

On-the-Step

Issue 37
November 2013

Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Great meetings, wins & concerns

The SPAA has been pretty busy since our last issue of On-the-Step. Of course the SplashDown2013 conference was the big news and associated with that, the Rathmines Catalina Festival. We have also had a small win against the trend in the Queensland government's agreement to remove the need for recreational seaplanes to have permits to operate in the Moreton Bay.

We will be pressing on to ensure that access to waterways is maintained and that unjustifiable restrictions are removed. Every effort is made to avoid unnecessary expenses when undertaking negotiations with various Government bodies however there are costs associated with meeting the various bodies. This is one of the areas where your donations to the SPAA are being put to good use. Please help us to continue this work by making a habit of regular donations to the SPAA. Possibly each new year (or new financial year) visit our website and click the "Donation" button.

- \$ -

When one of the worlds most experienced and skilled Searey amphibian pilots gets caught out by wake turbulence, it's time to sit up and take notice.

It is certainly one of the attractions of recreational seaplane flying to fly in company with one or two other seaplanes, find a lovely patch of water to put down, and have a swim, picnic, coffee, or just

stand around and talk. Flying in company leads to the temptation to alight in company and it is here that one needs to be very aware of safe separation and wake turbulence. Avoid alighting directly behind the preceding aircraft. If possible keep one or two wingspans to the side of the preceding aircrafts track, and on the upwind side if there is a cross wind component. Keep a mental picture of the possible wake of the preceding aircraft and keep well clear of it.

Its not a bad idea to fly through the wake of a similar sized aircraft at a safe altitude to get a feeling for how violent the impact of the wake can be in a light aircraft like most of us fly.

- \$ -

SPAA membership continues to grow and is now very close to 400. Philip Dartnell presented a breakdown of our membership as at October 2013 and we have reproduced his talk in this issue. It makes some interesting reading. I must admit that I had no idea that we had so many seaplane pilots in this country.

- \$ -

We continue Dan Nicken's story of his adopting a sad little amphibian who had tragically lost its builder/pilot and sat gathering dust your many lonely years. This is the second part of Dan's story of "Vee-Chee" which is just a lovely read.

- \$ -

Recently we have had reports of several wheels-up landings by amphibians.



If you had to choose between wheels-up landing on land, or wheels-down landing on water, the wheels-up option is far more preferable as it usually only results minor damage and huge embarrassment.

However one has to wonder if these wheels up landings are an indication of something that could be far more dangerous. Are we doing our pre-landing checks properly? If this is the issue, then it could only be a matter of time before it could be a wheels-down landing on water and that can have far more serious consequences including extensive damage and serious injury. I for one have caught myself on base having not set the wheels to the correct position and I know that I am not on my own.

Remember, and practice, those lessons that were drummed into you when you were learning, do your checks on late down-wind, again on base, and again on final. Vocalize your checks and touch the item that you check as you confirm it. Do it every time until it becomes as automatic as throttling back.

- \$ -

It seems all too soon, but Christmas is almost upon us again. May you all have a great Christmas and much happy flying in 2014.

- \$ -

Fly Safe & Wheels Up for Water



It was the first seaplane pilots association conference that we have held and as such we were tentative in estimating the enthusiasm our members would have for it. The organising committee decided early in the process that anything more than 20 participants would be a success. We received 72 registrations!!



SplashDown2013 was a success beyond our expectations. Despite some concerns about the weather, we had 55-60 attendees each day and almost 90 for the evening event.

Held on 7th & 8th November to precede the Rathmines Catalina Festival on the Saturday, the conference had presentations on a wide variety of topics of interest to seaplane pilots including airmanship, safety, waterways, maintenance, water operations and some just plain inspirational stuff.



We cannot praise highly enough the work of David Geers and his organising committee Donna Handley, Malcolm Burns, Adam Holt, Philip Dartnell and Rohan Walter. To put such a great conference together without the experience of any precedence is a mammoth effort and it was achieved with the committee working in a most cooperative manner. Donna's efforts in putting together fabulous evening functions and partners event was super human and the event would have not been anything like as successful without her efforts. It must also be said that none of the conference would have become a reality without the drive and stewardship of David. We are very much indebted to him.

Also a very big thank you to all the presenters who gave most interesting presentations on a wide range of subjects covering subjects of prime interest to SPAA in achieving its stated goals.

But the work of the organisers and presenters all comes to naught without participants, and we extend a sincere thanks to all the members who attended the conference. Not only were the numbers way beyond what had originally been anticipated but the interest and participation of the

audience in the presentations really made the event a success. Every presentation drew enthusiastic questioning and discussion, and it is that participant involvement that is the true measure of the conference's success.

An overview of the program was;

- SPAA Membership Statistics (Philip Dartnell)
- Marine parks and waterways access (Kevin Bowe, and David Geers)
- Australian aviators concepts of airmanship (Kirstie Carrick) University of Newcastle
- Maintenance and servicing by (Stephen Dines) Technology intranet site, iPad applications (David Geers)
- Spot GPS Tracking (Brian Somerville) from GPSOZ.
- Advanced water operations, Tips and handy advice (Adam Holt, Kevin Bowe, Rohan Whittington.)
- OzRunways (Neil Weste)
- Fuel for Thought (Rohan Walter)
- 35,000 Mile Pacific Odyssey (John Proctor, USA)
- Dinner Talk with Matt Hall
- Instructors Open Forum (Bill Lane, Kevin Bowe, Adam Holt, Rohan Whittington).
- Westpac egress training
- Marine Rescue presentation (Roger Evans)

We were particularly honoured to have John Proctor and his partner Barb come out from Texas to support



our conference. John gave a wonderful presentation giving a glimpse of his amazing flight around the Pacific in a beautiful Albatross that he restored. He also enthralled members who chatted with him about his many exploits around the world. John

donated a large number of DVDs of his Pacific trip. They make great and inspirational viewing and are available for \$30 by contacting Ben Hunter or Keith Clark.

Unfortunately an anticipated gusty Southerly change limited the number of arrivals by seaplanes from an anticipated 18 to 8 but that did little to dampen the enthusiasm shown at the event.



SPAA- A MEMBERSHIP OVERVIEW

In order for the SPAA to more effectively negotiate with various Government departments and other bodies it needs to be able to show that it represents the majority of seaplane owners, operators and pilots in Australia and that they represent a significant group. Towards this end we have been actively seeking to grow the SPAA. Some excellent work by members including the freeing up of membership application, initiated by Richard Holgate, and the publicity, largely led by Ross Vining's excellent work on "On-the-Step" has seen our membership rise from less than 50 to 396 at last count.

Philip Dartnell, our Membership Coordinator, reported to the audience at the SplashDown what the make-up of our current membership is. Below is a breakdown of his presentation.

As at 6-Nov-13 we have 391 (now 397) confirmed members (i.e. they've completed the membership form, are contactable and should be receiving newsletters).

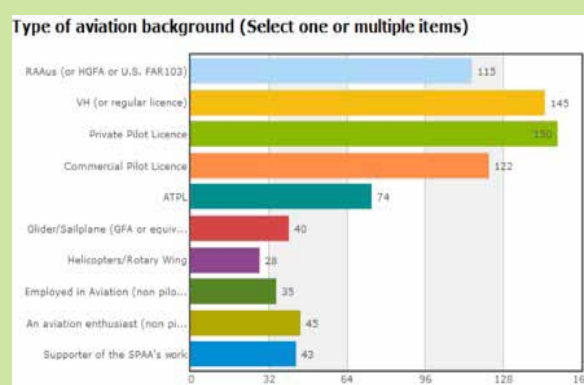
Although this is an Australian based association, we are pleased to see that we have attracted members from all over the world. 340 members are Australian based but we also have members from the USA (23), New Zealand (5), Switzerland (5), Canada (4), Brazil (2), Finland (2), Mexico (2), Sth Africa (2), and single members from India, Russia, China, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Cambodia, Fiji, Germany, Malaysia, Poland and Uruguay.

The state split is;

NSW	144	SA	26
TAS	12	ACT	2
QLD	74	VIC	54
WA	18	NT	5

The SPAA is open to everyone, seaplane enthusiasts as well as pilots and owners but the overwhelming majority are pilots (320, 190 of which are seaplane pilots).

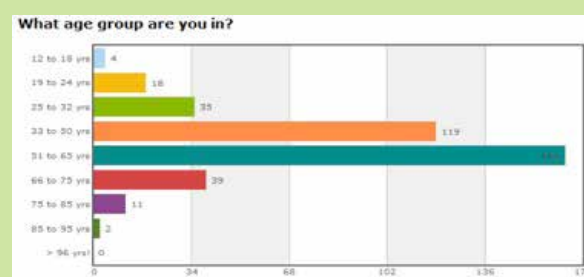
The figure below shows the aviation backgrounds of the members.



And as for the aircraft in the SPAA membership, we have quite a variety.

Aviat Husky	- 1	C172	- 2	C180	- 1
C182	- 5	C185	- 2	C206	- 3
C208	- 6	C305F	- 1	DHC2	- 4
Foxbat	- 2	AG164 AgCat	- 1	Gr Albatross	- 1
Icon A5	- 3	LA200	- 10	LA250	- 4
Maule	- 2	PA 18	- 3	RC3 Seabee	- 3
Seawind	- 3	Seamax	- 4	Searey	-27
Sea star	- 1	Super Petrel	- 9	Wilga	- 1
Mallard G73	- 1				

One thing that we might need to work on though, is the age spread, of the pilots that is. It is probably not surprising that the age group most strongly represented in the SPAA is the 51 to 65 year olds, but one of the focus's of the SPAA in the coming years must be to make sure the distribution curve moves down



.... and not by reducing the number of more senior members.



Almost by definition amphibians have retractable undercarriages, however there are some significant differences from the average land-only retractables. Getting the undercarriage position wrong in an amphibian can have fatal results if you are alighting on water. On the up side, amphibians generally have their propellers placed high relative to the airframe so that if you land on solid earth with your gear up, the result is likely to be minor damage to the fuselage underside and a very damaged ego. No prop or engine damage.

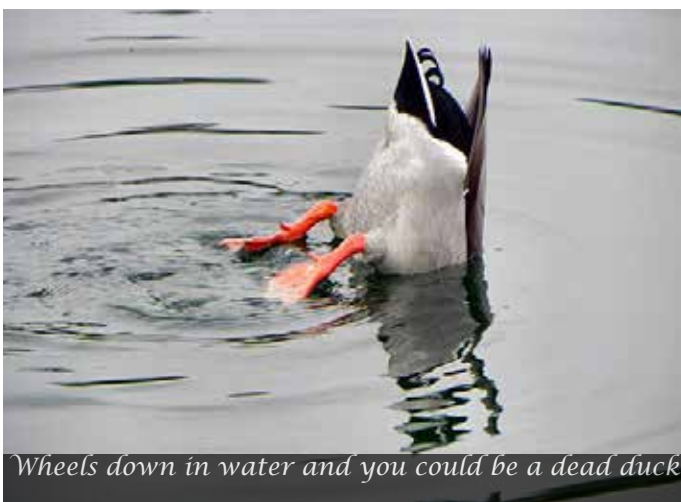
There has been several incidents of amphibians doing wheels up landings in recent months and, while no serious damage has resulted to aircraft or persons, they ring warning bells of what could have a very serious ending.

If we are honest, many of us have probably had a time when we discovered late in a circuit, that our undercarriage was

in the wrong position. Barring a mechanical failure, such an event boils down to poor pre-landing checks. It's all too easy to slip into missing checks, or doing them without thinking about what you are checking.

Talk to an instructor, but the advice I received was to do checks on late down-wing, base, and final. At each check, vocalise your checks, aloud. Touch and visually confirm each check. If you are able to sight your undercarriage, confirm its actual position, at a minimum touch and confirm the position of your selector and the state of your position indicators.

How do we give ourselves the best chance of doing our checks correctly? How about doing circuit practice, not just one or two but five to ten at a time making sure that you do the full vocalised checks each time on the down-wind, base and final.



Wheels down in water and you could be a dead duck



Wheels up on land, hurts a bit and embarrassing



*If you have to have your gear in the wrong position make sure its wheels up.
Get the gear up as soon as you take off, eg 200ft check flaps up, fuel pump off, wheels up and locked*

100 YEARS OF WATER FLYING

No this is not a repeat from last issue.
This is an Australian Celebration!

Adapted from an article by Tom Lockley from the Airmail Centenary Commemoration Group of the Aviation Historical

In the last edition of On-the-Step we told of the 100 year Anniversary of the first seaplane flight on Lake Como. On 5th October 1913 Lake Como hosted one of the first seaplane contests in the world, less than 3 years after the first ever seaplane flight by Henri Fabre. Just a few months after the Lake Como contest, on 8 May 1914, Australia saw its first seaplane flight.

As well as being a showman and conducting the first air mail flight in Australia, Maurice Guillaux also was the first person in Australia to fly a seaplane. Lebbeus Hordern, a member of the wealthy family which owned the Sydney department store Anthony Horderns, imported a Maurice Farman floatplane in 1914.

The Maurice Farman Seaplane

The Maurice Farman Seaplane was a very successful pre-World-War I aircraft. It was in service in 1913: Winston Churchill was flown over the British fleet by a young Australian, Lieutenant Arthur Longmore: he later became an RAF Air Chief Marshall. A Greek Farman seaplane was the first to be used in war when a Farman seaplane attacked Turkish warships with grenades, and carried out reconnaissance for the Greek Fleet during the Balkan War.

A Farman was imported to Australia by Lebbeus Hordern, a member of the wealthy family which owned the Sydney department store Anthony Horderns.

This was the first floatplane in Australia. The aircraft had a 70 horse-power Renault engine, giving a maximum speed of 60 miles-per-hour. Its wingspan was about 57 feet, 17.3 metres, and it was about 35 feet, 10.6 metres long, and weighed about 1680 pounds, 760 Kilograms. It could carry 'two seventeen-stone passengers' or three passengers of lesser weight!

Guillaux and the first seaplane flight

Lebbeus Hordern enlisted the services of the visiting French aviator Maurice Guillaux and his team. On Monday 4 May 1914 they began to set up the machine. Maurice Guillaux flew it for the first time on May 8 1914.

In the words of the Herald reporter, *Mechanics moved about in an orderly sort of disorder. Wire stays were tightened, ash props were tested, nuts were screwed up or slackened as required, levels were taken, the great polished propeller was tried.*

It was a general tuning up of the white-winged flying machine. And over all, Guillaux kept a hawk-like supervision. No detail was too small for his personal attention. At last all was ready. Right to a

millimetre' was Guillaux's comment after he had subjected all to a minute scrutiny. It was a trial flight, of course. Nothing could be left to chance. Up into the pilot's seat he mounted, the hydro-aeroplane having been wheeled down to the water's edge by many willing hands. Petrol was poured into the



tank, and a mechanic, who looked as if he came well up to the 17 stone standard, climbed into the passenger's seat behind Guillaux, a dapper figure in a tweed suit, who made no sartorial preparation for the flight beyond casting aside his Homburg hat.

The mechanic set the propeller whirring at top speed. So strong was the air-current which its revolutions set up, that a shower of sand and hats were blown into the shed behind, small children were thrown to the ground, and the crowd holding the 'tail' were almost forced to let go their hold.' Guillaux sat himself firmly in his seat, gave the order for release, and immediately afterwards the 'plane was skimming along the waters of Double Bay at breathless speed. For a few hundred yards it rushed along, spurning the water, in a direct line for Clarke Island.

'There she goes!' shouted the spectators, as they saw the far-spreading wings lifted slowly into the air. By degrees it rose, like a great bird stretching its pinions for height, and up it soared, its white wings showing clearly against the dark green foliage which clothes the slopes of the opposite shore. Away over towards Mosman it glided, as easily as if it were a bird, and then, with a wide sweep towards the right, it sailed in the direction of Manly. It seemed to soar right over one of the Manly boats, which sounded its siren in salutation. For a few minutes it was lost to view, and then it re-appeared over Point Piper. Right over the heads of the watchers at Double Bay it flew citywards, and after a circular movement, came back to the starting point.

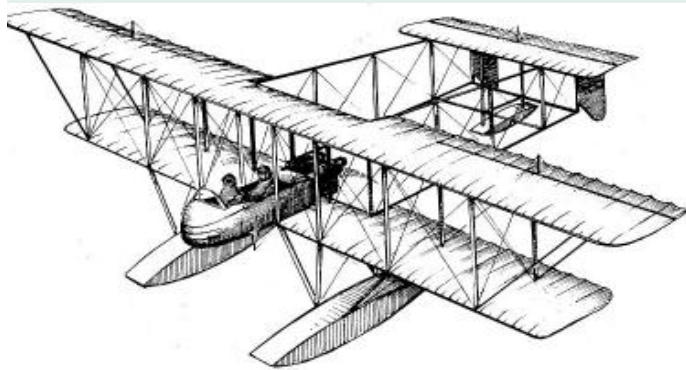
Landing on the water some distance out, it made its way to the

point of departure, covering the intervening distance at the speed of an express train.

Later flights

The second passenger was Lebbeus Hordern himself. He came back enraptured. 'Flying is the sport for me after this' he said. The next passenger was the French Consul, M. Chayet.

The following Monday Guillaux made twelve flights, On one of these the passenger was Miss Louise Carbasse, then a 19 year-old Australian actress. After the war, she became a wellknown Hollywood actress under the name of Louise Lovely.



Three days later, in a flight above the harbor, he travelled at over 100 miles an hour, thanks to strong tailwinds.

On 22 May Guillaux and Lebbeus Hordern announced their intention to fly the seaplane from Sydney to Melbourne. They hoped to complete the journey with only two intermediate stops. At the same time Guillaux announced his intention to remain permanently in Australia, making his home in Sydney. He had made arrangements to buy another seaplane, a 'fast, passenger carrying monoplane', and an improved type of biplane; these machines would arrive in Australia in about three months.

During June Guillaux was largely occupied with giving his performances, and then in July by his mail flight from Melbourne to Sydney, July 16-18, 1914.

Outbreak of war

Only a fortnight after the epic mail flight, war broke out; on 5 August the Herald reported Guillaux' eagerness to return to France. These plans were delayed by a bad crash in his Bleriot, which caused serious injury, and eventually he did sail for Europe on HMAT Orvieto on October 22. He accompanied the Headquarters staff of the First Australian Division, listed as 'Aviator', and travelled with an unnamed attendant. He was killed on 21 May 1917, while testing a new aircraft.

At the outbreak of war Hordern presented the M.F. seaplane to the Australian Government and the aircraft was taken on strength at Point Cook as C.F.S.7, in other words the seventh air craft, and the first seaplane, of what eventually became the RAAF.

Almost immediately it was sent, with a BE2 landplane, to New Guinea on HMAS Una to take part in the capture of German possessions in New Guinea, but it was not used in these operations. However, this was the first overseas military deployment of an Australian combat aircraft and indeed the first such World War I deployment in the British Commonwealth.

The aircraft was returned to Point Cook in 1915, but was reconstructed as a landplane, and re-equipped with Australian licence-built Renault engine, constructed by Tarrant Motors in Melbourne. It was still in use in 1917, but its subsequent fate is unknown.

Hordern's later seaplanes

After the war, Lebbeus Hordern continued his interest in marine-type aircraft. He imported a Felixstowe F.3 twin-engined flying-boat (G-EAOT of 1920), two Curtiss Seagull flying-boats (GAUCU, MF419/29, and G-AUCV, MF419/28 of 1921), and a Short Shrimp seaplane (G-AUPZ of 1922, which Captain Frank Hurley used for his New Guinea film Pearls and Savages). In 1924 Hordern ordered the specially built Short S.1 Stellite (later Cockle) miniature flying-boat, but this aircraft developed design problems and was not delivered. The decision to build the Australian seaplane carrier HMAS Albatross, announced in 1925, may well have been influenced by the publicity gained by Hordern's seaplanes.

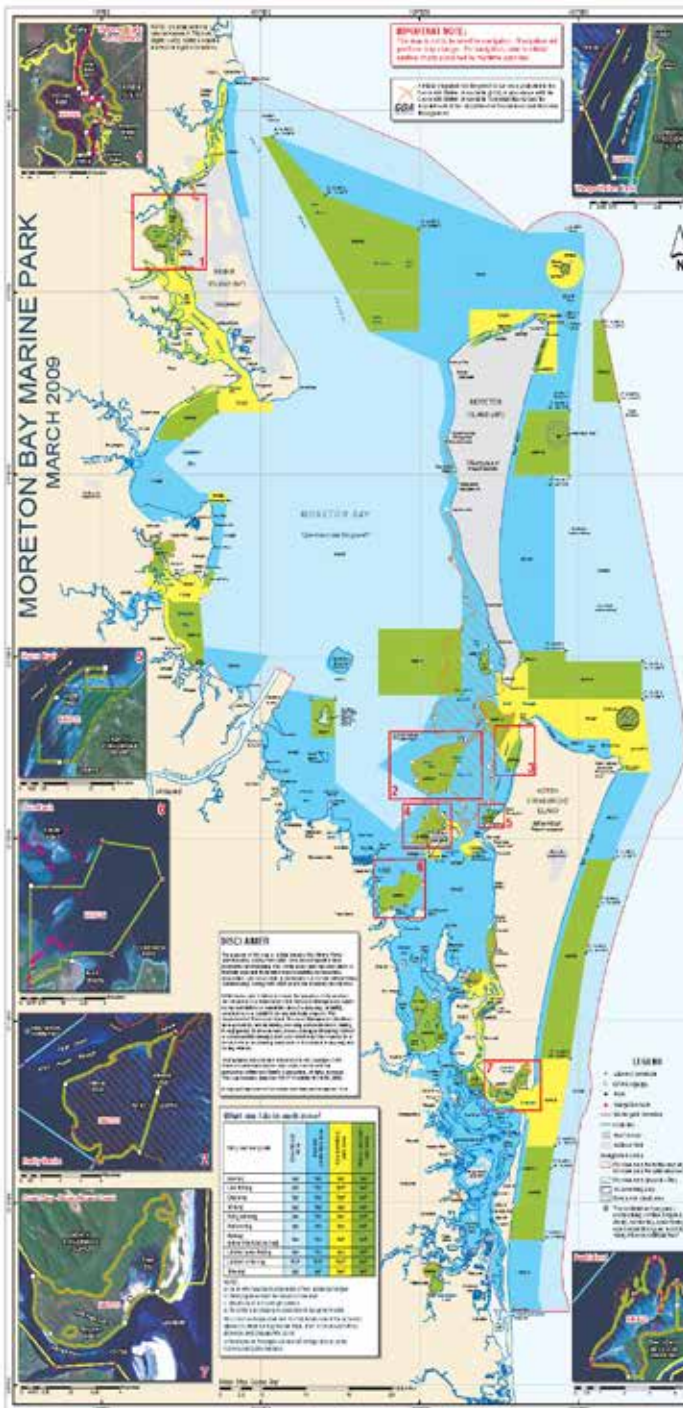
100 YEAR CELEBRATION

The Seaplane Pilots Association Australia will be celebrating the 100 year anniversary of Australia's first seaplane flight. Expect something big! Hopefully on Sydney Harbour!

Keep 8 - 11 May 2014 Free and Plan to be in Sydney.

MORETON BAY ACCESS SIMPLIFIED

Requirement for Permits to be Dropped



One of the principle functions of the SPAA is to make representations to Government bodies to ensure maximum reasonable access to Australia's waterways. The requirement of permits for any seaplane pilot to operate in the Moreton Bay Marine Park has been an unjustifiably and unfair burden on seaplane pilots, particularly when it might be for just one operation. Many pages of paper work, weeks of waiting and very costly increases in insurance make getting a permit so daunting that there was a real danger that pilots may simply ignore the requirement and who knows what flow on effects that could have.

Kevin Bowe, SPAA's National Parks and Waterways Officer, and David Geers, Moreton Bay/Stradbroke Islands Area Representative, have spent considerable effort consulting with Queensland's Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing over simplifying this process. The recently installed Queensland State Government has listed as one of its goals, to reduce the amount of "red tape" when dealing with Government Departments. We are most pleased to report that The Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sports and Racing and his Department saw the inconsistency between this stated goal and the requirement for permits and in a meeting held with Kevin, David and myself he announced that his Department would remove the requirement for permits. The representative from the Department undertook to expedite these changes, and we will let everyone know as soon as they are gazetted (??).

Even with these changes coming, please remember that if you are planning a trip that may take you through any National Park, Marine Parks etc, contact Kevin Bowe to find out what restrictions and procedures you may need to be aware of. He may also refer you to the relevant Area Representatives.

Please use this service and comply with any guidelines / directives given, as failure to do so may result in a backlash from a department banning our operation in certain areas or making operations in the area overly burdensome .

On top of all that ALWAYS FLY NEIGHBORLY!

NEW LIFE FOR VEE-CHEE



Part 2 of an adaption of a story by Dan Nickens

Having made the decision to sell VH-CHI was a relief. Instead of spending a week working to change out her clunky hydraulic gear and perform other up-grades, there was time for more flying.

Rob was concerned about my plan. I had to allay his fears about the loss of my Aussie SeaRey affecting our long term plans: circumnavigation of the Australian continent in 2014. I allayed those concerns by telling him I would ship old N220WT over for our planned expedition. I explained I would feel much more comfortable with a trusty ship than in-flight testing of a hard-knock new one.

The one part of my plan that got an enthusiastic endorsement from Rob was the flying. He is a flyer. We promptly launched to take advantage of the calm morning air.

We flew northwest through the hills towards Rob's hometown of Mudgee. From the aerodrome this took us around an outback version of Stonehenge.



In one of the fields, or "paddocks" as they're called, the owner had erected large slabs of country rock in a great circle. The tracks of cattle transitioning through the circle of stone gave it an emphasis that the English version doesn't have.

Just past the Ozzie Stonehenge was "Witch's Hat." The hat is a sharp spike of rock mounded into a hill. It is like a giant cone marking a race circuit for SeaReys. "Fly low, fly slow and turn right" would be a good slogan for cruising the Hat.

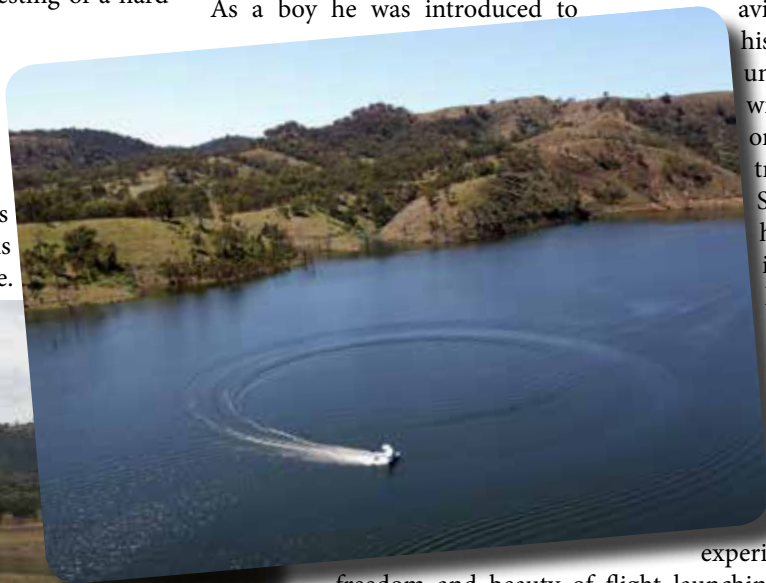
With Rob in the lead I got a tour of his hometown territory. It

is a small town, typical of the Aussie settlements on the interior fringe of the Outback. To visit these places is like traveling in a time machine back to a country town in the U.S.A. circa 1950. The streets and houses are clean and neat. Their inhabitants are courteous in the extreme.

Rob is a prime example. He grew up with a deep sense of graciousness towards his fellow men. He raised a beautiful family in the little town, continuing the tradition of hospitality and good will towards others.

As a boy he was introduced to

aviation by his father and uncle, flying with them on business trips to Sydney. By his own initiative he took up hang gliding,



experiencing the freedom and beauty of flight launching from the surrounding hills.

He pointed out one of the cliffs over the radio. "That's where I flew with a hawk, mate. I picked up a thermal and we rode it together. He flew my wingtip, close enough so that I could see his dark, piercing eyes. We circled in formation. It was amazing."

Rob took over the family's business at a time of rapid change. The country stores were being replaced by chain stores. He guided the company successfully through the transition before leaving for the big city of Sydney.

He was successful in Sydney too, but it came at a cost. He was becoming immersed in a world of just business.

It was during that time Rob was moved by the words of another flyer and philosopher, Richard Bach. Those words changed his life. He extricated himself from business entanglements to pursue his real passion: aviation.

And he was rewarded by finding just the perfect airplane. He went to Sun-N-Fun and fell in love with the newly introduced SeaRey. In short order he negotiated rights to import it to Australia. He made a business from his love of aviation.

In 1996 Rob completed the construction of his first SeaRey. It was far from a stock airplane. Rob is a consummate craftsman. To meet Australian requirements, it was substantially upgraded with aviation hardware. It was a beautiful plane.

For its first water landing he took it to Sydney harbour (actually Georges River??). He was accompanied by a highly experienced seaplane instructor. As Rob's SeaRey slid gracefully onto the water, the hull suddenly came apart. It sank quickly. Rob and the instructor were rescued and taken to the hospital.

To the credit of the SeaRey company, Kerry quickly arranged a trip to Australia to investigate the accident. Looking at the hull it was obvious that there was a problem with the fiberglass.

Rob is no quitter. Kerry sent him a new hull and the airplane was rebuilt. Rob went on to import many more. Out of all the seaplanes in Australia, most are SeaReys Rob brought in.

Please pause to consider the rippling of possibilities and improbabilities that sprung from words written in a book to changing a life's direction a world away. Then consider that the direction pointed towards a small amphibious urban escape vehicle, a SeaRey, whose universe of appeal had attracted me to end up flying on Rob's wing over the Australian outback. Amazing.

The morning over Mudgee was well-spent flying with Rob around his old home place. By midmorning, however, it was evident that a forecast front was rapidly moving in. We retreated back to Rylstone to put the two SeaReys out of the wind's way.

With wind and rain rattling the hangar, I spent some time with VH-CHI. I removed the clunky emergency gear extension system. "No worries, Rob. If the gear gets stuck I'll just land on your soft grass." The simplified system was tested with no leaks to be found.

The stormy weather passed in time for a late flight test. Rob and I launched for Lake Windamere.

The water was calm after the storm. In the long shadows of the surrounding hills we splashed again and again. Then we took a break to smoothly cruise upon the mirrored surface of the lake. The last golden gasp of the sun was firing up a few remaining clouds. We rolled back onto the softly welcoming grass of the aerodrome under their waning glow.

Putting VH-CHI back into the hangar I saw my smile reflected in curve of her canopy. I was reminded that it was the first she had seen in a long, long time. I think on this one day some of her sadness had been washed away.

You know it's going to be a different kind of day when you wake to find kangaroo romping around the airport. It could easily have been a dream. The blurry pictures captured by my camera offered little proof of the fuzzy reality of an Ozzie dawn.



The camera also failed to record the strange and varied calls of exotic birds going to work. Swooping down and around the Roo were gray, pink and white flashes of feathers. "Gallahs," Rob said as he made his coffee.

"Beautiful," I whispered.

"Stupid," he answered.

"Huh?"

"Yeah, mate. They're pretty, but they're pretty stupid. If you're called a 'flaming galah' in Oz, it's not a good thing."

I just stared. They didn't seem to be doing anything stupid, other than fluttering around the kangaroos and airport.

"You just wait and watch, mate. Soon they'll be up and alighting on the power lines. They'll come in hot, grab the wire, and do a loop spinning round and round the wire. Finally they'll hang there, upside down and looking dumb. When they get their bearings they'll flap their wing and squawk trying to get back upright. It's comical."

I thought about that for a good minute or more. "Now hold on, Rob. Are you sure they're stupid? Maybe they're just having some fun."

Rob's coffee cup stopped in mid-rise and he just stared at me in disbelief. I got no answer.

"Well, it sounds like fun to me," I said as I turned back to watch the red dawn breaking over the stupid or fun spectacle.

"Now there's a smart bird," Rob said, pointing to a starkly contrasting black and white bird.

"A magpie?"

"That's a brilliant bird, mate."

"It's just sitting there watching us."

"Yep. They'll do that. They make good pets."

"A pet?"

"When I was a boy I had one. It fell out of its nest. I took it home and fed it. We became best friends. Jacko followed me everywhere. He learned to knock on the window pane when he wanted to come in. One smart bird, he was."

"What happened to Jacko?"

"When Jacko got older, he found a mate and flew away." Rob looked away. "It was hard to let him go. It was the right thing to do, though."

I agreed. "The right thing is not always the easy thing, mate."

Rob's day was swamped with preparations for the big food fest and fly in. Instead of tending to business, however, he loaded his

son Toby into his plane, I cranked up VH-CHI, and we headed off for Lake Windamere.

In the early morning calm, the water was a beautiful deep blue. Lake Windamere winds through the old Cudgegon River valley between surrounding tan hills sprinkled with widely spaced dark green trees. The dam forming the lake submerged some of the trees. They now stand like dead grey sentinels along its edges. No worries for SeaReys, though. The flooded valley provides a deep, open playground for little seaplanes.

There were glassy patches scattered around the lake. In one cove the water was so slick that I began a great spinning circle that got ever smaller. As the noose of SeaRey waves tightened I pulled the throttle to idle and settled into my chop. Rob, flying overhead, radioed, "Well, mate, Toby has christened that bit of water. It's now called Dan's Donut Cove."

Donut Cove? I didn't argue, but I imagine it was much more like the spirals on a lollypop. (Aussie's simply call them "lollys".)

Back in the air I spotted a pretty little peninsula. I splashed down for a closer look. The grassy shore was gradually sloping to the water. It looked like a fine place to come ashore. Still wary of VH-CHI's hydraulic gear, I made sure it was firmly locked before heading inland.

A closer look showed a narrow beach composed of pebbles and small cobbles. There was a band of brown that had the consistency of mud. Plenty of room was left, however, for an angled approach with an escape route if the going got too soft.

My SeaRey rose easily up the beach. With power it pushed right through brown bow waves in front of the tires. I drove up the crest of the ridge and parked in a green field splotted with brown patties.

Rob and Toby followed into the eastern cove and floated near the shore. I carefully walked down to talk with them.

Rob observed with a good natured smirk, "Looks like you've found Cow Pattie Beach, mate."

"It's an all organic beaut, Robert."

Rob wasn't so sanguine about trying to taxi up through the brown quagmire with two on board. I pointed him to the other side of the peninsula. On the west side wave action had cleaned

the beach of the brown stuff. He taxied around and came up that side.

In the cool morning air we found good green spots to sit and consider the lake. Rob and Toby playfully argued about the proper identity of local flora. Not worrying about nomenclature, I simply appreciated the pretty yellow and purple flowers sprinkled about the hillside.

The rocks were pretty nice too. Their highly fractured nature, however, gave me some concern about the dam. As it turns out, the weathered Devonian conglomerates, sandstones and shales

had created a bit of a geotechnical problem for the dam builders. The project was well over-budget on grout required to plug the fractured rock.

Too soon we were called back to the airfield and a busy day of preparing for the morrow's festivities.

The day's work was rewarded with an afternoon flight. Instead of flying towards water, we headed east into

the hills. Rob with his wife, Harriett, and me in VH-CHI flew up a broad green valley. Rising steeply on both sides were massive sandstone cliffs. As the sun moved lower in the sky, the rocks took on a fiery red glow.

Passing over the woods back near the aerodrome in twilight we stirred up a cloud of white. A massive flock of cockatoo took flight painting a brilliant white swirl over the dark landscape. Their shrill calls penetrated through the engine noise and headset.

The once quiet airport was bustling when we returned. Campers and bonfires broke the peace and brought lights that threatened to drown out the crystal stars in the black void overhead.

Slipping away from the festivities, I retreated to the hangar to check on VH-CHI. She sat quietly with Rob's ship in the darkness, far away from the night's party. Her party finished earlier, out on the sun sparkled waters of Donut Cove, up on the grass of Cow Pattie Beach, and soaring through the red-rimmed canyons of Caperty Valley. I wouldn't have missed that party for a million of the ones going on next door.

END PART 2

-To be Continued-



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