



AHSA News

Vale Geoff Goodall



We lost one of Australia's most prolific aviation historians when Geoff Goodall passed away on 5 January 2024. Through his professional career and his love of aviation history, Geoff had a profound effect on the lives of many people around him. He possessed a seemingly boundless knowledge and an equally boundless willingness to share it with anybody who was interested - expounding on fascinating, and often obscure, aspects of aviation history in his legendary jovial storytelling style.

Born in Adelaide on 10 January 1947, Geoff's fascination with aviation history goes back to his early school days, living on the boundary of Adelaide's West Beach Airport in the 1950s. He grew up watching the propeller-driven airliners of ANA and TAA, with the weekly highlight being the Sunday morning arrival of an Avro Tudor 4B Super Trader of Freddie Laker's Air Charter London.

After meeting John Smith on the apron at West Beach in 1962, they formed the West Beach Aviation Group together with Brenton Holt and Rod Adam. This group of enthusiasts is still active today.

As an innocent aircraft spotting teenager he often drew the unwelcome attention of airport security, and in one infamous incident he and four other West Beach Aviation Group members had their names taken after driving through the front gate of RAAF Edinburgh and heading for the hangars.

Geoff joined the Department of Civil Aviation as a trainee Air Traffic Controller in Melbourne in 1967. In those days it was a 2 year course with classroom and simulator training in Melbourne and subsequent field attachments, during which Geoff spent

time at Essendon, Adelaide, Perth and Tamworth.



Above: Geoff (right) as "a fresh-faced youth" in Perth Tower during June 1968, training under the patient guidance of Greg Blackshaw (photo: Geoff Goodall)

At that time the ATC training course included airline attachments for cockpit familiarisation, and being an aviation enthusiast, Geoff bid mostly for the older aircraft types and enjoyed many cockpit flights and overnight stops with friendly crews of Ansett-ANA Viscounts, Electras and Carvairs. An additional two weeks on Airlines of NSW F.27 Friendships was to experience outback NSW operations, outside controlled airspace

Geoff completed the ATC training course in Adelaide in 1969 and was transferred to Perth ATC, where he worked for 20 years.



Above: Geoff never missed an opportunity to shoot another photo. Here he is carefully perched on some oil drums with Chris O'Neill (right) adopting a safer photography position in 1974 (photo: Roger McDonald)

Perth's General Aviation airfield is Jandakot and during the early 1970s Jandakot was Australia's second busiest airport, behind Bankstown. Perth controllers rotated through Jandakot Tower regularly and Geoff's first session there was in 1969.

Operating "Temporary Control Towers" for country airshows and royal tours was a pleasant diversion from Perth ATC H24 rosters. Geoff's first temporary tower was at Kalgoorlie for the annual Air Trial of 70 aeroplanes.

In 1989 while still in Perth, Geoff and John Chapman compiled the first Warbirds Directory and the early editions were published by Warbirds Worldwide in Britain.

In 1990 Geoff was transferred to Cairns, to use his experience in radar ATC to help with the transition to radar control there. Cairns controllers in the old Tower were handling impressive traffic numbers using procedural control without radar.

Australia was the launch customer for the new "TAAATS" Eurocat 2000 ATC system and in 1995 Geoff visited France with a team of Australian ATCs and technicians sent to the French contractor's training college at rural Jouy-en-Josas for training

on the new system. This was followed by a visit to the Airbus pilot training college at Toulouse, to see their advanced Computer Based Training (CBT) in action. The group also managed a trip to the French snowfields, and a visit to Eurocontrol at Maastricht, Netherlands.



Above: A temporary tower positioned on a high outcrop on the airfield at Fitzroy Crossing WA in 1972. Norm Kerr, Geoff and two DCA radio technicians took a 4 hour flight north from Perth by DCA turboprop Merlin, to set up this tower for a visit by the RAAF HS.748 callsign "Royal Purple One" carrying Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon. RAAF support Caribous and charter aircraft brought press and TV staff as well (photo: Geoff Goodall).



Above: Geoff met Jane Wilson during 1975 while she was working as Tower Coordinator in Perth. They were married in 1980 (photo: Geoff Goodall)

Back in Australia over the following 4 years Geoff was on the team which created the TAAATS training program, featuring CBT plus classroom and simulator sessions.

Cairns was the first location to transition to TAAATS, and Geoff travelled frequently to Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane for training and demonstrations of the new system. TAAATS brought a huge leap in complexity, but introduced Flight Data Processing and satellite capability, merging all Australian ATC Centres into just two: Melbourne Centre and Brisbane Centre. Following the transition of Cairns to Brisbane Centre, Geoff was transferred to the new Brisbane Centre, then on to Melbourne Centre just in time to commence its transition bringing in Adelaide and Perth Centres.

Geoff's position in Melbourne Centre was Operations Systems Supervisor, shift manager for the 40 sector room, setting the TAAATS configurations for the room, handling technical faults and air safety incidents, and coordinating operational issues across the new enlarged ML FIR from the Indian Ocean to the NZ boundary. Geoff described it as a demanding and stimulating position, but after some time he found that his age and far too frequent night shifts were making aviation medicals harder to

pass.



Above: Retirement from active air traffic control. Geoff and his good friend Tony Wright shared a memorable combined retirement party at Dave McKeon's Melbourne home. With their wives Jane and Maria, they show off their Golden Headset awards (photo: Geoff Goodall)

Following his retirement from active ATC, Geoff took a contract as an instructor at an ATC school in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Georgia had been a member of the Soviet Union until 1992 and was still struggling to establish stable basic infrastructure such as electricity, gas and water supply. Despite churches and buildings going back to the 12th Century and Caucasus Mountain scenery, tourism was largely unknown, and the "sheltered Aussie" Geoff found culture shock and unexpected surprises around every corner. The college at Tbilisi Airport taught the ICAO ATC curriculum to ab-initio young Georgians and the instructors included experienced ATCs from Sweden, Armenia, Canada, Malaysia, Kazakhstan and Britain. Georgian tradition demanded special feasts to celebrate achievements, so whenever a course passed written exams, or the simulator, long lunch events were held in rustic open air venues at long tables laden with traditional food, with Georgian red wine flowing to the numerous speeches and toasts.



Above: While in Tbilisi, weekend visits to neighbouring countries were a bonus - here Geoff and a group board an Azerbaijan Airlines Tupolev Tu-134 bound for Baku, Azerbaijan. The airline offered "open seating" and the plane was over-booked, so they joined the mad scramble to board (photo: Geoff Goodall)

After returning home from Tbilisi, Geoff took a Melbourne ATC Centre contract with the Flex Tracks Project, creating different daily air routes between Melbourne and airports in the Middle East, utilising accurate MET upper winds and jet-stream forecasts. These routes could save an airliner up to a tonne of fuel each flight. Emirates Airlines was a project partner and Geoff along with other Australian "Trackmasters" spent time at their Dubai Ops Centre. He found it a shock being expected to go straight to work in Dubai immediately after a 14 hour flight from Melbourne, but Flex Tracks was a great experience.

Following other part-time contracts testing new ATC software, in 2013 Geoff decided the time had come to retire for good.

But of course retirement didn't mean inactivity, and this allowed Geoff to dedicate all his time to collating his decades of aviation history research into the form of a website. Working with his "webmaster" Ron Cuskelly, he curated hundreds of articles and thousands of photos into the most complete record of Australia's aviation history ever compiled.

Geoff is survived by his wife Jane and two daughters.

(Career highlights extracted from "Behind the Mike" by Geoff Goodall)

Geoff Goodall's Aviation History Website

As a postscript to the item above, there have been many enquiries about the continuation of Geoff's life's work in the form of his fabulously rich aviation history website, www.goodall.com.au. His colleague Phil Vabre (President of the Civil Aviation Historical Society) and his webmaster Ron Cuskelly want to assure everyone that arrangements are in place for the website to be maintained as-is for the foreseeable future.

This rich legacy that Geoff has provided for us will be maintained online indefinitely, but the content will be frozen as none of Geoff's fellow aviation historians has the capacity to update it as Geoff would have wished.

The website is also archived by the National Library of Australia as an insurance measure.

