

# REDCLIFFE AERO CLUB

## AIRCHAT



No. 31  
Spring 2023

**OVER 50 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL AVIATION TRAINING  
CHARTER AND QUALITY AIRCRAFT HIRE**

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# From the President

Hello everyone and welcome to the last edition of AirChat for 2023.

As we come out of spring and head into summer it would appear that our weather systems are giving us the best skies to fly in. Our recent utilisations of Club aircraft are high across the board.

Last edition we said welcome to Andrew Kykkanen, our newest instructor. This edition we say goodbye to Andrew as he embarks on his new career with a position flying Virgin Australia's Boeing 737-800 aircraft, based in Melbourne. Andrew was a great asset to the Club and well liked as an instructor and we will miss his presence but also wish him well with his new position.

We welcome the new instructors to RAC: Angus Nugara, Tapi Maupvire and also Sebastian Rousseau. Please make all these new instructors welcome when you're at the Club booking your next flight.

The Club's first Friday night of the month BBQs are still very popular, hosting upwards of 50 guests. This is a great way to mix with Club members and aviators exchanging stories and info.



Club flyaways have been popular again with high numbers for the Stanthorpe and Mudgee trips. It's great to see so many different faces getting involved in these Club activities. Check out reports on these flyaways in this edition.

As we wind up the year's events and head into Christmas, as President of Redcliffe Aero Club I would like to wish each of you a happy and safe festive season and all the best for 2024.

Happy Landings

Mike Cahill

President - Redcliffe Aero Club 2023



# CEO update

Dear members

Compared to this time last year there has been a significant improvement in all aspects of the Club.

We continue to take on full-time students in our Diploma courses as existing students complete their courses. We have also been able to increase our number of full-time students, currently sixteen, as we increase our instructor ranks and aim for better utilisation of aircraft.

Our survey contract has continued throughout the year and has been extended into next year utilizing VH-VMV. This aircraft recently underwent significant maintenance with the installation of two overhauled engines and an avionics upgrade in the form of a Garmin engine management system (refer to article on [page 46](#) of this edition of AirChat). The new system replaced the original one which is no longer manufactured or supported.

The Registered Training Organisation (RTO) side of the business has also seen some changes with Rhonda Richings needing to reduce her hours due to family commitments. Taking up the role of RTO co-ordinator is Bernadette Killick. Bernadette has fitted into the team well and with assistance from Rhonda it has been a smooth transition.



The combination of improved weather conditions, increased RTO student numbers and the survey contract has seen a significant improvement in the finances of the Club since March and we are again profitable.

Please keep the evening of November 25<sup>th</sup> free, when we will come together as a Club to celebrate the achievements of our students at the annual Wings Dinner.

I'd like to wish you and your families all the very best for the holiday season and hope to see you around the Club. I encourage you to make the most of our facilities and services be it training, Club flyaways or hiring our aircraft so you can enjoy the privileges of your pilot licence.

Best regards,

Stephen White

CEO

# Chief Pilot's report

Welcome to another edition of AirChat.

With summer looming and storms and other inclement weather becoming prominent on forecasts, I thought it would be a good time to review with you the VFR flight planning alternate requirements. [AIP ENR 1.1 General Rules 10.7](#) states that except when operating an aircraft under the VFR by day within 50 nautical miles of the point of departure, the pilot in command must provide for a suitable alternate aerodrome when arrival at the destination will be during the currency of, or up to 30 minutes prior to the forecast commencement of, the following conditions:

- a. Cloud - more than SCT below the alternate minimum of 1500ft above aerodrome level; or
- b. Visibility - less than the alternate minimum of 8km; or
- c. Visibility - greater than the alternate minimum, but the forecast is endorsed with at least 30% probability of fog, mist, dust or any other phenomenon restricting visibility below the alternate minimum; or
- d. A thunderstorm or associated severe turbulence, or forecast of at least 30% probability of such an event; or
- e. Wind - a crosswind or tailwind component more than the maximum for the aircraft (or pilot).

So, if you are planning a flight to a destination, where the forecast has any of the above conditions you must plan for an alternate destination (we will ignore holding requirements for now). Any aerodrome may be nominated and planned for as an alternate for your flight provided it:

- a. is suitable as a destination for that flight; and
- b. is not an aerodrome for which that flight would require to provide for an alternate aerodrome; and
- c. is not a helideck.

Point a should be straight forward, as there is no point flying to an aerodrome that you cannot land at.



Point b says that the alternate destination must not require an alternate to be nominated. We can be reasonably assured of this from weather forecasts for the alternate that predict the conditions are not below the conditions mentioned above.

So far we have been looking at flight planning, now lets go flying. When I arrive at my planned destination, we might find that there is broken cloud at 1500ft above aerodrome level and visibility is estimated to be 7km. Do we have to divert to our planned alternate destination? No, we don't.

Despite the visibility being below the alternate minimum, we are still flying in visual meteorological conditions (VMC). We had planned for the worst by nominating and planning for a diversion to an alternate destination, however the worst did not occur and we are able to proceed to and land at our destination. However if when approaching our destination, we notice the visibility or cloud ceiling getting lower than VMC, or our comfort level for that matter, we still have the option of diverting to our alternate because we made provisions for such an eventuality.

Anyway, I hope you found that interesting and informative. Enjoy your flights.

See yah

Mal

Head of Operations / Chief Pilot

# Editorial

Dear aviators

As we near the end of the year, despite the forecast onset of a new El Nino event, the months of dry blue sky weather will come to an end and we can expect more challenging weather conditions in the months ahead. This means that planning flights will be more important than ever and it may be time to refresh our knowledge on weather forecasting before we head to the airport. We have amazingly sophisticated aviation weather services available to us from the [BOM aviation weather services](#) and its [Knowledge Centre](#). There are other weather modelling apps and EFB's like OzRunways and AvPlan to keep us abreast of the weather, so we should all make the most of them before we fly. The CASA pilot safety hub also has a range of videos and podcasts you can use to brush up on your knowledge:



<https://www.casa.gov.au/resources-and-education/pilot-safety-hub/weather-and-forecasting>

One weather related danger that we may encounter if we stray into marginal VMC conditions is “white out” as described by Bob Tait in this edition. Meanwhile, Greg Ackman relates a close call he had due to poor fuel management in flight, another danger that can result in serious incidents.

In other stories Rob Knight discusses some of the reasons we have aviation laws and why we should obey them and Jim Davis explains why we should all learn to fly without instruments - just in case.

On a lighter note we have reports on flying trips to Chinchilla for the One Long Table festival, to Mudgee and Temora, a “coffee hop” to a variety of airfields near Brisbane, the annual Stanthorpe flyaway and flights around the Kimberley and the Baltic coast of Germany. We also find out how Luc George managed to take one of the Wallabies’ coaches for a flight. It’s certainly been an active few months.

And there are introductions to our new instructor Seb and our new RTO co-ordinator Bernadette.

Thanks to all the contributors to this edition and happy reading.

And don’t forget - [please email me your stories for inclusion in the next AirChat](#).

Email: [airchateditor@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au](mailto:airchateditor@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au)

Philip Arthur

Keep yourself informed as to what’s coming up and tell us where you’d like to go by joining the RAC Flyaways Facebook group. Go to the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/678739008989427>

Also, the Club’s famous get together barbecues are held at the clubhouse on the first Friday of every month.

You pay only \$20 for the best steaks in SE Queensland.

Please call the Club reception beforehand to register for the barbecue for catering purposes.

# Vale Peter Nally

On Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October Redcliffe Aero Club member Peter Nally was fatally injured in an aircraft accident near Canberra. Peter had a long term association with the Club, following in the footsteps of his father, Jack Nally, who was one of the Club pioneers and life member. Peter joined the Club in his younger days when he first learnt to fly. He rejoined early last year and quickly became an active member, including being a participant in the Northern Exposure flyaway to the Torres Strait in the middle of 2022. He was also a regular attendee at our monthly barbecues where he enjoyed talking about flying and discussing with other members about interesting places they'd flown to.

Many of our members knew Peter and we were shocked to hear the news of the tragedy. We offer our deepest sympathy to his family as they struggle with their loss.



Recently Peter took part in a Club flyaway to Mudgee and Temora and enthusiastically offered to write the article on the following pages about the flyaway. It was clear from his writing and his general demeanour that he wanted to share his love of aviation with others. He wanted to encourage fellow members to appreciate what a special privilege it is to be a pilot and to recognise the unique opportunity our pilot licence gives us to explore far flung regions of Australia.



# Mudgee and Temora flyaway

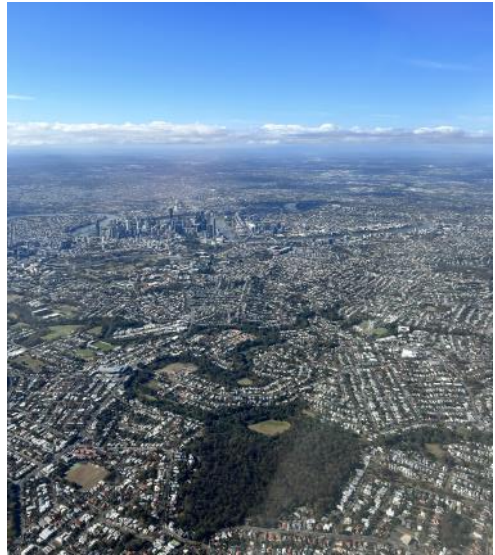
by Peter Nally

The [Temora Aviation Museum](#) hosts monthly air shows so it was decided for the September Club flyaway we'd attend the airshow while basing ourselves at Mudgee for the weekend. Six aircraft took part with Bryan, Mike and Gary in Cherokee BHN, Mike, Brett and Philip in Cirrus MSF, Sam, Jac, Ava and Georgie in C310 JTV, Neil in 19-7360, Paul, son Ben and grandson Josh in C182 ROC and Peter, Mark, Paul and Dean in Cirrus YVR.

The first leg on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> dawned fine with beautiful flying conditions, despite a few headwinds, enabling arrival at Scone for an 11:30 tour of the [Hunter Warbirds Museum](#). The museum opened 18 months ago and has an impressive collection of aircraft. An enthusiastic ex-RAAF guide gave a detailed history of virtually every aircraft, some of which are privately owned and stored at the museum for display purposes. Many are in flying condition and therefore absent from time to time visiting various airshows or just being flown by their owners.

They also have a Spitfire simulator and a 737 simulator that visitors can learn to fly.

*From the top: Departing overhead Brisbane, Sam tries out the Spitfire simulator, Hunter Warbirds hangar, landscape north of Scone*





It was a short leg from Scone to Mudgee for our overnight stop. Both Scone and Mudgee have significant high ground in close proximity to the circuit area and Mudgee requires right circuits on RWY22, which happened to be our arrival runway. The [Mudgee Aero Club](#) hospitality was on display, as the club President Gary and his wife Denise plus various members met us on arrival and treated us to afternoon tea. They also provided us with their club loan car for the weekend and a lift to town for those who couldn't fit in the loan car.



*Turning right base at Mudgee*

Some of us rose early on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> to beat the expected rush at Temora approximately 150 miles to the south-west. Traffic on arrival wasn't particularly busy, but as usual it's good to have extra sets of eyes scanning the sky, particularly arriving at an unfamiliar destination that might be busy.

The airshow was well attended, hosting thousands of visitors on the day. Flying displays by the Spitfires, Kittyhawk and Mustang were most impressive as were the Cessna Birddog, Cessna O-2A, Wirraway, Winjeel, Harvard, Tiger Moth, Ryan monoplane, CT4 as well as a PC21, the RAAF's current ab initio trainer. A flying-condition Hudson bomber was on static display while a flying-condition Canberra bomber undergoing detailed maintenance could be viewed in an adjacent hangar.

Local weather was picture perfect for the airshow with some great tailwinds for the return flight to Mudgee in the afternoon. That night we had predinner drinks at Kelly's Irish Pub followed by some great meals. Mudgee impressed as a vibrant community with great facilities.



Sunday saw most enjoying a restful day touring the local wineries while four young fellas in YVR flew over to Maitland for a visit to [Fighterworld](#) at Williamstown RAAF base. The displays are rich in RAAF and WW2 history and well worth a visit. Coastal weather conditions were much warmer than at Mudgee but, despite the heat, we enjoyed delicious steak burgers at Fighterworld café. It's close to the threshold of Willy RWY30 and we had views of RPT aircraft taking off into a strong sea breeze that had taken over from the previous westerly.

On Monday 18<sup>th</sup> we headed for home. At Philip's suggestion we landed at [McIntyres Airfield on Palmers Island](#) on the way. It is a privately owned and maintained ALA situated 4nm from Yamba. We were able to use their loan car to drive 10 minutes into Yamba to take in views of the beach, some sea air, seafood and a spot of whale watching from the well positioned dining room of the [Pacific Hotel](#). Mike, Brett and Philip were already well ensconced enjoying lunch when we arrived, but were on a tight schedule and soon on their way home to Redcliffe where they arrived before YVR departed Palmers Island.

After we eventually dragged ourselves away from the food and views at the hotel, Murray McIntyre at Palmers Island showed us around the many hangars at the airstrip where numerous local aircraft are based. The 914m grass strip is also used by commercial operators from time to time and the McIntyres welcome visits by private aircraft. You can book their loan car or they'll provide a lift into Yamba.

*From the top: Enroute from Mudgee to Temora, Temora apron, Yamba beach, McIntyre's Airfield*

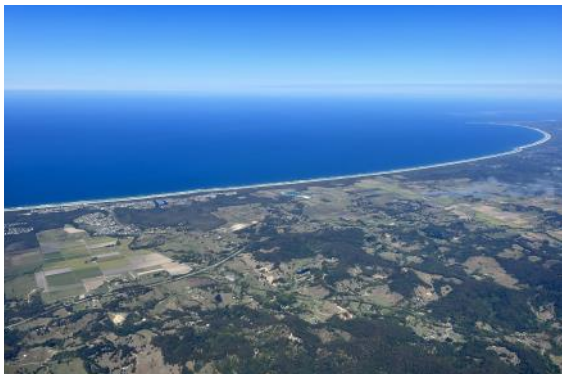


The trip home along the coast was absolutely delightful with yet more perfect weather and fantastic views from 10,000 feet. While the planned route would have taken us over Coolangatta, Brisbane Approach cleared us a few degrees to the left providing even better views of the coastline and a smooth descent to Park Ridge followed by hardly any traffic at Archerfield to cap off an aviation-rich long weekend.

This was only my second Club flyaway since rejoining the Club, the first being the Northern Safari to Cape York last year. Both involved lots of destinations I had never previously visited and brought home to me the privilege of being able to use a light aircraft to efficiently visit numerous destinations that would simply not be feasible by road in the time available. A small example is the flight planned time interval of 32 minutes from Mudgee to Maitland which Google says would take more than three hours by road.

Whether you're an experienced social member, a new pilot working towards one of our licence stages or a career pilot, general aviation has a lot to offer and Club flyaways to places of interest are a great way of living the dream. Thanks to Bryan Galvin and Paul Smeath for organizing a great trip.

*From the top: Brunswick Heads and Cape Byron, Yamba, Brisbane International, Gold Coast*



# Attitudes

by Bob Tait



## 'White out' conditions

Every VFR pilot with no formal instrument training is made aware of the difficulty of maintaining control of an aircraft when deprived of outside visual reference. Whenever the conversation gets around to this topic, the scenario is usually that the pilot has inadvertently flown into cloud and has suddenly lost all visual reference. However, there are other circumstances which can lead to the loss of visual reference that may not necessarily involve actually entering cloud. Let me tell you about Bret (not his real name).

Bret was a private pilot with almost 100 hours in his logbook. He was a keen and competent pilot who fully intended to get an instrument rating but, for financial reasons, had yet to commence instrument training. He flew with the local aeroclub in a country town in north Queensland.

It was a pleasant October morning when Bret arrived at the aeroclub early to plan a flight down the east coast of Queensland to visit some friends at the small coastal town of Yeppoon. The weather forecast was not great, but it did indicate there should be no problem conducting the flight in VMC. A high pressure system in the Tasman Sea was extending a ridge up the Queensland coast producing a weak south-easterly stream with coastal showers. Since the flight planned track would be coastal all the way with no high terrain to worry about, Bret was confident that it should be a comfortable trip.

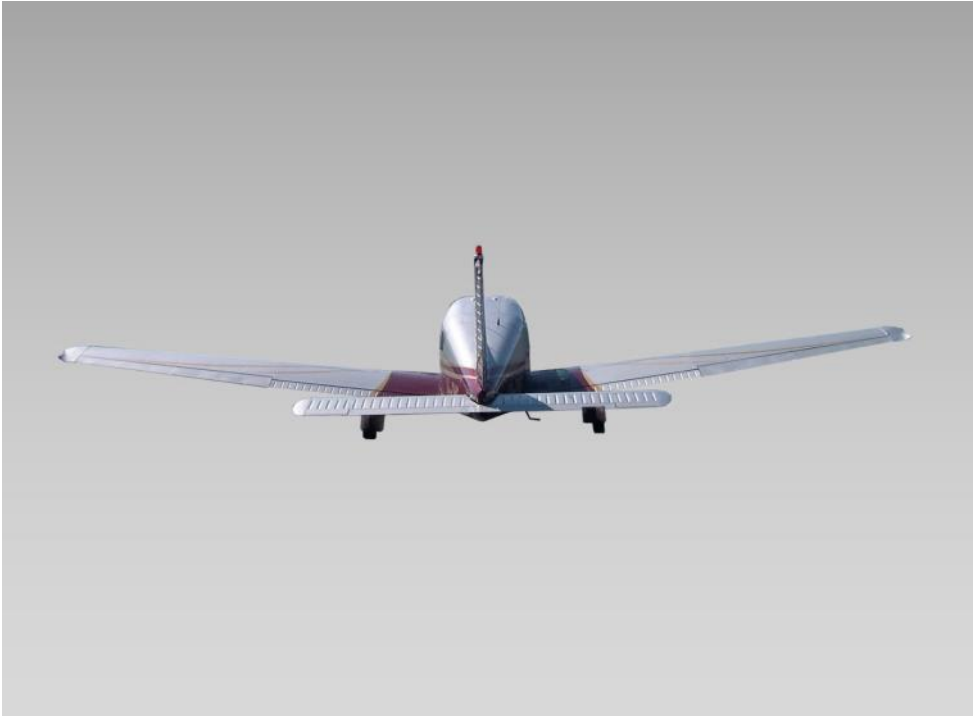
Departure was routine and the little Cherokee 180 settled down to cruise at 3000 feet. Bret was pleased to note that the planned headwind was less than expected. An hour and a half into the flight and the cloud base

had lowered with occasional showers making it necessary to divert to the east and fly almost exactly along the coast at 1000 feet. A heavy shower ahead reduced the visibility further forcing Bret to descend to 500 feet so as to keep sight of the sandy beach below. Bret realised that he had let things go too far, it was past time to turn through 180° and get back into clear conditions.

To his right, the heavy shower merged into a headland, so the only option was to turn left over the sea. In the light wind the sea was calm with no white caps or even ripples on its surface. The cloud base above was a murky grey featureless sheet. As the turn continued, Bret lost sight of the sandy beach and found himself searching desperately for some recognisable feature, but everything above, about and below was nothing but a grey haze.

Bret was straining forward in his harness with his chin almost touching the top of the instrument panel when he was horrified to see some texture on the water's surface - it was no more than a wingspan below and tilted at an angle in the windscreen. He had lost almost all of his height during the turn! He quickly levelled the wings and now that the turn had placed the sun behind him, he saw that he was heading back into the clear.

It's not at all difficult to see just how lucky Bret was on that occasion. He had become a victim of 'white out' conditions. Although this term is more often used to describe snow falling onto a snowy surface, it is also used to describe any condition where the horizon becomes indistinguishable. You don't have to be in cloud for that to happen.



**Private Pilot Theory Lectures**  
by Bob Tait

*Private Pilot Theory Lectures for the beginner with no previous experience!*  
**Full details at [www.bobtait.com.au](http://www.bobtait.com.au)**

# Instructor intro

## Sebastien Rousseaux

*Sebastien (aka "Seb") joined the Club recently as a Grade 3 instructor.*

*AirChat: How did you become involved in aviation?*

SR: I have always loved trains and planes and things that go. As my dad is French, we would often go to France when I was growing up. I would love taking the Metro around Paris and the high-speed TGV to other cities, but the biggest treat back in those days was being invited up into the cockpit of the 747s on the long-haul flight to France. Since those early days, I studied transport engineering at Uni and then gravitated to working at Brisbane Airport, before finally starting my pilot training.

*Where did you have your first flying lessons?*

I started at Archerfield, by squeezing in flying lessons at 6am before starting work at 9am in Salisbury, which is just the next suburb over. I completed my RPL this way until, without warning, my employer announced that all operations were moving to Melbourne, and that as a result all staff were being made redundant. I immediately transferred to full-time pilot training at Archerfield and haven't looked back.

*What type of licence and endorsements did you gain and over what duration?*

I knew from the get-go that I wanted to be an instructor, so after completing my RPL I just went immediately for the CPL and instructor rating. Fortunately the timing worked well in my favour, as by the time I finished the instructor rating, many instructors were moving on to

airline positions in the post-COVID boom. I am very glad to have found an instructor opening here at Redcliffe!

*Where did your training take place?*

It was based in Archerfield, so most of the training was around south-east Queensland. Redcliffe definitely feels like part of my home turf, but I am looking forward to spreading my wings further and exploring more of our great country by air.

*Where have you worked as a pilot?*

The Redcliffe Aero Club is my first gig! I consider myself very fortunate to be surrounded by experienced instructors, and I am definitely learning things every day.

*What other aviation related roles have you been employed in?*

I spent nearly four years doing various ground handling roles at Brisbane Airport - from check-in, to baggage handling through to pushback. I progressed to being a shift supervisor and eventually a trainer on a number of airlines, but at the time it didn't occur to me that I could actually become a pilot and FLY planes - that seemed like a distant fantasy. However, the knack for training staff is what gave me the inspiration several years later to pursue flight instructing.

*What attracted you to Redcliffe Aero Club?*

Having grown up on the southside, the Redcliffe aerodrome was unknown to me until I flew in a number of times during my training. Last year, Archerfield was having trouble staffing their control tower, and circuits at Archerfield were often unavailable. The easy solution was a quick transit to Redcliffe, then doing two lessons back-to-back. I was surprised to find such a nice, quiet (but still well-appointed) aerodrome nestled so close to the city. Added to that, the Redcliffe Aero Club itself presents a well-maintained fleet of reliable aircraft, a broad diversity of students and a tight-knit crew of instructors who are more than happy to coach me - I couldn't have found a better place to work!

*What do you love most about flying for a career?*

I love that there is always something new to learn - be it a new aircraft type, a new rating, a new student to get to know. The path of progression feels almost infinite, and yet the next step always feels attainable (with a bit of hard work). Every day is also a bit different, so that keeps me on my toes.

*Which aircraft do you like to fly most and why?*

I enjoyed flying the Cessna 206 during my CPL training - the 300hp engine has a fair bit more power than the other aircraft I've flown. It feels like a properly rugged workhorse.

*What would be your dream job?*

I'd like to retrace my French heritage, by getting an EASA conversion and flying for an airline out of France.



*What advice do you have for people wanting to learn to fly?*

You can do it! If you want to learn and put in the effort, that is vastly more important than just having a 'knack' for flying. Becoming a pilot is more about good communication and sensible decision-making than being a hot-shot.

*What advice do you have for Club members who want to improve their flying skills?*

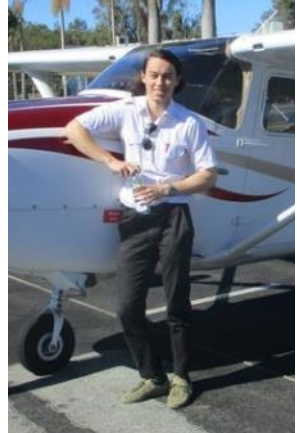
Commit to flying often - if you leave the time between flights too long, you'll spend a lot of time and effort just dusting off the cobwebs and getting back up to the standard you were previously, but not making much progress further than that.

# Recent achievers

Congratulations to all our students who recently completed a milestone in their training at the Redcliffe Aero Club. The whole Club wishes you all well for your future endeavours in aviation.



*Angus Nugara  
Grade 3 Flight Instructor 21 September*



*Double Diploma Student Alex Beck  
CPL 8 July*



*Garry Ayre  
PPL 10 October*

*Jake Whinn  
Grade 3 Flight Instructor  
21 September*



*Jacob Neumann  
CPL June 3*







Mary Comiskey  
First Solo June 8



Jeffrey Huff  
MEAIR 15 July



Salman Riaz  
CPL 9 September 23

Sarsha Pincini  
MEAIR 16 June



Sam Keenan  
MEA Class Rating 3 June



Michael Chan  
RPL 17 June



Jacinta Burgess  
MEAIR 23 October



# One looooooong table

by Carol Barnes

Chinchilla is a rural town and locality in the Western Downs region of South East Queensland, approximately 250km (four hours drive) north-west of Brisbane. For the Redcliffe Aero Club 'Flyaway Group' however it is 45-90 minutes flight time, depending on the aircraft's capabilities and conditions. The asphalt airstrip (YCCA, elevation 1030 ft, 1069 metres) has plenty of grassy aircraft parking and a small terminal with toilets and vending machines.



Why go to Chinchilla?.....for the annual **ONE LOOOOOONG TABLE** multicultural food festival of course! Chinchilla has a wonderful mix of cultures due to the many refugees finding their way to this friendly and accepting community. The event, held every September, celebrates the residents and everything the area has to offer.

RAC members have visited the festival since 2020 with my first trip being in 2021. This year's flyaway group comprised five aircraft and 21 visitors from RAC plus two aircraft and four people who joined us from Southport. It was a wonderful weekend with the One Long Table event held on the Saturday afternoon and evening. After landing and tying the planes down we caught a maxi taxi into town. They are reasonably priced and happy to collect everyone for the trip into town. Definitely book ahead if going to One Long Table or their Watermelon Festival.



There was a much larger crowd this year than last as the word had spread around SEQ about how terrific the multicultural food and entertainment is. It is very well organised and the locals are 'country friendly'.

The non-stop entertainment showcased the different cultures living in the area and included a Filipino dance and song group, line dancing for both children and adults, Hula dancing, Heimana (Polynesian) dancing, local dance groups, reggae and jazz bands, a fire breathing performer, roving entertainers and fairies on stilts to name a few.

Word of mouth of our attendance reached the event's MC, Chris Iliffe, who interviewed Paul Smeath, Melissa Hearn and me on stage about Redcliffe Aero Club and why our members like the festival. Paul spoke about the 50 year history of RAC and our love of flying to destinations like Chinchilla.

Some first timers from our group commented on the 'vibe' and country hospitality as soon as we entered the main street of the festival and yes, there really is ONE LOOOOOOONG TABLE ! The variety of food was amazing and I've been told the kangaroo tacos were extra tasty. Brown Brothers Wines have a tent there so I always head there first!

The evening was spent enjoying the activities and the great food, talking with the locals and generally soaking it all in.



*Above: the long table*



*Above and left: fairies aplenty*

*Below: Melissa answers a tough question*



After a comfy night at the [Chinchilla Motor Inn](#) (a short walk from the main street), the next morning on my way to find a coffee, I was amazed to see the festival area totally clean. All the tables, chairs, tents etc. had been removed so they must have worked into the early hours cleaning up.....a great effort.

We dropped into the [Chinchilla Historical Museum](#) where, to our surprise, local volunteers were cooking up a hot breakfast (for a small fee). With a coffee van in attendance, it was all much appreciated. The 'mini train' ride is good fun for everyone too. Late on Sunday morning the maxi taxi did a few trips to the airport and we headed for home with happy memories of a good time at this fun event. You can view a video of the event made by [Gerkies Media](#) by clicking on the link below. It includes an appearance by the RAC group.

Video: <https://www.facebook.com/chinchillachamber/videos/1470429250419156>



# Staff intro - Bernadette Killick

*Bernadette started recently as the Club's new RTO Co-Ordinator. Please contact her if you have any questions about the RTO program at Redcliffe Aero Club. Email: [bernadette@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au](mailto:bernadette@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au)*

*Airchat: What's your background and how did you become involved in vocational education and training?*

BK: I applied for an administration role and just fell into vocational education training. I have worked in VET for over seven years now and I am currently studying to get my training and assessment qualifications.

*When did you first start working with the VET Student Loans (VSL) program*

I first worked with VET Fee Help in 2016. This was right before they updated the scheme to what is now known as the VET Student Loans scheme.

*When and how did you get involved in the aviation industry?*

I had always been fascinated by anything aviation. My great grandfather was a Royal Air Force Catalina pilot, and my grandfather was an agricultural pilot over in the UK.

I studied aerospace during school and was even offered a scholarship to study aviation engineering to become a LAME. I attended the Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC) in my teen years and had my first taste of flying at the age of 15 in PA-38 Tomahawks.

Where have you worked in the past?

My most recent workplace was over at the Australian Trade Training College in Scarborough.

I have worked in several different training organisations offering a range of qualifications such as community services, veterinary science, business, automotive, electrical... the list goes on.

*What aviation related roles have you been employed in?*

I have never been employed in an aviation related role; however, I have previously volunteered at air museums and was an adult volunteer for the AAFC.

*What attracted you to the VET program at Redcliffe Aero Club?*

Aviation and vocational education. I could not have asked for a better combination.

*What would you like to achieve while you're at Redcliffe Aero Club?*

My greatest achievement would be to see my students achieve their goals of becoming commercial pilots.

*What aspects of your job are you especially passionate about?*

I am passionate about compliance within the vocational education and training sector. I like to ensure that we are doing the right thing and that our students are not disadvantaged in any way.

*What advice do you have for students who may be thinking of applying for a VET loan?*

Do your research. It is quite a large loan from the Commonwealth so you need to make sure this is something you really want to do.

*Would you like to learn to fly yourself?*

Yes! I would love to get back into flying and go for my RPL/PPL.



# Coffee hop

## A great learning experience

by Garry Ayre



The "Coffee Hop" was a Club flyaway held in June, following on from an earlier one a year or so ago that had been successful. It was a great opportunity to discover a number of the smaller airfields that surround Brisbane. The airfields chosen for the day were Kilcoy, Watts Bridge, Gatton Air Park, Clifton and Boonah. The weather was great with some beautiful early morning fog sitting in the valley on the way from Redcliffe to Kilcoy that started the day off perfectly. Coffee was provided at Watts Bridge and Clifton while the Gatton Air Park put on a fantastic lunch. I flew with Sam in VH-BHN which was great for me as I had never been in a Piper Cherokee before and Sam was very patient with answering all of my questions.

As I only gained my RPL earlier in the year and am now working on my PPL the Coffee Hop was a perfect balance of having a great day out and getting more experience on how to approach other airfields for landings and takeoffs and adding to my general flying experience. The day delivered on all fronts. So what did I learn? Lots!

*Top and below: Watts Bridge*



## Lessons learnt:-

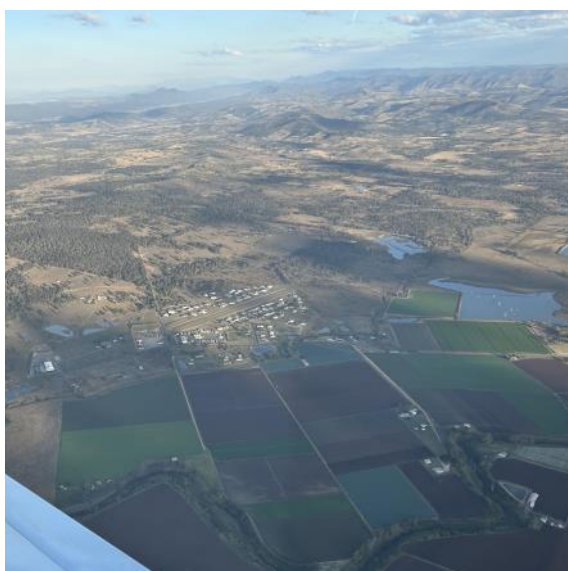
### Finding the airfields

As the airfields we landed at are much smaller than YRED they are not as easy to spot, particularly when they are unsealed without runway numbers. Research is definitely required before going to any unfamiliar airfields to become familiar with the terrain and any features like roads, lakes, etc that you can use to orientate yourself. Of course, now having been to these airfields on the Coffee Hop that makes the job of finding them a whole lot easier.

The most unusual airfield on the day for me was the Gatton Air Park. While I thought I'd spotted it I thought it can't be as the airstrip has houses on either side and seems to be in the middle of a residential area. It was only after having landed there that I learnt that 62 houses together with the runway and taxiways make up the air park and a number of the houses have their own hangar behind their house with direct access to a taxiway. What a great setup.

### Orientation of runways

At Clifton there was some confusion over which runway was 06 or 24 as one pilot announced turning base on 24 but was actually on base for 06 while two other planes were downwind for 24 so those other pilots couldn't spot the plane on base. I learnt how important situational awareness is so that you recognise the correct orientation of the runways and can correctly communicate your position so that each pilot has the correct mental picture of where all the planes are located. I could see how easy it is to be approaching from the wrong direction if the airstrip is unfamiliar, especially if there are no runway numbers.



*Right: Gatton Airpark*



### Condition, slope, surface and length

The Kilcoy airstrip has quite a mound and an upslope on RWY09. We landed on RWY09, using the upslope to slow down and took off on RWY27, using the downslope to accelerate. This was very different to any strip that I had landed on and the mound made the approach and touchdown way more challenging. Kilcoy was a bit shorter than the other airstrips as well.

At Boonah during our stop I learnt that it's wise to make a phone call before heading for that particular airstrip because if there has been any rain in the previous weeks it may well be closed as water comes off the hill to the north. Phoning ahead to any unknown airstrip is a good idea.

### Communication and organisation

Given that the performance of the various planes on the Coffee Hop varied, the order of takeoff and landing was organised prior to each leg to allow for the difference in airspeed. We also had constant communication between each other to identify where each plane was on each leg as well as each pilot's intentions if faster planes overtook the slower ones.

Sam had a great App on his phone called AvTraffic that showed the relative location of all the planes fitted with ADSB in addition to those using Ozrunways and Avplan. It gave us a really good idea of where everyone was.

### Check NOTAMS

I now know to check NOTAMS carefully before each takeoff and also to be on the correct Brisbane Centre area frequency.

While flying from Clifton to Boonah one of the planes infringed the Amberley restricted airspace while it was active, by being at 5000ft when the lower limit was 4500ft. When we left in the morning it was not active but became active in the afternoon. The active times were listed in the NOTAMS. It became more problematic as the plane that infringed the airspace was not listening out on the appropriate Centre area frequency so did not hear when ATC attempted to contact them. This meant that Centre contacted another plane in the group and asked them to contact the infringing plane. Made for an interesting phone call to Brisbane Centre after we all landed at Boonah.

So, the lessons were to read the relevant NOTAMS thoroughly at the start of the day and check whether anything has changed during the day and always be monitoring the correct Centre frequency (that may change as you fly). It was very beneficial for me to see how this whole process works and to double check before take off and during flight that you're at the correct altitude and have the right frequencies selected.



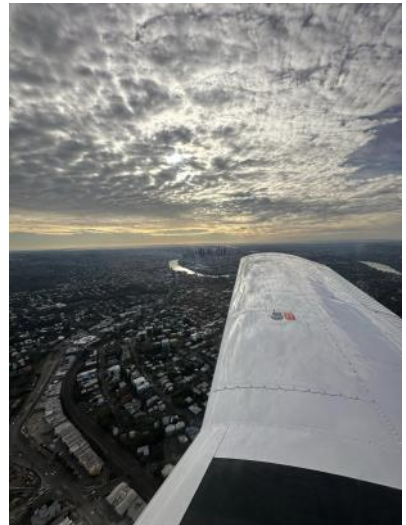




### Talk to ATC

I also learned it's a good idea to talk to Archer Tower even if you're not actually entering the CTR at Archerfield so the controllers know your intentions.

When we left Boonah we tracked back to Redcliffe via a route around the western edge of the Archerfield CTR and then via the VFR route north of the Walter Taylor Bridge. This route gave me a great opportunity to observe Archerfield from the air, especially as I was scheduled to fly into there for the first time as part of my PPL lessons soon after. As we approached the controlled airspace Sam contacted the tower to let them know that we would not be entering the CTR. I could tell the controller appreciated the call.



So, in conclusion, the Coffee Hop was a great way for all pilots, both experienced and those like me who are relative newcomers, to see a lot of great scenery around Brisbane, make some new friends and keep learning and improving our skills and ability while not travelling too far from home. I can only urge other members to take part in future Coffee Hops.



# Fuel management fool

by Greg Ackman

I had just arrived in Melbourne after an uneventful solo trip down from Sydney. I usually do this trip four or five times a year to visit customers and do in store staff training. Usually that is done after shop hours and as an incentive to attend we provide pizza and KFC plus as an added incentive a door prize of a night flight over their town or city for three or more staff members the following evening. As you can imagine the training evenings are well attended. To this date I had flown over 300 staff members of a leading retailer in over 40 different locations both in Australia & New Zealand.

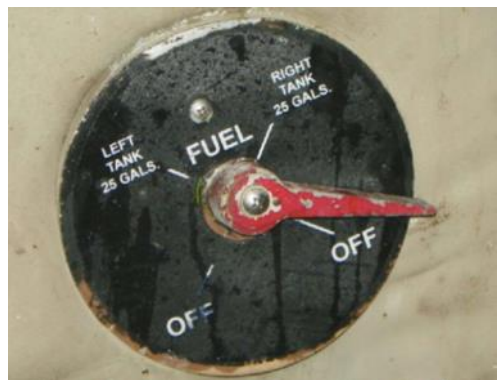
The day after the training at 7pm we departed Moorabbin airport with three staff pax for a flight over Melbourne city. The stars were out and a full moon promised a fairyland experience. The pax were not disappointed and the city lights blazed away as we orbited over the high rises at 1500 ft. Moorabbin tower had closed down for the night so communication was established with Essendon tower and we soon reported ops normal when departing the city for the 10 minute transit back to Moorabbin.

The tower advised me to report approaching the airfield and we tracked via the coast heading south. As the only aircraft in the area we had the magnificent vista of Melbourne at night laid out beneath us like a magic carpet of twinkling lights, truly a wonderful sight. When we were overhead Brighton however the engine gave a shot burp and stopped! Best glide, full rich, pump on, change tanks - no effect. What the?? Fuel pressure reads zero. It then dawned on me that I had run a tank dry, a result of bad fuel management.

But why didn't it restart when I changed tanks as the other tank had plenty of fuel? I didn't understand so I started cranking the engine and was rewarded with a couple of bursts of power. What is going on ? The engine should be

running on the backup fuel from the other tank. The fuel pressure gauge told me the story as I continued to crank the engine and it started to flicker more and more. By this stage I was descending through 1000 ft and a shot of adrenaline hit me. I started to look around and realised that suburbia was not an option for a forced landing at night. On my right was the dark surface of Port Phillip Bay - this was where I would land. I briefed the pax on ditching procedures and asked them to don life jackets. Now at 500 ft I gave a Mayday call and Essendon responded with confirmation that help was forthcoming. I kept cranking the engine and other than bursts of power it still didn't run. Then the fuel pressure gauge jumped a few more times and after passing 150 ft the engine roared into life. I pitched up and climbed for height, levelling off at 2000ft which put me within an easy glide of Moorabbin. I advised Essendon Tower and they confirmed my intentions. We made an uneventful landing.

After taxiing in we spent the next 15 minutes watching the fire brigade & ambos driving up and down the runways looking for us! We split our sides with laughter watching the antics of our intrepid rescuers driving this way and that without success. It took the edge off our near disaster and put the pax in a much more relaxed mood.



Finally after a call to Essendon by phone the fire engines and ambulances arrived to ask us where the plane had crashed!! Evidently the firemen had no aircraft band radio fitted even though they were the designated responders for emergencies at Moorabbin airport. It was nice to know that at least they had gate keys. Anyhow it all turned out ok and everyone departed for home. I inspected the aircraft and removed the fuel drain from the empty tank and discovered some debris in the drain filter. I then realised what had transpired was a touch and go event caused by minute amounts of residue clogging up the carby jets after accumulating in the bottom of the fuel tank over many years.

Now at every 100 hourly inspection I drain the tanks and clean out the filters. What a lesson to be learned. Don't run a tank dry while in the air and be diligent in regularly changing tanks at designated times so that what happened to me will never occur to you. I forgot that rule and came within 150 ft of paying the penalty. Fuel management is critical. That day I forgot to 'change tanks' every 30 minutes and failed to take notice that one wing was heavier than the other as the tank drained. All just basic airmanship.

Oh ! and if you do keep those filters clean (at every 100 hourly) then IF it happens that you do run a tank dry, then WHEN you change tanks and hit that fuel pump chances are that you will be rewarded with a roaring engine again after only a few nervous nail biting seconds.

Footnote:

The following morning and after receiving advice from the ATSB I attended Moorabbin Tower to lodge an Air Safety Incident report. The ATC on duty said "Hey were you the pilot of the aircraft flying over Brighton Beach last night?" After I confirmed that I was he advised that he lived at Brighton and was jogging on the beach and heard my approach knowing that I was in trouble and about to ditch. He had stripped to his undies and was about to dive into the water to swim out and assist us when he saw me pitch up just above the water and climb away. He observed from 30 metres away that we were only about 50 ft high when the aircraft started to climb. I guess that aviation is really a small world and what a shock it would have been to be sitting in the water after ditching and then to have an ATC tower controller swim up to the aircraft!

*Greg Ackman is an inventor and designer of communications products and has operated his Australian manufacturing business for 50 years.*

*A pilot and aircraft owner & operator with over 5,000 hours of private and business flying in Australia, New Zealand and the USA, he is proficient in single engine fixed wing operations as well as helicopter, gliding & light sport aircraft.*

*Greg currently flies a Grumman Tiger and a Rutan Long EZ and is based on the Gold Coast Queensland and Wedderburn NSW.*



# Learn to fly without instruments

by Jim Davis

I'd like to bring to your attention the accident report at right because we can all learn a hell of a lot from it.

About the most useful training aid an instructor can have is a towel. That's right - an ordinary bath towel. It should be used early on in the training - at least a couple of times before first solo. And after that whenever needed, but certainly whenever a student moves to another type of aircraft, or shows signs of battling with airspeed control.

Yup, you've got it. The instructor hangs the towel down in front of the instrument panel so that you, the student, have NO instruments at all. You should be able to take off, fly a reasonable circuit and land safely without any sight of the airspeed indicator, altimeter, rev-counter or the ball.

This is seat of the pants flying. It serves a couple of purposes. The main one is to emphasise the importance of attitude flying. Get the nose in the right position and the airspeed will be right. It is surprisingly easy to do, and it is a huge confidence builder.

When you try it get your instructor to lift the towel for a couple of seconds from time to time just to show you how accurately you can fly without any instruments - but particularly the ASI. Your circuit height may be three hundred feet out - but who cares as long as your airspeed is about right?

Also you will be surprised how accurately you can set circuit power - just from the sound of the engine. That is if you are not using those noise cancelling headphone muffs that prevent you from being in touch with the real world. OK, you can use them - but lift one occasionally to make sure everything sounds good.

If your instructor ever told you to "watch your airspeed" then she is a vile sinner and should have the soles of her feet flogged. She actually doesn't want you to watch your airspeed she wants you to

correct it by adjusting the nose attitude. So that's what she should damn well say. But if you are a good little pupil and do what you are told, you will be staring at the ASI instead of adjusting the nose attitude.

In this accident, our poor student was so underconfident in her seat-of-the-pants flying that she elected to land downhill with a strong tailwind rather than fly a normal circuit.

I would apportion blame as follows: student 0, instructor 10.

## WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

You can learn to trust your senses. Look at the nose attitude. Listen to the wind noise. Listen to the engine. Feel the sensitivity of the controls. Look outside. Feel in your butt whether the ball is in the middle or not.

Round the circuit the instruments are aids - they are not essential - any of them. Learn to do without them.

If you are an instructor, learn these skills yourself and then pass them on to every student you ever fly with.

Uninstall 'Flight Simulator' from your computer - it teaches you to fly with your head in the office. You can install it again when you start training for your night or instrument rating.



ACCIDENT REPORT SUMMARY					
Date of Accident	12 June 1999	Time of Accident	1450 Local		
A/C Registration	ZS-NWG	Type of Aircraft	C172		
Name of Owner		Name and Number of Operator			
Not relevant		Not relevant			
Pilot in command License No.	Student	Age	25	License valid	Yes
Pilot in command Flying Experience	Total Flying Hrs	41	Hrs on Type	9	
Last Point of Departure	Nelspruit Airport				
Next point of intended landing	Nelspruit Airport				
Location of the accident with reference to easily defined geographical points.					
Runway 22 Nelspruit (about 150 miles East of Johannesburg)					
Meteorological Conditions	Fine.				
Number of people on board	1	People injured	0	People killed	0
SYNOPSIS					

On the afternoon of 13 June 1999 the student pilot prepared for a solo flight and after all the documentation was filled in and pre flight inspection carried out, she took-off on runway 22. (which has a considerable uphill gradient 60° in 1000m. The Airfield Guide says that all takeoffs should be on runway 04 and all landings on 22 unless the wind is very strong.)

The pilot claimed that during the take-off roll and climb the airspeed was normal but shortly afterwards the airspeed decayed to zero. She then notified the tower and decided to carry out a "leardrop" in order to land on runway 04.

The pilot admitted that she was too high, too fast and very close to the runway, but decided to land rather than doing a circuit without the air speed indicator. According to the captain of the airliner, parked at the apron (facing the approaching aircraft), the aircraft porpoised approximately 6 times and eventually the nose gear collapsed. The aircraft skidded to a halt approximately 30 meters from the airliner.

#### PROBABLE CAUSE

The malfunction of the pressure instruments could not be determined as the system was tested and no malfunction was evident. However it is the belief of the investigator that the pilot would not have returned just after take-off if there had not been a problem. Due to the inexperience of the pilot during this event and panic she was unable to control the aircraft during the landing.

*Jim Davis has been training civil and military pilots for over 50 years. That includes 15,000 hand-flown hours, of which the majority were instructing. He also has a passion for writing and has columns in flying magazines on three continents and is the author of the best-selling training manual "PPL" (with the intriguing sub-title "A practical book about flying safely") as well as the very popular "Flight Tests" booklet (reviewed in the Summer 2023 AirChat). You can find him at [www.jimdavis.com.au](http://www.jimdavis.com.au).*



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# A dusty diamond

by Philip Arthur



It was 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Together with David, a mate from high school, and his wife Rita, Sigi and I had made it to the Kimberley after flying Cirrus VH-MSF in comfortable steps over three days all the way across Queensland and the Northern Territory. We were accompanied by Luc George in his Piper VH-WKE and had just arrived at [El Questro](#), a slightly upmarket resort place not far from Kununurra but far enough to be like a completely different world. Nature at its finest. The first day was a chance to relax after our long journey. Settle in. Swim in the waterhole, explore the facilities, move MSF to let some aircraft from Tyabb in Victoria out so they could depart the next day, and find out where we could buy some oil in Broome during our visit the next week. There was a great steakhouse with very good food and reasonable prices. Live music at the bar. The glamping tents were great, located in a shady grassed area only a few minutes walk from the restaurants and bar, and only a five minute walk from the airstrip. And you could sit out front to eat breakfast. All that was missing was a kettle and fridge - we had to talk to management!



*From top: short final at El Questro, WKE joins MSF on the ground, the Steakhouse restaurant*

Elquestro day 2 we had an early start to avoid the heat of the day. By 6:30 we'd had breakfast and were hiking to Champagne Springs. We passed an enormous Boab tree on the way and were held up for almost an hour trying to find the track because the creek crossing was poorly signposted. We had to talk to management (again).

Nevertheless, three hours after setting out we were swimming in the pools. Very refreshing. A well deserved siesta was disturbed by a Longranger helicopter that had flown some less energetic tourists in from Kununurra for a swim.

We walked back to the station in time for a late lunch and another swim in the waterhole. After a short break Peter, one of the Elquestro tour guides, drove us up to Saddleback Ridge for sunset drinks over the Pentecost River (see the photo on the back page of this AirChat).

Day 3 at ElQuestro we did the full day tour. Starting at 7:15 we were driven over to Emma Gorge where Peter the guide led us up the gorge to a refreshing water hole with a 35 metre high waterfall. After morning tea at Emma Gorge reception we were driven to Zebedee Springs (ala Magic Roundabout) for a warm bath in the 30 degree water. That was only a five minute walk. Lush tropical vegetation surrounds the numerous swimming holes.

This was followed by lunch at the steakhouse and a cruise up the Chamberlain River where a three metre salty was sunning himself on a ledge and some clever little arrowfish spat water at us. They use this technique to catch insects as they fly overhead and make them crash into the water. Nature's own FLAK.

*From top: breakfast time at El Questro, Champagne Springs, overhead El Questro, Chamberlain River*



The next day it was time to depart ElQuestro station. I really recommend that if you go there you spend at least three nights like we did. If you're wanting to spend up big stay at the exclusive ElQuestro Homestead down the road, but otherwise there's plenty of cheaper options varying from campsites to motel type suites at the Station.

We took off at 8:30 and after a pass over the station and the homestead we climbed to 5500ft over Champagne Springs and set course for the Argyle Diamond mine. I've been following the mine's progress since the 1980s so although it's now shut down it was impressive to see it from the air.

Next we tracked up the west coast of Lake Argyle to Kununurra. That lake is a huge expanse of water. Twenty times the volume of Sydney Harbour and 2000 square km in area.

On descent into Kununurra we passed over some of the fields that are irrigated by the Lake Argyle water. On landing we refuelled and were picked up by a shuttle that took us to the [Kimberley Croc Motel](#). The motel has great casual accommodation right in the middle of town.



A quick sandwich was followed by a bus trip to join a cruise with [Lake Argyle Cruises](#) that helped us appreciate all the more the vastness of the lake. Lake Argyle was formed by damming the Ord River in the 1970s. At a cost of \$22m in 1971 this engineering marvel must've been the best deal in WA history. There's a 30MW hydro power station that's now running at about one third capacity since the diamond mine shut. And sooo much water. We saw more fresh water crocs than ever before and then went swimming not too far away from them as the sun set over the hills. What a day!



From top: Argyle diamond mine, Lake Argyle, Kununurra irrigation area



Having spent an afternoon on Lake Argyle, the next day we had to do a boat trip up the Ord River, downstream of the dam wall, to see what the river was like before the lake existed. The boat trip was with [Triple J Tours](#) and our skipper Justin was cruising at up to 50km/h. The first 40km upstream from Kununurra is called Lake Kununurra as it's the level held back by a lower "diversion" dam. The remaining 15km to the Lake Argyle dam wall is essentially the original Ord River. Along the way we stumbled on rock wallabies, fresh water crocodiles, mountains that formed silhouettes of famous people and animals and even some pumpkin scones, as well as the dam wall itself and the outlet pipes from the hydroelectric power station. It was a beautiful landscape and the day finished with a stunning sunset with thousands of fruit bats taking to the sky. On the way back to the mooring spot we passed an old pumphouse located on the river bank. Rita had been told by a Kununurra local that the [Pumphouse Restaurant](#) was pretty special so she'd booked us in there for dinner. After a quick stop at the motel we were whisked back there and settled in for an impressive array of culinary delights.

After breakfast in the morning Luc and I met with Chris, a friendly pilot from Aviair, a local charter company, who gave us some useful tips about flying (and landing) in the Kimberley. Then we packed up and headed out to the airport. Around 11:30 we lifted off and followed the Ord River to the coast as far as Wyndham where there was a magnificent view of the King River and Pentecost River that both flow into the sea nearby, then followed the Pentecost inland to [Home Valley Station](#).

Home Valley sits at the eastern end of the Gibb River Road and they put on a pretty good lunch. Trish the manager texted me an airstrip report before we left Kununurra that was very useful. It's the only place that supplied such a report.

It was a 10 minute walk from the strip to the homestead where they had a pleasant restaurant that had just opened for the season. You can stay there too. It's surrounded by some stunning escarpment type scenery.

*From top: Ord River sunset,  
Pumphouse Restaurant, King River*



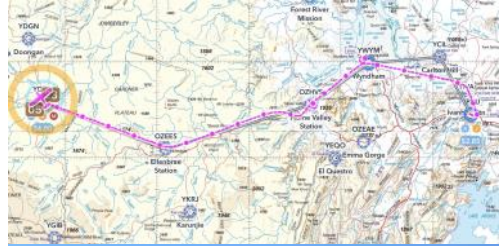
Recharged by lunch, we walked back to the strip, took off and followed the Gibb River Road to the west as far as [Ellenbrae Station](#), another place we could've stopped for lunch or stayed overnight but we overflew at 2500ft and continued on to [Drysdale River Station](#).

Drysdale River is a great jumping off point for Mitchell Falls in the central Kimberley. The accommodation is only basic but clean and well equipped for independent travellers. There are free washing machines, fridges, toasters and kettles. There is also a shop with basic groceries. The beer garden is a great setting and the restaurant/cafe does reasonable pub food. Continental breakfast is included in the overnight rate - cereal and toast, tea and coffee. Hot breakfast is extra. Owners Anne and Alan are looking towards retirement so leased management of the accommodation to Outback Spirit in 2022 for two years. The strip is well maintained. Anne and Alan still run the shop and fuel service. They also still run cattle on the property.

Anne can arrange avgas but you have to buy it by the 200L drum and order and pay in advance. So I'd ordered a drum for us at the special price of \$5 per litre. Liquid gold. Anne's son Paul had invested in a new hand pump so he pumped 120L into MSF and about 60L into WKE. 20L remained to add to WKE the next day. With tanks filled it meant we were all ready for a flight to Mitchell Plateau the following day.

Dinner was in the beer garden under the fairy lights as the temperature dropped suddenly to a chilly 15°C or so. At about 1200ft AMSL Drysdale River did not retain the heat of the day.

Breakfast at 6:30 the next day meant we were lifting off shortly after 8am for Mitchell Plateau. The forecast was for strong winds so we expected a bumpy ride but at 4500ft it was pretty smooth. Landing at the plateau it was a bit gusty but we had a smooth landing nevertheless. Chris from Aviair had warned us that there were a few rocks exposed on RWY 06 so we managed to avoid them and were tied down and waiting for our chopper by 9:15. You see the only way to get from the airstrip to the falls was by helicopter, operated by [Helispirit, a subsidiary of Aviair](#). The Longranger took us over to the Mitchell Falls campground where a three hour hiking trail to the falls starts.



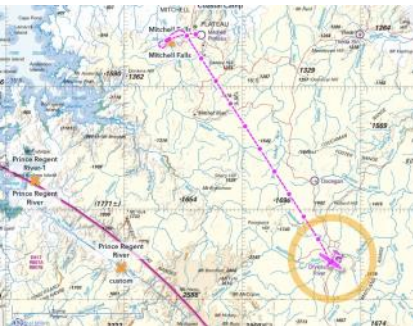
From top: Gibb River Road, refuelling at Drysdale, beer garden ambience, Mitchell Plateau apron

It was a very scenic walk with a stopover at Little Mertens Falls where there are some indigenous rock paintings behind the falls. We had a swim in the pools at the top of the falls and again in the water hole at the base.

At the Mitchell River it was a matter of wading knee deep across the river. We learned the “socks trick” - take off your boots but keep your socks on. Less chance of slipping. A spectacular picnic spot overlooking the falls capped off the walk.

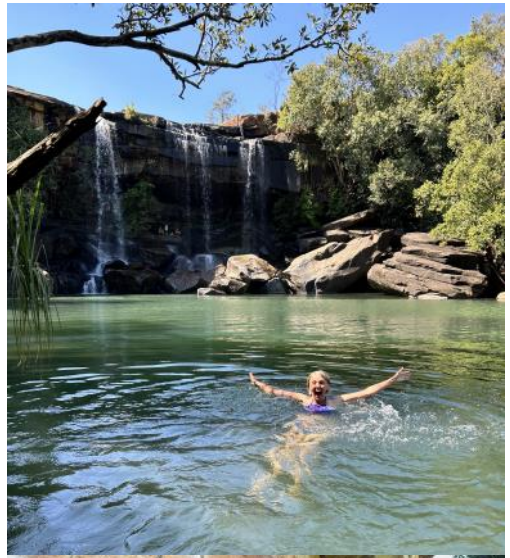
At 2pm the Helispirit chopper picked us up for a couple of low level laps over the falls and a birds eye view of our hiking route on the way back to the airstrip. After taking off in MSF we did another couple of passes over the falls before heading back to Drysdale River.

Dinner in the beer garden was followed by chats with fellow travellers around the camp fire, most of whom were surprised to hear we were “winging it”.



So ended the first week of our flying safari around the Kimberley. Little did we know that the best was yet to come! It's not just a pearler of a destination, it's a diamond, albeit a bit of a dusty one.

To be continued in a future edition of AirChat...



From top: swimming at Little Mertens Falls, rock art, waiting choppers, Mertens Gorge

Left: Mitchell Falls

# Aviation law – there’s a reason for it

by Rob Knight

*Rob Knight grew up in New Zealand in the 1950s and 60s with a crazy urge to fly. He became a flight instructor and worked in the industry for many years, eventually as Chief Pilot/Chief Flying Instructor for the Wellington Aero Club. Rob is now retired and living near Amberley. He is the editor of the BVSAC Flyer, the magazine of the Brisbane Valley Sport Aviation Club based at Watts Bridge.*



Have you heard the adage “Laws are made for the guidance of wise men and the obedience of fools?” Is there any truth in this, or should all pilots ALWAYS obey the laws as they pertain to aviation when they are pilot-in-commanding an aircraft?

Firstly - the following of all aspects of aviation law is not arbitrary, without question it is absolutely compulsory. The adage is actually flawed, because wise men who fly will always remain in accord with the law unless it is an emergency situation which can be an entirely different issue and outside the scope of this article.

Over the years I have heard many arguments in regard to this topic. Some sensible, but too many not. For me, aviation laws are designed in such a manner that, if I follow them, I am far less likely to spear myself into the ground than if I charge off and ignore them. They are the result of many others’ accidents and mishaps, all over the globe, and are designed to assist me in not repeating them. That does not mean that I am as white as driven snow in respect of compliance with the Law, but my errors in the main have been inadvertent rather than deliberate breaches. It is worth noting that very, very few fatal accidents occur when the relevant aviation laws are being complied with.

Not every other pilot with whom I have had contact holds the same or a similar opinion of law compliance in aviation. Some radicals were mere students (a few not even solo), whilst others have been part of the rest of the aviation personnel spectrum, right through to senior commercial pilots and air transport pilot licence holders.

However, every single serious refuser to comply with the laws was either ignorant, or arrogant, and neither attribute makes a good pilot regardless of qualification. As a CFI operator hiring aeroplanes to members or clients it was easy for me - they had to comply or go somewhere else. Any other act would have left me with insurers shaking their heads and refusing claims in the event of an accident. Occasionally I would hear of an illegal act carried out in one of the aeroplanes for which I was responsible and I would always have to be seen to resolve any issues to maintain my organisation’s reputation with both the aviation authorities and our insurers. At these times a lack of tact when addressing the offenders was a powerful weapon. These issues still continue today as the news media reports and, in particular, amongst private owners, who have no restrictions upon their actions, compared to hirers who will always be subject to peer reviews by the aircraft operator.

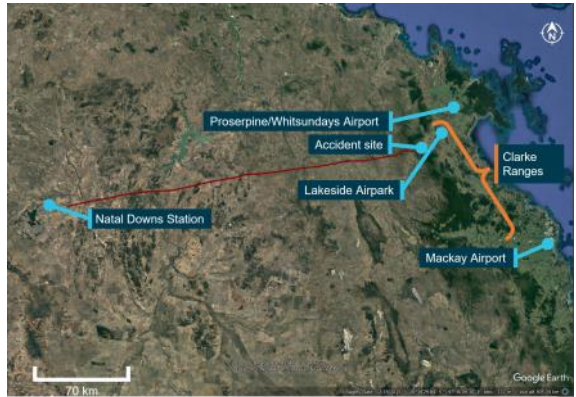


The most recent example (ATSB Investigation Number AO-2023-013) of such deadly arrogance occurred in April this year. The 22-year-old pilot flying his own PA28-180 crashed into the Clarke Ranges killing not only himself but also his trusting wife and their unborn daughter. Without bothering to get his pilot qualification to carry a passenger, and reportedly with less than 31 hours of total logged flight experience, he took-off in a sophisticated aircraft, equipped for IFR operation, to take his wife to a medical appointment. BUT - the weather got in the way and knocked him down; then a tree covered, rocky mountain range reared up in front of his windscreen and finished the job. The training that he had not bothered to undertake would have equipped him to deal with the sort of weather he encountered and how to retreat in safety. Alas, having knowingly forgone that training, he couldn't adequately read a forecast, and so flew into environmental conditions with which he couldn't cope. I'll leave you to form your own opinion as to what level of abject stupidity he attained before he killed himself and, oh so tragically, the rest of his family. His wife and unborn child were innocent - they made no decision to fly illegally - his ego and arrogance did it on their behalf, and they died.

This example serves to drive home perhaps the most important message of all. If you break the law, you might kill yourself and that is not good. But in breaking that law, you are putting others in danger, an act that you have absolutely no right to make. The others that are placed in danger, unaware of the hazards, have not consented or agreed to run the risk to which the law-breaking pilot exposes them, nor to the potential results of any mishap that might result from that legal aberration. These others may be passengers in the aircraft, or they might be innocent people on the ground who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but they all have that one thing in common - they are innocent.



Image taken in-flight of the weather conditions ahead



It's easy to say that a pilot who crashes in bad weather was operating at the end of his flight outside the law because the conditions were worse than the minimum meteorological conditions for VFR operations. However, the end of the flight is not necessarily represented by the earlier stages before the weather deteriorated. In this case he had simply not made the correct decisions early enough.

Another pilot, one that I personally trained (with some difficulty) at the Waitemata Aero Club, was prone to operating to lower legal standards than NZCAA provided. He nearly killed himself, his girlfriend, and a full load of Fokker Friendship crew and passengers after he qualified. He trained in a Victa 100 and was sufficiently arrogant as an unqualified pilot to decide to ignore instructions when flying solo. He too frequently deliberately flew out of the prescribed training area that was set aside for students south of Ardmore, because, as he said, he got bored with practising things and wanted to do a little sightseeing from time to time. On the last occasion he did this a club instructor had to be diverted from his own training flight to find him and bring him back from near Raglan on the west coast. I grounded him until we met with the CFI so the student could explain his actions, at which time the CFI gave him an ultimatum that another such event would see his grounding made permanent and his departure from the club membership list a certainty. As lists of groundings were shared amongst the training establishments, this would put a substantial kink in his ability to continue flying and he complied for the balance of time he was training.

Finishing his PPL without further incident, he converted to the club's PA28s. Then, about a year after he qualified, a Fokker F27 on an instrument approach for Tauranga had a near miss with a PA28 crossing their path. Even though it happened in cloud, the PA28 was close enough for the startled F27 crew to read its registration and report it to the Tauranga ATC who then passed the rego on to an interested NZCAA. It's no contest to guess who the pilot flying was. That no-one was killed was just LUCK with a capital "F". NZCAA acted quite appropriately when, I understand, they withdrew his pilot license indefinitely.

On another occasion, whilst the CFI at the Wellington Aero Club, I was asked to assist in the validation of an Indonesian pilot's CPL and instrument rating. According to the Indonesian logbook he presented, he had somewhere around 2500 hours and had logged charter VFR flight and positioning IFR ops in the recent past, the operations all being in a Cessna 207 out of West Irian Jaya.

He had no actual licence with him, which was surprising as this was a stated requirement, but NZCAA had spoken to me and advised me that they had waived the requirement in light of his recent logged experience.

We were using the club's IFR PA28 and I had to provide an unusual degree of assistance with his flight planning and the filing of his flight plan but eventually we were ready and were cleared for take-off on RWY16. We were visual in the early climb, and as he had limited Piper experience I was letting him get a bit of a feel for the aircraft on the climb and the initial tracking. There was IMC ahead, so I just let him go. His radio work was fine, accented but his English was OK, and eventually we were cleared to Palmerston North VOR from the Newlands NDB. We entered IMC and for the first few minutes all was normal. He seemed a little nervous but that was not unusual. Then his heading began to wander. I touched the compass and the DG. He yanked the yoke and the nose slewed around, but too far, and we were heading out the other way. Only Kapiti Island lay in that direction and it was still higher than we were. When we got to a 30° heading error, and were nearly a mile west of track, I touched the compass and the DG again, and also pointed to his planned heading on his knee pad. The nose yawed violently to the right, and now the VSI began showing a descent when we were supposed to still be in the climb.

This was not good enough for a qualified instrument rated pilot so, highly suspicious, I took control off him and sorted it out before giving it back to him in a trimmed climb. Dismayed, I saw his heading wander and airspeed increasing all over again after just a couple of minutes without a horizon.

I retook control and called ATC. I advised them I was abandoning the flight, and requested vectoring back to Wellington for a VFR approach. I didn't give the pilot the controls again.

It was ultimately ascertained by NZCAA that the pilot held a mere PPL with about 600 hours actually logged, entirely in Cessna 172s, and limited instrument training. He had never passed or held any CPL or instrument rating. Imagine the results had he had the opportunity to try to exercise those qualifications. He figured that if he could get the dumb Kiwis to validate a non-existent CPL and instrument rating, he'd use it to get that put on his own file in Indonesia when he got home and save having to do the required training. Instead, after NZCAA made inquiries back in Indonesia and became aware of his lack of declared qualifications, his visa into New Zealand was revoked and the Indonesian authorities were made aware of the situation. I was advised that the Indonesian authorities deemed him unsuited to hold a pilot's licence in Indonesia and his PPL was revoked.

In a further incident, a Piper PA34 Seneca arrived over an hour late to Auckland International Airport to collect fare paying passengers and some family members to fly them to Wanganui, a city on the south-west coast of New Zealand's North Island. Already late, and with conditions deteriorating enroute the pilot rushed around shoving in baggage and passengers where he could until he had on board the designated passengers as well as his own daughter in law and two of her children. Ultimately, it has been reported, there were nine persons on board and all their baggage.

It remains unclear whether he entered IMC or was still operating in VMC after darkness fell, but on reducing power to begin his initial approach into Wanganui, the aircraft suddenly stalled and spun in. It appears that, when he reduced power, the misloaded aircraft pitched nose up uncommanded, the attitude change instigated by a seriously aft centre of gravity position. The subsequent aerodynamic stall and spin held no possibility of recovery and all the occupants were killed. Once again, the pilot made the fateful decision by not checking the weight and balance, but eight more innocent people paid for his noncompliance with their lives as well. He killed them.

An agricultural pilot acquaintance of mine had two Fletchers and a working flying business in

the area south west of Hamilton in New Zealand. Like all operators in the agricultural industry he freely gave flights around properties to local farmers to size up their hazards and to familiarise himself with the locality and the farm boundaries.

He arrived at work one morning and, on unlocking the gate onto the home strip where he kept his operation, he saw a Fletcher tail sticking up at an angle beyond the pampas-grass boundary. He shot over there in his truck to find his Fletcher nosed over in a boundary drain, the propeller bent and twisted, and a flap torn off. Then he heard another Fletcher start up with excessively high RPM and jumped back into his car to drive in front of his second aircraft that was now taxiing. He knew it wasn't his other pilot - he was away with his wife in labour about to deliver their first baby.

The man sitting in the cockpit of his running aircraft was the 18-year-old son of a farmer customer who had seen him flying the aircraft on various joy rides. He had decided that it looked simple enough to try for himself. He later stated at the inquiry that he thought that he knew why he crashed the first aircraft so he was giving it another go in the other one, now that he knew more.

No one was injured, but the pranged Fletcher was out of the air for a while which cost my friend sorely. The farmer paid up and covered all costs but it left an issue with the local law, and the lad, it was reported, got three months as a guest of the government. How lucky can you get? Three months holiday on pay instead of being killed! It really was his lucky day.

1981 saw a Smith Aerostar being ferried to the USA by a pilot whom I had once known well. A disagreeable chap, he was rather too full of himself and his prowess at the controls. When arranging ferry details with the New Zealand authorities, he included his girlfriend as a passenger. This was rejected by NZCAA who instructed him to do the flight alone as there was insufficient fuel available on board for safety, and her weight would increase the enroute consumption, further adding to the potential deficiency.

He flew solo to Kaitaia where he refuelled before heading out across the Pacific. Witnesses reported seeing him stop the aircraft at the end of the runway and shut an engine down so a young woman could board the aircraft before it took off. After a fuel stop in the Pacific Islands they departed for Honolulu. Alas, the authorities knew what they were talking about because he ran out of fuel 80 nautical miles south of Oahu and they both were killed after they ditched and the aircraft sank. Few were sad for him, many for her.

Another recent one, here in Australia, occurred near Mackay on Christmas Eve in 2021 when an aircraft crashed on Balls Beach. The aircraft was a write-off and the passenger was killed. Refer to [ATSB Investigation Number AO-2021-9054](#).

After the ensuing investigation, it was reported that the pilot was charged with manslaughter over the death of the passenger. Other charges included his failing to maintain the aircraft and flying without satisfying safety requirements.

The ATSB commissioner, Angus Mitchell, stated "When owners operate outside of the rules, they remove the built-in safety defences and undetected problems are more likely to emerge." The aircraft, a Jodel D11, was destroyed in the accident.

Lastly, another fatal in New Zealand. A syndicated Cessna 150 Aerobat operated by the Rukuhia Flying Club in Hamilton, New Zealand, was sold to another local aero club. Not long after, so I was informed by the chief engineer at Pacific Aerospace who did all its maintenance, a student pilot decided to show his girlfriend how good he was and attempted to loop the aircraft over her house.

Alas, and without any training whatsoever, he was too low to complete the manoeuvre and went out with a great bang, being killed in the resulting near vertical impact. A tragedy of course, but not as bad a tragedy as it would have been had he had a passenger with him. Remember - he made the decision to break the law. Had he complied ...

If you break the law deliberately, know well that you have reduced the margins of your own safety, and it will be much easier for you to



*Jodel crash site at Balls Beach*

have a serious mishap and even, perhaps, kill yourself. Should you also kill or injure someone else during your deliberate illegal foray, expect universal condemnation for your cretinous stupidity and abject idiocy. Sure, you will be remembered, but for all the wrong reasons. Don't make your next take-off your last one!

So, what should you do if you become aware of a pilot breaching the law? You can confront the breacher and offer advice but you are likely to suffer in the confrontation as such people are unlikely to easily accept criticism. However, be aware that it is mandatory for pilots in such circumstances to report breaches of the law when observed, and such reports are supposed to be made to [CASA on line](#) or by phone on 131 757. Alternatively, a report can be made to the ATSB, either on-line, or by calling 1800 011 034 (toll-free). The third option is to make a report via [REPCON](#), ATSB's aviation confidential reporting scheme.

Your decision and subsequent actions will rest on your conscience.

*Postscript: The perfect example of the concept of hubris endangering others because of the commanding self-belief that following rules and advice is unnecessary was illustrated by the five dead people in the implosive demise of OceanGate's Titanic-visiting submersible that so recently was in the worldwide headlines. Advising your passengers that the operation has dangers is no substitute for ensuring that you, as commander, make every effort to keep them safe.*





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# RTO roundup

by Rhonda Richings

It has been a busy few months for our RTO students and has been great to see a number of students graduating. Nick Arezio completed the second half of his Double Diploma program - Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Rating) while Sarsha Pincini and Jeffrey Huff both completed their Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Rating) courses.

Jacob Neumann, our first graduate on the new AVI50222 Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence) course, was followed closely by Alex Beck, who also completed his Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence). On completing his Diploma course Alex has now met the requirements to graduate with a Bachelor of Aviation from University of Southern Queensland. Congratulations Alex on your double achievement! Both Jacob and Alex are now well advanced in the final stages of their Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Rating) courses.

Since my last update Gabriel Goodman completed his PPL licence and Manual Propeller Pitch Control (MPPC) endorsement while Jaime Clarkson also completed his MPPC and is now nearing the completion of his Commercial Pilot Licence.

In the last few months we also welcomed several new students at PPL level who transferred to Redcliffe Aero Club to complete their training. Joel Rodney is now nearing completion of his Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence). Tom Chettiyath and Ethan Carlson, who joined our Double Diploma program, have already completed their MPPC and are currently working through their CPL shortfall phase of training.

Our final course for 2023 commenced on 13<sup>th</sup> October. We welcome Xavier Blunt, Jhye Fisk, Matthew Grahame and Isabella (Izzy) Martin to the Double Diploma program. They are now busily working towards their first solo milestone in the Recreational Pilot Licence phase of the course.

In June we attended the Aviation Careers Expo to showcase the training opportunities offered by the Club. Our presence was very well received by prospective students.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August I presented a session on flight training to the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) students at the Toowoomba campus followed by a further presentation on 12<sup>th</sup> September to the USQ Springfield campus aviation students. We look forward to welcoming some of these students in the years ahead when they commence their flight training.

On a personal note, I have enjoyed being able to support RAC through what has been a busy period of RTO compliance and course transition. I initially intended to stay for only 3-4 months to assist the Club through a challenging period but have now stayed on for over nine months. Although I have enjoyed working with the great team and students, I have decided that now is the time to step back, while continuing to support the team when required in a reduced capacity.

On 11<sup>th</sup> September we welcomed Bernadette Killick as our new RTO Coordinator. Bernadette brings a wealth of knowledge of ASQA/RTO compliance and importantly a genuine passion for aviation. I am sure that the Club will benefit from her knowledge, skills and student focus. You can read more about Bernadette in a separate article in this edition of AirChat. Please contact her if you have any questions about our wonderful RTO program at Redcliffe Aero Club.

Email: [bernadette@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au](mailto:bernadette@redcliffeaeroclub.com.au)



Rhonda and Andrew at Aviation Careers Expo



Mal and Craig congratulate Jeffrey Huff



# A Baltic flight

by Philip Arthur



Ever wondered how easy it is to fly GA in Europe? I have. After living in Germany for almost 10 years in my younger days, and having a German wife, we often go back there and this July, after a Covid induced hiatus, we returned to catch up with family and friends. I asked Hans, a friend who is involved in aviation over there, where would be a good place to have a “flying lesson” and he recommended a flight school at Barth, on the Baltic coast. So I sent off an email a few weeks prior to departure and booked a day of flying lessons with an instructor.

Barth is a small town on the German Baltic Sea coast just west of the island of Ruegen. There are lots of waterways and islands along that stretch of coastline making it very scenic. The OstSee flying school is based at the GA airport just outside of the town and its owner Mike was only too happy to set me up with a couple of instructional scenic flights ie me in the left seat and the instructor in the right seat as “safety pilot”.

D-EJTC was a 1975 C182 with upgraded glass cockpit avionics and an engine that burned mogas. For the first flight it was just the instructor and me so I could get to know him and vice versa. We initially flew northwest to the coast and followed it eastwards and around the coast of the island of Ruegen and then on to the Polish border, passing over Peenemuende where the V1 and V2 rockets were built towards the end of WW2.



We also passed over a four kilometre long beach resort comprising the “world’s longest building”. Prora, built on the command of Adolf Hitler between 1936 and 1939, consists of several identical connected six-storey buildings. Added up, they measure 4500 metres in length. On the return journey we flew past Stralsund, the mainland gateway to Ruegen.



We returned to Baarth for lunch and to pick up Hans and his daughter Carolin, who flew with us on the afternoon flight, this time to the west, past Rostock and Warnemunde then Heiligendamm, where a G8 meeting was held in 2007, and the seaside resort of Kuelungsborn.

It was perfect weather for a flight, with great visibility due to there having been a torrential downpour the day before. There was almost no other traffic, a bit surprising considering the location in central Europe. I learned that all German airports, regardless of size, have some sort of control tower. There are no uncontrolled airports like Redcliffe. At their smaller airports the tower gives advice and clearances to enter, backtrack, take-off, land etc, but does not have control in the sense that Australian air traffic controllers do. To reduce my workload so that I could enjoy the views I let the instructor manage the radio calls while I did all the flying.

It was a great day.



*Above: a ferry departs the port of Rostock for Denmark*



*Right: Stralsund*



## Victor Mike Victor gets a makeover



The Club's twin engine Vulcanair P68 is a bit of a workhorse. It's used for much of our multi engine training as well as charter and survey work. Having reached the end of the service life of its two engines, the Board decided it would be sent to AMS in Caloundra in September for a major overhaul. It underwent significant maintenance with the installation of two overhauled engines (costing \$80,000 each) and an avionics upgrade in the form of a new Garmin engine management system. The internals were stripped out totally and new wiring and plumbing was installed.

After two weeks in AMS's workshop it was returned to the flight line at YRED to continue our survey contract into next year.



*The new engines ready for installation (left) and installed (right)*



# Flying coach

by Luc George



In April 2008 I was working at a macadamia farm near Ballina and playing rugby at the Wollongbar Alstonville Rugby Club. One evening we had been urged to attend the training session on time as the former head coach of the U18 national team was going to give us a training session for one hour only. This guy was from Sydney, and had just moved to Lennox Head, nearby. I was running 15 minutes late so missed the start of the training session. Just as I arrived the “guest coach” called for four volunteers he could teach some skill drills - his speciality apparently. Initially no one moved. I had no shame at offering to be a sheep out of the shed, as I was by far the oldest player on the pitch. I could always blame any errors I made on my rough shoulders and my French mother tongue! I volunteered and so I met Scott Wisemantel for the first time.

By the end of the training session, a friendship was born. I found out that Scotty loved France very much and in 2004-2005 had coached Clermont-Ferrand near where I’d lived for years.

More in depth was an encounter a few months later, in June 2008, when we beat the Lennox Trojans with a last second winning try! We were top of the ladder, but not for long, as after that with their new coach Lennox won five championships in a row. As noted on the Trojans’ website:

*“2008 saw the arrival of key players and new coaching techniques under Scott Wisemantel, Lennox Head resident and former Skills Coach to the Wallabies”*

Do you think the guy has some abilities to coach from the field... YES, amazing and absolutely unusual.

That June evening, at the Lennox Hotel, he was the only one to stay on as all the Trojan players were upset by the defeat and animosity between the two teams was already legendary at the time. During the evening Scott paid me a compliment about my rugby technical skills and commitment on the field. At 48 years of age I was absolutely smashed to receive such a compliment after so many years of playing rugby!



From February 1976 until February 2015 I played over 500 senior rugby games, and the last one was with Bangalow reserves grade vs Murwillumbah. My final tackle was in the last two minutes of the game when Richie Arnold (yes) went to the deck and missed the last pass - it was a knock on in front of the last defender before the try line. And it happened to be the end of the line for my rugby.

I'd always wanted to fly since an early age but after completing my studies and military service I headed from Belgium to the French Alps where I continued to play rugby. I often thought over the years I would eventually learn to fly when I stopped playing rugby. So, in February 2015, with rugby over, this is when my aviation story could finally begin.

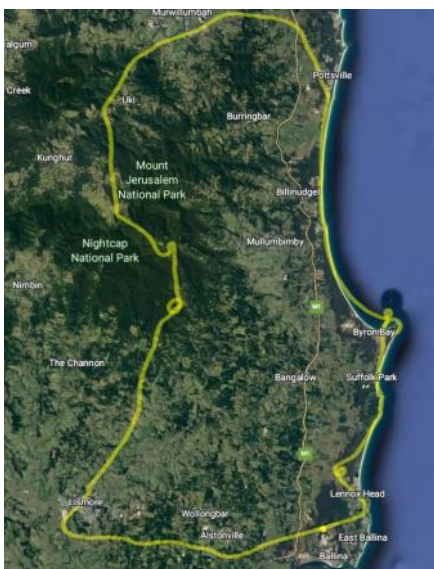
In March 2015 I had my introductory flight at Air Gold Coast and shortly after departed for the French Alps to work for the summer season at the family refuge, one of my many secrets to stay fit over all these years, but with the idea to come back and start seriously on my PPL in Oz Land.

I came back in November 2015 and did my first solo with Air Gold Coast in February 2016. Returning to France, I received my full PPL/A in June 2017 in Pau, in the Pyrenees in the south west of France.

In the meantime, I'd stayed in close contact with Scott. After being the assistant coach for the Waratahs for two years, he became the assistant in Lyon (one year) and Montpellier (two years). On my regular visits to France I used to meet up with him from time to time for a chat over a couple beers. We developed a great friendship, mostly talking about rugby of course. We have a bit of a similar understanding of the game. SLW is for sure the most influential expert to get the coaching job done, for many reasons. Like how he helped the Brits reach the Rugby World Cup 2019 grand final.

Occasionally our conversations drifted into aviation, so Scott was aware of my interest in flying and he was interested in going flying so it was going to happen... but when?

*Right: Wollongbar and Alstonville, with Ballina in the background*



As soon as I had my PPL, in June 2017, I wanted to hire a Cessna and fly from Pau to Montpellier in order to take him for a flight, but he and his family were heading back to Oz Land.

In November 2019 we had an opportunity in Murwillumbah when I was a member there, but the flight didn't happen for various reasons.

Later, after I bought WKE and Scott was appointed the Wallabies assistant coach, Australia played France in July 2021 at Suncorp Stadium. It was a Saturday night, and we were supposed to go flying the next day, but the 'Covid Bubble' didn't allow us to do so. That was a shame, as the French manager, Raphael Ibanez, who I knew and who was quite a good friend of SLW, was supposed to join us on our scenic Sunday morning tour in WKE.

One year later the same happened on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2022 when England coached by Eddie Jones hit Lang Park. Different reason this time, not a Covid issue anymore, but Scott got overruled by his old boss. Same outcome - no flight on Sunday morning.

Finally, after more than five years, in December 2022, I decided to fly WKE to Ballina in order to take him for a scenic flight over Lennox Head, Byron Bay, Mount Warning and back to YBNA.

The morning was a bit gusty and while having breakfast in Newmarket, I had a text from Scott asking me whether it was going to be too turbulent.

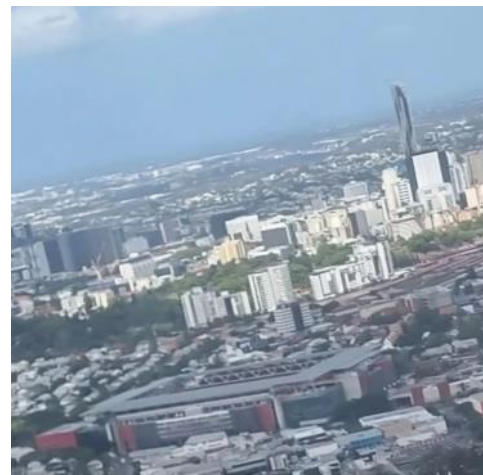
I understood his concern and told my man that because I had to fly from Caboolture to Ballina in order to pick him up, I'd assess the flight conditions on the way. If it was not going to be perfect, I would simply cancel our flight and notify him.

While approaching the Gold Coast, he wanted to know if I was going to make it. I sent a quick picture to confirm the weather was ok (see photo on previous page).

Then the magic happened. I landed at Ballina and Scott and his daughter climbed aboard. Even though it was not a CAVOK day, the flight was perfect - nice and smooth, as promised. I'll let you judge by the huge smiles on our faces to decide how that adventure finally went for us. We covered some amazing country including the Scenic Rim and Mount Warning and the coast from Pottsville to Ballina via Brunswick Heads and Cape Byron. It was great. I'd finally managed to "fly coach".



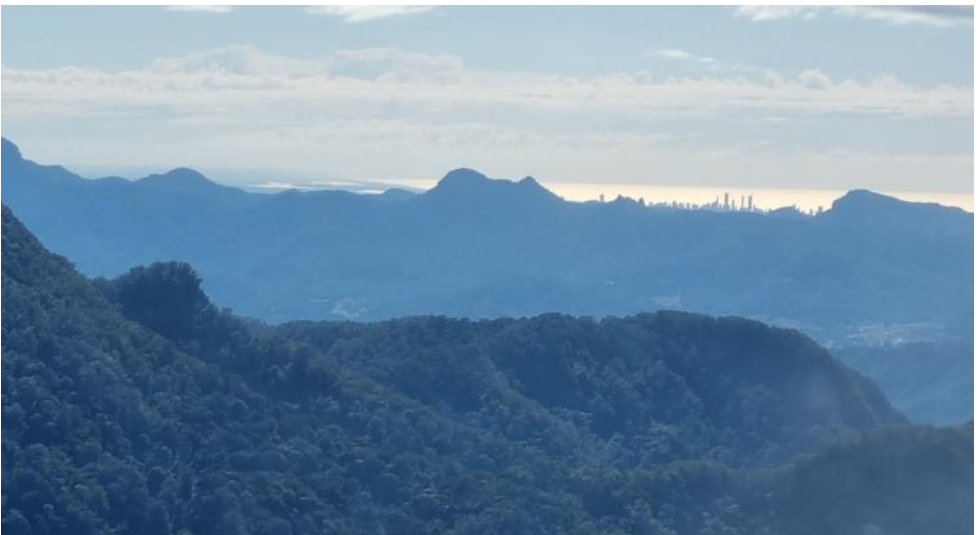
*Passing Suncorp Stadium on my return trip*





*Above: Brunswick Heads*

*Below: Gold Coast Hinterland from Mount Warning*



# Stanthorpe in the sun

by Jaclyn Hope



*The annual Stanthorpe winery flyaway has been more of a “driveaway” in recent years due to poor weather, be it rain or storms or wind that has kept members on the ground rather than in the air. Thankfully 2023 was an exception (apart from the westerlies).*

This year the annual Stanthorpe flyaway was on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> August, aligning perfectly with the arrival of the “Ekka westerlies” that made for a slow flight out west against a head wind of 15 knots (ever so slightly slower for FRF compared to BHN, both who came in behind MSF followed by RAQ).

On arrival into the [Stanthorpe Airport](#) (for those who haven’t been, it is located at Applethorpe, 6km north-east of the township, and has a sealed runway), we were this year again greeted by Alan from [Granite Highlands Maxi Tours](#). Alan has been our driver for at least the last four consecutive years (possibly longer!). Anything (or anyone) that Alan doesn’t know about Stanthorpe, isn’t worth knowing!

Our first stop was at [Robert Channon Wines](#). It was a windy 12 degrees and the group was romanticising about drinking red wine in front of a fire place, only to be taken to the back shed and starting our wine tasting with a cold “breakfast champagne”. Aside from this, our host, Ashley Smith, who is the cellar door manager and assistant wine maker, was excellent. He is extremely knowledgeable and very entertaining.





Our next stop was at [Casley Mt Hutton Winery](#) (which did have a fireplace!) - a lovely winery, with a beautiful cellar door with some quite good white wines.

For lunch, we headed to the [Blue Pot Pantry and Cafe](#) - a quaint venue set in a converted old packing shed with homemade style meals, sourced from local produce. Surrounding the café are old, unrestored cars...one man's trash is another man's treasure...

After lunch, we set off to [Jester Hill Wines](#), a beautiful winery with well-manicured gardens and a quirky owner, Michael Bourke. The end of the wine tasting was complimented by Michael

donning a jester hat, reciting a poem and playing the flute (I always wondered during primary school if anyone ever made use of the flute lessons that were forced on us ...). I don't think the wine from here will ever appear on James Halliday's Top 100 Wine List, but even so this winery is well worth a visit!

The final winery we visited was [Art of Krupinski](#), which was my personal favourite! The cellar door only opened in November 2022 and is run by Artur and Natalia Krupinski, a young husband and wife team with Polish heritage, which is what influences the hospitality and atmosphere. It would be very easy to spend an entire afternoon there.



For dinner, we ate at the [Stanthorpe RSL](#). The food and service were excellent, further elevated by the courtesy bus and its driver who picked us up, waited on our table, and dropped us home. You don't get that kind of hospitality in the city!

The following morning, we ate breakfast at [Jamworks](#), a popular local café and store that sells amazing condiments that are mostly made on site. From there, Alan took us for a drive up to [Mt Marlay Lookout](#). It was a beautiful, clear (and thankfully, much warmer) day which allowed us a full, panoramic view over Stanthorpe.

Because we hadn't yet had enough to eat (and drink!) for the weekend, we next headed to [Stanthorpe Cheese \(also known as Jersey Girls\)](#). The true foodies amongst us indulged in the cheese tasting plate - the Brass Monkey Blue was the standout for me.





Our final stop was the [Granite Belt Christmas Farm](#) - a place that I think would even convert the Grinch into loving Christmas. It's seriously awesome and how I would imagine the North Pole to be at Christmas time (without the snow). The Granite Belt Christmas Farm has everything you associate with Christmas - from 20 acres of real Christmas trees to Santa's animals (that you can feed!), a store filled with thousands of Christmas decorations and a café that serves the best hot chocolate you could possibly imagine. It's truly incredible.

With our bellies full of good food and (mostly) good wine, and some early Christmas spirit, we headed back to the Stanthorpe Airport and made our respective ways home in perfect flying conditions.



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