



Uiver and Albury celebrating 75th anniversary

Albury's history has been soaked in Uiver stories over the last 75 years. The Douglas DC2, appropriately named Uiver (word for *ooievaar* (stork), in the Betuwer dialect), made people in the Netherlands aware of the existence of the small New South Wales town of Albury. 1934 was named the year of the Uiver in the Netherlands and people went Uiver-mad.



This anniversary was celebrated in a manner befitting this historic event on the 23rd and 24th of October 2009.

The departure hall at the Albury airport had been modernised recently and on the morning of the 23rd the celebrations started with the official opening of this new building and the unveiling of a plaque by Mayor Mrs. Alice Glachan.

The departure hall now includes a café which has been dedicated to the Uiver. All tables display memories of the historic night Albury played an active part in the Uiver's journey. A mural has been painted by Mr. Marc Spijkerbosch, a Dutch trompe l'oeil (trick the eye) artist living in New Zealand. The mural was also unveiled by the Albury mayor Mrs Alice Glachan, with the help of Marc Spijkerbosch. After the unveiling the illusion muralist explained what he tried to express in this mural. "The idea is that people can interact with this story and this way it will never die."

John Newnham, the son of Arthur Newnham (the radio announcer who at the time appealed to car owners to come to the racecourse and turn on their headlights to form a runway), attended the celebrations. And so did Jean Thompson, now 93 years old. She can vividly remember the night of the 'lame' Stork. "The passenger door was opened and Fraulein Thea Rasche, who was one of the passengers, asked: "Is this Melbourne?"

Later Henk van de Ven, deputy mayor of Albury, took us to the Uiver replica, which is in a very sad state. "It will cost the taxpayers of Albury between 300,000 and one million dollars to restore this plane, which is far too much for such a small country town."

At night a lavish dinner was held, attended by about three hundred people and sponsored by KLM. Many people were dressed in 1930's costume.

Before the dinner an air show was performed by three small planes, which normally 'live' in the hangar where the



dinner was held.

After this show a DC3, disguised as the Uiver, arrived from Melbourne with 30 guests on board. Amongst the guests were Mr. Koene Bouke van Brugge and his two sons. Mr. Van Brugge is the son of the Radio Operator of the original Uiver flight and is named after Captain Koene Parmentier and Flight Engineer Bouke Prins.


The dinner was attended by Netherlands ambassador Mr. Willem Andreae and his wife Christine Gervoson De Sierven. Mr. Andreae mentioned in his speech that while he was ambassador in Pakistan the neighbouring Danish embassy was bombed, which damaged his residence and left him and his wife homeless. Not one representative of any country was willing to take them in; except for the Australians they were prepared to let them stay with them. "Knowing they were risking their own lives". This and the help the Uiver received showed the true spirit of the Australian people.

Mr Jean-Luc Mévellec, country manager of KLM Australia, reminisced about the relation of KLM and Albury and announced the speech on DVD of Ype de Haan, KLM's executive vice-president of operations in the Netherlands. The diners were treated on the very entertaining 'live broadcast radio play' of the *Flight of the Uiver* by the Albury-Wodonga Theatre group.

The next morning, a half hour joy flight of the DC3 Uiver was enjoyed by raffle winners, Albury dignitaries and Mr and Mrs Andreae. Just before the plane departed Mr. Andreae drew the tickets for the last two people to be allowed on the joy flight.

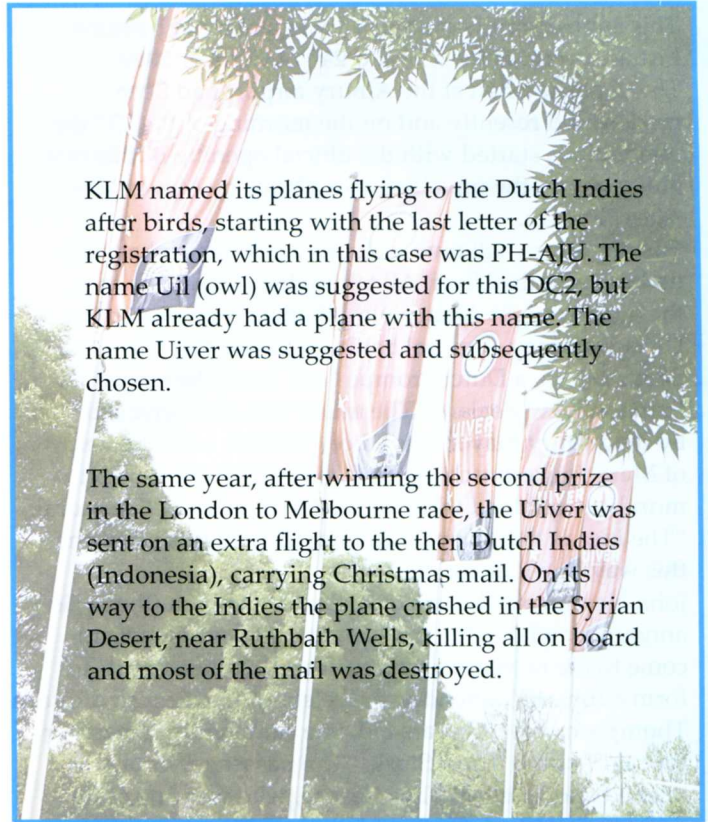
A display of aircraft and antique vehicles at the airport was enjoyed by many visitors defying the heat.

At 12 o'clock the festivities came to an end when the DC3 Uiver departed for Melbourne taking the 30 guests back on the re-enactment flight to Moorabbin. After circling the Albury race course it disappeared in the distance.

That evening the Moorabbin Air Museum held a lecture to celebrate the pioneers of England to Australia flights and the 75th anniversary of the race completion in Melbourne. 

KLM named its planes flying to the Dutch Indies after birds, starting with the last letter of the registration, which in this case was PH-AJU. The name Uil (owl) was suggested for this DC2, but KLM already had a plane with this name. The name Uiver was suggested and subsequently chosen.

The same year, after winning the second prize in the London to Melbourne race, the Uiver was sent on an extra flight to the then Dutch Indies (Indonesia), carrying Christmas mail. On its way to the Indies the plane crashed in the Syrian Desert, near Ruthbath Wells, killing all on board and most of the mail was destroyed.





Photos starting on page 12:

Mr. Koene van Brugge in front of the mural; memorabilia from the Uiver hype; the old Uiver replica at Albury airport and Henk van der Ven being filmed for Dutch TV-news; screen with Ype de Haan; Jean-Luc Mévellec being interviewed for the local TV station; ambassador Willem Andreae addressing the crowd at the dinner party; Willem Andreae with the boy that won one of the tickets; Marc Spijkerbosch, the painter of the mural; the unveiling of the mural

