e'er conditions or the weather  
frequency in prayer shall bring us together.  
Grant us true airmanship to be shared  
and in Scouting ways we will Be Prepared.



"YEH! AND I'M THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER"

A Don Austin cartoon from  
Christmas 1976



## SKIPPY GAINS A BIG BROTHER !

As demand for the Scout Air Activities facilities continued to increase, it became obvious that the Base would have to increase its aircraft capacity. Camden Aero Club continued to provide aircraft for cross-hiring, but an additional Scout-owned aircraft had become a necessity. Accordingly, in October, 1975, Cessna 150 VH-ROO gained a big brother in the form of Cessna 172H, VH-DPF for the sum of \$9,500 from Camden Aviation Sales & Service.

This first 4-seat addition to the fleet was put to good use as 1975 saw the Base facilities stretched to the limit. Around 3,600 Scout and Guide members were flown during the year which included four country weekend activities:

Moruya 20-21 September with 187 flown, Mudjee 11-12 October flying 189 members, West Maitland in 8-9 November with 205 flown and Cootamundra 22-23 November flying 122 members.

Interestingly, after the Cootamundra weekend activity finished, the 'away' crew departed Coota around 2pm and arrived back into Camden to then participate in the usual Sunday air activities based at Camden !

Gliding also got in on the act, with a gliding country activity hosted at HMAS Albatross at Nowra providing gliding experiences to Scouts from the South Coast area.



*Cessna 172H VH-DPF sporting the Fleur de Lys in 1975*



*The Air Activities 'away' team during a Mudjee country air activity, October, 1975*



*Reg Thompson explaining the control surfaces to Venturers from the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), National Venture 1976*

During this period, the Base's 4-seater aircraft capacity was supplemented by the placing of privately-owned Cessna 177 VH-DZP on the Scout's line. It remained on the Scouts line through to the end of 1976. To meet the increasing demand for flying training, the Base purchased its third aircraft, Cessna 150G, VH-KPO from **Mr George Dusting** in March 1976. Interestingly, this Cessna 150 aircraft had been used during the very first Air Activities trial day in March 1972.

Initially, a Scout aircraft was hangered in Hangar 56, but after a 177% increase in hangarage charges imposed by the DCA, this hangar was vacated. In July 1976, plans commenced for the Base to acquire land at Camden Airport for the development of its own aircraft park and operations building.

March 1977 saw the next change for the Base-owned aircraft, with the sale of the original Cessna C150F, VH-ROO (Skippy) and the purchase of a second four-seater aircraft, Cessna C172F, VH-SCA.

In December 1978, privately-owned Cessna 172K, VH-BON joined the Scout line. The addition of this aircraft onto the Scout line enabled consideration to be given to replacing the two older Scout Cessna 172s with more modern and better equipped aircraft, and in October, 1979, Cessna 172s VH-DPF and VH-SCA were replaced with Cessna 172M VH-SXK.

## THE BASE REACHES ITS PEAK

The late 1970's are considered as the peak of General Aviation activity in Australia, and so too for the Air Activities Centre. Over 5,000 Scout & Girl Guide members were flown by the Camden Air Activity Centre during calendar year 1975. In 1976, the Centre had a total of 114 members, consisting of 42 student pilots, 13 private pilots, 18 staff pilots, 3 instructors within the 'power' wing and 24 gliding student pilots, 2 glider pilots and 12 staff and instructors in the gliding wing.

In January 1977, the Base supplied two Cessna 172 aircraft and crews to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> Jamboree held near Melbourne. This Jamboree was attended by approximately 14,000 Scouts and leaders from all Australian States and from about 20 overseas countries. In conjunction with the Victorian Branch Air Activities Team who used aircraft provided by Groupair Pty Ltd, about 1,900 Scouts were provided with 30-minute activity flights from Casey Airfield near Berwick (Melbourne).

In Dec 1979 -Jan 1980, the Base provided five aircraft and crews for the 4<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific / 12<sup>th</sup> Australian Jamboree held in Perth. The five 'Scout' aircraft consisting of three Scout C172's a Grumman Traveller and a Beech Bonanza were flown from Camden to Perth and return, and joined another five aircraft and crews provided by the Royal Aero Club of Western Australia. The overall air activities team conducted 1,326 flights 637 flight hours, flying 4,165 of the ~13,000 Scouts attending the Jamboree from all Australian States and from over 30 countries on 30 minute activity flights from Jandakot airport over an eight day period.

Records indicate over the first five years of the Air Activities Centre operation, approximately 15,000 Scout and Guide members were introduced to aviation. By the tenth anniversary, this number had risen to over 50,000.

The regional locations served by the Air Activities Centre by delivering country activities over the first ten years include, Albion Park, Albury, Ardlethan, Armidale, Broken Hill, Canberra, Casino, Coffs Harbour, Cootamundra, Cooma, Dubbo, Forbes, Goulburn, Maitland, Merimbula, Moruya, Nowra, Orange, Parkes, Richmond, Taree, Tamworth, Temora, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong, Williamtown. This is in addition to participating in numerous flying competitions at Bowral, Maitland, Griffith, Schofields, & Wallacia.

*Grumman Traveller VH-ETQ owned by Miss June Perry, Guide Leader, AAC activity pilot and winner of the 1981 Amelia Earhart Memorial Scholarship. Only the second female Australian pilot ever to be awarded a scholarship in 40years*

The aircraft owned by the Scouts over the first ten years of operations included :

<i>Aircraft</i>	<i>registration</i>	<i>purchased</i>
Cessna 150F	VH-ROO	3 June 1972
Blanik J13	VH-GUI	23 June 1974
Cessna 172H	VH-DPF	30 Sept 1975
Cessna 150G	VH-KPO	28 Mar 1976
Cessna 172F	VH-SCA	26 April 1977
Cessna 172M	VH-SXX	28 July 1979
Cessna 152	VH-MAW	16 Aug 1980

Other aircraft that were routinely on the Scout 'flight line' during the first decade were :

Cessna 150	VH-WXT
Cessna 150	VH-UWS
Cessna 152	VH-IVX
Cessna 172	VH-DJG
Cessna 172	VH-UJG
Cessna 172	VH-DKX
Cessna 172	VH-PXQ
Cessna 172	VH-WSA
Cessna 172	VH-BON
Cessna 172	VH-EIX
Cessna 172	VH-SXI
Cessna 177	VH-DZP
Cessna 182	VH-FZK
Cessna 210	VH-CWN
Bellanca Citabria	VH-WEO
Bellanca Decathlon	VH-SSZ
Grumman Traveller	VH-ETQ





## ACCOLADES ROLL IN

In March 1981, the Scout Association of Australia was awarded an 'Honorary Group Diploma' by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) in recognition of the contribution to aviation made by the NSW Air Activities Base—the first Scout group to own their own aircraft and be licensed to conduct flying training for a private or commercial licence.

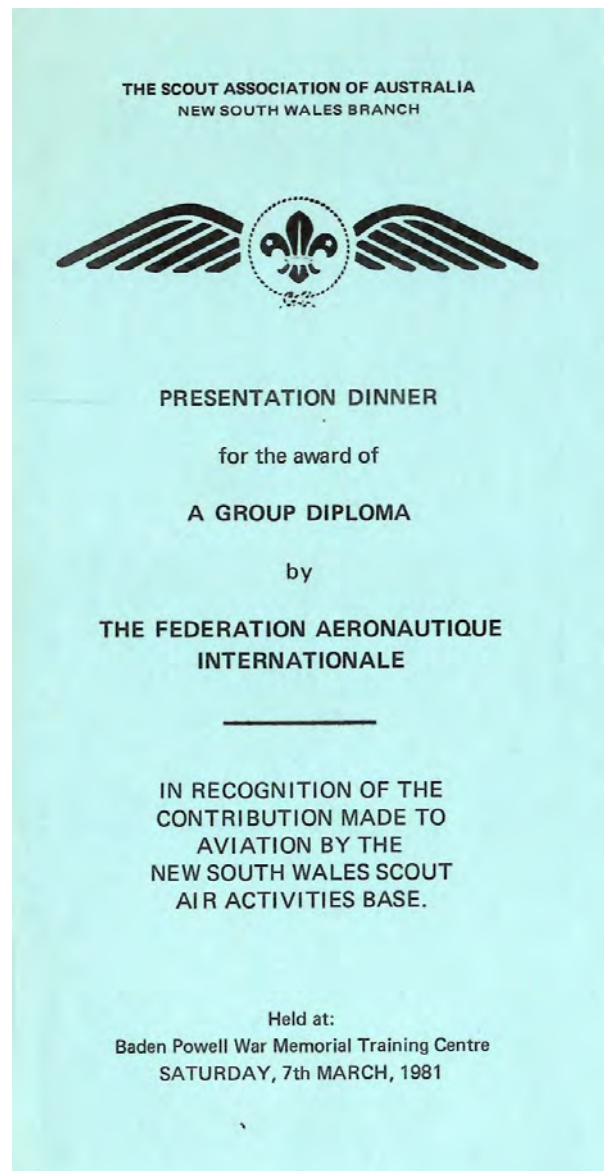
In May 1974 the NSW Air Activities base was admitted to full membership of the Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia (RFACA) and later the same year joined the Gliding Federation of Australia (GFA). In so doing it became part of the FAI and the first youth organisation in the world to achieve membership through the RFACA of any major international aviation body.

The only other Australian recipients (ever) of a Group Diploma are the Aeronautical Research Laboratories jointly with the Department of Civil Aviation and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.



*Branch Commissioner for Air Activities Reg Thompson, with Chief Commissioner Ron Pate displaying the Honorary Group Diploma presented by Jack Fahey, President of RFACA on behalf of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale.*

Also in 1981, one of the founders of the Base and Branch Commissioner for Air Activities, Mr Reg Thompson is awarded the Federation Medal by the RFACA in recognition of his contribution to the Aero Club movement in Australia.



## THE TREVAILS OF TRYING TO BUILD ON AN AIRPORT !

After migrating from a tent pitched and taken down every air activity day to a small annexe to someone else's hangar, the Base clearly needed a permanent home as the scale of the operations increased.

Formal application for a dedicated site for the Scouts Air Activities was made to the Department of Transport (DoT) on 12 July 1976, resulting in the allocation of an aircraft park site. This 'Stage 1' was an open-air area leased from the DoT that would be used to park the Scout aircraft. This area required fencing at a cost of around \$1,500. The DC-3 was later moved to the area within this compound.

Stage 2 required a building to house air activities, flight operations and the flying school. In 1977 Scouts were offered an old building owned by Clutha Developments located at the North Nattai Mine. Permission was gained from the DoT to move the building to a site on the airport. The move was effected on Saturday 18th December 1977 to a temporary location while permanent site works were carried out.

After submission of a series of plans, permission to erect the building on the Scouts leased aircraft park site were declined. Hence an application was made for an additional site adjacent to the Control Tower. After further negotiation the new site was allocated and leased and the revised building plans approved. During June 1978, the building, now in a poor state of repair was moved to the new (current) site.



*The Scout Activities building,, later named the Raoul Mondon Hut under construction*

Substantial building and repair works were required and the original official opening date of 20th August came and went with a revised opening date of 24th September also deferred to the 19th November 1978.

Hence on an unusually cold and wet November day in 1978, Mr Peter Langford, Director, Department of Transport officially opened the Air Activities Base Operations Building.

The Base development plan to add an additional Scout Activities building then commenced almost immediately.

The acquisition of an extended lease from the DoT was much easier than on the first occasion. The most significant problem was finding the funds to build. A strong case was prepared for the Scouts Branch Executive Committee and a sum of \$5,000 was subsequently approved. The complete cost of the building was nearer to \$7,700 which required substantial fundraising activities by the Base.

In June 1980, the new Activities building is opened by Mr J Fahey, President RFACA.

Stage 3 of the building plan was the construction of a hangar—which came much later.



*Senior Pilot Audrey Williams, leads a 'Principles of Flight' discussion in the new Scout Activities building.*

*Audrey was both a Ranger Leader for Girl Guides and a Scout member of the Base. She began learning to fly at the Base in September 1972 and was the first female Base member to gain her wings. She was a senior Scout activity pilot for many years and was later awarded the Nancy 'Bird' Walton Trophy in April 1985 for the most noteworthy contribution to aviation by a woman in Australia.*



## STAFF PILOTS 1972-1982

J. Jarman	June 1972	B. Lye	Nov 1974
M. Munro	June 1972	R. Pritchard	Nov 1974
G. Tisdell	Aug 1972	V. Sorensen	Mar 1975
R. White	Sept 1972	R. Thompson	Mar 1975
B. Bannerman	Feb 1973	K. Partridge	Jun 1975
R. Hale	Mar 1973	R. Mondon	Jul 1975
R. Maas	Apr 1973	R. Johnson	Jul 1975
R. Andrews	May 1973	K. Lewis	Jul 1975
G. Kierle	May 1973	R. Thomson	Jul 1976
B. Atkinson	May 1973	D. Austin	Sep 1976
K Randle	Jul 1973	A. Newnham	Feb 1977
G. Dusting	Oct 1973	J. Perry	Jul 1977
D. Ireland	Nov 1973	C. Rowley	Aug 1977
R. Groves	Dec 1973	A. Williams	Nov 1977
L. Edwards	May 1974	J. Hoore	Sep 1978
B. Nickless	Jun 1974	W. Townsend	Mar 1979
C. Hordern	Jun 1974	B. Stapleton	Mar 1979
L. Paul	Aug 1974	D. Sanderson	Mar 1979
J. Iliff	Sep 1974	R. Eyers	Sep 1980
E. O'Brien	Sep 1974	A. Smith	Nov 1980
P. Stitt	Oct 1974	S. Curtis	Mar 1981

## DC-3 VH-ANR STATIC DISPLAY

In March 1977, the Scout Air Activities Base became a joint lessee with Capt's Alex Garriock and John Wilson for the Airlines of NSW, DC-3 aircraft VH-ANR. This historic aircraft was built in 1937, reportedly flew American General Douglas Macarthur during WWII before phased out of airline service in 1973. It was moved to a static display position in the Scout Base aircraft compound at Camden and used for display to both members of the Scout Movement and to interested members of the public.

Sadly in July of the same year, Alex Garriock and his son were killed in a light aircraft accident near Camden.

The DC-3 proved very popular with visiting



Scouts and public alike, and a visit inside VH-ANR became a regular feature of Air Activity Days. On occasion, the engines were run, and over the years some repairs were made to external fabric by Scouts as the custodian of this historic aircraft.

VH-ANR was eventually relocated to Caloundra, Queensland where it has been restored and is on permanent display at the Queensland Air Museum.



## HOW DID THE BASE SURVIVE ?

The purchase of the first Scout aircraft (Cessna 150 VH-ROO) for \$4,890 was possible through a special council grant and did not draw from Scout funds. Subsequent early development of the NSW Air Activities Centre was also only possible through fundraising activities with the purchase of later aircraft funded by bank loans. Air Activity day participation fees were set to fully cover the Centre operational costs, including aircraft maintenance, loan repayments, to ensure the Centre did not impose a cost burden on the broader Scout Association.

This continues to be supported by all members of the Air Activities Centre team being voluntary leaders in the Scout Movement, who receive no remuneration for their services.

From the beginning, the NSW Scout Air Activities Centre was akin to a Flying Club – with a difference. In addition to providing the usual club facilities – pilot training, both in light aircraft and gliders, private flying for members, flying competitions, etc. It has a major role of providing familiarisation aviation programs for Scouts and Guides of all ages. Its membership is restricted to members of the Scout Movement and kindred youth organisations such as the Girl Guide Association and the Australian Air League.

The Centre receives no financial assistance, either from Government or other sources, and is financially self-supporting. We must pay full fees for Government Air Navigation charges and rentals, and full aircraft operational and maintenance costs. All our members are appointed leaders in the Scout movement or members of the Movement's training sections (Cubs, Scouts, Venturers, Rovers) and consequently we do not incur any staffing costs.

The Centre has survived substantial increases in regulatory compliance costs, government costs, lease costs, insurance costs, maintenance costs, fuel costs and a fuel shortage.

The underlying and ongoing key to the survivability of the Centre has been the absolute dedication of its members to introduce youth to aviation and constant adaption to changing circumstances.



Scouts Cessna 150G VH-KPO



Scouts Cessna 172H VH-DPF



Scouts Cessna 172F VH-SCA



Scouts Cessna 172M VH-SXX





SO YOU WANT TERMINAL INSTRUCTIONS! WELL I'LL TELL  
YER! "THE QNH IS OFF THE CLOCK - THE CUBE ARE  
CHUCKING GLIDERS ON THE TAXIWAY, THERE'S  
SCOUTS PITCHIN TENTS IN THE HOLDING AREA,  
VENTURBA'S ARE ABSEILING DOWN THE WALL OF THE  
TOWER, SOME BROWNIES ARE PLAYING HOPSCOTCH ON  
THE THRESHOLD OF TWO FOUR AND "DOWNWIND" IS IN  
THE CIRCUIT UPEIDE DOWN." — "APART FROM THAT, YER  
CLEAR TO LAND."

