

# On-the-Step

Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Where do I start? So much has happened since the last newsletter. First up, you now have a new committee from the AGM at the end of June. Big thank you to all the previous committee members who have retired from the committee:- Kevin Bowe, Duncan Miller, Lars Larson, Paul Cummings, and Malcolm Burns.

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All of the committee members over their tenure have put in long hours to improve your Association. A special thank you to Malcolm Burns who has been at the helm for over four years, who almost single handedly saw the Association through tough times and leaving it in a very good financial position.

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Going forward, the new committee is comprised of 4 commercial operators and 5 recreational seaplane enthusiasts. Which gives the Association a broad knowledge base. As time goes on, you will get to know each of our new committee members as we do updates on following newsletters. Our new committee comprises of:-

David Geers:	President
Keith Clark:	Vice President
Bill Coote:	Secretary/Public Officer
Rohan Walter:	Treasurer
Donna Handley:	Events Coordinator

Chad Banfield:	Parks and Waterways Liaison Manager
Alex Fisher:	Training Coordinator
Daniel Bolton:	Social Media
Emma Holdgate:	CASA Liaison

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One of my goals is to ensure that the Association is heading in the right direction so a big thank you to everybody that participated in the survey's that we sent out recently. Results confirmed to the committee that maintaining our seaplane water landing privileges was at the top of most people's responses, followed closely by social events and maintaining training standards.

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Chad Banfield and myself, are busy working on proposals to reopen access to several waterways. We are also working on a directory and a Google overlay for members outlining important seaplane information. This is a huge undertaking and if there are any members that would like to help, please let me know. And thanks to everyone that completed the recent survey regarding waterways access, it has been a big help!

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Alex Fisher is busy working on the training manual, and has produced a draft copy for you. If you are interested in helping, please contact Alex.



Donna Handley who heads up our social committee, has started work on next year's SPAA Conference to be held at Airlie Beach in the Whitsundays, so lock away these dates - Thursday 29 April through to Sunday 2 May 2021. You might wish to plan on coming up the week before to enjoy the Whitsunday Airport Airshow and associated festivities including the runway dinner. Details to be released by Whitsunday Airport soon. On a sad note, we have had to cancel the meet and greet we had planned for October in Casino. With border restrictions starting to relax we have our fingers crossed that our only other scheduled event for the year, that shouldn't be affected by the pandemic, will be our Christmas party on 5th December in Coffs Harbour.

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*Stay safe, stay sane & kindest regards*

David Geers  
President

# COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE

## ALEX FISHER

My name is Alex Fisher one of the newly appointed committee members in the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia. I am a 23-year-old hailing from Brisbane. For as long as I have known I have wanted to be a pilot. It wasn't until around the age of 12, after a scenic flight at South Stradbroke Island in a DeHavilland Beaver with Gold Coast Seaplanes, that I knew I wanted to be a commercial seaplane pilot. Growing up in Brisbane in a family that lives and breathes the water I did a lot of sailing throughout my school life. My love of the water well and truly continues to this day. Being on, in and around the water is where I am most happy. The idea of operating an aircraft on the water to me was the absolute dream. Brings back an era of exploration that doesn't really exist anymore, no limits just pure adventure.

During my school time I was involved with the Australian Air Force Cadets in South East Queensland for 5 years as a cadet and continuing today as an adult instructor. During my time in the cadet program I moved through the ranks to reach Cadet Under Officer (highest achievable rank). During my time I also developed a deep passion for gliding. I still try and get up gliding every time I can but more often than not I'm flying the tow plane instead.

I have always had a mind to achieve big things that to others might see unobtainable or "too difficult". The first time I displayed this was in 2014 (Grade 12) when I started a non-profit organisation called Flight of Solidarity. This organisation had two goals; first was to raise awareness and funds for the Royal Flying Doctors Service and secondly to set the record for the youngest person to circumnavigate Australia by a single engine aircraft. I achieved these goals in mid 2014 setting the record at 17 years old and raised over \$30,000 for the RFDS.

Once leaving school I went on to complete my commercial license immediately. From there it was like many other fresh commercial

pilots struggling to find that first lucrative job. Whilst driving up and down the east coast of Australia I decided it was time to pull the pin and get my Floatplane Endorsement. A few weeks later I was in Sydney doing my Endorsement with Adam Holt at Sydney Seaplanes. Incredible experience! After completing the endorsement 8 months past and Sydney Seaplanes offered me a job working on the dock. I worked on the dock with Sydney Seaplanes for around 9 months in what I describe to many as the seaplane operations apprenticeship. From Sydney I gained the contacts needed to get that first flying job, and there I was off to



the remote Kimberley to start flying a straight float Cessna 206.

I absolutely loved my time in Kununurra over the 2017 & 2018 dry season. It definitely taught me very quickly that although you might have the endorsement, the learning really starts when you start flying seaplanes day in and day out and experience the infinite number of variables and conditions that you can encounter as a seaplane pilot. After my second season in Kununurra it was time to move on to the next adventure, which laid on the tropical island of Hamilton Island. My time at Hamilton Island was short lived at about 7 months and didn't touch the DeHavilland Beaver which I moved from Kununurra to fly. But it wasn't too long until I was getting my feet wet again. Two weeks after leaving Hamilton Island I was on another airliner heading west, but this time for Broome and the Horizontal Falls Seaplane Adventures.

Working as a line pilot at Horizontal Falls Seaplanes blew my mind at the size of the operation and the well-oiled machine that has won award after award in the tourism industry. Not to mention flying the Cessna Caravan, which is just an amazing aircraft to fly. 450 hours in 5 months and the season came to an end and no work ahead. I had a trip planned from Greece to Dubai on a cruise ship. Little did I know that whilst on this cruise



I would be negotiating my next adventure.

Three days after arriving back in Australia I was off to the Philippines to take over as the senior pilot of the seaplane company. Without a shadow of a doubt the most difficult experience of my career. Learning a completely new set of flying rules and way of doing things and an operation very different to what I had previously been in. Multi-crew IFR in a country I'd never flown in before. Unfortunately, my time in the Philippines came to a very abrupt end when COVID-19 hit and decided to relocate back to Australia to see out the impending pandemic.

Currently I am back in Broome flying with Horizontal Falls after recently obtaining my flight instructor rating to hopefully start doing some floatplane endorsements in the near future. I have big plans moving forward in my career, with my primary goal now being my company Brisbane Seaplanes and hopefully in the very near future bringing seaplanes back to the Brisbane and the

Gold Coast region. I have already been working on this project for the last 2 years, there have been a lot more hurdles than I originally expected. I always tell myself, if it were easy everyone would be doing it.

I have been very much enjoying myself working on the Seaplane Pilots Association as a committee member, currently heading up the training side of things. We have some great ideas as a new committee and look forward to making things happen.



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the March 2020, of "On The Step", yet another excellent issue, read from (digital) cover to cover during our days of confinement in Ireland.

Having visited your wonderful country earlier this year, I hope I can use your "Letters to the Editor" page to thank your SPAA members and friends for their welcome and hospitality on our recent visit.

My wife Caroline and I arrived in Brisbane airport at some ungodly hour (06.15) on Sunday 15th December 2019 and I'm sure local Searey pilot David Geers and his wife Cheryl never thought for a second that we would breeze through Baggage reclaim and Customs in jig time. Picking up the hire car was equally efficient and I felt I was doing both of them a kindness in dragging them out by 7.30am to enjoy the scorching sunshine.

Our first day in Australia was just the beginning of a number of social outings with David and Cheryl. They not only provided a most enjoyable "Highlights of Brisbane" tour by river, they also delivered an aerial tour of the area from David's hangar at Caboolture Airport (be sure to check out TAVAS, based here) - thank you both for entertaining us, advising on places to visit and introducing us to flying friends.

We arrived in Airlie Beach for Christmas. First stop was that awesome Airpark at Whitsunday Airport - if you haven't been, make sure you add a visit to your bucket list. We were welcomed by SPAA members Shane and Sue Finney and finally got to meet their neighbours, Glenn Brooker and his mum, who informed us that she had been to Ireland and even visited our home town of Sligo. It's a small world.

No trip to Airlie would be complete without seeing the local sites from the air. Obviously the guys who named the Whitsunday COAST Airport have a sense of humour but it was worth the 30 mins drive inland to catch a flight to see the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsundays and the majestic coast off Airlie including White Haven beach.

Next stop was "Tassie" - see, I'm fluent in Australian !. Once more, SPAA "brothers" were on hand to guide, mind and entertain us. I'm sure no further commentary is required when I explain that the Handley Hilton owners Donna and Bill took us under their wing or should I say awning. We spent a wonderful two days in their company around Hobart, which included the now mandatory seaplane flight - this time in the Beaver of Above and Beyond Tasmanian Seaplanes. We continued our island tour with a list of recommendations and commentaries from a Donna which any aspiring tour guide would do well to study.

Back on the mainland, we slowly trekked from Adelaide to Melbourne, arriving at Rothwell Estate and Airfield towards the end of January. Words fail me. Somewhere in my brain is "Lord of the Manor", "Seabear", "Smith", "W-O-W". Our few days of rest with Anne and Michael will never be beaten.

From Melbourne we took up a "heading" towards Sydney, our zig-zag route highlighting many diversions along the Grand Pacific Drive. Despite the scars from the devastating forest fires, the stunning and rugged beauty all along the route was quickly preparing for recovery. And the optimistic outlook of the people we met endorsed the Australian can-do and never say die reputation.

Our leisurely progress led us to the Munctons, Ted and Jenny, fellow SPAA members who we first met when they visited Ireland in 2018. What a lovely part of the world Bermagui and Wallaga Lake is ... loads of Kodak opportunities, (showing my age, pre camera phones) and a relaxing break for a couple of days. Thanks Jen & Ted.

Wedderburn Aerodrome .... put it on your bucket list if you haven't already done so. Until we arrived here, I believed we led a fairly privileged aviation existence. Apart from our local small airports in Ireland's scenic North West (Sligo, Donegal), we have a few "sleepy" asphalt or grass strips and multiple lakes and waterways which have yet to enact any objectionable rules against private aircraft. (Jetskis are not so lucky!).

Wedderburn has jumped to the top tier of my favourites list. Time and space (and a lack of superlatives) mean we cannot do justice to our Wedderburn experience from fabulous company, food and accommodation not to mention the privilege of a truly unique tour of the local sights from Bill Handleys Lake Buccaneer. Sights such as the Cliff Bridge, past Sydney Airport and on up to "Home and Away" land before transiting Sydney Harbour at low level was special. No wonder my phone memory could hold no more ! Donna and Bill, we owe you one helluva a visit to Ireland/Europe.

*Happily, we still had the month of February to spend in the Sydney area. The Blue Mountains are an ideal stopping point as we headed towards Rob Loneragan at Rylestone Airpark. Thanks to Rob (and David Geers), my Searey is practically Australian - its fuel tank and bubble canopy both emigrated from there to Ireland. Its heartening to see a visionary fulfilling his dream - the airpark has developed into a quality facility and has an exciting future for those planning permanent residences on site. I'll be back.*

*Returning to Sydney at the end of February, SPAA members again contributed to our Sydney experience. Keith and Annie Clarke are excellent tour guides, showing us around the Opera House, Admiralty House, various lookout points and places of interest. We can but try and return the favour someday - I feel a tour of Northern Ireland coming on.*

*Now you might expect that on the last few days, we would rest up in preparation for our departure from Oz. Nope. We couldn't pass up a farewell meetup and very enjoyable lunch with Rob and Harriett. We look forward to a rescheduled and extended visit to Ireland.*

*The Sydney SailGP was our final event before departing Oz. In the small world we live in, I had the privilege of meeting Brian and Suzanne Dehelsen when they visited Ireland in 2017. They kindly invited us to join them on a spectator boat for the SailGP - ringside seats to watch the 750 catamarans "fly" through the water. It certainly was a memorable last day in Australia.*

*We left Australia with plans to meet with a few SPAA members later in 2020. Covid-19 was a threat back then but would surely be contained in China. Our own itinerary was cut short and we arrived back in Ireland just 3 days before "lockdown" was declared. We often reflect and remember the welcome and hospitality we received from SPAA members and friends and are truly grateful for what we hope will not be a "once in a lifetime" trip. There are still many "media friends" to connect with on our next visit.*

*Congratulations to David Geers on his appointment as President and his very capable supporting team. I know the association will contribute to safe and enjoyable flying and the social activities will be the envy of seaplane pilots all over the world !*

*Finally, thank you for keeping a permanent smile on our faces during these unusual times. Be assured of a welcome in Ireland and if any members (paid up !) wish to get in touch, sligosearey@gmail.com finds us.*

*Take good care until next time,*

*Fairwinds and small waves,  
John & Caroline Brennan*



# FIRST EVER COMMERCIAL FLIGHT WAS A SEAPLANE

The first flight went off on New Year's Day, 1914, with much pomp and circumstance. About 3,000 people paraded from downtown St. Petersburg to the waterfront to watch as the first ticket was auctioned off. Pheil, then in the warehouse business, won with a bid of \$400 (more than \$8,500 in today's dollars).

Just before the flight, Fansler made a brief speech, saying, "What was impossible yesterday is an accomplishment today, while tomorrow heralds the unbelievable," according to the Tampa Bay Times. After several more speeches and many photographs, Jannus and Pheil squeezed into the small wooden seat. As they took off, Jannus waved to the cheering crowd.

He flew the plane no higher than 50 feet (15.2 m) over the water. Halfway to Tampa, the engine misfired, and he touched down in the bay, made adjustments and took off again. As the plane landed at the entrance of the Hillsborough River near downtown Tampa, Jannus and Pheil were swarmed by a cheering, clapping, and waving crowd of about 3,500.



*Tony Jannus piloting the Benoist flying boat*

Pheil went about his business and placed an order of several thousand dollars for his wholesale company. At 11 a.m., Jannus and Pheil flew back to St. Petersburg. The entire trip had taken less than an hour and a half.

The airline made two flights daily, six days a week. The regular fare was \$5 per person (about \$100 in today's dollars) and \$5 per 100 pounds of freight. Tickets sold out for 16 weeks in advance. A second Benoist airboat was added, and flights were extended to Sarasota, Bradenton and Manatee. Tony Jannus' brother, Roger, was the second pilot.

The airline operated for nearly four months, carrying a total of 1,205 passengers. Passenger interest declined rapidly when the winter residents began heading back north. On April 27, Tony and Roger Jannus flew their last flight before leaving Florida, putting on an air show over Tampa Bay.

The brothers continued to give exhibitions, perform tests of aircraft, and train other pilots. On Oct. 12, 1916, Tony Jannus was training Russian pilots when his plane crashed into the Black

Sea. His body was never recovered.

Roger Jannus also died while flying. He crashed on Sept. 4, 1918, during air patrols over France.

In 1964, the Tampa and St. Petersburg Chambers of Commerce established the Tony Jannus Distinguished Aviation Society in honor of Tony Jannus.

Jannus was born in Washington, D.C., where his father Frankland Jannus was a patent attorney and his great-grandfather, Roger C. Weightman, had previously been mayor from 1824 until 1827. By 1910, the 21-year-old was employed as a boat engine mechanic. He became interested in flying when he saw an airshow in Baltimore, Maryland, in November, 1910, and began flight training that year at College Park Airport in Maryland. In 1911, Jannus was the first pilot to fly the Lord Baltimore II, an amphibious airplane built in Baltimore, from the city's Curtis Bay. His older brother, Roger Weightman Jannus (1886-1918), also learned to fly and both brothers became test pilots for airplane builder Thomas W. Benoist in St. Louis, Missouri, in late 1911.



On March 1, 1912, Tony Jannus piloted a Benoist biplane when Albert Berry made the first parachute jump from a moving airplane near St. Louis. Later that year, Jannus set a 1,900-mile (3,058 km) overwater flight record following the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers from Omaha, Nebraska, to New Orleans in a Benoist Land Tractor Type XII mounted with floats.

During the Great Lakes Reliability Cruise in 1913, Thomas W. Benoist entered three aircraft flown by Antony Jannus, Hugh Robinson, and Benoist himself.

Also in 1913, Jannus participated in a New York Times-sponsored air exhibition. He flew actress Julia Bruns in a Baldwin Red Devil 4,000 ft above Staten Island for twenty minutes on October 12, 1913. The next day, he flew in an air race over Manhattan, the Times reporting that "The graceful Benoist biplane sailed along on an even keel...driven by the famous Tony Jannus".[3]:60 Jannus described flying as, "...poetry of mechanical motion, a fascinating sensation of speed, an abstraction from things material into an infinite space." On 15 October, Jannus crashed on take off while setting off to search for Albert Jewell, an aviator who had disappeared over off southern Long Island while flying to join the race on 13 October; Jannus was unhurt in the crash, though the airplane was written off.[

The following month, Jannus moved to St. Petersburg, Florida.

Prior to 1914, travel from Tampa, Florida, to St. Petersburg, located on a then-isolated peninsula, required a slow steamboat trip across Tampa Bay or a circuitous, five-hour journey by railroad. A bumpy automobile or horse and buggy ride took many hours over primitive, unpaved roads. The airplane at the time was a rare novelty, lacking any practical application. Impressed by the record-setting overwater flight made by Jannus in 1912, Florida businessman Percival Fansler approached some St. Petersburg businessmen the next year with a proposal to use Benoist flying boats for “a real commercial line” over open water between the two cities. Convinced by Fansler’s plan, several St. Petersburg community leaders, led by L. A. Whitney of the local chamber of commerce and Noel Mitchell, agreed to provide financial support for the creation of an airline service to connect the two cities. A 90-day contract with Benoist was signed on December 17, 1913 (the 10th anniversary of Wilbur and Orville Wright’s historic first airplane flight), to provide airplanes and crew for two daily round trips across Tampa Bay, dubbed the St. Petersburg–Tampa Airboat Line — the world’s first scheduled airline.

Fansler told the St. Petersburg Times: “The St. Petersburg waterfront is an ideal place for starting and landing as the trip to and from Tampa will be one of the most beautiful in the country. Skimming a few feet above the surface of the water... with the purr of a 75 h.p. engine and the whirring of a propeller turning several hundred times a minute, the rush of the cool salt air and the shimmering sunlight on Tampa Bay — no trip could be more enjoyable.”

Departing from a location on January 1, 1914, near the downtown St. Petersburg Municipal Pier on Second Avenue North, Jannus piloted the twenty-three-minute inaugural flight of the pioneer airline’s Benoist XIV flying boat biplane. A crowd of 3,000 gathered at the pier to watch the history-making takeoff at 10 a.m. and were told by Fansler that “What was impossible yesterday is an accomplishment today, while tomorrow heralds the unbelievable” [sic]. Abram C. Pheil, former mayor of St. Petersburg, won an auction for the first ticket with a winning bid of \$400 and was a passenger on the inaugural flight. It was the first time a ticket was sold to the general public for point-to-point scheduled air travel. The Benoist reportedly reached a maximum speed of 75 miles per hour (121 km/h) during the flight, according to a United Press account. Other reports indicate that Jannus flew over the Bay at an altitude of less than 50 feet (15 m). Upon the airboat’s arrival in Tampa, the Tampa Tribune reported, “a crowd of two thousand was waiting...Messrs. Jannus and Pheil bowed and smiled”. Thereafter, flights departed St. Petersburg daily except Sundays at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.. Return



flights left Tampa at 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Following the end of the St. Petersburg–Tampa Airboat Line’s scheduled service between the two Florida cities on March 31, 1914, Jannus left St. Petersburg and quit flying for Benoist, becoming a test pilot for Curtiss Aeroplane Company. In July, 1915, Jannus successfully flew the prototype Curtiss JN-3, forerunner of the JN-4 “Jenny” of World War I fame. On October 1, 1915, he was sent by Glenn Curtiss to Russia as the company’s test pilot and trainer of Russian pilots flying Curtiss airplanes in combat during World War I.

Jannus died on October 12, 1916, near Sevastopol (then part of Czarist Russia) when his plane, a Curtiss H-7 he was using to train Russian pilots, had engine problems and crashed into the Black Sea, killing Jannus and his two-man Russian crew. His body was never recovered.



# Vale Dick Peel



For those who have ever visited Lake Boga on the NSW Victorian border, either for the celebration of the Catalina Festival or just as a visitor wanting to see the site of the WWII flying boat base set up as a flying boat maintenance facility far away from the reach of any invaders, you most probably have met Dick Peel. Dick was the powerhouse behind the creation of the Catalina Museum

SPAA members were saddened to hear of the passing of Dick on July 24. Many of us have fond memories of the fly-ins at Lake Boga and the hospitality that Dick extended to us all. away.

One of the prime movers of the restoration work, Dick remembers the big Cats landing on Lake Boga during the war years. He is very proud of the work that has been achieved at the Museum. "The Catalina Flying Boat and all the other items of memorabilia accurately recall Lake Boga's significant involvement in the war effort", he said. "I get a great kick out of the many visitors who gain enjoyment from visiting the Museum and seeing what took place."

The idea of the Catalina Museum started over a glass of beer after a Lions club meeting at the local hotel. "We thought it would be nice to have a piece of Catalina that we could put up at Catalina park in memory of those that served here and gave their time and worked tirelessly to keep these aircraft operational, he says.

Dick Peel is the coordinator of the museum in Lake Boga and seems to have been having a love affair with these flying boats for years now.

Dick used to live near the Lake during the war and his family often entertained pilots on their orchard property. Dick's eyes still light up as he recalls the Catalina joy flights the pilots would take him on.

When he was just 12 years old Dick says a flight in a Catalina was arranged and it's something he'll never forget. "What can I remember of it? I'll remember it until the day I go down that six foot hole. "It was a bit bumpy that day, a warm day in November.

In military aircraft there were no sick bags and the worst thing happened to young Dick.

"When they landed they had to send a fire truck out and hose the back of the aeroplane out after I had finished decorating it," he says.

For his second flight Dick says he was warned after explaining his past experience to the captain. "He said to me 'Dick, don't you dare' and I said 'no you'll be right mate'.

It's almost like Dick has been living out his childhood fascination ever since his initial contact with the aircraft. "Mainly because the pilots used to all come out to our place and socialise and back in the days when little boys were seen and not heard around the dinner table. "They used to put a jacket or a pilots cap on me and I used to think I was great with that," he said.

For all seaplane lovers the efforts and memories that Dick was always keen to offer will provide fond memories for a long time to come. Dick Peel will be fondly missed.



# Flying the Volmer VJ-22 homebuilt amphibian

by Rob Germon

Back in 1968 euphoria broke out in Glendale California when one Volmer Jensen wheeled out of his workshop the first two-seat homebuilt amphibian of the age. Hysteria echoed right around the homebuilt aircraft world. How heavy is it? they asked. What will it cost to build? Will it fly two people off the water?

To answer some of these questions, let's talk about how Volmer Jensen came to design a wooden two-seat homebuilt amphibian aircraft. Jensen had been in the backyard aviation business for a long time and in fact worked for several aircraft companies in the USA.

Jensen was a gliding person at heart but loved the water. He had built a three-seat pusher land aircraft a couple of years earlier and had hoped that Piper or someone may have been interested in putting it in production. However, that wasn't the case. He turned his thoughts to a homebuilt amphibian after coming across a very old Italian wooden two-seat amphibian hull. He took it home, modelled up a new hull, hung a set of Aeronca Champ wings and tail feathers on it and installed an 85 hp Continental pusher engine, and the job was done. His friend and buddy Irv Culver watched from the sideline.

Culver was a unique engineering man in Lockheed's Kelly Johnson Skunk Works at the time. No doubt Culver would have answered a few questions and crunched a few sums for Jensen on what was to become the VJ-22 Volmer Sportsman homebuilt amphibian. Soon word was flying right across the world and around 100 Volmer VJ-22s were built. Jensen re-engined his creation with a 100 hp Continental engine after reports started coming in that 85hp just wasn't enough. The Canadians put 125 hp engines on Volmer's creation and some of them even turned the engine around to a tractor configuration. Jensen flew into a rage about builders modifying his creation, and the idea of a tractor engine was sacrilege in his eyes.

But let's talk about ZK-CTY, the Volmer Sportsman I flew for several years and ended up owning for a while. ZK-CTY was 1070 lbs empty and had a 100 hp Continental engine (in fact it came with a Rolls-Royce silver engine sticker). The VJ-22 has a very roomy cockpit and excellent visibility. Noise level is not too bad, similar to a thousand bees flying in formation.

With the correct propeller the engine would generate 2750 rpm all day and all night. Revs never hurt an O-200. CTY had a set of Aeronca wings designed to carry the 1300 lbs all-up weight of an Aeronca Champ. The VJ-22 was



designed to carry 1600lbs on the same wing! So they said. This Volmer was painted yellow and it soon got the name the "Drunk Duck", not a very nice thing to say about a fine old wooden amphibian. The name stuck, however.

This VJ-22 carried 77 litres of fuel and two 170 lb people at 85 mph. It also carried in the payload a 30 lb sand bag which was essential when flown solo to bring the centre of gravity into the aft safe limits. The 30 lb sand bag I kept on losing at beaches as I used to sit on it and then leave it behind! The duck would also carry a cut lunch, life jackets and a lot of ancillary bits and pieces.

The O-200 engine had a modified oil tank so it would fit into the A frame engine mount, and the problem with that was the temperature was often too cold. However, trawling on the water the oil temperature got too hot! This was a great problem as there were times when one couldn't get out of the water when it was too rough and so one would have to taxi a mile or so to find some smooth water. As a matter of interest, I never flew the Duck in fresh water; it was always in the open sea and harbour areas. The VJ-22 is a stick-and-rudder aeroplane, a sort of cross between an Auster and a Tiger Moth. Land takeoff is Auster stuff, very short, and the climb is average — but in fact I flew the VJ-22 to 10,000 feet for the CAA on auto fuel (mogas) tests. It was still trying to climb at that altitude.

Ailerons are typical Champ and the engine blows plenty of air over the tailplane in the wrong places. Pusher aircraft of course are a handful, but it seems the ultralight design people still haven't discovered that. Pusher aeroplanes always need another 5 knots on the clock on approach due to the fact there is no propeller blast over the leading edge of the wings.

On the Duck one had to lockwire everything down on the

engine. That's right, rocker cover screws, exhaust system and you had to have the propeller bolted on in such a way that the exhaust pulses fire not on the blade but just after it passes by.

Then of course you have to make sure you don't throw your empty Coke can out the window while cruising along as that will go through the prop and what a spectacular event that can be. You also need to make sure mother's shades are on her head properly and her bikini is well strapped on and everything in the cockpit is tied down just in case.

The Duck has retractable landing gear, mains and tail-wheel. Biggles would be thrilled with the design. There is a centre lever between the seats that locks the gear down and it also raises it when required and locks it on top of the canopy frame. The weight of the gear is offset by bungees so you don't break your yodel when retracting the gear. I found a karate shout did the trick. New passengers get a bit of a fright when you leave the ground, unlock the gear and then shout, "HONG YUNG KACHUNGA!" and the strength comes to haul that big lever with those 600x6 tyres up to the locked position.

Then on the back of the cabin bulkhead there are two levers that raise and lower the tail wheel and water rudder correctly. It's all great Navy stuff and the design was probable used on Noah's ark.

If you yaw the VJ-22 in the climb too much the engine will splutter and lose power because the carburettor air intake doesn't stick out far enough past the front of the engine cowl and so the air just blows around the cowl profile. So there is always a good reason to keep the ball in the centre at all times. But how do you do that when the ball in the turn coordinator won't stay in the centre anyway due to the fact the fin area down the back is too small? Well, it's easy. The radio aerial on the front of the nose is a perfect place to tie a piece of wool and there you have it. Just keep the wool pointing towards the centre of the windscreen and the problem is solved — although there are times when the same piece of wool does point forward in some flight modes!

One of the most dangerous situations you can get yourself into is landing on glassy water. I was glad one day when I ran into a pilot who drove a Grumman Goose and he came for a flight with me and showed me just how quickly you can write yourself off in the glassy water situation. It's so easy. The trick is to find some rippled water. But if you have to land on glassy water, shoot an approach at a very low rate of decent, like 100 ft per minute and the nose just below the horizon. This is hard to do in the VJ-22 as it glides like a house brick. So plenty of power is needed and plenty of room. Had I flared at the point I thought was correct I would have been 10 feet below the surface of the water. It takes lots of practice and you need dual time for this for quite a while. Otherwise you will wind up in Davy



Jones's locker.

Water flying doubles your fun and safety. It also offers you a chance to explore many harbours areas and estuaries that one could never get into and see otherwise. Learning to read water and what it can do to you is another story.

My water flying training was pretty limited when I started to fly the Duck. I had completed a couple of check circuits and that was about it. I did get some Biggles books out of the library on water flying and picked up a few things. So all my takeoffs were in a straight line until one day I hit a beer bottle that appeared in the cabin right under the passenger's seat. I started taking on water like you wouldn't believe.

A flashback to another Grumman Goose pilot: if you put a hole in the hull, get the stick right forward and full power and bounce your way out — and it worked. I then had around 12 gallons of water down the back. I mean right down the back! So the CG was well aft. I had full power and around 60 knots, full forward stick and an altitude of 50 feet. Pretty good, really. Beats sinking in the open sea.

I collected my thoughts and slowly did a very shallow turn around to see how far the airfield was away. It was about three miles. The problem was the airfield was 120 feet above sea level and I was at 50! Ever so slowly I got the VJ-22 to climb a bit, and a bit more, until in the end after 10 minutes I had enough height to just get onto the airfield at full power.

I was a bit uneasy about lowering the gear as that would drive the CG even further aft, but I had to do it and with that I did my first full power landing in the Duck! We soon realised that Volmer's VJ-22 and the ¼ inch plywood with 6 oz glass cloth on the bottom was complete useless in deflecting beer bottles that nasty people leave in the water, not to mention the bits of 4x2. So we re-skinned the front step with light Kevlar and that worked like a treat. The problem was where the loads were now going to be transferred. We found they were transferred right into the

wing pickup bolts — all four of them. So it was a case of installing close-tolerance helicopter bolts and that did the trick. However, they needed changing every 100 hours.

Not so long after this event, I took a Canadian bush pilot for a flight in the trusty Volmer. He was impressed but he said to me, “The trouble with you British is you do everything in a straight line.” “What do you mean?” “Haven’t you learned how to do a circular takeoff on the water?” I said, “Well no, I always do a straight takeoff and make sure the nose is pointing towards Buckingham Palace for good luck!” Anyway, the short of it was Mal showed me how to shoot good circular takeoffs. That way one can see the debris that you are going to run into as the water swirl sweeps the debris into the middle of the circle.

Two: you can use a much smaller space to get out of the water; and three: you can roll the aeroplane up on half the hull to reduce drag and thus pick up speed. Cross-wind takeoffs are much more manageable. With this knowledge I was becoming an expert. No more thundering out of a bay in smooth water only to strike a 20-inch chop when one is almost on the step! Perhaps the most treacherous part of water flying is reading the water. At 1000 feet in general it’s all Disneyland down there. Then when you get down to 500 feet it’s often a cross between Disneyland and Alcatraz.

The short of it is that if the chop is 12 inches high and a short fetch, forget it, because if you get into that sort of water it’s dangerous. The experience of landing in a 12-inch chop is similar to driving down a corrugated dirt road on a dark night in a Ford Prefect with the lights out. So one needs to look for bays and estuaries with smoother

water and less chop and long fetch. The problem with bays is that usually you have to approach over a built-up area, and then you have little old ladies ringing the police saying there is a yellow aeroplane crashed into the water! I have had that happen three times.

The big plus about owning the VJ-22 is it doubles your aviation flying fun. The freedom is fantastic. But a plus for me is my wife loves the trusty Volmer! I never dare ask why, as she sure doesn’t like Piper Super Cubs. So we really enjoy an afternoon snooping around the bays and low flying right on the water. It’s all legal as you are checking a landing spot. The other excuse is you could have carburettor icing.

One great feature about the Volmer is it’s a great speed-boat. You can beat anything on the water, even these 1000 hp jobs. You can do them like a dinner.

Waving to yacht crews is fun, as is spotting nudists and people in secluded places doing things they shouldn’t be doing. Of course you don’t take your wife on those sorts of sorties!

Coming up on an isolated beach can be embarrassing. At one secluded beach with my good wife I had just dropped the gear to taxi up onto the beach when three chaps in the nick felt they should run out and give us a hand. My wife didn’t know where to look!

A final thought: if you plan to build a Volmer Sportsman, do put a new Rotax 914 up top. This would cut the weight down by 110 lbs and reduce the height of the engine pylon, and it would also allow you to use a three-blade propeller. You would then need less fuel and have a bigger payload and plenty of grunt up top.

# REID FLYING SUBMARINE RFS-1



*I am sure that, like me, one of your greatest fears is botching a water landing or taxi and ending up with the nose going under the water, "submarining". I was surprised to find a story of a project to build a craft that was designed specifically to do what I had been avoiding, to submarine.*

- § -

While the thought of a flying submarine might seem completely ridiculous to most people, it has been done. Way back in 1962 nonetheless. Donald Reid, a US defense contractor and also an early R/C submarine enthusiast built the RFS-1 using parts from salvaged aircraft and other assorted components.

It wasn't a high-tech machine, despite its abilities. In the air it was powered by a 65 horsepower four-cylinder Lycoming engine. While underwater a 1-horsepower electric motor provided propulsion. Conversion from aircraft to submarine was a clumsy affair. The pilot first had to remove the propeller, and then cover the engine pylon with a rubber diving bell to keep the engine dry. The pilot used an aqualung to breathe. Maximum depth was roughly 10 to 12 ft (3.5 metres).

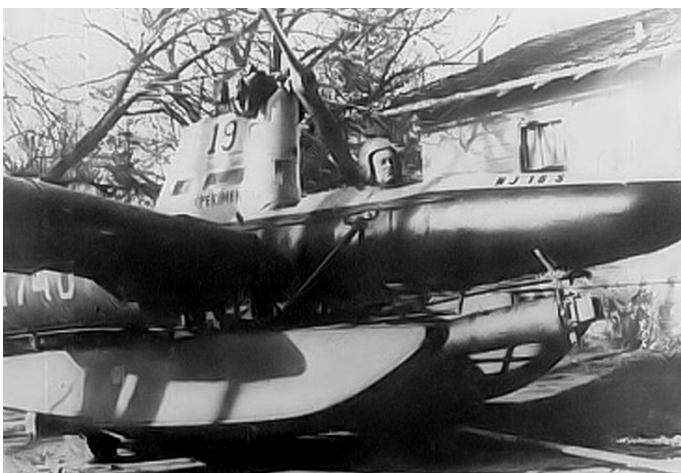
The Reid Flying Submarine didn't really excel in either the air or water. Its heavy weight meant it only managed to fly for 75 feet (25 meters) - piloted by Donald's son Bruce.

But when you consider this was built by one man, from

spare parts, on a limited budget and over 50 years ago, it's simply astonishing. With more time and money surely its performance could have been radically improved - after all the RFS-1 should really be thought of as a proof-of-concept vehicle more than a production-ready design. Sadly however Reid was unable to find any backers for the project and it never went any further.

Amazingly the Reid wasn't the first person to come up with the idea of a flying sub - although he was the first to build one. In 1934 Boris Petrovich Ushakov, a student engineer at a Soviet military academy, drew up plans for a three-engined flying submarine capable of scouting enemy ships from the air, and then attacking them with torpedos from under the water. Although the Soviet military reviewed his proposal in 1936, it was deemed to be useful.

But that's not the end of the story. Because in 2008 the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) announced that they were accepting proposals for a stealth aircraft which could transform into an attack submarine.

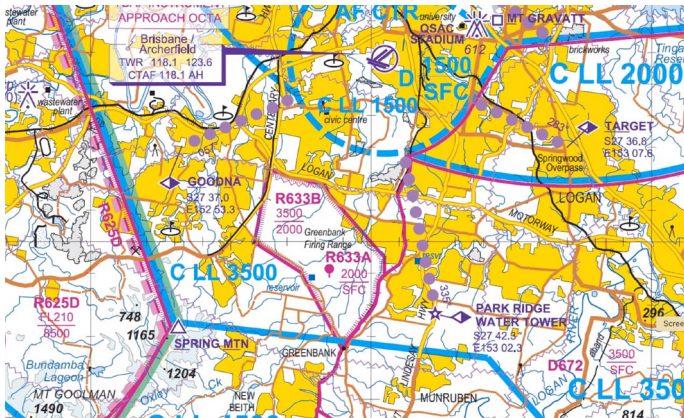


# TEN THINGS YOU SHOULD DO BEFORE FLYING INTO AN UNFAMILIAR AIRPORT

Don't fly in unprepared!

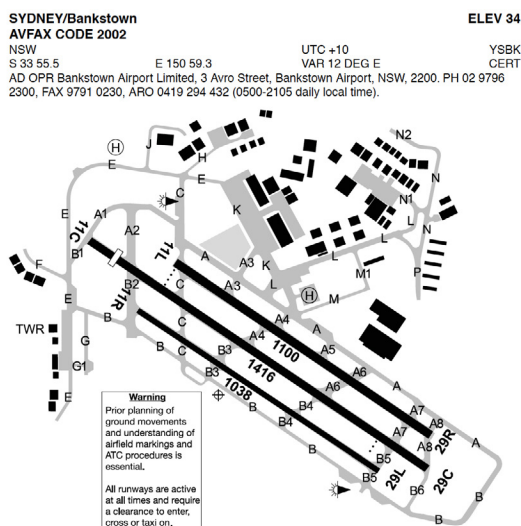
## 1) Review The Airspace

If you're flying into new and busy airspace, familiarize yourself with surrounding airports and controlling agencies before you take off



## 2) Have A Taxi Diagram Ready To Go

Make sure you have a taxi diagram downloaded or in paper form with you. There's no better way to feel lost than exiting the runway only to find a maze of taxiways and no way to get a good overview.



### REMARKS

#### AVAILABILITY

1. AD Charges: All ACFT - Contact AD OPR for price structure and conditions of use.
2. Turbojet ACFT to OPR only on RWY 11C/29C or RWY 11L/29R.
3. Pavement concessions AVBL for ACFT ABV 20,000KG MTOW with H24 PN.
4. This AD is a Security Controlled Airport.

#### OPERATIONAL HOURS

##### TWR HR:

W2000-1130 (HDS 1900-1030); E 2000-1030 (HDS 1900-0930);

##### ATS AIRSPACE

BK TWR provides ATS within Class D airspace SFC to 1,500FT during TWR HRS.

## 3) Call Ahead

If you're planning to stop at an FBO, call ahead to verify opening and closing times, fuel prices, and ramp/hangar availability.



## 4) Know Anyone Who's Flown There?

If you know a pilot that's been to the airport, ask them what to expect, or if there's any unique challenges about flying in. Calling the FBO can help with this too.



## 5) Study Arrival And Departure Procedures Before You Fly

Some airports have VFR arrival and departure procedures. Read through them before you take off. If there are waypoints or reporting points you don't recognize, look them up online.

- Pilots planning VFR flights in the vicinity of Mount McQuoid (MQD NDB) and beyond should, as far as is reasonably practicable, plan to avoid the Class E airspace in this area due to the intensity of IFR aircraft inbound to and holding for Sydney.
- 9. CIRCUIT OPERATIONS**
- 9.1 Circuit Altitude: 1,000FT.
- 9.2 Circuit OPS are to be confined within a 2NM radius of the ARP.
- 9.3 A traffic sequencing instruction shall remain valid for consecutive CCTS unless a new sequence is advised by ATC.
- 10. CLASS D**
- a. Circuit Directions during TWR HR.
- (i) RWY 11L HJ - left: HN - right (when RWY 11C not AVBL).
- (ii) RWY 11R HJ - right: HN - not AVBL.
- (iii) RWY 11C HJ - left: HN - right.
- (iv) RWY 29L HJ - left: HN - not AVBL.
- (v) RWY 29R HJ - right: HN - left (when RWY 29C not AVBL).
- (vi) RWY 29C HJ - right: HN - left.
- b. OPS on RWY 11C/29C shall conform to the 11L/29R circuit direction (i.e. 11C/11L - left circuit, 29C/29R - right circuit), unless otherwise advised by ATC.
- c. Practice instrument approaches may be approved by ATC.
- d. CAUTION: HELICOPTERS OVERFLY RUNWAYS MIDFIELD AT 500FT.
- 11. DEPARTURES**
- 11.1 All ACFT requesting an AWY Clearance into Class C airspace shall report 'Ready' on SMC FREQ 119.9 prior to leaving the run-up bays, to avoid congestion at the holding point.
- 11.2 DEP ALT (HJ): 1,000FT for RWYs 29; 1,500FT for RWYs 11.
- 11.3 **IFR arrivals and departures - South**
- a. Pilots are reminded that R555A has RA3 conditional status, and a clearance issued by ATC:
- (i) Into Class C airspace on DEP FM BK or
- (ii) To leave Class C airspace on descent to BK does not authorise entry into this RA.
- AIP ENR 1.4 Para 5.3.2.2 refers.
- 12. ROUTES**
- a. A VFR ACFT departing into Class G airspace must depart the CTR on an extended leg of the circuit.
- b. VFR ACFT must advise departure intentions with READY Call.
- c. Clearance for VFR ACFT to operate in the BK CTR and VFR ACFT departing into Class G will be issued on BK TWR FREQ.
- d. A take-off clearance constitutes a clearance to operate within the CTR or depart the CTR in accordance with the intentions notified with the READY Call.
- 13. ARRIVALS**
- 13.1 CTR ENTRY ALT (HJ): 1,000FT for RWYs 11; 1,500FT for RWYs 29.
- 13.2 ARR VFR ACFT should track via and report at PSP or 2RN.
- 13.3 After landing remain on 132.8 until clear of all active RWYs, then contact SMC on 119.9 in accordance with AIP.
- 13.4 Request "taxi guidance" if required.
- 14. HELICOPTER OPERATIONS**
- NOTE: THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES APPLY HJ ONLY. HELICOPTERS SHALL USE FIXED-WING PROCEDURES HN
- 14.1 Local Procedures**
- a. All HEL OPS in the BK CTR shall be conducted at 700FT on BK QNH, unless otherwise advised by ATC.

## 6) Check NOTAMs

It goes without saying, but checking NOTAMs is always a good idea, especially when flying into an unfamiliar airport.

!AST 05/002 AST RWY 08 RWY END ID LGT OUT OF SERVICE  
1705031930-1705032200  
!AST 05/001 AST RWY 13 RWY END ID LGT OUT OF SERVICE  
1705031630-1705031830

Pay special attention to runway, taxiway, and navigational equipment closures.

## 7) Are There Unique Local Weather Patterns?

Many airports are known for unique wind and weather patterns at certain times of the day and year. Considering looking up some details before you take off. Better yet, call the FBO before you go and talk to a local pilot.

## 8) Double Check Your Airplane's Performance

You're probably comfortable with takeoff and landing distances for your local airports, but remember to check performance calculations as you fly into a new airport, especially those on hot days at high elevations.

## 9) Progressive Taxiing Is Always An Option

If you get lost during taxi at a large, unfamiliar airport, stop where you are. Take a second to figure out your position and taxi route, and consider asking ground for a progressive taxi if you need it.

## 10) If ATC Directs You To Local Waypoints, Tell Them You're Unfamiliar And Request Vectors

One of the most common problems you'll face flying into new airports is ATC directing you to local landmarks or waypoints. If you're unfamiliar, it's much better to let them know right away than to get confused, lost, and cause a traffic conflict.



# FOR SALE

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place your add in the next issue.

***Seaplane Pilots Association Australia (SPAA) is a not for profit organisation staffed by volunteers.***

***Its goals are to:***

- ***Promote the safe and responsible operation of Seaplanes.***
- ***Advocate for equal rights and access to waterways for Seaplanes.***
- ***Engage with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Air Services Australia (ASA), industry stakeholders and other interested parties on Seaplane related matters and legislation.***
- ***Foster high standards of Seaplane training and airmanship.***
- ***Provide support and information to its members.***

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Keith Clark Mb 0419 237 831 email: [Click Here](#)

## QLD Coordinators

David Geers (07) 3352 4311 Mb 0418 103 535 email: [Click Here](#)

## ACT Coordinator

## VIC Coordinators

Jack Peters (03) 9690 5398 Mb 0414 737 400 email: [Click Here](#)

Rod Gunther (03) 95474454 Mb 0417 688 388 email:

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## Safety Officers

## National Commercial Representative

Adam Holt Mb 0402884811 email: [Click Here](#)

## Victorian Commercial Representative

Rod Gunther (03) 95474454 Mb 0417 688 388 email: [Click Here](#)

## Local & Special Area Contacts

Great Sandy Straight Marine Park	Kevin Bowe	(03) 95474454	Mb 0414 744 799	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
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Moreton Bay/Stradbroke Islands	David Geers	(07) 3352 4311	Mb 0418 103 535	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
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Central Coast (NSW)	Jim Moline	(02) 4360 2993	Mb 0418 235 879	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
St Georges Basin/Nowra (NSW)	John Daley	(02) 4443 4092	Mb 0412 434 765	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
Port Stephens/Great Lakes Marine Park	Rob Loneragan	(02) 8003 3130	Mb 0411 816 300	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
Smiths/Wallis Lake (NSW)	Steve Ridley	(02) 6554 4953	Mb 0408 284799	email: <a href="#">Click Here</a>
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