

2011

PLEASE NOTE

It is with great sorrow that I advise of the passing of Heather BELL (Wright). Heather was a great member and supporter of the Southern Microlight Club and her cheery smile, good nature, friendship and expert photography will be missed by all. On behalf of us all I extend to Steve our sincere condolences. Steve, we all share your pain.

ON A HAPPIER NOTE

SOUTHERN MICROLIGHT CLUB

CHRISTMAS MEETING 2011

TUESDAY 13TH DECEMBER

SPOUSES AND PARTNERS MOST

WELCOME

DINNER AT THE MANHATTEN RINGWOOD 6 TILL

7:30

FOLLOWED BY A SHORT MEETING

OUTLINING EVENTS FOR 2012

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE END

TO ANOTHER GREAT YEAR

MICROLIGHTS AND THE MORNING GLORY 2011

Ken Jelleff

It had been 3 years since our previous trip to Burketown in pursuit of the elusive Morning Glory roll cloud, and so it was with no expectations at all that we set off from Traralgon for the 3,155 km road journey North, for the seventh time in the past ten years, with our trusty XT912 S3 sitting in the back of the ute with the plush Jayco expander trailing behind.



Trike on Ute, towing the "Jayco Hilton".

The 2008 trip had been rewarded with a solitary weak system resulting in a 30 minute engine off Soaring Flight on our first morning, at the front of a marginal roll cloud, but nevertheless, enough to give us the will to return for more, unlike the large powerful cycles we encountered ten years ago which would flow through with monotonous regularity, generating humungous lift from a rotating monster anything up to 7,000 ft AGL, moving across the outback at speeds of around 60 kph.

The route from Traralgon to Bourke in the first day was a mammoth task requiring 14 hours at the wheel, shared with Pauline, who had also brought along a good supply of talking books for the journey. The second day was a 12 hour pull to Winton, arriving at Burketown around 3:30pm on the third day after a mere 9.5 hour drive.

The Dalby/Newcastle crew, Don ("Doggy") Cramer with Heidi and Hugh, Billo with Brod, had been dug in at the palatial Burketown Caravan Park for nearly a week and reported they had already been fortunate enough to have soared a couple of Glory Clouds 3 and 4 days

earlier. Wayne and Julie also from Newcastle arrived with Trike on board, making for a total of 4 Airborne Trikes and one Lonely Hang Glider Pilot (“Brod”) keen for the Aerotows to begin.

Geoff Pratt, the undisputed doyen of Morning Glory flights, had also been in camp for a week or so with his Motor Glider parked at the airport. Geoff’s assessment of the weather conditions over the next week or so led us to be optimistic about the prospect of encountering more roll clouds in the ensuing days.

Day One: Out to the Airport at 5am to be setup by first light at 6am (or close to it). Massive dew on the ground. Wing covers saturated. Air temp 23 degrees (cool for Bktn). Not a breath of breeze. First glimmer of light reveals nothing on the horizon, so we take off in the direction of the coast for a scenic flight across the salt flats which lead all the way to the Carpentaria coast. The huge inversion results in an increase of air temp from 22 to 33 degrees at 200 ft AGL. As we gain height approaching the coast 20 klm away it becomes apparent that there will be no Morning Glory on this our first morning, despite the strong indicators. Arriving at the coast we turn westward toward the Nicholson River and descend lower in order to get a bird’s eye view of some of the huge reptiles which bask on the river sandbanks awaiting prey to arrive, (hopefully not in the form of people delivered to them by a malfunctioning Rotax). Cutting back east to the Albert River, as we flew effortlessly at 500ft enjoying the cool glassy morning air and the spectacle of the broad waters beneath us, we discussed the unimaginable difficulties the early explorers experienced whilst attempting to tame this wild landscape into a habitable grazing land.



The intricate veins of the creek network reaching out over the Burketown Salt Plains

In 1861, the vessel Firefly was the first boat to enter any river at the southern shores of the Gulf, and after navigating through the bar at the mouth and slowly progressing upstream a few miles, it landed at the South bank of the Albert River, where a camp was established, and from where an expedition was launched to try to find Burke and Wills, whom they supposed were still wandering around that area of the Gulf country. As we dipped our wing from side to side following the river, we tried to picture men leading horses and slashing their way through mosquito ridden mangroves. What would those folk have thought had they been told that, 151 years later, their descendents would be flying little machines over the very same harsh country for fun without a second thought?

At 8:00am after an exhilarating two hours of flying over the Coast, Rivers and Savannah, we join circuit and land, tie down and cover up the Trike for the day before the first whisper of what will be the strong daily sea breeze arrives.

Back at the Caravan Park, after second breakfast, pilots with big mugs of tea discuss what might have been and what will undoubtedly occur the following morning. The science of accurate Morning Glory prediction has never really progressed since 1989 when Russell White and Rob Thompson were the first pilots to soar the phenomenon in their Motor Glider. Good theories as to the origin of the energies which cause it to happen have been developed, however, even when all criteria is optimal, the best pilot to know when it is coming is the one standing at the airport in the dark at 5:30am gazing North East.

On the third morning, interesting conditions unlike I had seen for that time of year, began.

First light revealed a thick fog 500 ft above the airfield, confirmed by Billo who climbed toward it and found it impenetrable before returning to the surface. After another 30 minutes it had dissipated enough to take off, and it was at this point I experienced what we determined later to be carby icing, (normally unheard of on a carby heated 912). After warm up, with Pauline onboard we accelerated down 21, lifting off at max revs, after which several coughs and splutters saw us land safely back on the runway. Checking fuel bowls, filters, and plug leads revealed nothing unusual. After one more try, with the same result, I abandoned my passenger, waited for further engine heat to build and took off solo with no malfunction occurring at all this time. We then enjoyed a one hour flight to the coast and back, listening intently for any unusual engine behaviour. There was none. Speaking with some experienced Motor Glider pilots with their aircraft also powered by 912's later in the day revealed that they too were experiencing some previously unheard of misses and coughs from their own power plant. It was put down to the extreme humidity at ground level, combined with the huge inversion temperature fluctuations so close to the ground, which was occurring at our very tropical location. Hmm, something to carefully consider when flying around these remote areas where a forced landing in the remote outback would have consequences.

After four more days of 'Gloryless' mornings, despite all the positive indicators, with a trough approaching from the West, our friends decide to call it a day and begin the long journey back to Dalby and Newcastle, content to have at least flown a couple shortly after their arrival two weeks earlier.

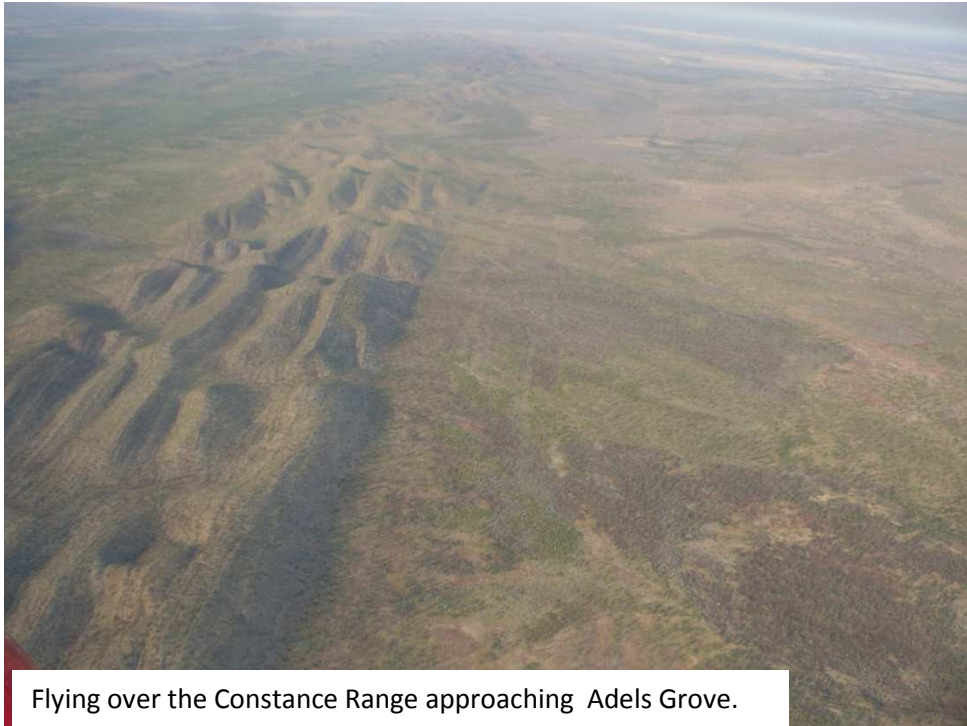
Billo makes the prudent decision to fly to Karumba where he leaves his Trike, and hitches a flight back to Burketown with one of the Motor Gliders, in order to save his aircraft from bumping along the very corrugated track to Normanton en-route to Carins and Townsville where his son lives. As we later found out, this was astute judgement. When we finally departed in the same direction, the ruts slowed us down to 5kph for stretches an hour at a time, with the Jayco squeaking pitifully along behind. Fortunately the Trike in the back of the ute is protected nicely thanks to the forgiving nature of the 1 tonne Ford ute suspension.

Pauline and I are determined to dig in for a while yet and over the next few days the weather was under the influence of a slow moving trough (not the best Morning Glory conditions).

The following morning, again with no Cloud activity, we tracked south for 90nm across patches of unfriendly looking Savannah, to the Oasis resort of Adels Grove located on the banks of the pristine Lawn Hill Creek.

The property, now known as Adels Grove, was originally gazetted in 1904 as a Miners Homestead Lease. In 1920 Albert de Lestang took up the property as an experimental Botanical Garden (hence the name "Adel" arose from Albert's initials). The majority of the country surrounding Adel's Grove is semi-arid Savannah during the 'dry' but blooms to form a completely different landscape during the 'wet' season. Forming a magnificent backdrop to the Grove and containing the famous Lawn Hill National Park is the Constance Range, a limestone capped sandstone escarpment which forms the eastern extremity of the Barkly Tablelands.

After touching down on the resort airstrip, and tying the Trike down, a 150mtr stroll took us into the lovely resort complex where we immediately ordered the full pilot breakfast, incorporating cereal, bacon & eggs with mushrooms and tomato, toast and cappuccino to wash it all down. As we enjoyed the owner's hospitality, a slight pang of guilt briefly overcame us as we sat in this remote location, so hostile to settlers only 50 or so years previously. After breakfast we swam in the crystal clear tepid waters of the Lawn Hill Creek which is fed the year round by huge subterranean reservoirs which have existed for thousands of years, the result of seepage of regular wet season rains through the Limestone crust. The hospitality at Adels was so good, and the dinner menu on display for the forthcoming evening so delectable, we decided to stay the night. Settling down for the night in a tent erected on a deck overlooking the Creek, with the murmur and rippling of the creek on its bars lulling us to sleep we felt we had indeed discovered Savannah Paradise.



Flying over the Constance Range approaching Adels Grove.

Returning to Burketown early the next morning into a very stiff headwind, our flight time was blown out from 90 minutes to 3 hrs. Unfortunately my bladder has a 120 minute endurance, and so the necessary pit stop landing was executed onto what proved to be a much rougher surface than it appeared at 500 ft causing Pauline to temporarily lose her sense of humour, however, I managed to pick out a smoothish 100 mtr line into the stiff breeze which got us back up with minimal bouncing, just before a hostile herd of Brahman emerged from the scrub to check who or what was trespassing on their grazing patch.

Wednesday October 5th. Another morning similar to most others, with pilots bustling around in the dark at Burketown Airport, fueling, checking instruments and waiting for the first glimmer of light in the Northeast. At 6:05am we are Airborne, a solitary Microlight in the company of four motor gliders, all heading in the same direction with the same purpose. It was with initial shock that we received the transmission from the Pipistrel Sinus, which was already at 5000 ft with a clear view to the coast, that there was a well formed Morning Glory 10 miles off shore.

This type of early report is usually received with some trepidation, as it is not uncommon for a Roll Cloud to lose its energy and stall motionless before it actually crosses the coastline. Until it is established that the Cloud has motion, we try not to get too excited. Five minutes later, the confirmation arrives via the radio that the Cloud is indeed in motion and producing a nice enough lift band for the Motor Gliders to power off. Time to get excited! As we approach our first Morning Glory of the 2011 season, we are stunned into silence at the awesome spectacle growing larger in front of us. An unbroken line of smooth white floating pipe cleaner extends from horizon to horizon as far as the eye can see. The base is approximately 1000 ft AGL with the top soaring above at around 5000 ft.



Glory clouds approaching in series

Arriving at the leading edge, we turn away to the west, parallel, and begin powering down to check the lift strength to see whether this tube will sustain the Streak 3 XT912, two up. As we come back to idle the VSI shows that we are in fact maintaining 4000 ft at idle and so I shut off the 912 and immediately become aware of no noise other than that of the air racing past us as we become one with one of nature's miracles.

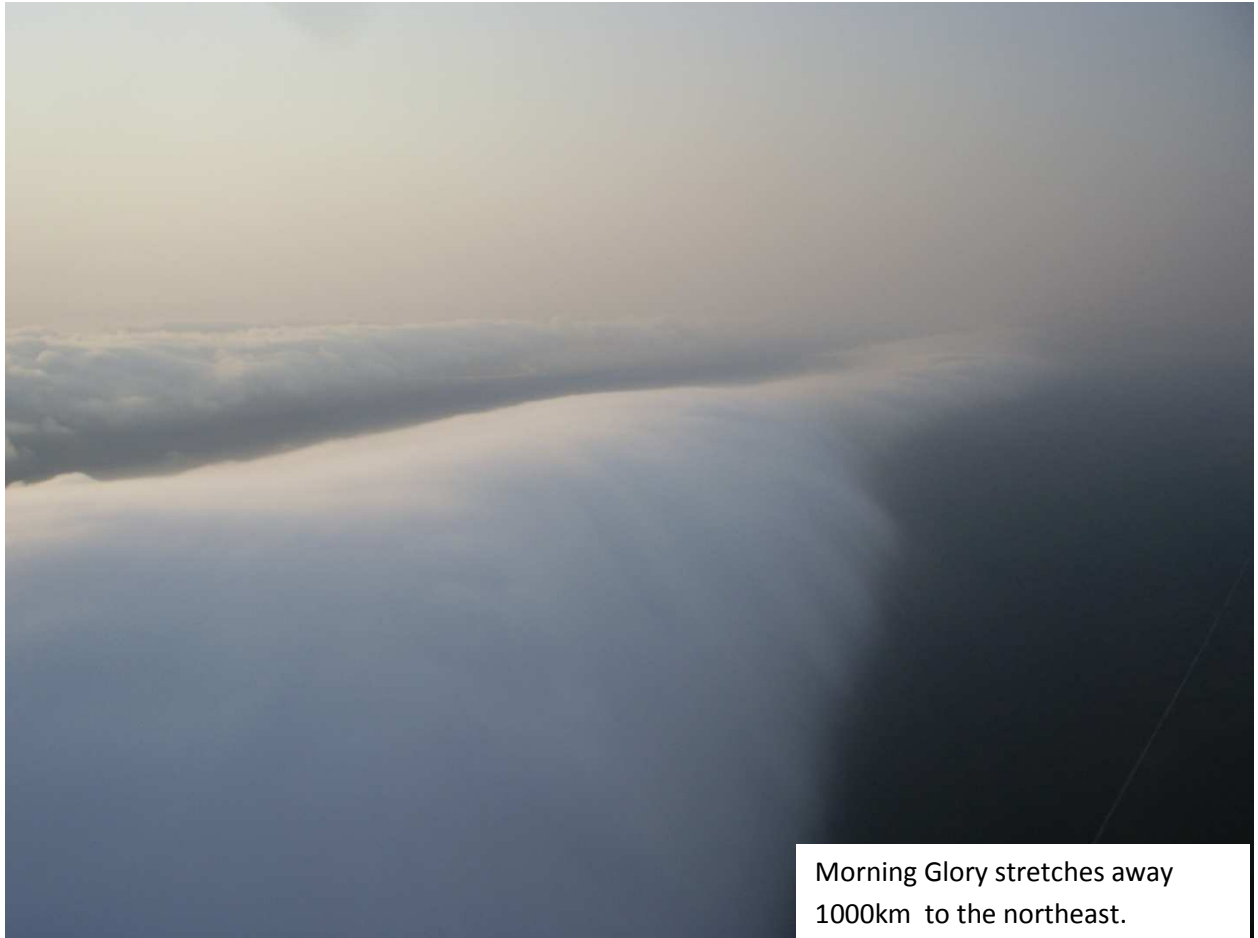


Pauline enjoys the spectacle from the back seat.

Up closer, the Glory is not quite as smooth as it appeared from a distance. There are hollows here and there, and as we watch knobs begin to protrude from sections, giving the texture a solid perspective. As we surf unpowered along the leading edge, we arrive at a thinner section, and as we pass, our VSI shows us sinking at 100 ft per min. Despite its excellent form, this Cloud does not quite contain the degree of energy necessary to sustain our soaring flight. The form ahead appears narrower and less dynamic than it had been over the last 10 miles, and so I re-start the engine to regain some height and turn 180 degrees heading back east the way we came. Again the VSI shows an increase in climb rate, so I shut down the engine delighted to discover we are again sustaining unpowered flight. We are overtaken by a Dimona, followed closely by the Super Ximango, both Motor gliders having a ball cruising back and forth around 100kts and not bothered by fluctuating lift due to their 40-1 glide ratios.



The sun now breaks over the top of the cloud causing shafts of silver light to burst back and forth across the trailing edge creating the impression that we are on an alien world witnessing some kind of titanic celestial event. We were fortunate to continue our Cloud surfing for an hour, switching between powered and unpowered until the energy diminishes with the rising sun, and we watch whole sections of the cloud dissipate and vaporize before our eyes. Satisfied, we return to the Airstrip.



Morning Glory stretches away
1000km to the northeast.

The conditions, according to the synoptic chart, remain favourable for the next few days, so it is quite possible more may occur, and hopefully with larger more powerful tubes which will permit extended free flight. These ponderings prove to be folly, as we witness an early onset to the buildup of the tropical wet season with thunderstorms brewing only 30 miles away to the northeast, something I had not witnessed at this time of year during our seven previous visits.

Our time had nearly run out anyway, and as we began to pack the trike away for the long journey home, there are no complaints at all. To encounter a solitary Morning Glory cloud, be it marginal, as was this morning, is definitely the icing on the cake, of a trip to Burketown. On some previous trips our cake had no icing at all, but there was never any suggestion that we would not return. The flying around the Burketown area is unlike anything we have experienced anywhere in our numerous flying travels throughout a lot of Australia and we are already excited about the return trip in September 2013. Hope to see you there.



View from the ground as a Glory Passes overhead



Full set of Punkinhead covers doing their work in the harsh elements at the Burketown Airport

INTERESTING

Max Glynn has forwarded the following which seems appropriate in view of Ken Jelleff's article. Enjoy! Just click on the picture.



Jumbo-1.wmv

A real Jumbo Aircraft



apprentis_pilotes_-_4.wmv



Ases_del_paracaidismo.wmv

Boeing makes a new aeroplane for South West Airlines. Watch particularly the paint job process. In your internet browser copy and paste the following:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKnsyYbfC60&feature=player_popout

and

<http://parahawking.com/> and open [Para-Hawking - Parahawking](#)

FOR SALE

My Wizard Wing that has 80.4 hours on it and has not been flown since 15 April 2001 is still for sale. It needs the nose channel to be upgraded and has a scuffed leading edge (a result of a dust devil rubbing it against a cyclone fence) that needs re-taping or other repair. Has always been hangared and or bagged and is structurally excellent

Make me a realistic offer.

Kel.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is at the Manhattan Hotel, Canterbury Road, Ringwood, on Tuesday, December 13 at 1930hrs after a meal for those who wish to enjoy pleasant dining with fellow pilots at 1900hrs.

NOTE: There will be no Newsletter or Meeting in January 2012.

CONTRIBUTIONS

I need and welcome contributions from members and thank those who do contribute. Any story or item of interest adds to the pleasure we all get from our association. Do not be shy – Nobel Prize for Literature standard is not expected.

Newsletter Closing times:

Last Tuesday of the month.

Advertising enquiries and any articles or items of information to:

Kel Glare: 03 9439 5920

O421 060 706, or, preferably, kalkat@optusnet.com.au