

Edition 50, September 2024



**In appreciation of our project manager**



**Russ Jacob at the restoration hangar.**

Russ Jacob, the Uiver Memorial DC-2 Restoration Project Manager and all-around expert on everything Uiver, has had to leave the project due to health issues. This is a great loss to our organisation, requiring a lot of phone calls and a couple of emergency meetings to ensure our work can continue.

Russ has always been interested in aviation. He was in the RAAF for six years and gained his private pilot's license as a civilian. He was the president and instructor at the Albury Corowa Gliding Club for ten years.

The Uiver project enabled Russ to be involved in a story of a momentous time in Albury's history. He loved every aspect of the restoration and enjoyed his contact with various groups to share the story of the great race.

It is hard to overstate how much Russ has contributed to the project. On the workshop floor, he was foreman, safety officer, volunteer coordinator, purchasing officer, trouble-shooter, and friend to all.

Behind the scenes, Russ was chair of the operations committee, a member of the board, de-facto treasurer, the primary administrator and a regular speaker to community groups and the media.

Indeed, it has become obvious since his resignation, how every facet of the organisation relied on Russ. In the six years since he joined the restoration project, Russ Jacob has become the face, the heart and the brains of the operation. Under his leadership the restoration has made considerable progress, the outreach has been more enthusiastic, and the governance of the organisation has improved.

One of Russ' significant recent achievements has been arranging for the translation and publication of the book by Captain Parmentier entitled *To Australia in Three Days*. The book will be launched at our 90th Anniversary event on the 26th of October. More on this in the next edition of the Uiver Flyer.

With enormous respect and admiration, we thank Russ Jacob for all his hard work, and wish him and his family a bright and joyful future.

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**Koene Dirk Parmentier**



**Captain of the Uiver, Koene Dirk Parmentier (1904-1948).**

Best known for his command of KLM's DC-2 'Uiver' during the 1934 Melbourne Centenary Air Race, Koene Parmentier was one of a new breed of professional commercial pilots who transformed aviation from a risky adventure to a safe and practical form of transportation. Born in Amsterdam on 27 September 1904, Parmentier was the son of a cement factory worker, growing up during World War 1 alongside the development of aircraft as tools of war. Among the leading figures in this field was Dutchman Anthony Fokker whose outstanding fighter aircraft designs for the German Air Service allowed German fighter pilots to match the best Allied machines. The Fokker D.VII fighter was among the last in this line before the war ended in November 1918. Anthony Fokker then arranged a remarkable smuggling operation to move his entire aircraft factory from Germany to Holland in 1919. Along with machinery and spare parts, some 400 engines and around 200 aircraft including 120 D.VII's were spirited across the border in 360 rail cars assisted by bribes of money and gifts to German and Dutch customs officials. The following year, at the age of just 16, Koene Parmentier joined the Fokker company then known as the Nederlandse Vliegtuigenfabriek in Amsterdam where he worked until 1924, gaining a sound apprenticeship in aircraft design and construction.

After enlisting with the Dutch Army, Parmentier began flying training at the Military Flying School based at Soesterberg in late 1926, gaining his wings brevet in April 1927. He married

Maria Nukoop in December 1927 and the couple had three daughters. Parmentier was detached for service with KLM to gain flying experience and on 1 May 1929 became a permanent employee of the airline flying on European and Dutch East Indies routes. KLM founder and managing director Albert Plesman clearly saw Parmentier as a rising star and sent him to the USA in October 1933 to study instrument flying. While in America he encountered the revolutionary new Douglas DC-1 design and informed Plesman about the capabilities of the new aircraft. After a visit to California, Plesman was also impressed and ordered a DC-2, the modified commercial version of the DC-1 for KLM. He sought production rights for the DC-2 which was an indication of the increasingly toxic relationship with Fokker who had supplied most KLM aircraft to date. Anthony Fokker was an astute operator and had already approached Donald Douglas with a proposal to act as European sales agent for the DC-2 along with production rights. These were granted to Fokker in November 1933 and Plesman had no option but deal with Fokker for future orders.

In July 1934, Parmentier returned to California to inspect the final assembly of KLM's DC-2-115E (s/n 1317) at the Douglas factory at Santa Monica. He flew other DC-2 aircraft to gain type experience and accepted the new DC-2 on 16 August 1934, flying it across the US to New York between 22-26 August with representatives of Douglas, Wright Aeronautical and Shell on board. After disassembly and shipping to the Netherlands, Parmentier flew the sleek silver Douglas over Rotterdam on 19 September on its first European flight and it was named 'Uiver', a colloquial name for stork. In May 1934, KLM had entered the DC-2 in the Melbourne Centenary Air Race with Parmentier and Jan Moll as captain and first officer respectively. Moll had served with KNILM, the Netherlands East Indies subsidiary of KLM since 1928 and flew to Australia in 1931 as first officer of the Fokker F.VIIb/3m 'Abel Tasman' on an experimental mail flight. This was as close as the Dutch had come to securing an air service extension to Australia. By 1933-34 there was an intense commercial and political struggle inside and outside Australia to secure rights to the first international passenger flights to Australia. A consortium of Britain's Imperial Airways and Qantas had secured the rights to operate between Singapore and Brisbane on 19 April 1934 to begin in late 1934. For Plesman, the timing was right to demonstrate his new state of the art DC-2 and show up the outdated British wood and fabric biplanes. Qantas managing director Hudson Fysh was deeply impressed with the Douglas aircraft, describing it to Imperial Airways as "...the most ingenious, carefully thought out high speed aircraft ever put out and is a real eye opener."

The story of the Uiver's air race flight to Australia in October 1934 under Parmentier's command and its rescue from the stormy skies above Albury would require a book to do it justice and fortunately Parmentier wrote his account titled 'Three Days to Australia' in 1935. This work will be published in English for the first time later this year by the Uiver Memorial and makes enthralling reading, underlining the professional skill of Parmentier and his crew. Parmentier and Moll were knighted by Queen Wilhelmina soon after landing in Melbourne. Parmentier returned to flying KLM air routes pioneering radio navigation aids and in December 1937 made the 500th return journey on the Amsterdam to Batavia air route.

Soon after the invasion of the Netherlands by German forces in May 1940, Parmentier was one of the KLM aircrew who flew DC-2 and DC-3 aircraft to Britain where they formed the Dutch section of British Overseas Airways Corporation operating the Bristol to Lisbon route. Later in 1940, a newspaper story originating in the USA was widely circulated claiming that Parmentier conducted nightly aerial 'vengeance raids' on Nazi targets in Holland to avenge the death of his family. He was also said to drop notes to warn locals where he would strike next. Not surprisingly, this was a piece of complete journalistic fiction. Parmentier was forced to deny this ridiculous tale and pointed out that his family was safe in Rotterdam. He was appointed Flying Superintendent of the Dutch section of BOAC and flew on the Bristol-Lisbon service. In March 1943 Parmentier was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. The following month on 19 April 1943 Parmentier was flying DC-3 PH-ALI 'Ibis' over the Bay of Biscay to Lisbon when it was attacked by Luftwaffe fighters, he dived steeply to sea level and weaved sharply, escaping to land at Lisbon with damage to a wing and fuel tank. The same aircraft with a different crew was attacked and shot down on 1 June 1943 by Luftwaffe Junkers Ju 88s with the loss of all passengers and crew including Cornelis van Brugge, the Ulver's radio telegraphist during the 1934 air race and actor Leslie Howard. The flights continued but under cover of darkness.

After the war, Parmentier returned to help rebuild KLM which faced a very different world and needed to replace its shattered fleet with new Lockheed Constellation 049 and 749 aircraft, of which the first were delivered in 1946 with more following in 1947 and 1948. On 28 September 1948, Parmentier was captain of a Constellation that flew the inaugural KLM service to Shanghai. Less than a month later he met his death in command of KLM Constellation PH-TEN 'Nijmegen' which struck electricity lines and crashed near Tarbolton in Scotland on approach to Prestwick Airport in low cloud, rain and darkness on 20 October 1948. All 40 passengers and crew were killed. Like many air accidents, a series of missed opportunities led to tragedy when a delayed take-off from Schipol meant the crew missed a crucial weather report and outdated wartime maps gave incorrect spot heights for hills near the airport. An extended downwind leg may have caused the pilots to mistake their position in zero visibility that they expected to lift before the clouds and hills met. At the age of just 44, Koene Parmentier was buried at Leiden.



**At Santa Monica, California, Douglas Aircraft Company CEO, Donald W. Douglas (L) hands over the DC-2 (soon be known as the Uiver) to Koene Parmentier (R).**

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### **A kangaroo flew on the Uiver**

The upcoming release of our book *To Australia In Three Days* is on track. Details of the official book launch and how to purchase a copy will be the subject of a special edition of the Uiver Flyer.

The book is a first-hand account written by the captain of the Uiver, Koene Parmentier and covers the Uiver's part of the great race. The following is an excerpt in which Parmentier writes about carrying a special marsupial passenger on the return flight to the Netherlands.

*... Lady Moulden asks me if I mind taking a kangaroo on board. I think this is wonderful, of course, provided the passengers want to take care of this resident of Australia. Gilissen takes it upon himself to retrieve this animal, takes a taxi and disappears. When dinner has ended and the guests have gone to the ballroom, Gilissen suddenly appears again on stage, the kangaroo in his arms. It is a small species called a wallaby, slightly larger than a hare. A nice creature that looks around the brightly lit room with big, frightened eyes. A serious*

*discussion is now arising. "What shall we call the kangaroo?" I did not wait for the result but went to bed after signing my umpteenth signature. Tomorrow is an early day again and we have a long journey ahead of us. We are woken up at three o'clock in the morning; we want to be in the air at 4am. It is still dark when our vehicles arrive at Archerfield airfield ...*

*... Our passengers who lacked sleep due to all the festivities now have the opportunity to make up for their losses. Soon there is a deep peace in the cabin; only the kangaroo does not sleep and from time to time jumps down the aisle with great leaps. The little animal seems to feel completely at ease, sniffs under all the seats and occasionally nibbles on the green laurel wreaths that stand at the back of the cabin as a memento of the warm welcome. Certainly not an everyday food for this Australian species.*

*... When opening the door that gives access to the cabin, an unpleasant smell hits me. I also see the passengers making suspicious movements with their nostrils. What could be the cause? Due to the strong cooling of the air at our flight altitude, the ventilation shutter has been closed. But even opening this, which blows fresh air into the cabin through fourteen ducts, cannot remove this bad-smelling air. Then suddenly our friend kangaroo jumps out from behind a chair and hops happily around the cabin. This solves the mystery. Lady Moulden, who always pampered the animal, is now staring at it with horror in her eyes. After some effort we managed to catch the culprit and as a first measure he is locked in the rear part of the cabin as punishment. However, this does not in any way solve the problem and it appears that our Australian friend, at the general request of his fellow passengers, will be left at the next landing point ...*

*... Unfortunately, we can only stay in Koepang for an hour at most. So, we must gradually think about leaving. The mail is being loaded and as we enter the aircraft we are suddenly reminded of the kangaroo. Yes, how are we losing this no longer wanted passenger in a responsible way. Moll knows what to do. He is just talking to a lady and tells her that we have an animal on board that we want to get rid of. "If you guess three times wrong what kind of animal it is, then it becomes your property," says Jan Moll.*

*"Of course a monkey," answers the lady.*

*"Wrong guess."*

*"Then it is definitely a parrot."*

*"That's wrong the second time."*

*"Then it must be an Australian bear."*

*"That's three times wrong; I'll show you," and triumphantly Moll takes out the kangaroo and places it in the arms of the crestfallen lady. "He's your property, madam!"*

*So, Timor-Koepang was enriched with a resident of Australia. We hope that the animal will get used to the climate and will have found a good home there. The Australian pilots, who land in Timor-Koepang on their homeward journey, will be able to greet the kangaroo as a harbinger of their country.*



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### **We need your help**

The Uiver Memorial DC-2 Restoration Project does not receive funding from either federal or state governments. The majority our support comes from donations by individuals, service clubs and businesses.

Aircraft restoration can be a costly business and we rely heavily on the support of the public to keep the project moving ahead. Please consider helping the project by donating to our “Give A Rivet Program” [at our website](#) or using the QR code below, or directly by visiting our hangar at 7 Bristol Court, Albury Airport on Wednesdays or Saturdays.

***A big thank you to the many subscribers both in Australia, overseas and especially in The Netherlands, for your continuing financial support.***



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### **Help us spread the word**

We want the whole community to know about our project and you can help by forwarding this newsletter to others in your address book, either through email or social media. You could encourage them to also forward on the newsletter so we can expand our circulation, and invite them to subscribe and join our emailing list. A small effort could have a big impact.



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