

NEWSLETTER

May/June 2014

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Megafauna

For Sale and Wanted

Useful Information

Cover Picture

Megafauna Landing by Tony Batson

Queens Birthday Fly-In 7th - 9th June

This annual event is on again at Latrobe Valley. Once again Ken's hangar is available and some great flying will be had.

For further information e-mail steve.secretary@southernmicrolightclub.com.au



Midfield Crosswind Join

Trevor Lane

I was flying to Latrobe one Sunday; I like going to Latrobe because there are usually a few faces I recognise and friendly ones at that. I had not long crossed the end of the ranges and wasn't far from Pakenham when I heard the first voice I recognised come over the radio. It was Joe Ferstl. How could you not recognise his wonderfully accented tones. Joe was calling to do a midfield crosswind join for 03 and as is the requirement gave his altitude; which was circuit height. I know Joe has done many midfield crosswind joins before as I am sure we all have. It is in fact ; taken from the AIP; the recommended approach for a low performance aircraft such as a microlight, ultralight or gyro when approaching from the dead side.

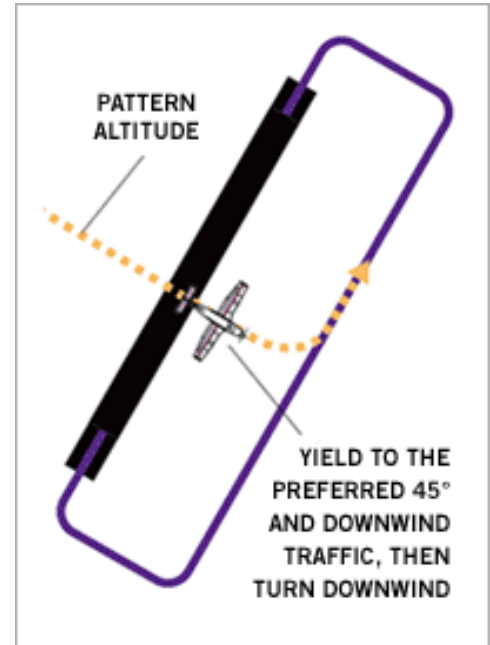
Another pilot picked up on this, which funnily enough is exactly what they are supposed to do. However this pilot retorted with "overfly at 1'500ft". This surprised me and I couldn't from this response, ascertain whether this was another 'low performance' pilot or GA. After all a GA pilot may have said overfly at 2,000ft. Knowing that you should never cross the circuit pattern of a fast jet (at least one fast jet—a Vampire—flies out of Latrobe), and a microlight pilot would have known the midfield crosswind join is done at circuit height; which is 500ft for a trike. I responded politely reinforcing joe's choice with "I think you will find a midfield crosswind join is done at 500ft in a microlight". The response was sharper and more authoritative than the first but just said the same; "overfly at 1,500ft" It sounded so impolite, and argumentative that Joe just said "wilco" and I, not wanting an argument on air, kept quiet.

In retrospect this was stupid of me, I allowed Joe to overfly at circuit height for the Vampire. I apologise to Joe for not being more authoritative myself, and allowing you to plough on into what was probably the most exactly wrong and most dangerous position to be in at Latrobe.

However, we should learn from this. The mid-field crosswind is the recommended approach for a low performance aircraft from the dead side, and we all need to be very familiar with this. I believe we all are, but I am surprised how one person with the wrong information but an officious manner can overrule common sense. That person may have been GA and have no knowledge of our procedures yet both Joe and myself submitted to his order; it would have been nice if I could have called it a request, but that is not how it came across.

I am absolutely flabbergasted that I questioned something that I "knew" because of one persons manner. Especially because I revised that particular join only two weeks prior because I was asked by someone about it. I actually went back to the AIP after this event to check it again. How often do I need to check something before I am confident enough to not accept this kind of behaviour.

Please all, fly safe. This means know your stuff, and when you do, be assertive about it. A GA pilot would rarely do a midfield crosswind join and wouldn't be as sure of the procedure as we are; don't let them bully us.



"Does that say Pattern Altitude?"

"Yes it does"

"What is the pattern altitude for a microlight?"

"500 feet"

"So do we join at 500 feet?"

"Yes we do"

Megafauna 2014: Yarrawonga to Broken Hill NSW

Tony Batson



I was looking forward to my third Megafauna trip with Peter McLean from Yarrawonga Flight Training. I had never been to Broken Hill, NSW before. Flying, instead of driving over Semi desert conditions should be fun. This year we had three international trike pilots; two from the USA, one a pilot from California and the other a pilot from Montana. Both run the website alltrikes.com. The third was from the Republic of Slovakia; an instructor and inspector for the Amateur flying association in Slovakia. He flies a Hungarian Trike.

I planned to fly from Latrobe Valley to Yarrawonga on the Friday, Anzac Day, two days before the commencement of the Megafauna. However, after a big week at work, a visit to my grandson's footy match in the morning, it was lunchtime before I got to the hangar at Latrobe. Being tired and not mentally prepared for a long flight I decided to trailer to Yarrawonga. When I arrived, Mitch was visiting a local friend's house and Ian and Chris were already at the airport. Thankfully, the guys had managed to secure lodgings in a

hangar and it was not long before I had made myself comfortable. We dined with Peter and Anne, along with the international visitors and a few other pilots at a local pub.

"The wind always seems to blow opposed to the way you're travelling."

On the Saturday the winds were beginning to increase with some "gusto". I set up my trike whilst Ian and Chris played around with theirs. Chris calls it "tinkering" and loves to fiddle. I call it "interfering" and say, "Don't touch things that aren't broken". However, it is fair to say that Chris knows more about his trikes workings than I do about mine. We were planning to go for a local fly to Porepunkah after lunch whilst the rest of the aircraft and crew arrived. However, a wind sock sticking straight out, crossways to the runway told us a 20 knot cross wind would be no fun to land in. So, we did not fly. I still had not tested my trike since setting it up. I also had made a few changes to my trike. Wing adjustments, brake adjustments, slime added to all three tyres, change of spark plugs, replacement of a few pins and bolts: I was keen to fly and make sure all was in good order.



Unfortunately, I would have to wait until tomorrow, departure day.

The Saturday night was the traditional dinner before departure. 53 people, including 2 bus drivers. What a mob! 32 aircraft of which, 18 were trikes, the largest number for some time in a Megafauna.

**Day 1 Yarrawonga to Hay,
NSW - 108 nm Heading: 316
degrees.**

Peter gave his morning briefing with an update of weather conditions, NOTAMS, restricted areas on route, parking expectations at the next airport and answers to any other questions you may have, a daily event on the Megafauna. And then, we were off. It never ceases to amaze me how 32 aircraft can take off at one time and once you get into the air you do not see another aircraft until you arrive at the next airfield.

It was not long before we had crossed Lake Mulwala and were on our way. Conditions were good, but we had a 10 knot head wind. The wind always seems to blow opposed to the way you're travelling. Some flew low, some flew high. Everyone was chasing an escape to the head wind. It was not to be. A theme I was soon to learn would become part of this trip on a regular basis. Others flew along the Murray and turned after Tocumwal to Hay. I chose to head straight to Hay. Unusual for me, as I normally like to land at

various airfields along the track and experience as many on the ground as I can. On the radio I could hear others making plans to land at Jerilderie airfield. A small town of 700 odd people with a 01/19 single runway.

As I passed the town of Finley on my left and Berrigan on my right I could already hear trikes landing at Jerilderie. The area below me is mainly agricultural and is made up of flat plains, and plenty of water for irrigation. The area had been doused in rain over the past few months and everything is green. As I began my journey over the flat boring plains of Hay, I was surprised to see so much greenery on the ground. I could hear one of our international visitors on the radio, in their strong American accent, saying "that they could not see anything, there is nothing out here!" I smiled as we had not even got to anything yet

that could be described as "remote".

"An Ipad has just hit my prop!" was the loud shriek I heard on the radio from a trike pilot leaving Jerilderie. It was Chris.

His passenger's Ipad had dislodged from its secured leg holder and hit his prop 200 feet above the runway. Unfortunately they were past the end of the runway and could not land immediately. The prop continued to turn with 3 blades still attached and they managed to do a go around for a very short, quick circuit. It was some time before

**"All those things I have
said about three axis
pilots I take back"**



we heard that the prop was undergoing some repairs at the airport. We were still unaware of the true damage to the prop. The time quickly passed as our international guests were told to look for “Drop bears” and spitting Koalas and various other creatures that were known to us locals to roam the plains of Hay.

As I approached Hay airfield heading North West, with a 10 knot head wind, I mentally prepared myself for a most likely direct approach into the wind on runway 04. However, as I neared closer, the active runway was 22. It did not make sense. Why was everybody landing with the wind to their backs? The answer lay in the direction of the wind sock. It was going in the other direction to the 10 knot head wind. Interesting! “Looks like it’s going to be a rough descent” I pondered. Somewhere below, the wind must be going in two directions at almost the same height.

“Yes, just found it”. Just after turning short of the town, with the Murrumbidgee River glistening in my eyes, on final to runway 22, I felt the violent

tumbling of the changing, opposing winds. An unusual feeling of uncontrolled sink, even with extra power applied on approach was a little disconcerting and then, above the runway, the sudden unintended lift, forcing an extended landing further down the runway made it an interesting experience. Later discussions with others, and some visual observance by me, proved that I was not the only one to share this unusual experience. Some pilots were landing more than half way down the runway.



Whilst preparing my trike for overnight parking I wondered where I had put my Trike covers. Very necessary on these trips for ensuring your instruments and seats don’t get wet overnight from the dew and rain that was sure to come. “Ummm!” I realise quickly that I have left them in

the car at Yarrawonga. As it was still early in the day, I decided to go into town whilst the others visited the truly interesting Sheep museum, which sounds amusing to some, but is always worth

visiting. Luckily for me the thriving metropolis of Hay had a bargain centre which had ground sheets that I could turn into professionally crafted trike covers. Luckily for me, I manage to get a lift back to the airport in our bus followed by a coffee and cake at the café in the Sheep Museum. As Peter Mc Lean and I drink coffee whilst eating our calorie infested cake and wait for the museum tour to finish, Chris and his passenger, with a repaired propeller, fly over the museum on approach to the airport. **Flying time: 2.2 hours - Distance 115.7 nm (208.2kms)**

Day 2 Hay to Broken Hill via Ivanhoe and Menindee Lakes - 256nm

Hay to Ivanhoe - 103nm Heading: 335 degrees

The day started with reports of 20 knot head winds ahead. “Great!” That’s flying. My carefully

“the “wind gods” like to shake the trike violently ”



crafted trike covers have worked well. I hear that a 3 axis aircraft is flying back to Yarrawonga for a small repair. I arrange for them to get my trike covers for me. All those things I have said about three axis pilots I take back. Everybody inspects Chris's prop and unfortunately for Chris, the decision is made that it is too dangerous for him to carry on flying into a remote, semi desert region, with a repaired, though still damaged, prop. It is a great sight to see 18 trikes, sorry, 17 trikes, warming up together ready for our next adventure. "What does today's flying adventures bring us"?

The radio chatter is almost unbearable as 30 aircraft give advice as to where the lowest head wind could be found. I surmised that it did not matter what height you were at. It was rough and slow at every height. At Yarrawonga, Mitch had advised me to increase the tension in my wing by unwinding my batons a few turns. I was chasing down Mitch and Noel in the distance and noticed that I was gradually catching them at the same height. I'm impressed. I have found a little bit of extra speed in my trike. After hunting both down, I changed height to take advantage of my newly acquired speed. Almost immediately they pulled away from me as I had lowered myself into even stronger head winds. I never managed to catch them again for this leg. Pilots closer to the ground reported vast amounts of emu's and kangaroos. All I see are wild goats.



The land is sparse, covered in salt bush. The green grass and copious amounts of water has been fostering an epidemic of wild animals. The Cobb Hwy stayed in sight until it turned sharply to the North East, 37km from Hay, at the town of One Tree. You guessed it; it was named after the one

"I seem to be sinking as I am trying to climb at full revs"

tree that existed on the continuation of the Hay plains. Apparently in 1900 that one tree was destroyed by a storm, they never did re-name the town.

Lake Waljeers, one of the largest lakes located north of the Lachlan River acted as a beacon in the distance, whilst the head wind continued to throw us around. After a while you go with the bumps and eventually you don't think about the conditions. However, as soon as you do this, the "wind gods" like to shake the trike violently to keep yourself sharp and aware of where you are. On the radio the 2 stroke pilots are discussing possible landing options for refuelling. The head wind is causing heavy fuel use and they are unsure if they will make it to Ivanhoe. It's time like this you appreciate the 912 4-stroke engine.

As we near Ivanhoe, the wind conditions seem to be very inconsistent. Winds are gusting up to 37kph. When I make my 10 nm inbound radio call another 2 or 3 aircraft make the same call. I cannot see them but know they are nearby. I mentally plot their position. I can see other



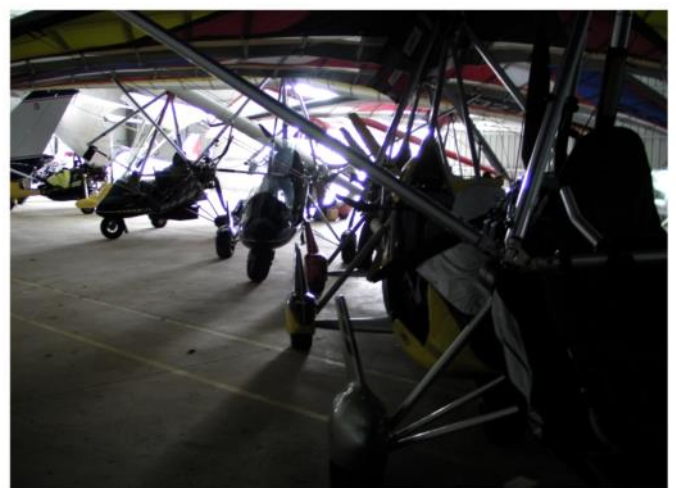
aircraft in circuit in the distance and decide I would rather make a direct in approach and get out of this wind. At 3 nm I make an "on final call". Immediately after making the call, another pilot makes the same call, at the same distance from the same direction. This guy must be on top of me. Unsure of his real location and if I am about to be hit, I make a call to the pilot if he has me sighted, on final at 3 nm. No response. I make a call that I am going to orbit to the west and make another approach. Half way through my turn I can see the other trike. He is some 5nm from my current position and I am a little annoyed that he was not where he said he was and now I have to wait whilst this trike and the other pass me by. As always, this is when you get hit by the 37kph wind gusts. Eventually the two trike passes by and I begin my final approach again. The wind is coming directly down the runway. Whilst it is strong it does not cause too great a concern on landing. However, the upward slope on the runway does surprise me. After parking, I am unsure if I can leave my trike. The gusty wind conditions make me wonder if it will be blown over. I turn the trike further into the wind and leave for the bus which has just arrived and is setting up lunch. Whilst eating lunch, we watch as other aircraft approach with some taking the safer option to do a go around due to the changing wind conditions. **Flying time: 2.5 hours - Distance 105nm (189kms)**

"Strange! I thought
Menindee Lakes airport
was next to a Lake"

Ivanhoe to Menindee Lakes - 101nm Heading: 278 degrees

The take-off from Ivanhoe proves to be one of the more challenging take offs I have experienced. The wind is now more of a cross wind, rather than directly down the runway. As I turn into the wind to get on a track I seem to be sinking as I am trying to climb at full revs. Whilst it is only momentarily, my senses are confused as I try to interpret what is happening. Once I have enough height I am more relaxed. The battle now is to try and get on track. As I turn to my heading, the winds fight me to stop me from getting on course. With a 2 hour flight ahead of me I decide it is not worth fighting it at the moment and surrender to the course it wants to take me on.

Once settled, pilots are again chasing the height with the lowest head winds. From 500 feet (Or maybe below, I am unsure?) to 7,000 feet, there is



again no escape. Some make claims it is calm at this height, but another pilot will quickly dismiss this once they are at that height. I observe other aircraft following the Ivanhoe to Menindee railway line and road below. I stay left of track to avoid any other aircraft following the same course. The landscape is flat and even more desolate. The safety of the railway line and dirt road below is comforting to see. On the radio I hear a message that my trike covers are sitting in Broken Hill, awaiting my arrival. "Does anybody need a set of hand crafted trike covers?"

After some time my GPS tells me I am 10 nm from Menindee, a welcome sight. "Strange! I thought Menindee Lakes airport was next to a Lake". I cannot see any lakes nearby. I see lakes on the horizon, but not nearby. I have not heard pilots from trikes that took off just before making inbound calls. "Gee, my new adjusted wing is giving me some real extra speed. I love this!" 10 nm out and I still cannot see the airport. Not that unusual. These country airports can be hard to spot. 3nm from the airport and I still cannot see the airport. As I survey the desert and sand dunes below of the red earth, littered with greenery, I begin to conclude that "hey! There is no airport in this location". This is a first for me. My GPS has wrong airport coordinates loaded for Menindee Lakes. Not to worry, I will wake up my ipad and just check my back up map. What's that icon in the top right hand side of the Ipad reading? 2% battery life. Not possible. I have it connected to my DC connection. It should be



charging as I fly. I run my fingers across the surface of the ipad with the authority of a pilot in charge, expecting the ipad to obey me and give me one last gasp of brightness to read the map. Nothing! There is not enough power to run the program. Never fear, my third navigational back up will see me home to Menindee. I look at my physical map in my leg pocket and the lakes on the map are on the fold of the page, just where I

"the occasional whack on the wing makes sure I am alert"

cannot see the airport. When did I last reference my map to the ground? Wind conditions are a lot calmer, but it will be difficult to open the map, control the trike, re fold the map, and place it back into my

leg pocket whilst flying. What an interesting situation to be in whilst flying in a desert location. I have plenty of fuel. I decide to change my GPS for a direct track for Broken Hill. Unfortunately I am desperate for a comfort break. Flying for a further hour, desperate for a toilet will make the rest of the flight very uncomfortable, or wet.

In the distance, with reference to the part of the map I can read, I conclude that the lakes in the distance must be where the airport must be. 3 lakes, one airport; which lake has the airport beside it? I see smoke next to the middle lake. Like a detective, I conclude that the lake with smoke next to it must be the lake with the airport. I back my judgement and make tracks for the smoke. On the radio, the trikes that I thought I was in front of make their inbound calls for Menindee lakes. With the lakes still some way in



the distance it supports my thoughts that those lakes are the lakes I need to get to. It is not long before I can see Menindee Township and then the airport, right next to the middle lake. "You little beauty"! Within minutes of landing I rush off for the toilet facilities that do not exist. Its times like this it is great to be male. **Flying time: 2.1 hours - Distance 109.5nm (197.1kms)**

Menindee Lakes to Broken Hill - 52nm Heading: 286 degrees

After departing the runway, my track to Broken Hill takes me directly over the lake. As the lake is directly beside the airport I do not have enough height to clear it should I have an engine failure. I make a decision to do a 360 degree turn and have my wing camera take footage of Menindee Township and the airport and then track to the north of the Lake. This footage should be good I think to myself. The wind is now down to 20 kph. It almost seems calm compared to earlier conditions. However the occasional whack on the wing makes sure I am "alert, but not alarmed". Heading west, with the sun working its way downwards towards the horizon, it is difficult to see ahead. Looking down or to the side is best. Eventually I catch up to Mitch and we attempt to fly together. However, whilst we are close in proximity I fail to spot him. He then says I have passed him and now ahead of him. With my extra speed I slowly pull away. The

"What else is there to do on a flying trip when it's raining? "



previous rains have left the desert scarred by empty river beds. Large empty river beds can be seen everywhere you look. As we get closer to Broken Hill I hear a Rex RPT approaching Broken Hill. There are some discussions between the RPT and a 3 Axis aircraft as they ensure each other's

paths do not cross on approach to circuit. Just prior to reaching 3nm from the airport, the landscape changes from desolate desert plains to very green small mounds or hills which look out of place to

its surroundings? Is this why they call it Broken Hill? I am glad to see the airport as the day has been long. Eventful, fun, and a great experience, but it will be great to get on the ground and relax with an evening beer.

As I join midfield crosswind the flight into circuit is calm. Peter has organised a hangar for us to keep our trikes in for the two nights we are here and I am grateful I do not have to tie down my wing for the night. I land very long on the 8,000ft runway and taxi my way to the hangar. Various aircraft are on the grass and I am soon informed the hangar arrangement has fallen through. That's no good. I will now need to find my covers. As the shadows get longer over the airport the 2 stroke trikes announce their arrival by their distinctive clatter in the sky. All of our group have arrived safe and sound with just Chris, still sitting alone at



Hay airfield, I assume, fitting his new propeller.
Flying time: 1.1 hours - Distance 159.2nm (106.5kms)

Total flying time for the day 5.7 hours 273.7nm (492.66kms)

Day 3 Broken Hill non flying day

Today the group is off on a bus trip to Day Dream underground mine, 27 km North West of Broken Hill. The wind is gusting at 57 kph. Yes, it is windy and the heavens will soon unleash their load on us. Chris will have no chance of flying from Hay today as flying conditions are intolerable. Peter has always managed to arrange our non-flying days on rainy or windy days. Last year our trip to Bathurst was exactly the same.

After turning off from the main road into Apollyon Valley, the bus traverses a narrow outback road with huge washouts which, are surprisingly dry after the recent rains. The mine was founded in 1881 before the beginning of the Broken Hill Mining Company (BHP). The underground tour was extremely interesting.

We make our way over the 39 humps into Silverton. Lunch is being provided at a local restaurant and with the rain just beginning to fall it's a pleasant sight filled with country style cooking aromas. After lunch we walk around the town. Not a big town. The rain is falling as drizzle and the cloud base is close to the ground. After a short walk we all head to the infamous Silverton Hotel. What else is there to do on a flying trip when it's raining? The atmosphere in the pub is electric. Some try their luck at some drinking games; others read the many sayings and proverbs hanging from the ceiling. A number of films including Mad Max were made in and around the town. Mad Max 4 was to be made here, but was moved to Africa because the desert has turned too green, so the story goes. We eventually get back on the bus and head 5 kms north to Mundi Mundi plains to view the South Australian Border, some 18kms away. The bus



windows are fogged up; the cloud base is so low that we can only see the side of the roads. The temp has now dropped to 12 degrees. We see nothing. Back to Broken Hill. The rest of the day is filled with a trip to many of the local sites, including the Pro Hart Art Gallery, where 2 of our group managed to prevent the art gallery burning down; a true story.

Day 3 Broken Hill Traditionally a day that a local flight is taken

Winds are gusting up to 37 kms today. All of the group, bar one elect not to fly. We take a trip to the Flying Doctors service; visit the Miners



memorial on top of the mullock heap that bisects the city of Broken Hill. Good views of the city can be seen from here. Some of us walk back to town over the railway line and stop in at the pub where some of the making of "Pricilla Queen of the desert" was made. A short walk around town and the day has quickly passed. Chris has flown in just in time for dinner. He tells us his flight was calm and conditions were perfect and all is good.

Day 4 Broken Hill to Wentworth - 127nm Heading: 162 degrees

"Mitch has a friend"! These words have become iconic for me since I have been flying with Mitch ever since being associated with the club. It seems everywhere we fly, Mitch has a friend that he can call up and say hello to when we arrive at an airport or town, no matter where or how remote that may be. Most times when people say this they cannot back it up with a real person. However, Mitch can and always does. Mitch tells us he has a friend who lives at Buckalow station, 80 kms from Broken Hill, and 23 kms from the

**"Soon, all signs of roads
and civilisation have
disappeared"**

South Australian Border with an all-weather strip. He has arranged for us to visit. 8 Trikes decide to divert to this outstation including both the 2 stroke aircraft. At our morning briefing we find that

Wentworth Airport has been closed for a few days due to the rains. It is open today, but if they get more rain, the airport will be closed for a few days. At short notice, Peter has arranged for us to divert to Mildura; one of Australia's busiest country airports. Distance 138 nm. On warm up, we hear on the radio a RPT aircraft making its way to Broken Hill. Unfortunately, with 30 aircraft trying to take off, some of us got caught up waiting for it to join circuit, land and then taxi to the airport terminal. It seems to take for ever.

After leaving the Runway I bank to the east and circle for a departure over the airport. Chris and I decide to do a lap of the town to see the sites from the air. With a population of 20,000 people, the town seems small from above. The memorial to more than 800 miners killed whilst working looks great from the air. Our track takes us above

the Silver City Hwy, Route 79. The road stretches into the distance in a long straight line. Now that we are heading south west, the wind decides to come from the South; another head wind. Soon, all signs of roads and civilisation have disappeared. The landscape is more like a desert here. Whilst there is greenery, it more like the desert blood red you expect to see. Sand dunes are now forming. Our landing options have narrowed. Landing should be okay, but I am not sure about taking off. In the distance, near a dry river bed lined with large healthy green trees I see scratching's on the surface that could be interpreted as a runway. My GPS, correctly programmed, confirms this. I hear on the radio the others ahead of me doing a circuit over the farm house. I soon call a 3 mile final for a direct in approach. The runway has been cleared as safe by the others. Another trike makes a 1 mile final just after my call. "How can that be? I should be able to see him in front of me. Then, suddenly I see a trike turning sharply in front of me from the east, now turning on final, but less than 1 mile from the runway. I later find out later that the 1 mile final was for the nearby road next to the farm house. This was a short flight, but what a buzz. **Flying time: 1 hr - Distance 53.9nm (97kms)**

We are welcomed by Mitch's friends and they offer us a coffee. They breed Kelpie dogs and they have a large litter of small puppies. When trained, they sell for a minimum of \$7,000 dollars. Mitch has not seen his friends for a few years and he is deep in discussions. One minute I am talking and enjoying the ambience of the desert environment and then in the next minute, it seems all the trikes are warming up to depart. Mitch and I are left behind on our own. I am shocked as I have not even had my coffee yet! We take off in a great environment. This is what trike flying is all about for me. Mitch has turned his wing





batons one turn out and I now find I fly at the same speed as him. Not faster. I can feel the smile on his face as I stay the same distance from him all the way to Mildura. We fly over the Murray River and we are one of the last aircrafts of the group to fly into the airport. For the first time on the trip we have to change the radio frequency from 126.7. As I taxi for parking all the trikes are lined up at a hangar door. "You little beauty, we have a hangar". It is an ex-Qantas maintenance hangar; big enough for all of our 30 aircraft to park in. Well done Pete! As we wait for the bus, I notice one of our trike members loading his trike onto the back of a utility van. I think he has had enough. Our accommodation is in Wentworth, not Mildura. The bus drive to the motel takes 35 minutes and we are glad to finally arrive. **Flying time: 1.7 hrs - Distance 105nm (189kms)**

Total flying time for the day 2.7 hours 158.9nm (286kms)

Day 5 Wentworth- Non Flying day

Normally we do not have as many non-flying days on the Megafauna trips. However this year, an extra day has been included for our international visitors. Just as well. A cold front has come in and it looks like it's going to rain heavily. The temperature has dropped down to 12 degrees. Wind gusts are up to 39 kms. Peter has organised a river cruise with lunch on the Murray and

Darling rivers. The food is good, the drinks are cold and the company is good fun. I am listening to the music on the boat radio and I am told it is our captain and his wife singing below. With disbelief, I look downstairs and sure enough, "The Captain and Tannille" concert has been going for a little while now. On return we take a tour of the town which takes only minutes. Back at our accommodation, Mitch and I decide to play with our cameras, exchange some footage and learn some functions that we should know how to use. I upload some images on the clubs face book page. We check tomorrows forecast and all does not look good.

Day 6 Mildura to Deniliquin via Balranald - 178nm Heading: 118 degrees (Unplanned non Flying Day)

The forecast for the day is for 52 km wind gusts. Winds will be around 24 km on departure, which is flyable but will get worse as the day continues. Above average rain is expected for the day. 53

people are booked in for a motel in Deniliquin and we are in Mildura. When we arrive at the airport, Qantas and 2 Rex Aircraft are on the Taxi way getting prepared for early starts. We wait for the whole group to arrive and a sensible decision is made not to fly. Pete makes a number of phone calls and comes back to the group telling us he has found accommodation in Mildura, in one motel

"I conclude it could be dangerous "





for 53 people. Not bad for a Saturday morning booking. After checking in to the motel, Mitch tells me "he has a friend". It is not long before Mitch and I are having coffee in a house not far from the motel. Amazing! After Coffee and listening to some of Mitch's mis-adventures with

his friends from a bye gone era, we get a lift to the Workers Club in Mildura; once known as the pub with the longest bar in the world. Lunch and a visit to the local brewery keep us entertained. Late into the afternoon it is time for an afternoon nanna nap. This non flying is hard work.

Day 7 Mildura to Deniliquin via Balranald - 178nm Heading: 118 degrees

Yes, the weather is flyable today. The wind continues to cause havoc as today it is only expected to gust to 37 km. However, lucky for us, our morning take off has the wind well down. I have done the trip from Mildura to Balranald a number of times now. I know the track well. We take off to towards the west and circle back to the east. The square paddocks surrounding Mildura always display a kaleidoscope of colours. Dark red earth, light greens, dark greens, yellows. I have no idea what is growing here at this time of year but the land looks extremely fertile. I decide to follow some of the 2,520 kilometre Murray River, twisting and turning violently past the towns of

Irymple and Red Cliffs. I follow it part way to Robinvale and instead of going further southwards, I continue eastward to the north of Robinvale. The landscape is quite barren to the north of the river and even with the recent rains, still shows a lot of red earth. Past Lake Benanee, the area remembered by some of us for the loss of a trike pilot some years ago due to medical reasons. Without navigation aids you could follow the Sturt Hwy straight to Balranald. The outside temperature seems to be getting colder. Winds are gusting from the west. We should have a tail wind, but the changing wind conditions make it difficult to tell what is going on. I don't think I have ever flown into Balranald airport in a calm environment. It has always been a wild ride in, no matter what the season. On approach to Balranald I hear that the active runway is 18. Interesting!

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With a westerly wind it seems there is going to be a strong crosswind on approach. As I fly over the airfield I look at the wind sock and it is flicking skyward, directly across the runway. I need to go wide to make my left base turn. The

crosswind appears to be at least 15 knots, probably more. I approach the end of the runway at a 45 degree angle. Not an angle I have ever approached the end of a runway before. As I near the end of the runway I see a very large puddle. Some may call it a lake, on my track. With a higher





approach speed due to the conditions, I conclude it could be dangerous to have one wheel catch part of the puddle as it may cause the trike to pull violently to one side. I straighten the trike over the top of the puddle and the trike pulls around nice for a good landing considering the conditions. As I taxi to the corrugated hangars, everybody is parked extremely close to the hangars trying to protect themselves from the gusty cold wind. It feels that at any time, your trike could blow over. I manage to get close enough to the hangar to protect my trike from blowing over. Mitch has some friends from the township to greet him. On a past trip I got to know them as we had stayed overnight at their house. It was great to catch up with them once again. Now I can say "I have a friend" too. Well, at least one friend.

We were going to have lunch here, but this morning it was decided, we would have a quick break, and have lunch once we get to Deniliquin. However, the activity on the wind sock has everybody making no effort to continue the journey. The sock flickers violently. The

"be aware of a flock of cockatoos at the end of the airport."

temperature is about 14 degrees. But the wind chill factor makes it feel like 2.

Many of our group are huddled on one side of the hangar trying to keep out of the wind. Our American friend from California has his balaclava on his head. Chris

arrives last to the airport as he detoured back to Wentworth to see where the Darling and Murray River meet. As we watch him fight his way to the ground though the crosswind, he lands just short of the "lake" on the runway and then there is an almighty rooster spray of water dispensing itself high into the air. His trike bounces onto the front wheel and then onto the back two wheels one at a time. Wow! Many onlookers thought the spray was smoke from the tyres. When we ask Chris why he landed in front of the puddle, he said "What puddle"? His concentration so focused on that one spot of the runway, he was blind to the puddle. The bus eventually arrives and it is quickly sent into town for 52 cappuccino's, and a selection of cakes. **Flying time 1.5 hours 84.2nm (151.5kms)**

Balranald to Deniliquin - 88nm Heading: 129

degrees

After a few hours a decision was made to move. I am not sure if the wind actually died down or not, but we had to get to Deniliquin before dark, and whilst there was still plenty of time, like sheep, we all got ready to fly. The wind was now from the south, directly down the runway. Another head wind ensued. On top of this we were heading south east, so it was going to be another battle to keep turning onto track.

As we departed Balranald, the battle begins. Again the radio chatter was all about where the least head wind could be found. Ian thought he would be clever and go high. Very high! At 5,000ft he makes a claim that he has actually found a small tail wind. "What? Do we all climb to 5,000ft? Within moments of making this claim Ian is back on the radio saying that he has incorrectly calculated his tail wind and that he actually has a strong head wind. I think he says 18knts. Ian took off before me and now, I am in front of him. He decides to go higher to find the fanciful tail wind. He reports in at 7,500ft and tells us that he still has a head wind. Chris is on the radio and Ian invites him to join him. Chris replies with an "I'll be right there."

The "English Muffin", (Chris in his P & M machine) tells all of us on the radio that his CHT temperatures are all even. Chris receives a big response to his communication from many pilots. One pilot claimed that his wheels were spinning in the air at the same speed. Most communication can be best summed up as; "Who cares?" a little harsh, but quite funny at the time. Ian continues to search for clear air. At 9,500 ft he tells us that he still has a head wind. We wonder why you would want to be that high. Shortly after Chris received his feedback about his CHT temperatures, he fails to respond on the radio. Some thought Chris was upset by the responses

he received. Others became concerned for his safety as they asked him to confirm he was still on channel. As time went by, he continued not to respond. Chris has had some radio issues previously and it was my belief that it was his radio, not his self that had stopped communicating.

The Edwards River comes into view and my map tells me Deniliquin is close. Runway 24 is the runway of choice. A call is made on the radio to be aware of a flock of cockatoos at the end of the airport. Another front is appearing on the horizon and the skies are getting darker. I see the

cockatoos in the distance and am surprised at their quantity.

As I taxi for parking I cannot see any aircraft on the ground.

Where is everybody? Eventually

I find that we are again parking

in a hangar for the night. "Fantastic!" Ian and Chris fly in some time later. By this time the clouds are quite dark and the wind is more relentless. The aero club has opened up their club

"they got to Euroa and
was faced by a large rain
front."



rooms and we all join in for a drink or two whilst we wait for the bus to arrive. Chris confirms that his radio had stopped working. **Flying time 1.6 hours 91.6nm (165kms)**

Total flying time for the day 3.1 hours 175.8nm (316.8kms)

**Day 8 Deniliquin to Yarrawonga - 60nm
Heading: 108 degrees**

Our final day. Conditions are good for a short flight back to Yarrawonga. The winds are well down and the head wind is low. I make track to Tocumwal where I will follow the Murray River into Yarrawonga. Tocumwal airport was an ex WW2 training base that has the largest runways in the area that I am aware of. It passes to my left as I look down to the river looking for anything of interest. Cobram is now on my right. In the distance I can now see Lake Mulwala. Suddenly, I see an extremely bright light flash from the ground in the distance, followed by a bloom of black smoke rising high into the sky, my first thoughts are that an aircraft has gone down. I listen attentively on the radio for any reaction to the sight. Nothing. After a number of minutes I conclude that a farmer must be burning off and has started his fire with petrol. Whilst it is always good to leave for a flying trip, it is always great to get back safe and sound and without damage to your aircraft. As I taxi to a parking area I contemplate the thought of having to pack up my trike for the trailer ride home." Bugger"!

Ian and Chris are flying back to Dixons Creek and I wish I was flying with them. However, a large cold front is heading towards Yarrawonga and today is probably a good day to trailer back as I have to work in the morning. The cold front is just hitting Melbourne and it sounds like there is lots of rain, low level clouds and strong winds. I ask the boys if they think they will make it to Dixons Creek before the rain. "Yeah no worries" is the reply.

After packing up, Mitch and I go to the Pub in Yarrawonga for a celebratory counter lunch. We

just get our orders in before the kitchen closes. After a relaxing break, we both head off for home. By the time I get to Seymour the cloud base is down to the hill tops. The rain is falling and the winds are blowing. The front is upon me. I think of Chris and Ian and wonder if they have already landed at Dixons Creek. I hope so, because conditions do not look good. I imagine what I would do if I encountered these conditions on route. As I arrive into my driveway the dog is there to greet me. He appears to have missed me.

On my way to work the next day I get a phone call from Chris. He tells me he is in Euroa. He explains that they got to Euroa and was faced by a large rain front that could not be flown around. They were forced to change plans and turn back, landing at Euroa gliding club airfield. They were not able to get away for the rest of the day and had to take accommodation in the town for the night.

What a great triking experience. Unusually windy compared to other trips and for the first time I believe that an extra day was added because of an unplanned non flying day. Peter does a magnificent job in planning these trips. The bonus use of hangers is fantastic. Having 3 international visitors just added to mix. The friendships made and rekindled make the trip even more enjoyable. Flying with 18 fellow trike pilots added to the excitement. We had 6 Southern Microlight club members on this trip. It would be great to see even more next time. I highly recommend you come along.





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Southern Microlight Club Incorporated

Useful information

Southern Microlight Club Inc. is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

Southern Microlight Club Inc. is affiliated to the Hang Gliding Federation of Australia

If you would like to pay money into the club account for payment of membership fees, the purchase of polo shirts, or deposits for events; then please make a direct deposit to:

Account Name : Southern Microlight Club

BSB : 063109

Account No : 10405908

Please indicate your name and what you are paying for. If you do not have enough space in your banking web-site to put sufficient information, then please email treasurer@southernmicrolightclub.com.au with the details.



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