

## David Gray & Co Ltd, Perth (1951-1961)

by Geoff Goodall

David Gray & Co Ltd, 10 Railway Parade, West Perth was a manufacturer of chemicals, insecticides, fertilizers and specialists in pest control. Managing Director Mr. David Gray was interested in the development of aerial agriculture and saw it as a good business investment to use and promote the company's products. In April 1951 the first Tiger Moth was acquired from Aero Service Pty Ltd at Maylands who were contracted to convert it for agricultural use. That same month the company wrote to DCA requesting VH-DD\_ registrations be reserved to identify their aircraft to the public and DCA agreed. The first two Tigers became VH-DDT and VH-DDA while a DH.94 Moth Minor support aircraft used to carry pilots, mechanics and supplies between aircraft in the field, was VH-DDG.

The inaugural ag pilot was D.M. (Max) Taylor who was to become widely known over the next 25 years flying for many WA ag operations. By 1953 the company's Aviation Manager was chief pilot George Beamish, who went on to an airline career with MMA.

David Gray & Co leased a hangar with licenced workshop at Maylands Aerodrome, Perth for maintenance of its aircraft under Chief Engineer Keith R. Chappell. He was to leave in 1960 to establish his own maintenance business at Maylands, WA Aircraft Service Co.

Pilots included:

G. J. Baily 1952  
R.McKenna 1953  
Jim Pekin 1954  
Sydney Bignell 1955  
Donald McClyment 1955  
Robert Faulds 1955  
H.A.H. (Hal) Watts 1956-1957  
Tony Edgerton-Green 1957  
R. Digby Bull 1960

The support Moth Minor was replaced by a much more useful Fairchild Argus VH-DDG, which was also used on WA Dept of Agriculture contracts to drop poison baits to eradicate wild dogs and dingos from sheep farming districts. By 1956 the company was appointed Cessna dealers for WA and Mr. David Gray attended the 1957 Australian Cessna dealers conference in Sydney. A Cessna 175 was ordered, which was also used for dog baiting, fitted with a bait dispenser, but by June 1960 its registration was changed from Airwork to Private category.

By early 1962 the remaining three ag Tigers were retired at Maylands and this pioneering WA aerial agricultural business ceased operations.

Aircraft:

Type	Regn	Acquired	Disposed	
DH.82 Tiger Moth	VH-DDT	4.51	10.2.55	Crashed Toodyay
DH.82 Tiger Moth	VH-DDA	5.52	4.5.61	CofA lapsed, left in hangar Maylands
DH.94 Moth Minor	VH-DDG	7.52	3.54	Sold to Tom Talbot, Bunbury as VH-THT
DH.82 Tiger Moth	VH-BEI	7.54	4.5.61 6.63	CofA lapsed, left in hangar Maylands. Sold.
DH.82 Tiger Moth	VH-BKS	5.54	6.62	Sold to W.Michaels, Perenjori
Fairchild 24W Argus	VH-DDG	1.55	5.58	Sold to E.M.Fitzgerald, Carnarvon as VH-EMF, VH-EMP
Cessna 175	VH-DDG	6.59	1.7.59 8.60	Del. ex Bankstown Sold to E.M.Fitzgerald, Mullewa as VH-EMF

Source:

<https://www.goodall.com.au/australian-aviation/wa-aerial-ag-operators-2/westaustrianagoperators2.html>