

# The Flying Tigers Newsletter

May 2009

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You will find this newsletter much longer than usual. This is because my pleas for articles have been answered. Two members have sent articles. **Thank you David Tonks and Ian Walker;** stars both of you. I was tempted to publish Ian's account as a series but, because it relates to current events, you will be able to read it in one go.

### **Flying Tigers Meeting April 2009 at 11.00am** *report*

The main discussion of the meeting was regarding the concrete floor for the hangar. Although no final figure for cost was produced, it looks like a lot of money is needed. There was a suggestion that the club needed a funding officer to investigate ways of raising money. David Tonks volunteered for this. The club has \$9,000 approximately after estimated current expenses.

Members were reminded that forms are available for membership renewal.

Brian thanked members for their support and donations after the recent Avalon disaster (see Ian's article) He was very appreciative of all the camaraderie of the club members He also thanked Mark for organising the donations. Most of the money was used to build a trailer to transport Brian's broken Savannah back from Melbourne. He said this was now available for use by club members,

A new lease has been received and this is getting closer to the club's requirements. This has been published on the website for members comments. Please phone Brian or John with your comments.

Two new members were welcomed to the club; Roslyn Ferry and Paul Brooks. Roslyn is a student pilot with the flying school and Paul a frequent visitor to Boonah who wants to be more involved with the club. We look forward to their contribution to club activities

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### **A WEEKEND AT THE CLUBHOUSE**

**by Cropduster Dave**

I was given plenty of notice for the 'Girls Weekend', so naturally I made plans of my own – She would be in the company of the Ratpack Girlz at the Gold Coast for the weekend, staying at Jupiter's Casino, going to the Bollywood show, and doing her best to make our credit card scream in agony. Part of their cunning plan (a fact that became apparent to me

when I attempted a telephone conversation with Her on the Saturday night) was to also relieve the Gold Coast of a significant quantity of its champagne.

My newly acquired Drifter (455) was straight from farm duties on a property near Longreach, and in dire need of some TLC, preferably with the assistance of those who know a lot more about these terrific little aircraft than I do. It turned out that the weekend in question was free with Kiwi, one of the legendary Boonah Drifter Drivers. Another Tiger suggested to me that Kiwis' willingness to volunteer for helping out with my Drifter may have had something to do with the fact that in 455s previous life she spent a great deal of time chasing sheep, and that as such there was a deep bond betwixt 455 and Kiwi. These comments must be taken with a grain of salt though, because the person making this statement (former Drifter Driver and the bloke all sheilas want to go for a fly with, Grummo himself) also told me that Kiwi is the only pilot ever to join the Mile High Club in a Drifter – and Kiwi was solo at the time!

The agenda was set – apart from a thorough going over, 455 needed the removal of the automotive-type handbrake and the installation of the original Drifter joystick-mounted unit (not a good idea, it soon turned out), fitting an elevator trim kit (thanks to Wayne Fisher, it arrived in Fridays post) and the installation of a new VHF aerial. There was a problem with the car-type handbrake being mounted on the right, so removal and changeover to the standard unit was decided.

Much work was completed on the Saturday, but 455 was not flyable at end of light - reluctantly I tied her down for the night in the open, complete with numerous coverings to ward off cold and moisture. The Mafia then piled into a Brian's Limo for the short run across to the Aratula Roadhouse, where the inner men were fed with truckie-sized portions washed down with smuggled-in beer. Then it was back home for a quick nap, followed by a restless night worrying about poor little 455 tied down out in the cold.

Sunday saw the completion of the work, followed by a short test flight to check out the aerial, elevator trim and new braking system. The aerial worked a treat, and so did the trim - how nice is this, being able to take my hand off the joystick without 455 settling into a steady descent toward terra firma! The brakes – well that's a different story altogether, and now I know why the handbrake conversion is so popular. The amount of leverage available with the motorcycle-style hand lever is marginal, so now a plan is being developed to re-mount the car-style lever to the left of the pilot's seat.

One thing about being a member of a club like the Tigers is the ever-helpful comments – my landing after the test flight was a real Skippy Special - when I asked at the clubhouse "anyone see my landing?", Kiwi's voice rang out from somewhere "which one?". Why is it that your fellow pilots always see the crap landings but never see the greasers?

Thanks for the help guys, great weekend. Pity about the credit card balance, though.

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### **Sunday 17 May. Gatton Air Park Breakfast Fly-In**

Come early and join us for breakfast.. It is only a short flight from Boonah. All welcome.

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## **Avalon 2009**

By Ian Walker

The Flying Tigers go to the Avalon air show March 2009 – and one of our aircraft fails to return (again).

With the Avalon air show on again from 10<sup>th</sup> March to 16<sup>th</sup> March this year, we decided that the Flying Tigers should once again put in an appearance, so John McKeown, Brian Melbourne and myself began making preparations for the big trip, with Andrew Dunning (Kiwi) in his car as ground support vehicle.

As the departure time drew closer, it became apparent that John was not going to be able to transform his Bush Pig into a Bush Caddy in time to make the trip in the air. Kiwi then nobly decided to substitute in the flying role with his own aircraft (the legendary Drifter 404), and John, showing a similar degree of nobility, decided to perform the crew role in his old faithful Hilux.

### **Part 1 – Preparation**

Due to time constraints with Kiwi's holidays, we decided to ferry his aircraft to Tony's (Lynden Field) near Gunnedah a couple of weeks early, and he set off for Lynden on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, with me following in my car to collect him and provide any necessary ground support or extra fuel for the trip of approximately 260 Nm. With his first position report (via SMS) over Inglewood showing him to be 2 hours ahead of me I gave up the idea of being ground support and after suitable refreshment and comfort stops along the way eventually arrived at Tony's about 4 hours after Kiwi, just in time for a 7 hour drive back to Boonah. With 15 – 20 Knots of tailwind, he had managed to average close to 65 knots of ground speed, which annoyed me considerably, as I figured he'd used up my share of tailwinds as well as his own for the whole Avalon trip. This later proved to be pretty close to the mark.



Installing screen to my Drifter.

The other frantic activity in the few weeks before our departure involved fitting a full canopy to my Wayne Fisher Sports (Drifter) which turned out to be a much larger job than first anticipated, and kept us fully occupied with just time for a decent test flight before setting out. I was hoping that I would see an improvement in fuel consumption, but this did not eventuate. It was however very much more pleasant to fly, and I found that I could cruise very comfortably at 65 knots or more if needed.

## **Part 2 - The trip down**

### **Days 1 (Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March)**

In company with Brian in his Savannah, I depart Boonah on the Thursday morning, which allows us 6 days for the trip to Avalon if needed in case of bad weather. (John McKeown is to leave early am Friday, and Kiwi as soon as he can escape from work, catching us up at Tony's and leaving his car there.)

At a fast cruise (for a drifter) of 65 knots, it takes us over 2 hours for the 89 Nm to Inglewood. This persuades us to divert slightly from our track and call at Moree to take on extra fuel as a safety margin in case the headwinds don't improve. The terrain on this path also allows us to escape even worse headwinds, by safely cruising at less than 1000 feet AGL. The countryside there is basically one giant airfield in an emergency. Altogether, it takes us over 6 hours to make the trip to Lynden, compared to about 4 hours for Kiwi on his trip.

## **Day 2 (Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March)**

Lay day for us, waiting for the rest of the party to catch up. In the afternoon we go into Gunnedah for a meal and monster Jodie (Tony's neighbor) at the cafeteria where she is working part time. John eventually arrives at Tony's at about 9pm, after some exciting and nervous moments of Tom Tom inspired exploration which apparently has done nothing much to improve his travel time. Although leaving about 7 hours later, Kiwi arrives approximately 30 minutes after John – a tribute to both his newly fitted long-range fuel system (in his car) and his personal endurance.

## **Day 3 (Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March)**

Battling headwinds again, we head for Narromine for a quick pit stop and fuel top up before heading on to Leeton, our planned overnight stop. After another longish day of over 6 hours flight time we arrive at Leeton to be greeted by members of the local club, which is comprised of both power and glider pilots (the glider pilots all with independent operator ratings allowing them to operate outside a formal gliding club structure). We are very generously offered the use of the clubhouse for the night and very gratefully accept, making use of various couches and cushions as beds. John, having been slightly delayed by such things as shopping and finding his way by Tom Tom, arrives just in time to do a run into the town to get some fuel and most importantly some food. John is delighted when Kiwi asks him to get 4 cheeseburgers from MacDonald's (about the only place open at that time of night), thinking that Kiwi must be buying him dinner. It turns out however that Kiwi is just very hungry, and the cheeseburgers aren't exactly a large serving, so we all have to buy our own after all.

## **Day 4 ( Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March)**

Kiwi as usual is ready way before me to depart for Shepparton. Suggesting that I'll easily catch him, he departs just as I'm finishing my pre flight. All ok except that one of the last checks is exhaust springs and I've one broken. No problems as I carry spares just in case, but by the time I'm in the air Kiwi's ahead by 25 minutes, not 5 minutes. Brian finds it uncomfortable slowing to less than 70 knots so he goes on ahead as well. Once again, not a problem – it's not the first time I've flown by myself. Next thing my GPS tells me that my batteries are flat. Annoying, but It helps that I've got my map out and know my position accurately, and this leg has plenty of readily identifiable features, so a GPS is just a bonus. I switch to the Shepparton CTAF in time to hear both Brian and Kiwi doing their circuit calls and a few minutes later I'm tied up next to the others after a very pleasant 2.6 hour flight. As it's a Sunday there's a fair bit of activity at the Goulburn Valley Aero club, and it's good to catch up with old friends. We decide to get rooms at the motel next to the airfield and then have dinner at the bistro with Bruce Colmer and Joe and Shirley and friends – a really nice evening.

## **Day 5 (Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March)**

We depart for Lethbridge Airpark via Bridgewater, choosing this track because we're natural cowards these days and like the terrain much better along this route. We decide not to go into Bridgewater as we have (wonder of wonders) a slight tailwind component, and we land at Lethbridge after a very pleasant 3 hour flight. We are as usual made welcome by Gary (the owner) and are once again offered the use of the club facilities until we fly into Avalon on Wednesday. (We are very appreciative of the kindness and assistance offered to us by everyone

at Lethbridge and would like to think that some of these people will call in at Boonah so that we can return the favour in some small measure.)



Lethbridge Air park

### **Day 6 (Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March)**

Lay Day. We go to Geelong to buy a few small items (one of which for me was some stronger rope for my aircraft tie downs), make the mandatory visit to Ray's Camping, and have lunch. We get back to Lethbridge in time to hear an aircraft do an inbound radio call. John gets all excited because he is sure he recognizes the voice as belonging to John Birrell, who owns the Bush Pig – er - Caddy that flies out of Port Pirie. Sure enough a Bush Caddy appears, lands and ties down.



**John Birrell's Bushcaddy**

John Birrell is staying the night and is to fly into Avalon in the morning a little after our slot. As the hotel at nearby Meredith put on a good meal last night, we decide to venture there again, and invite John to join us as there is room in the Hilux for us all to fit at a pinch (or a squeeze). He happily accepts the offer and once again we all enjoy a good meal.

### **Day 7 (Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March)**

8.30 am, the weather is lousy, and our airspace slot is 9.00 am. Low scuddy cloud coming through with showers and it's definitely not VMC. We contact organizers and reschedule our time for 10.00 am, and wait to see what the weather brings. We're in luck; the weather is improving rapidly, and by the time we take off visibility is actually excellent. First waypoint is Anakie, then down the road to the temporary control post at Barwon west where we are to receive approach instructions. Brian takes off first (with John on board for the flight in), followed by me and then Kiwi, on the principle that if fastest goes first we won't have any problem with separation (We are supposed to enter the control zone at 90kts, or as close to as we can manage). Something seems amiss however, as Brian is turning far too early and is way off track for Anakie. Well, maybe he's just cutting the corner – no matter – We'll stay on track and see him at Avalon. Anakie comes up out of the slight haze and I make the right turn to follow the road to Barwon west as per instructions, with Kiwi following behind at a reasonable distance. "Green high wing, separation from preceding traffic is 2 Nm, make left turn, proceed Barwon Prison, prepare to join on base for 18 Right, call Avalon Tower on 120.1 at Barwon Prison." No acknowledgment is required under the special entry procedures so I make a left turn as instructed and follow the stone wall which runs toward Barwon Prison. Then I hear "Red Cessna 185, can you maintain separation behind green high wing". Even though I am maintaining 75kts, which is a pretty good clip for a drifter, I am not surprised to hear a negative reply. Then "Green high wing, you are now number 2. Traffic

is a red Cessna 185 which is passing you to your right.” Once again no radio response is required, and I rock my wings to acknowledge. At this point I slow slightly as the 185 races past, then speed up again as much as possible to try and keep it in sight – any help in finding the landmarks eases the stress slightly, but even at close to 80kts I soon lose sight of him. Barwon Prison cones up underneath and I change to 120.1 and call Avalon tower and am instructed to continue on base for 18 Right and call turning final at the orange painted container. (This had been specially placed there as an indicator to help locate the runway, since poor visibility caused so many problems to pilots in 2007). I proceed in now excellent visibility, and have the runway visual by the time I am 3 miles out. I continue and am now approaching the container. “Fisher Sports 5072, Avalon tower, Do you have orange container sighted?” I reply “Avalon Tower, Fisher Sports 5072, approaching container, expect to turn final approximately 30 seconds”. The Tower comes back “Fisher Sports 5072, continue approach, clear to land” I acknowledge then turn final and land at the third taxiway, flying in ground effect for half the length of the runway after discovering that the first two taxiways had closed gates. A quick call to advise the tower I am clear of runway, and I head for the parking area. I hear Kiwi land after me – he’d pushed his little drifter hard at about 70kts all the way in from Barwon West. Then I hear something unexpected over the radio – Savannah 4213 is landing next after us. I’d imagined that Brian had just cut the corner slightly initially and was already down and parked. No, just a minor hiccup between pilot and temporary navigator requiring some backtracking. (And all this time we thought the Tom Tom was the problem!) We all make our way to our allocated parking spaces, with the two rag and tube aircraft not far from the RAA area, but unfortunately Brian gets parked some distance away with the tinnies. Serves him right, we say, for having an aluminium aircraft in the first place, but we’re disappointed and the organizers are unable to change it at this stage despite all of our pleading. In the scheme of things, it turns out to be a very significant failure.

### **Day 8 (Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March)**

Kiwi is away early to the air show to check out the flight line and any other items of interest. Being conscious of the fact that I am on a holiday, I get out of bed at a more civilized hour, make my way to the Lara sports club beside the camp ground and have breakfast before heading out to the airfield. First stop is my aircraft to check that all is in order, then I decide to ring Kiwi to find his whereabouts. “I’m at the Northern end near the C17 transport” he advises. I look around – yes, there’s the C17 about 200 metres towards the north end of the field. “Ok, I can see it” I say, “you must be somewhere there near the DC3’s then”. “No, I’m at the northern end” Kiwi says, “the DC3’s are at the other end”. I’m silent for a moment (unusual for me) before I reply “they’re at the northern end”. “No” says Kiwi. “look, we landed towards this end on runway 18, didn’t we?” I reply “That’s right”. Kiwi suddenly realizes something is slightly out of whack (in this case, his sense of direction). “No, no, I meant the other north. I’m heading back to the aircraft now so I’ll catch up with you there.” Oh well, at least he worked it out eventually. We all spend most of the day at the airfield as the weather conditions are reasonable.

### **Day 9 (Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March)**

Normally the best day of the air show. It first opens to the public at 2.00 pm on the Friday, and it continues on until 9.30 at night. There is the jet powered glider providing a wonderful fireworks display during his night routine along with general fireworks, a dump and burn from an F111, and a fly-past from the Super Constellation. What a disappointment! About 6.30pm low cloud moves in at about 200 feet AGL. Most of the displays are cancelled including the glider, the Super Constellation merely taxis up the runway and back (it’s apparently VMC only), and when they do

proceed with the dump and burn most of it is not visible except as a glow in the cloud. We leave in disgust and return to our campsite at Lara.

### **Day 10 (Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March)**

D/Day (D for Disaster). We leave early after checking and tightening tie downs, as the wind has been mostly blowing at about 20Kts. We are sitting in the sports club at the Lara campground after a leisurely evening meal when Brian's mobile rings. It's the air show organizers, there's been an incident with Brian's aircraft and they're sending a car to collect us. This sounds serious. We wait an hour for the car to arrive and then spend another hour trying to find our way back in since most of the gates are now locked. We finally make it and it's as bad as we feared. There's been a microburst, and the three aircraft we come to are on their backs. One of them is Brian's beautifully turned out Savannah.

The next couple of hours are like a bad dream. We manage to get the aircraft all back on their wheels, but the damage is severe. The foxbat has been lifted into the air by the microburst and dropped on its tail, which is now folded over the cockpit. It's probably a write-off, and is owned by a lady who is very distressed and is quietly sobbing in the background. The gazelle looks fairly good at first glance, but the aileron on one side is completely broken off, and we suspect that there is probably major structural damage. Brian's Savannah has a smashed tail, the cabin is crushed, the windscreen destroyed, wings badly damaged and one lift strut broken away from the wing. All of these aircraft were very solidly tied down but their stakes were ripped out of the ground by the force of the gust. Amazingly, (according to eye witnesses) the gazelle was actually lifted and thrown completely over John Birrell's bush caddy without touching it – it's just the luck of the draw. Our two drifters are both tied down with tail to the wind and the controls tied with stick forward. Mine are secured tightly with a bungee, in the hopes that if any severe winds hit there will be just a little bit of damping for the forces, whilst Kiwi's are strapped tightly - both aircraft have suffered only minor damage. We both are using screw-its and after this episode I'm inclined to think that they are probably the most secure form of tie down available, with the one major drawback that they are very difficult to get in to rocky ground.



**Upturned Savannah**

### **Day 11 (Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March)**

The day is spent taking Brian's Savannah apart sufficiently to enable him to get it onto a trailer on Monday when vehicles will be allowed in. Brian's friend Peter Glover is bringing in his trailer and is going to take the Savannah to his property at Berrybank North West of Geelong.

### **Day 12 (Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March)**

Amid the turmoil in the aftermath of the storm, this is the day we have to fly out of Avalon. Kiwi leaves early for the airfield to remove the various parts of Brian's Savannah from the customs tent. We have been allowed to use it as a workshop, but it is needed to process departing overseas visitors by 10.00 am. In the cleanup after the air show, there is complete chaos, and it takes him an hour to reach the Savannah. He is just in time, and the customs area is ready when the departing passengers begin turning up. Leaving Brian and John to wait for Peter Glover and supervise the retrieval of the Savannah, Kiwi heads for his drifter. By this time I have also arrived at the airfield, although it has taken me even longer than Kiwi to get there. We both do another very careful check of our aircraft and prepare to depart, even though the weather is lousy. Avalon ATIS has the wind at 26 kts of crosswind, and there are showers around, but visibility is reasonable. I call Avalon ground and am given permission to line up on the taxiway after the DC3. My mistake, he actually said DC3's – there are two of them. I wait for the second to pass and then join the queue, with Kiwi behind me. Another aircraft attempts to barge into the line, so Kiwi

checks with ground controller, and is confirmed as next in line. Before long I am next to go and I call "Avalon Tower, Drifter 5072 is now No. 1 Taxiway Charlie". My radio must have been a little scratchy as the tower asks me to repeat my call sign, which I do. I am told to line on runway 18. Kiwi also calls to advise that he now no. 1 Charlie for departure in company with Drifter 5072. To our surprise, he is told to also line up on runway 18 beside me – this is not quite what we meant but the tower confirms and clears us for immediate departure. I ease on the power and as I reach full revs I am running out of left rudder, so I allow the nose to ease a little into the wind (the runway is very wide) and then very quickly lift off. The ATIS may have been advising 26 kts of crosswind, but it was probably closer to 40 kts in actual fact. I am crabbing at about a 45 degree angle to maintain runway heading, and even Kiwi is doing an almost vertical takeoff. The tower gives us permission to make an early right turn and we set off for Lethbridge. The people watching on the ground see us turn into the wind and seem to stop and then gradually creep off as we ease out of our climb to cruise speed. Although I am doing 70 kts, my ground speed is only around 30 kts, and after a few minutes the tower calls me to ask if I am clear of the restricted area. I reply "Avalon Tower, Drifter 5072, approximately 2 miles to go to clear control zone". I have a bit of static in my headset and I don't clearly hear the reply from the tower, but it sounds like "That'll be about 15 minutes". I'm not sure so I pass up the offered opportunity for a smartass reply. I approach the edge of the control zone and call "Avalon tower, Drifter 5072 departing restricted area now, thanks for your assistance". The answer comes back in typical fashion "No worries, have a good day". By this time Kiwi has dropped back a little, but is soon clear of the controlled airspace. Ahead is a huge rain shower which is completely obscuring Lethbridge, but we hold our course as we know where it should be, and the shower is moving away. After a 40 minute flight for the 18 nm we land at Lethbridge Airpark and tie down. We spend a couple of hours on the ground. Kiwi makes some minor adjustments to his aircraft while we wait for the weather to improve, and then we set off for Peter Glover's private strip, about 40 miles to the West. It is an uneventful flight except for the headwind, and eventually we land and taxi through the gate up to his hangar, which now safely houses Brian's damaged Savannah. We tie down in a nice sheltered area and as we have been invited to stay the night, we enjoy an excellent evening in the company of Peter and his wife.



### **Day 13 (Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March)**

We prepare to depart from Peter's strip under a heavy overcast, with a slight South Westerly on the ground. As it has rained overnight, Peter suggests we take off down wind from his cross strip which has a firmer surface. The cloud base is fairly low when we set off, probably no more than 1000 feet AGL, and he advises us to track about 10 miles west of Ballarat to avoid the higher ground. Once in the air, we have a tail wind of about 15 knots, which makes a nice change. The terrain below is all nice landable paddocks, which is good as we are forced down to not much more than 500 feet AGL for a short while. We consider the option of a precautionary search and landing, but we can see ahead that the cloud base is much higher. We press on as the conditions gradually improve, and by the time we land at Bridgewater the cloud base is close to 3000 feet. We have a short wait for our ground support vehicle, which now also has Brian on board. They arrive and do an extra fuel run for us as we are hoping to get to Temora tonight and want to take off with full tanks. Brian brings food in a brown paper bag with "Planet Ark" or something similar on it. Don't ask for a plastic bag in Bridgewater – they would rather use trees than oil. After an uneventful flight with a short comfort stop at Tocumwal, we land at Temora where we are greeted by Dr. Carol Richards. Thanks to solid tail winds it's only taken us 5.5 hours to cover the 300 odd miles from Peter's strip south of Ballarat. We have been invited to stay overnight with Carol and her husband Sam and we have gratefully accepted the invitation so we taxi our aircraft to her house and tie down outside to await the arrival of John and Brian. Once again there is a slight delay (Tom Tom again?) and by the time they arrive Carol has dinner almost ready for us. A very bright and entertaining lady called Anne Marie is also staying with Carol while she completes a right seat pilot's course (for partners of pilots). A very pleasant evening is had by all and we eventually retire to our very comfortable beds to recuperate for the next days' flight or drive (as the case may be) to Tony's.



#### **Day 14 (Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March)**

We thank Carol and Sam profusely for their hospitality, and depart for Lynden. We are tracking for Parkes and then possibly for Wellington, depending on what the conditions are like, and even more important (for drifters), on what the ground below is like. We have slight headwinds, but not too bad so we have enough fuel to go via Wellington, which is reportedly a very nice place to visit, but from about 6000 feet there seem to be a few large patches of forest that we would need to cross. Recalling our self imposed status as aerial cowards, we chicken out and alter our course for Narromine figuring that we will want a comfort stop about there. After a 2.8 hour flight, we land at Narromine in rough thermally conditions (aren't they always?) where we take a short break and also take on an extra 20 litres of fuel each in case the headwinds strengthen. We find conditions unchanged, and after a 2.6 hour flight we land at Tony's and treat ourselves to a very welcome drink. We think my propeller may be just a little too coarse, so we fine it up a little and I take it for a test flight. It may be partly that I have unloaded all my gear, but whatever the reason, it climbs like a rocket. The maximum revs are still within acceptable limits so I land and put the aircraft away. The prop setting will be ok for the trip back to Boonah.

#### **Day 15 (Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March)**

Mark Gamer has flown down in his Technam Sierra to join in the fun. We all spend the day at Tony's, venturing into Gunnedah for lunch and to buy fuel and a few groceries (except for John, who is obviously feeling lonely and has headed for home already). When we get back to Tony's we find that Brian has locked the gate on the way out and Tony hasn't got his key with him. Fortunately Jodie has a key, and a call to her brings a prompt response, so we are soon all enjoying a cold drink. Today is also our chance to again experience the carefree flying that comes from having a private airstrip in the midst of many thousands of hectares of beautiful flat

paddocks. Mark especially seems to be enjoying the conditions and gives his aircraft a good workout.



### **Day 16 (Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March)**

I depart from Tony's at about 9 am, followed closely by Mark, who struggles to overtake me – after all, he's only travelling about 60 kts faster than me. Kiwi is not flying back since he'd left his car at Tony's on the way down. He'll be back to collect his aeroplane when he goes to Narromine, with a bit of luck – if not then the first fine weekend after Narromine. I set course by myself for Inglewood with a slight tailwind and cover the 170 miles in about 3 hours. I've probably set my prop just a little too fine at Lynden, as I'm a couple of knots down on my normal cruise speed but there's no problem, I've got plenty of fuel on board and I'm making good progress. This slows markedly when I alter course for the final 25 miles into Inglewood (after dodging the tiger country to the south west of Inglewood) as I'm now heading in a more Easterly direction. This section is quite rough and the approach and landing at Inglewood as usual is bumpy and unpleasant – there's never any lack of thermals in the circuit. I land, take a quick comfort stop, and top up my fuel. I call Brian who is with Kiwi and he advises me not to spend too much time at Inglewood. Mark Gamer has been in contact with Brian. He's arrived back at Boonah and the weather's ok, but there are storms predicted and it won't pay to be late back. I advise that I'm planning to leave within 15 minutes and expect to arrive at Boonah between 2.00 and 2.30 pm.

I depart for Boonah and climb for height to tackle that ugly stretch of country between Inglewood and Warwick. Murphy's Law is being enforced today, and I find nothing but sink as I get over the worst of it. I hate having to work the engine this hard especially over poor terrain, but I must keep enough height to glide to one of the few landable paddocks on route. I get over the worst of the country and suddenly I am in good air again and it's all good country in front. I breathe a sigh of relief. Warwick comes up on my right as I switch to CTAF and give a radio call. Gradually

Cunningham's Gap edges closer, and then suddenly I'm through the Gap and over good paddocks again. I change to Boonah CTAF and give my inbound call and join the circuit. The wind seems a bit variable but mostly Southeast, and landing on 22 seems like a great option. I land, taxi up to the hangar and switch off with relief. All I've got to do now is manage to get out of the aircraft (I'm a little bit stiff and sore by this stage), and then find my car keys and hangar keys which are stashed somewhere in my gear. I do a bit of searching, eventually find both, and get my aircraft away just in time to avoid a shower drifting in from the East. Home at last!

### **Conclusion**

Total time for the trip for my aircraft was 37.4 hours. We were all having a great time until Saturday evening at Avalon, but the storm and the damage to Brian's plane in particular, completely spoiled things. It will return better than ever we are sure, but for the time being, once again,

### **ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT HAS FAILED TO RETURN.**

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### **Letter from Ian Baker**

Attached below is a letter recently received from Ian Baker regarding his Recreational Flying website.



# Recreational Flying (.com.au)

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20 April 2009

Dear Club Committee and Members

I am writing to you to let you and your club members know about all the FREE services that are available to support every RAAus Club and introduce you to a website on the internet that has supported Recreational Aviation in Australia and its members for over 4 years called Recreational Flying (.com.au).

Recreational Flying (.com.au) is completely non commercial and commenced over 4 years ago. It was created to provide free resources to all RAAus members as a home on the internet where pilots can come together and communicate and assist each other in areas of flying safety, aircraft maintenance and flying skills. This was all in the hope that through the exchange of information in one centralised place accident rates would be reduced, flying recreational aircraft is promoted and the fostering of a greater recreational flying community. Membership to the site is free and is simply by way of registering, and Recreational Flying (.com.au) is currently used by nearly 4,000 recreational pilots and growing every day. Pilots through helping each other are solving many maintenance issues, resolving problems with their aircraft, learning many safety aspects of flying and in fact several pilots have commented that had they not read a post of another pilot's experience at Recreational Flying they would have come to grief.

The professionalism of flying a recreational aircraft is also developed with the ability to converse at any time day or night with a pilot's peers and with the site being so large with over 75,000 pieces of information, pilots have the opportunity to find answers to many of their questions from intersection departures to engine failures – all through other pilot's experiences. We also have a group that we call the Brains Trust who are a select few individuals with thousands of hours experience to ensure threads are steered appropriately with correct information with a final "Please speak to your instructor on this". Recreational Flying (.com.au) is heavily moderated to ensure that it remains free from any trouble makers that do not follow the site rules and that there is NO commercial interest. This ensures a great friendly and helpful environment for all recreational flyers.

Some of the free resources available to your club members and all recreational pilots are:

- Extensive forums on all aspects of flying including aircraft type user groups
- Large Photo Gallery with images of all kinds of aircraft and club events
- Aviation articles from what to carry in your aircraft to the different types of Airspeed
- Free classifieds for site members to sell or even auction anything they have in aviation
- Links to hundreds of different aviation sites – from engines to aircraft
- Member's Blogs – you can create your own blog for everyone to read
- A vast number of Video Clips that you can watch on anything aviation

- Google Earth Airfields so you can see what to expect at an airfield that you may be flying to
- Free Flight Planner that even gives you a cross section of elevation
- The most extensive Weather page on the internet – even recommended at the NatFly forums
- Events Calendar for you to see what aviation events are coming up that you may like to attend
- Aviation Terms plus so many more resources to support RAAus members – and ALL FREE

Recreational Flying (.com.au) would also like to offer you and your club members, and like everything else on the site completely for free; many more resources that we hope will assist your club:

- **Recreational Flying Club Page** – with Recreational Flying (.com.au) continually promoting the flying of recreational aircraft around Australia many new flyers come to the site often asking where is their local club. You can create a page on your club in the Clubs section of the site which is also randomly displayed on the Home Page of Recreational Flying for everyone to see.
- **Your Own Club Forum** – your club can have its own forum on Recreational Flying for your club members to get together anytime day or night, you can promote your club activities there or discuss with your club members anything about what your club may be doing.
- **Your Own Club Photo Gallery** – have your own club Photo Gallery without any hosting costs to show everyone your club pictures at Recreational Flying including features of having slide shows and albums.
- **Your Own Club Calendar and Event Organiser** – a calendar can be created for your club so members can see what events are happening and when and it even has an RSVP system where you can see those members that have RSVP'd for your event. If you have your own aircraft or a school you can have a booking calendar so members/students can see when there is a vacancy and book an aircraft/lesson at any time day or night wherever they may be. Instructors also wherever they may be or at any time can see what bookings they have for that day, tomorrow or next week – it's all free. A booking calendar can even be setup for syndicates in your club to see when their aircraft is available to use.
- **Free Web Site Hosting** – do you have a website? Recreational Flying will host your website completely free with no hosting costs, no traffic costs and you can edit the pages whenever you like. If you don't have a website we can help create one for you, again it is free as this is what Recreational Flying does to help support the RAAus community. An example of this is the Thruster Operators Support Group at

<http://www.thrustersupport.org> with links to forums and a Photo Gallery that we set up for them.

- **Your Own Video Chat Room** – would you like to be able to conduct a committee meeting without the members even leaving their home? You can use a private Video Chat Room at Recreational Flying to conduct any video/speech/text conference at any time – its even great for an instructor to present an answer to a question that a student may have visually with that student or group of students.
- **Free Credit Card Facilities** – the banks charge enormous fees for you to have a credit card facility which just comes out of your club's membership fees – isn't it better to use these funds for other club's activities. A credit card payment area is setup for your club so that when someone pays you by credit card you receive an email that it has been paid. At the end of the day those funds are then transferred to your club bank account. There are no bank fees and just another service that Recreational Flying provides to the recreational aviation community.
- **Club Exposure In The RAAus Magazine** – although not confirmed as yet but Recreational Flying is hoping to sponsor an article on a different club in each RAAus magazine edition. This will help to promote the RAAus clubs to all the recreational flying and general public that read the magazine.

Furthermore, Recreational Flying through its vast site user list would like to explore any other ways of assisting clubs in areas like group purchasing benefits, event organising and more. For over 4 years Recreational Flying (.com.au) has been supporting RAAus members and will continue to do so for many years to come often being the entry point for many new recreational aviators. If you haven't heard of the site then please have a look and see how it can help your club and its members.

These are just some of the features that are available to support RAAus clubs, their members and the whole RAAus community. However, if there is anything else that Recreational Flying can do or to discuss anything already listed then please just let me know by phoning, Ian Baker on 03 9444-8025 – hope to hear from you soon.  
Ian Baker