



YMURmurs

MURWILLUMBAH AERO CLUB NEWSLETTER No. 7 February / March 2026

<https://ymur.com.au/>

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President:	Martyn Jackson	0410 669 704
Secretary:	Bruce Gard	0418 518 000

Welcome to another edition of YMURmurs newsletter. This edition includes reports on a couple of flyaways, a visit to Southport Flying Club, a visit from CASA about changes to Ballina airspace, info about the Back to Murwillumbah Fly-in on 2-3 May and our State of Origin Comp in June.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions on things you'd like to see included and how we could make it more interesting or relevant to your world of aviation.

Email us at: news@ymur.com.au

Philip Arthur & Bill Dennis

Snippets from February committee meeting

Three aviators applied for membership.

- Jonathan Rodda, who lives near Canungra, is originally from South Australia where he flew gliders from age 13 as a member of the Naracoorte aeroclub. He flew for Qantas for 23 years and instructed for a few years. He also had a few years flying Islanders for Coastwatch. After joining Qantas quite young he had 8 years flying long hauls in 747s as second officer. This was followed by 12 years flying short haul, then back to long haul, and now flying 737s short haul. It's 26 years since he flew a 172 but he's keen to get back into one. Now has about 18,000 hours.
- Francis Fung, originally from Hong Kong, is from Clear Island Waters and gained his CPL from Airways Aviation 6 months ago. He hadn't flown much until recently and now has about 200 hours. He intends to do his multiengine rating soon and will try to stay in Australia long term.
- Paul Kelly lives in Robina and completed his CPL at the beginning of 2025 at Airways Aviation but hasn't flown much since. He originally wanted to fly commercial but doesn't want to any more. He's found it's more difficult than he thought to get a job and there's a "huge cost to get qualified". He has a passion for private flying. Paul works in the Oil and gas industry for the Bechtel construction company, mainly constructing LNG refineries. He hasn't done any flying apart from with Airways and has about 160 hours so far.

David Charles from Gatton Airpark dropped into the meeting. He is a former member of MAC, having joined in 1975. He helped to build our clubhouse building when it was only a single floor. When he was a member here they held a flyin each year of vintage aeroplanes and lined them up along the runway. He and some others decided to hold a "Back to Murbah" weekend and they came up with the date of 2-3 May this year. It could be over one or two nights. He said there are lots of interested people. So far 8 people say they want to fly in. On Sunday 3 May we would be holding our flying comp day so we could combine it with the fly-in as a sort of open day.

David said there are over 20 planes hangered at Gatton. They have a social club at Gatton that holds an annual fly-in in the middle of June. MAC is invited to attend.

In December we used lots of fuel so got below 1000 litres and got fuel within 2 days.

The end of year party will be held on the 29th November this year to avoid the Christmas rush.

RYC flew 62.7 hours for January which must be almost a record.

The Southport charity breakfast on 28 Feb was discussed.

Snippets from March committee meeting

RYC flew 22.7hours in February.

There is currently 4800 L fuel remaining so we will look at ordering some more.

The 100 hourly was completed in February. The hand brake was fixed and new o-rings were installed in the wheel cylinders.

The radios were checked by Cam after reports that there were malfunctions but he did not find any issues with them. There can be confusion over operation of the radios for pilot and passengers so a simple operation guide appears in this newsletter to remind members how to operate them. There may be some issues with various headsets so the radios should be adjusted each time before you fly to suit your individual headsets.

The February flying comp went well despite getting off to a late start due to weather but everyone enjoyed the cooked breakfast while they waited for the clouds to clear. Jason won with 55pts. Bill was second and Nick third.

Gary Clarke is organising a mini open day on April 12th. About 6 young people have registered their interest in attending. Gary has a 30 minute powerpoint presentation that he will talk to.

The meeting with two CASA reps was discussed. See article later in the newsletter.

17 members turned up on 17th January for our working bee and did an amazing job of cleaning up the clubhouse, the hangar, RYC and around the airstrip markers.

Watts Bridge breakfast Sunday 15th March

There will be a fly-in breakfast at Watts Bridge airfield this Sunday. It's always a popular event with 20 or so aircraft flying in.

15 WBMA - QWVAA Watts For Breakfast??

7:30am - 9:30am

Watts For Breakfast?? is back for 2026 proudly hosted by homebase group the Queensland Warbirds & Vintage Aircraft Association (QWVAA).



John Yates
0416-287-717

UPDATE!!

It has now been confirmed that some extra special warbirds will be dropping in for breakfast!! Expect to see on-field a WWII Spitfire, a Mustang P51D and a P40 Warhawk!

We will be firing up the BBQ's to cook an absolute feast of sausages, bacon, eggs, and beans plus all the usual extras. So whatever you do, fly-in or drive-in to Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield for Watts For Breakfast?? Everyone is Welcome!! Adults are \$20/meal, with kids under 10yo just \$5/meal.

Proudly sponsored by IGA Toogoolawah.



Mini open day on April 12th

Come along to our mini open day on April 12th where we plan to run a pilot briefing session before the fly comp. This will be a session from 8.30am to 9.30am upstairs in the clubhouse. The purpose of the session is to provide budding pilots with a "How to get started in aviation as a pilot" session. The content will include

1. Getting an ARN
2. Getting a medical
3. Getting an ASIC
4. What a TIF involves
5. What books to purchase
6. Headset options
7. Maps / Charts.

We plan to have a starter kit ready for them which includes the ARN application form, DAME contacts and locations, ASIC requirements, recommended books / log book, headset options and costs...etc. This can be a handout in the morning so they can go away and start the process of getting ready to fly.

Back to Murwillumbah Fly-in May 2-3

A group of former YMUR flyers is organising a fly-in for vintage and other aircraft to be held at YMUR on the weekend of 2-3 May. The picture below is from a similar fly-in held at YMUR in the early 1980s, taken from the clubhouse. It gives a hint of the turnout then. The organisers expect people will fly in on Saturday 2nd and some will stay overnight. They are talking to the Murwillumbah Lions Club about providing a barbecue for attendees on the Saturday evening and Sunday morning. MAC members are invited to attend and join in the activities. There will be no MAC flying comp that day.





Recreate the heady days of the 1980s when the annual vintage aeroplane flyin to Murwillumbah was the highlight of the year.

Join the others who will be heading for Murwillumbah on the weekend of

2nd and 3rd May 2026.

Put it in your calendar now!



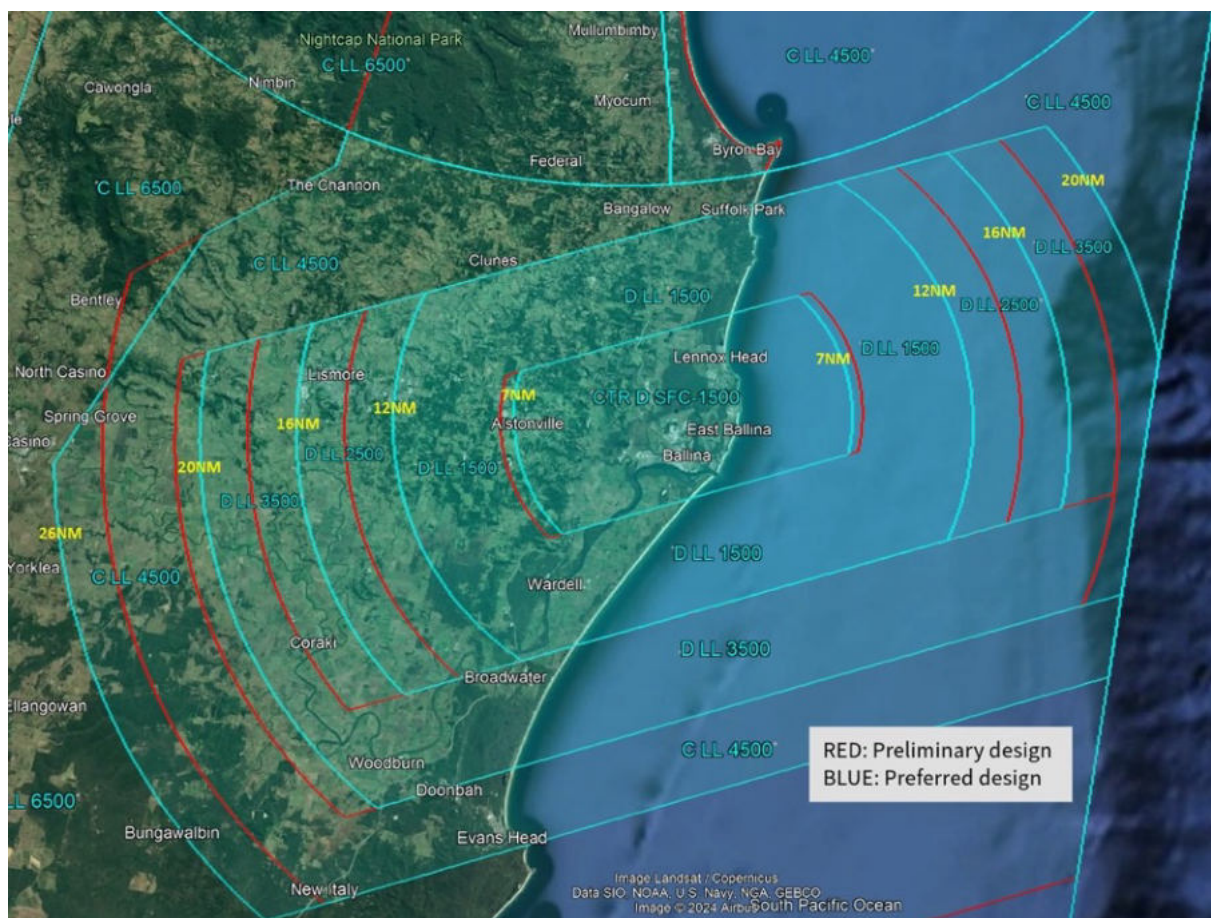
Ballina Airspace changes from 9th July 2026

On Thursday 5th March Ballina two CASA representatives visited our clubhouse to talk about imminent changes to the airspace around Ballina. Anthony Nugent is the Manager of Office of Airspace Regulation, based in Brisbane and Anthony Lawler is an airspace projects specialist, based in Canberra.

The airspace around Ballina has been the site of some incidents in past years so in 2017 CASA formally recognised the airspace risks and started to look at ways to avoid risks and keep aircraft separated. Initially they put in a radio service but it created a few more problems than it solved such as radio frequency congestion. Later a mandatory broadcast area was introduced but it was still not good enough. More recently a flight information service was introduced and that's what is operating now, with air traffic controllers based in Brisbane. When approaching the Ballina area, we need to ask them for a code and they'll provide traffic info. However, this arrangement still has problems.

In November 2023 CASA decided to install actual control services at Ballina. There have been controlled airspace steps designed as shown in the image below, extracted from the Casa consultation hub. Red lines are the preliminary proposal and the blue are the preferred design after consultation.

<https://consultation.casa.gov.au/stakeholder-engagement-group/ballina-preferred-airspace-design/>



A new VTC will be published on 16th April and the new airspace will become active on 9th July. It will be a Delta CTR to 1500ft AMSL with Delta airspace above to 4500ft. There will be Charlie airspace above 4500ft. The control zone will be active from 7am – 8pm. We will need to squawk 3000 on the transponder and call up the tower and receive a response from the controller before entering the control zone, similar to Archerfield and Sunshine Coast. There will be a number of preferred visual approach waypoints. ERSa will be updated prior to July 9th.

The tower will be manned with Air Services personnel from July but at some later stage it will change to remote operation, when controllers will sit in Brisbane.

Two ALAs that are presently in the mandatory broadcast zone will in future be outside the CTR. These are Blueberry Fields and Alstonville South. Alstonville will be on Lismore frequency from 9th July. Blueberry Fields will probably be on the frequency used by Tyagarah and YMUR.

Air Services/CASA will make another presentation to the club on the week commencing 3rd May. It will last approximately 2 hours and will be held on a week day evening.

February Flying Day Results

Name	Normal	Flapless	Glide	Total
Brenton Smith	25	0	0	25
Bill Dennis	25	0	5	30
Mick Hennessey	15	0	0	15
Stephen Gochman	0	0	5	5
Gary Clarke	25	0	0	25
Jason Prigoone	25	0	15	40
Sherie Sunderland	25	0	0	25

March Flying Day Results

Name	Normal	Flapless	Glide	Total
Bill Dennis	5	15	0	20
Nick Christian	0	5	0	5
Sherie Sunderland	0	0	0	0
Jason Prigoone	25	25	5	55
Gary Clarke	0	0	0	0

State of Origin comp 13th June

A contingent from Redcliffe Aero Club will join us again for another state of origin flying comp on Saturday 13th June. RAC members will fly down on Saturday morning and may stay overnight. Plans to be finalised closer to the date.



Interest in flyaways?

We'd like to gauge interest in members for flyaways to nearby destinations this year. We have ideas for single day trips to:

- Yamba (Palmers Island) for lunch at the beach
- Evans Head aviation museum plus lunch at the surfclub
- Straddie Breakfast at Dunwich (every 3rd Saturday of the month)
- Gatton Airpark for lunch (we've been invited there by residents)

Also a couple of ideas for trips further afield:

- Southern coastal flying weekend – Coffs, Nambucca Heads, Port Macquarie, Old Bar, and/or Forster
- Scone aviation museum/Mudgee
- Temora airshow weekend
- Whitsundays safari anchored around the Shute Harbour Runway Dinner on Saturday 12th September



Yamba



Gatton Airpark

If there is interest, some members have access to aircraft apart from RYC so we could go as a group. Talk to Philip Arthur if you're interested. Meanwhile the following pages show a few events that are coming up.

Gatton Airpark Social Club

invites you to our

Annual Breakfast Fly-In



Saturday 27th June, 2026

Breakfast served between 8.00 - 9.30am

\$15 for cooked breakfast

\$5 barista coffee

Fly or Drive

RSVP Gina Mathers, Message 0427 546 511



WINGS OVER SHELLHARBOUR

16-17 MAY 2026, SHELLHARBOUR AIRPORT NSW



WARBIRDS OVER SCONE

28 - 29 MARCH 2026

EXPERIENCE THE BIGGEST WARBIRO SHOW
IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.

TIX ON SALE NOW | PRE-PURCHASE + SAVE



PAY'S



The Quiz

1. An aircraft wanting to fly for maximum endurance would fly at what altitude?

- A. Full throttle height to stay aloft for maximum time
- B. Critical height to stay aloft for maximum time
- C. Minimum altitude to travel maximum distance
- D. Minimum altitude to stay aloft for maximum time

2. Refer to the following TAF for Merimbula (YMER).

TAF AMD YMER 082315Z 0800/0812 02020G35KT 9999 -RA BKN030 BKN100 FM080500 25015KT 9999 -RASH BKN025

INTER 0804/0808 3000 -TSRA SCT010 SCT050CB

INTER 0808/0812 5000 BKN010

T 18 18 17 15 Q 1003 1003 1008 1009

If your ETA at YMER is 080815 UTC, the lowest visibility forecast for your arrival is?

- A. 8000 m
- B. 10 km
- C. 5000 m
- D. 3000 m

3. While cruising at A045 OCTA you notice that another aircraft is converging on you from the left at the same level. You should?

- A. Give way to the other aircraft
- B. Maintain your present height and heading but be prepared to take action to avoid a collision if necessary
- C. Climb to pass over the other aircraft
- D. Descent to pass under the other aircraft

4. At a non-towered aerodrome, the latest recommended position at which an aircraft should join the circuit is?

- A. On the downwind leg abeam the upwind threshold
- B. On the downwind leg at mid-field
- C. On the crosswind leg
- D. On the upwind leg

5. A METAR is routinely issued?

- A. at 12 hourly intervals
- B. on the hour and half hour
- C. on the hour

- D. whenever one or more observed meteorological elements meet specified criteria significant to aviation
6. What is the effect of increased pressure altitude on take-off distance?
- A. It increases the take-off distance
 - B. It has no effect on take-off distance
 - C. It improves engine performance
 - D. It decreases the take-off distance
7. Two aircraft of the same type are flying near each other in ISA conditions, but aircraft 1 is at 4000 ft AMSL with 1013 HPa set on the altimeter subscale, and aircraft 2 at 4500 ft AMSL with 1003 HPa set. The actual vertical separation between the aircraft is closest to?
- A. 500 ft
 - B. 200 ft
 - C. 800 ft
 - D. 850 ft
8. Given the airport elevation is 900 ft AMSL. If the pilot sets the QNH, the barometric altimeter reading would be?
- A. Always the pressure altitude
 - B. Always the density height
 - C. Always the pressure height
 - D. 900 ft
9. TAS and IAS are the same at?
- A. All altitudes provided it is ISA temperature at all altitudes
 - B. At any altitude provided there is no instrument error
 - C. At any altitude provided there is no instrument error or position (pressure) error
 - D. At sea level, in ISA conditions, with no position or instrument errors
10. What forces act through the Centre of Gravity (CG)?
- A. Lift
 - B. Weight
 - C. Drag
 - D. Thrust
 - E. All of these forces act through the CG

ANSWERS ARE ON THE LAST PAGE

A simple guide to RYC's GMA 340 audio panel

Know and love your Garmin audio panel. Take particular note of the knobs. The left knobs control the Pilot only. The right side controls the co-pilot and if you pull out the small knob, controls the rear passengers.



INTERCOM CONTROLS (SUMMARY)

Intercom volume and squelch are adjusted using the following front panel knobs:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| LEFT SMALL KNOB — | Pilot Intercom volume and power ON/OFF |
| LEFT LARGE KNOB — | Pilot Intercom Squelch level. |
| RIGHT SMALL KNOB — | IN position: Copilot Intercom volume.
OUT position: Rear Passengers Intercom volume. |
| RIGHT LARGE KNOB — | Copilot and rear passengers mic squelch level. |

PILOT isolates the pilot from everyone else and dedicates the aircraft radios to the pilot exclusively. The copilot and passengers share communication between themselves but cannot communicate with the pilot or hear the aircraft radios.

CREW places the pilot and copilot on a common Intercom communication channel. The passengers are on their own intercom channel and can communicate with each other, but cannot communicate with the crew or hear the aircraft radios.

ALL *PILOT & CREW lights are not lit.* Allows full intercom communication between everyone plugged in to the GMA 340. Aircraft radios are heard by all.

Murwillumbah Aero Club Calendar 2026				Updated 09 Mar 2026
Month	DATE	TIME (NSW)	TIME (QLD)	
January	Sun 18 Jan	08:00	07:00	Working bee at clubrooms (Garden and Interior)
February	Sun 1 Feb '26	08:00	07:00	Club Flying Comp
	Mon 9 Feb '26	19:00	18:00	Monthly Committee Meeting
March	Sun 1 Mar '26	08:00	07:00	Club Flying Comp
	Mon 9 Mar '26	19:00	18:00	Monthly Committee Meeting
April	Sun 12 Apr '26	08:00		Club Flying Comp & Quiz
	Mon 13 Apr '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
	Sat 25 Apr '26			Anzac Day Fly Over
May	Sat 2 May '26			Back to Murwillumbah fly-in Day 1
	Sun 3 May '26			Back to Murwillumbah fly-in Day 2
	Sun 3 May '26	08:00		No flying comp due fly-in
	Mon 11 May '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
June	Sun 7 Jun '26	08:00		Club Flying Comp & Quiz 1hr Pilot info session in clubroom
	Mon 15 Jun '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
	Sat 13 Jun '26			"State of Origin" spot landing comp at YMUR
	Sat 27 Jun '26			Gatton Airpark Breakfast Fly-in
	Tue 30 Jun '26			Club Membership renewal deadline
July	Sun 5 Jul '26	08:00		Club Flying Comp & Quiz Club Open Day
	Mon 13 Jul '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
August	Sun 2 Aug '26	08:00		Club Flying Comp & Quiz
	Mon 10 Aug '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
September	Sun 6 Sep '26	00:00		Club Flying Comp & Quiz
	Sat 12 Sep '26			Shute Harbour Runway Dinner Possible fly-away
	Mon 14 Sep '26	19:00		Monthly Committee Meeting
		08:00		Inter Club Challenge
October	Sun 4 Oct '26	08:00	07:00	Club Flying Comp & Quiz 1hr Info session
	Mon 12 Oct '26	19:00	18:00	Monthly Committee Meeting
November	Sun 1 Nov '26	08:00	07:00	Club Flying Comp & Quiz
	Mon 9 Nov '26	19:00	18:00	Annual General Meeting
	Sun 29 Nov '26	12:00	11:00	End of Year Party / Presentations
December	Mon 7 Dec '26	19:00	18:00	Monthly Committee Meeting

Why not pay your 2026 membership fee now?



Don't lose your cool
Get in early and avoid the end of financial year rush
That way you can fly RYC the whole year
At just \$1.63 per week it's the best value in the land
Transfer \$85 to:
Murwillumbah Aero Club
BSB 032563
Account 560358

Just a reminder that members can only fly VH-RYC, our C172, solo if you're current flying that particular aircraft. Every plane is different so even if you've flown another 172 you're only "current" if you've flown RYC as PIC within the past 90 days. This stipulation is a requirement of our insurance policy. You have to write your due date for currency on the invoice before you fly. If you haven't flown in the past 90 days, a check flight with one of our approved instructor members will set you up to go solo. Call one of the following instructors to arrange a time for a check flight:

Gary 0409 646 242	Cam 0488 198 544
Dominic 0423 283 893	Jason 0402 765 317

Our flight docket (as shown to the right) that must be filled out when you hire C172 RYC.

Also remember that it's up to you as pilot in command to **include any landing/parking fees** (if applicable) along with hours flown in your invoice and pay them within a couple of days of each flight. To make things easier we've posted a list of the most common landing strips in the local area on the notice board along with the cost for landing/parking at each one. Please check this list first and add the relevant amount to your invoice after you've completed your flight. If the airstrip or airport isn't listed, please contact the ARO of the relevant location and ask them what the landing fee/parking fee (if anything) is.

And if you buy fuel away from YMUR you may deduct an amount for the fuel from your bill. If the fuel costs you less per litre than at YMUR then deduct the amount you actually paid. If it costs more, then deduct the amount you would've paid at YMUR for that many litres. So if you fill up at Bourke and it costs you \$4 per litre, only deduct the amount it would've costed you at YMUR (say for example \$2.90).

We appreciate all members' co-operation with filling out the form, including all landing fees, each time you hire the aircraft. **Also note that the hire rate is currently \$270 per hour.**

MURWILLUMBAH AERO CLUB INC.

ABN 59 001 253 872 accounts@ymur.com.au
PO BOX 254 MURWILLUMBAH NSW 2484 PHONE 02 6672 3235

FLIGHT DOCKET

9999

TAX INVOICE/RECEIPT

PILOT IN COMMAND (PRINT)

Mobile 04Wtkg

AIRCRAFT

DATE OF FLIGHT

TIME OF HIRE

VH-RYC

UNTIL

I AM CURRENT IN RYC UNTIL:

MY MEDICAL IS VALID UNTIL:

NEXT FLIGHT REVIEW DUE:

Note: For insurance purposes you must have flown RYC within the last 90 days to be current. If not, you need to do a check flight with one of the Club's approved check pilots before flying solo.

PASSENGERS / INSTRUCTOR

1.

Mobile 04Wtkg

2.

Mobile 04Wtkg

3.

Mobile 04Wtkg

FLIGHT ROUTE (UNDERLINE ANY LANDINGS)

I undertake to comply with the Approved Flight Manual which I have read and had explained to me including its requirements and any special instructions.

If the Club's aircraft or any other property is damaged or someone is injured whilst the Club's aircraft is in my care and control I will indemnify the Club for the full amount of any insurance claim excess/ deductible, or up to \$5,000 if no insurance claim is made, at the discretion of the Club's board.

My legal right to fly is current in all respects including RYC currency, medical certificate and flight review.

PIC ARN/LICENCE NO..... LICENCE CLASS.....

VDO END

VDO START

HOURS

RATE \$/HR

\$

FLIGHT CHARGE

\$

LANDING AT

LANDING AT

LANDING AT

LANDING AT

OTHER FEES

TOTAL CHARGES

FLIGHT CHARGE

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

CHARGE TO:

MEMBER NO:

SIGNATURE:

BANKING DETAILS

MURWILLUMBAH AERO CLUB

BSB: 032563

ACC NO: 560358

Orchid Beach Flyaway 22nd February

By Philip Arthur

Hot on the heels of RYCs 100 hourly, two aircraft from MAC - Sherie, Jason and Dean in one aircraft and Bill, Stephen and me in the other - flew up to Orchid Beach on Fraser Island/Kgari on Sunday 22nd February. It was originally meant to be a Redcliffe Aero Club flyaway but we ended up outnumbering the RAC guys as only one plane flew in from there with Paul and Kelly. However, there were a few other aircraft up there with flyers from Amberley, Toowoomba etc.



Bill was PIC for the flight up and it was a great flight even though we had a bit of cloud to contend with.

Originally planning to climb to 8500ft and pass over Brisbane, Bill asked for a code from Brisbane Centre and we took off to the north. However, some pesky cloud got in the way so as we were flying VFR we had to head out towards Straddie. Over the Gold Coast the cloud cleared enough so we could climb. By that time though there were other larger aircraft in the vicinity and Brisbane just happened to change the active runway so our climb was slowed while the transition occurred and until we were well clear of other traffic. By the time we reached Morton Island we were at 8500 ft and above the clouds.



With the help and guidance of Brisbane Centre and Brisbane Approach we remained at 8500ft over the top of the Sunshine Coast and Noosa. We exited controlled airspace and descended just before Double Island Point for the flight up the coast of Fraser Island at about 2500ft.

There were a few aircraft approaching YORC ahead of us so we joined downwind as the last of them landed and turned onto Final for RWY 12.



Soon after we joined the other aircraft on the apron.



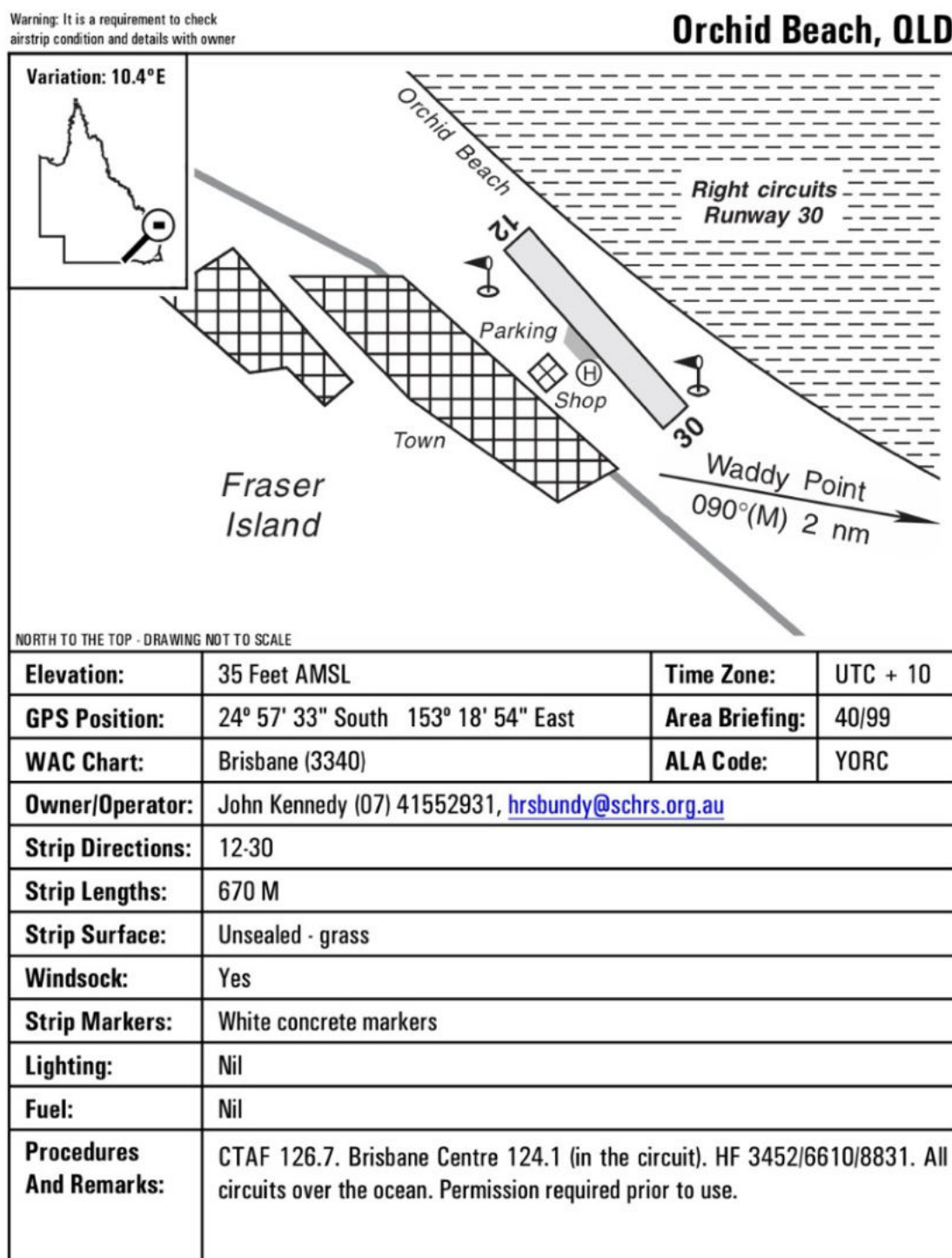
We were ready for a pub lunch but unfortunately there was some “spillage” of a “flammable liquid” in the kitchen that meant they refused to open for lunch so after waiting and chatting for an hour or so we decided to cut our losses and head to Redcliffe where we could refuel RYC and have a drink and a chat with the RAC guys.

On the way back I was PIC and we flew at 2500ft passing over Lake McKenzie with its white sand and crystal-clear blue water then on via Inskip Point and Rainbow Beach. At NOSA we were cleared to fly through Class D at Sunny Coast and on to Redcliffe. After a couple of Zeros and topping up the fuel we headed back to YMUR, but not before Stephen jumped ship, preferring to fly back to YBCG in a Cessna Caravan that a mate of his just happened to land in while we were waiting to depart.

So, with just Bill as passenger I “threaded the needle” between Amberley, Archerfield and the Greenbank Firing Range. We flew past danger area D623 where apparently the Queensland Rocketry Society carry out launchings from time to time. Not good to fly over it at less than 5000ft if it’s active.

The last bit of the flight was very scenic flying down the Numinbah Valley and popping out into the Tweed Valley only a few minutes west of YMUR.

Although the runway at YORC is a bit bumpy it's still a great place to fly into. I have been there before and the pub food isn't too bad when the kitchen's open. I'd recommend it to anyone who hasn't been there before.





MAC WhatsApp Group

Keep in touch with other members

Stay up to date with Club activities

Post aviation events, flyaway ideas, photos and videos of your flying adventures or aviation info

Invite others along if you're planning a flight
and want some company

Raise questions, share ideas, or flag any issues
with aircraft or facilities

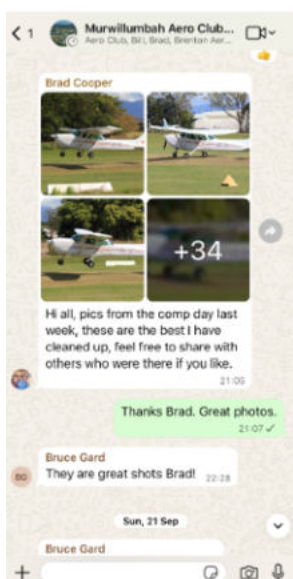
Text or talk to

Nick Christian on 0413 171 664

or

Philip Arthur on 0412 217 510

to sign up



Charity Breakfast at Southport Flying Club

By Philip Arthur

On Saturday 28th February Southport held a breakfast to raise funds for Angel Flight. Originally, they had 40 planes booked in but with cloudy, gusty weather and some rain forecast it was reduced to about 10 or 12 who actually flew in. RYC was one of the planes that flew in with Naomi and Troy rising to the challenge. Bruce and I were joined by Sherie and Jason on the ground but we all chose to drive there.

It was a great way to meet a few aviators from other clubs and chat about flying and of course to support Angel Flight.



Flying safaris in the “olden days”

by Bill Dennis

Gone are the days when we used AvFax for accessing weather and NOTAMs, and pretty much also gone are the days of NDBs, DMEs and VORs. However, it's worth remembering that not so long ago there was no such thing as the internet and GPS was a novelty and pretty basic. How times have changed. Bill Dennis wrote the following article about one of several fly-aways he did in a Cessna 210 from his home base in Latrobe Valley via Moorabbin. On this trip, Bill logged over 27 hours of flight time in 10 days, providing invaluable experience.

The article was printed in the monthly magazine produced by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) in March and April 1995. It makes interesting reading when you compare it to how we do things these days.



Air safaris were more popular back in the day. Here is Bill with friends refuelling in Karumba in 1997. A pair of C210's – VH-UJ and VH-POO (really!)



Camping at Mataranka, NT



FLYING SAFARI OR ORDEAL?

By Bill Dennis, AOPA 27150

I recently completed another trip up North and I thought AOPA readers might be interested in the trials and tribulations of the adventure from a pilot's perspective. Of the many flying trips I have undertaken, this was by far the most demanding in a variety of ways.

It is now ten years since I gained my unrestricted license and there have been periods of intense flying and others of very little. One such dry spell preceded this trip and recognising the danger of infrequent flying, I took special care to prepare myself through planning and plenty of dual instruction.

I rented a 1980 Cessna 210, VH-RZZ, from Troy Aviation in Moorabbin where I was given a thorough checkout having not flown the type for four years. This involved the routine procedures of various circuits, steep turns, climb and descent and the obligatory stall and manual gear extension. Whenever I have a lengthy break from a 210, I am always amazed at how heavy it feels on the ground but how stable yet responsive it becomes in the air. This really is a pilot's aircraft and one I feel very comfortable in (don't worry about passenger comfort, they're only there to subsidise the flying habit!)

My willing assistant, Ian Dyson, and I had spent many evening hours trying to finalise the itinerary taking into account fuel, reasonable

accommodation and local attractions. With five POB we had to ensure a strict baggage limit of 17kg was met to enable us to carry at least four hours of fuel. To this we added a GPS and Survival Kit hired from Latrobe Valley Aero Club, 20 litres of water, Esky, cameras and sleeping bags. It amounted to a mountain of gear you would think impossible to fly with, but the weight and balance charts tell no lies. With heavy items stowed forward to assist the COG, it all fitted comfortably. I've heard it said that with a 210, if you can get the doors shut, it'll fly!

My four passengers and I planned to depart Moorabbin on Friday the 7th of October for Maroochydore, then Undara (250k SW of Cairns), Mt Isa, Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and Roxby Downs. We expected to arrive back on Sunday the 18th but in hindsight, that was always optimistic. The AVFAX forecast on the first day did not give us great joy with rolling fronts, 8 octas of Strato-Cu down to 2000 feet, scattered showers and a strong SW wind. Despite this, we assembled at the airport because actual observation was not that bad and the

weather was mostly South of the range. The plane was packed, fuelled and after kisses goodbye, we were ready taxi to the run-up bays. This was as far as we got because after a series of attempts to clear a rough running engine, we returned disappointed to hear the diagnosis of a sticking valve. Our thanks to Rodney of Aeromod for working until 11:00pm to have the plane ready first thing the next morning.

On these trips, we always run a kitty system. From time to time, we each pay \$100 to the kitty and all shared expenses such as taxis, meals and accommodation are paid from this. Souvenirs and alcohol are paid from the individuals own pocket so that the teetotallers can rest easy. Our first group meal at the Caulfield Pub was on this basis in a relaxed mood because despite our setback, we were officially on holidays...yippee!

After another AVFAX briefing (which resembled the previous day) and submission of flight plan, we returned to Moorabbin early the next morning and during the 20 minute ride, observed the rolling fronts. We started in clear blue sky, then low cloud and rain followed by blue sky again as we arrived. Seeing this pattern, we were back in the plane and ready as a shower passed. The run up was smooth and we were cleared for takeoff. As I fly by VFR only, my plan was to find the blue sky and climb on top as I knew our first fuel stop at Dubbo was reporting only 2 octas of Cu at 3,000. The only problem was that from Moorabbin, I had to locate the blue sky then gain a clearance to climb in that direction from Melbourne Radar. This was a simple affair and despite the fact that they were busy, they obliged with a quick clearance including requested heading deviations to remain clear of cloud. By the time we reached Eildon Weir, we were at 8,500ft in smooth air and sunshine. With autopilot following the heading bug, nav aids tuned and set, mixture leaned, it was time for a well-earned apple, happy in the knowledge that the GPS and the DME were both reporting a ground speed of 214kts (395kph) or a tailwind of 54kts. Don't bother to unfasten your seatbelts folks because we'll be there soon!

The second leg of the day from Dubbo to Maroochydore was expected to proceed directly as planned as our new AVFAX weather briefing gave

The only problem was that from Moorabbin I had to locate the blue sky then gain a clearance to climb in that direction from Melbourne Radar. This was a simple affair ...

only a hint of what was to come. Overflying Gunnedah at our planned 9,500', it was clear the scattered CU we were above was beginning to thicken and rise. Unable to go higher, we had no option but to let down while the gaps were still large enough. To make sure I remained in VMC, I lowered the gear and the rate of descent increased to 1,000 fpm. This did the trick and we were soon back on track albeit in gloomy overcast heading towards the rising terrain NW of Armidale at 5,500' while turbulence continued to rise. Facing a wall of cloud 25 miles ahead, we turned for the coast where we could see it was clear. The loneliness of the long distance VFR pilot is complete when you call flight service to advise of a significant flight plan deviation in difficult conditions and remember that not only are they not following your flight, they have no interest except in your excursions through controlled airspace and

the Sartime known only to Maroochy Tower. My regular broadcast position reports are addressed to all, yet no one replies. I found myself constantly re-checking the volume and squelch levels while studying the ERC to try and guess frequency boundaries. Hitting the coast around Nambucca heads in

moderate turbulence, we called Coffs Tower where the friendly voice cleared us to track inbound for a landing.

Glad to be down, we made for the Aero Club for coffee and to contemplate a night in Coffs. We met a couple of instructors enjoying their first beer for the day and they asked where we were from and where we were headed. After explaining our plight and disappointment, they were both adamant that the flight from Coffs to Maroochy would be quite smooth as we would fly out of the roll turbulence off the ranges from the strong Westerly. "What the heck" we thought and after waiting 20 minutes for the re-fueller to arrive, we were airborne again with a new resolve. The flight was indeed smooth and we were soon in Coolangatta airspace. It was then that I realised that we were having a race against last light. I had previously calculated last light as 6:05 local time and my calculations said we would be at Maroochy at 6:20. Knowing my last light figure was conservative, I called Cooly tower to gain his figure. The friendly reply was 6:12 along

with his confirmation of our groundspeed and estimate of 6:20. He even went to the trouble of gaining Maroochy's last light and reported it as 6:16. "Blow it!", I thought – now realising we would miss Maroochy tonight by a mere 4 minutes. Cooly tower was now at work offering us alternates; the best of which seemed to be Redcliffe and details on runways, PAL frequencies and distances to run came through my headset. This guy was working hard for us and I appreciated it.

Handed off to Brisbane tower, I was instructed to descend and overfly the tower at 1,500 feet. As we approached at 160 kts indicated, the light was fading fast. Right over the top of the tower, I made the snap decision to land at Brisbane. I was immediately cleared for a right turn onto downwind for a visual approach to runway 19; number two behind the 737 on final! What a lovely sight it was as we turned onto runway heading with runway lights and T-VASIS shining brightly. Not wanting to hold up any of the big boys, I flew a fast approach of 120kts up until short final where the plane decelerated quickly as the power reduced to touch down a little hot with 80kts and 20 degrees flap.

Only two of us had been to Brisbane before and after dinner at the famous "Brekky Creek", we were back in the taxi for a Saturday night in Brisbane. I had an early night while the others went partying. The following morning, it was breakfast at "Jimmy's on the Mall" then back to the airport for the short hop to Maroochy to regain our itinerary.

Monday morning in Maroochy was warm and sunny for our flight up the coast to Undara located 135 miles West of Townsville. Our new AVFAX briefing again suggested no problems with a light Westerly and isolated areas of cloud and numerous TAFs reporting CAVOK. The most significant warning was the reduced visibility in smoke haze. This is common for the area at this time of the year but it was particularly bad due to the amount of bushfire activity. My flight plan details were submitted by fax, which is great if the plan is error free. I later learned that it was not and this was the first of two dumb things I did this day. After receiving the ATIS, I called Maroochy tower for taxi and airways' clearances and he replied it would be no problem if I could advise my

requested altitude because it wasn't noted on the plan. I stared at the flightplan sitting on my lap and could see that the entire column was blank! This wasn't really a problem except that much of this 700 nm trip would be in and out of controlled airspace and they appreciate plenty of notice. I requested 6,500 ft and the clearance was given just prior to takeoff. On climb, it became clear that the 3 octas of cumulus cloud and associated slight turbulence topped at 7,000 ft so I requested a continuation of my climb to 8,500 ft. Approval came quickly and we reached top of climb at 55 DME from Maroochy. This leg was characterised by the variation in cloud tops and layers of heavy smoke haze, so several altitude changes enroute were required to remain clear.

This led to the second dumb thing for the day, and the most serious. After passing through

I was immediately cleared for a right turn onto downwind for a visual approach to runway 19; number two behind the 737 on final! What a lovely sight...

Rockhampton airspace at 55 DME and 6,500ft, I again felt the need to climb but thought it prudent to contact Flightwatch to see if they could offer any advice on the weather ahead. I called Brisbane to gain the correct frequency then called Flightwatch on com 2. They responded with the "Flightwatch"

callsign and advised me to stand-by while they gathered the information. This left me to ponder their source. I was hoping to gain an actual report to select the most appropriate cruising level but for this, he would have to specifically ask another aircraft. I felt this was unlikely because I have noticed that actuals seem to be a thing of the past. When the call came, it was Brisbane on the area frequency, not Flightwatch on the Flightwatch frequency with the weather information consisting of a repeat of the area forecast already held courtesy of AVFAX. Hearing a repeat of the CAVOK TAF for Mackay, I elected to climb back to 8,500 ft and broadcasted my intentions accordingly. As I levelled off at 8,500 ft, Brisbane again called to have me report my altitude. I thought this strange as I was within radar coverage the whole way and I was continuously transmitting my assigned transponder code in mode "C". I said I was maintaining 8,500 to which he replied, "you have climbed into controlled airspace without a clearance", and went on to advise that the lower limit was 8,000 ft. I ascertained that I should continue at this altitude and was recleared

accordingly.

"How the hell did I do that?", I thought as I examined my ERC LOW chart. The last CTA step out of Rockhampton was at 6,000 ft and I knew this as I had just left their airspace at 6,500 ft. What I failed to see was the fact that there is a common CTA step at 8,000 ft joining Rocky to Mackay. The lower limit South of Rocky is 10,000 ft and I obviously assumed that would apply to the North as well. I make no excuse for myself and I said as much to the Area Controller in Brisbane who requested I call after landing at Mackay. He was very good about the whole thing and agreed that this anomaly had

caught out others before me. He even said they were watching me on the radar on climb thinking I would level off at 8,000, not 8,500 ft. The only other mitigating factor I could cite is the deplorable conglomeration of undecipherable lines that is the ERC LOW. When this

was first released, I welcomed the tracks and distances it shows. But when you look at areas such as West and North West of Brisbane, the chart becomes unusable. Bring back the VEC chart I say, but throw in just a hand full of track lines; even none at all where it is especially busy or we will see a continuation of the high rate of Violations of Controlled Airspace.

Our departure from Mackay was uneventful despite the fact that the refueller had overlooked our instructions to fill only to the tabs. We were right on the weight limit at this point, but I was confident in the 210's ability but just in case, I lined up at the start of the 1981m runway. We accelerated strongly however, and climbed well as the gear was put away. After passing Bowen at 8,500 ft, it was then 93 miles to Townsville followed by another 167 miles at 290 degrees to Undara Station, famous for its lava tubes. This was going to be the only real navigation challenge for the trip so I had my able assistant Shaun Johnson (who had recently returned from 12 months constant GPS use in Antarctica) hide the display

from my view for this leg. This was not to be an exercise in map reading, compass, clock and DR but using all available nav aids, to get us within 2 miles then visually locate the strip. "Some challenge" you might say in an IFR capable aircraft tracking out of Townsville using the VOR and DME. That's true, but they would fall away at about the half way point, leaving another 80+ miles to run, the latter part on descent into unknown wind conditions. Until this point, I had been keeping meticulous record of the fixes and their times to reconfirm my visual position and to update the groundspeed calcs. Although I was tracking the

VOR, I had the autopilot track the heading bug, making only minor heading changes to keep the CDI centred. This worked well and when the VOR finally fell out of range, we continued on heading mode.

Undara's elevation is 2,500 ft and we were at 8,500 so I needed to descend 4,500 ft for a normal circuit arrival. I

wanted a descent rate of 300 fpm to keep the speed well out of the yellow range and to avoid rapid engine cooling, so this meant my top of descent was 15 minutes prior to my last calculated estimate for Undara. Smoke haze was significant and passing through 7,000 ft, we approached the underside of a layer of strato-cu. For a few minutes, it was impossible to see if the dark murk that now lay only 10 miles ahead actually had a base. I was now hand flying to maintain heading and rate of descent, but my palms were getting sweaty. It wasn't until the sun fell behind the cloud mass that we could see underneath and with only a few miles to the edge of the cloud, I was again satisfied that we would remain VFR. This was not before time as I was ready for the 180 degree turn at anytime before entering what looked to be cloud. With no other way of determining my position, it was down to clock and compass. I called out NOW as we reached our ETA but there was no runway. Scanning the magnificent Gulf Savannah country as it sprawled out ahead, I looked for any correlation between the roads on the map and the



Refuelling at Undara Station from 44 gal drums

roads I could see but this was no use. I then noticed a small pimple about 4 miles at my 11 o'clock and I looked at Shaun with a questioning face. He nodded knowingly and we had found Undara. A quick buzz over the camp to ensure our pickup and we made a reasonable landing on a great bush strip.

I'm not sure if I was having a bad run with unforecasted weather or that my ability to interpret the information was questionable. I suspect the former because one of my passengers (who happened to be a Bureau of Meteorology officer) was very helpful in deciphering the AVFAX information. My gripe here is that the forecasts were rarely correct and in flight, next to useless. The BoM staff employed to present this data should spend regular time in the front office of light aircraft to see first hand how wide of the mark their predictions are. What feedback mechanisms are in place for them to hone their skills instead of trotting out inaccurate information. For my next trip, I intend to take a copy of Nostradamus to see if he can shed any light on the matter!

I had not intended to describe the actual locations visited but for Undara, I will make an exception. Millions of years ago the many volcanoes in the area were quite active and enormous lava flows were common, travelling several hundred kilometres. As the lava flowed like a river, it cooled on top eventually forming a shell but the lava inside continued to flow in what effectively became a conduit. With the last of the volcanoes, the molten lava had drained to the lowest point, leaving the tubes empty and over the years, became substantially buried under the bulldust. The result, known today as the Undara Lava Tubes, is the major attraction and professionally run tours operate from the accommodation centre. Undara cater beautifully for the light aircraft traveller, they own a Cherokee Six, and they extend a warm welcome. Meals and accommodation can be purchased to suit various budgets from very cheap to fairly dear. I highly recommend it to anyone in the area whether travelling by air or road.

After two nights, we departed Undara on the Friday morning for Mt Isa. Ian had booked a mine surface tour for the afternoon so it was important not to waste time. This was a pleasant and uneventful trip except for the lonely feeling when you are way out of VHF range and you are not carrying the ideal HF frequency for the location

and time of day. Despite this, it was important to continue to broadcast position reports that went like this "ALL STATIONS JULIA CREEK, VFR CESSNA 210 RZZ WAS JULIA CREEK TWO SIX, MAINTAINING SIX THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED, CLONCURRY FOUR NINER". You would often hear nothing immediately after, but every now and then, someone would pop up with a cheerful "giddyay".

As I had lodged my flight plan by fax, I noted that my Sartime should be held by Mt Isa tower. I could not find my VTC for Mt Isa before the flight but while I was approaching Cloncurry, I examined the next best thing available, which was the ERC. Lo and behold there were no CTA steps as expected but the location was surrounded with small circles indicating it was now an MTAF.... Dummy! After a normal circuit and landing, I cancelled my Sarwatch with Brisbane and this was done mercifully without comment. It was then straight for the taxi and into town where we met the

Millions of years ago the many volcanoes in the area were quite active and enormous lava flows were common...

mine tour at the museum. The boys set off the next morning bright and early for the previously arranged underground tour that should not be missed. As I had seen it before, I elected to get to the airport with all the gear to refuel and plan the flight so we could be ready to leave as soon as they arrived. Before leaving the hotel, I received my AVFAX briefing and feeling more knowledgeable of the system, gained Notams as well. I completed my plan there and as I checked out, again lodged it with Brisbane by fax.

At the airport, I carried all the gear to the aircraft and had the refueller do his thing. Before packing the plane, I wanted to thoroughly complete my preflight of the aircraft and while doing this, saw a friendly but official figure walking up to me. "How are you?", he asked, extending his hand, "I'm from the CAA Townsville branch and we've flown in to carry out inspections of operations here at Mt Isa. Do you know what a Ramp Check is?" As the colour drained from my face, I offered my name, rank and serial number. I thought for a split second that I should stand back and shut up as I had nothing to gain from this exercise and everything to lose. But in the next split second, I knew that I was as prepared for this flight as I had ever been and this guy was only here to see that we arrive safely.

To be continued next YMURmurs...

Quiz answers



Question 1

An aircraft wanting to fly for maximum endurance would fly at what altitude?

D. Minimum altitude to stay aloft for maximum time

Question 2

Refer to the following TAF for Merimbula (YMER).

TAF AMD YMER 082315Z 0800/0812 02020G35KT 9999 -RA BKN030 BKN100 FM080500 25015KT 9999 -RASH BKN025

INTER 0804/0808 3000 -TSRA SCT010 SCT050CB

INTER 0808/0812 5000 BKN010

T 18 18 17 15 Q 1003 1003 1008 1009

If your ETA at YMER is 080815 UTC, the lowest visibility forecast for your arrival is?

C. 5000 m

Question 3

While cruising at A045 OCTA you notice that another aircraft is converging on you from the left at the same level. You should?

B. Maintain your present height and heading but be prepared to take action to avoid a collision if necessary

Question 4

At a non-towered aerodrome, the latest recommended position at which an aircraft should join the circuit is?

B. On the downwind leg at mid-field

Question 5

A METAR is routinely issued?

B. on the hour and half hour

Question 6

What is the effect of increased pressure altitude on take-off distance?

A. It increases the take-off distance

Question 7

Two aircraft of the same type are flying near each other in ISA conditions, but aircraft 1 is at 4000 ft AMSL with 1013 HPa set on the altimeter subscale, and aircraft 2 at 4500 ft AMSL with 1003 HPa set. The actual vertical separation between the aircraft is closest to?

C. 800 ft

Question 8

Given the airport elevation is 900 ft AMSL. If the pilot sets the QNH, the barometric altimeter reading would be?

D. 900 ft

Question 9

TAS and IAS are the same at?

D. At sea level, in ISA conditions, with no position or instrument errors

Question 10

What forces act through the Centre of Gravity (CG)?

B. Weight