



RELIVING their early flying days with John Bange's Tiger Moth plane are foundation members of the Darling Downs Aero Club (from left) Ian Finden, Glen Ziesemer, Nial Hart, Stan Spies, Rod Trousdell, Jack Halliday and John Bange.

## Aero club members hold fond memories of flying

Jack Halliday isn't flying these days, but he has fond memories of life aloft.

Mr Halliday was one of the dozen foundation members of the Darling Downs Aero Club, formed in 1946, which now has 260 members 41 years later.

Another founding member, Mr Nial Hart remembered the club being formed after World War II, when the Royal Queensland Aero Club would give flying instruction on the Downs.

Some of those "daring young men in their flying machines" got together recently to take a nostalgic look at John Bange's own Tiger Moth at Back Plains and relive a few of their early flying days, when three solo flights completed on the same day was a record for a provincial club.

In 1946, it was decided to form the Darling Downs Aero Club with Dr Mervyn Hall as president and "guiding light."

Mr Mervyn Cullen, who was secretary of the club until 1950, was also described as the its "backbone" in those early years.

Tiger Moths were the standard training aircraft of the day, according to Mr Hart.

"The club got a licence from what was then the Department of Civil Aviation, to train with Tiger Moths, which they did for about four years before moving on to other aircraft," he said.

Jack Halliday began his 20 years-plus, 2000-hour flying career in a Tiger Moth. The old biplanes were great for circuits of the Toowoomba airport, he recalls.

He also flew gliders for a few years with the Darling Downs Soaring Club, operating from Toowoomba and Oakey.

"But if you wanted to go anywhere they weren't much good, of course. You were flat out getting 80 miles an hour out of them."

Aircraft have become more sophisticated these days, making flying easier, he says.

But he still remembers the thrill of soaring upward in a thermal in a sailplane; and in powered flight his greatest moment probably was when he mastered the technique of landing.

John Bange, of Back Plains, was 80 earlier this year, but he still flies when he gets the time.

"I just wish I was getting younger and not older. I hope to

fly for a few more years yet," he said.

Mr Bange, whose telephone listing still describes him as an aviator, was also a foundation member of the Darling Downs Aero Club, receiving his private licence the same day as Mr Halliday.

He bought his own plane 15 years ago, but remembered the days when the aero club used to borrow Tiger Moths through its affiliation with the Royal Queensland Aero Club at Archerfield.

"They bought them for a couple of hundred pounds when the Air Force was almost throwing them out after the war," he said.

"Someone would go down to Brisbane and fly one of the planes up here to the club for the weekend and then fly it back."

Apart from the Tiger Moth, Mr Bange has another piece of history in his Back Plains hanger — a 50-year-old portafield plane called "Lone Eagle," which originally belonged to Sir Reginald Ansett.

He even took the plane for its 50th birthday flight this year.

"Not bad for an 80-year-old," he said proudly.