

Australian Air-Ferry

Ferry company of choice for Cirrus, Cessna, Partnavia and Mooney

June Newsletter

Welcome to this months newsletter, our reader base grows every month and I thank those who have taken the time to send us emails of encouragement, it is very much appreciated. Special thanks to those who let us ferry their aircraft as well.

This month was full of trials and tribulations, we've broken some records and made some friends, but we've also drawn the attention of the American FAA who has an extremely elevated level of alarm, maybe it's indicative of the times in which we live.

Make sure you read the Pocket Rocket story about an Ovation 2 Mooney that found its way to Australia (Below).

Short haul

The Shorts has been described as, "the aircraft that is still in the box it was delivered in," or "the ugliest thing in the sky". But for those who have flown this magnificent old sky-bus it is sad to see so many being retired.

Australian Air-Ferry was involved in the relocation of the last of a dying breed in Australia.

After the initial phone call to move three Shorts 360 – 300 Series aircraft, several phone calls secured the required crew and the preparations began.

Finding six crew for Shorts 360 aircraft in Australia was an achievement in itself.

Moving three (3) Shorts 360 aircraft from Brisbane to Milwaukee Wisconsin simultaneously was not going to be easy either, but once the crew had arrived the relocation took a positive turn.

These three aircraft were amongst the last four in the country, one remains on the Sunshine Coast but it's a lonely existence, the only aircraft of its type in Australia.

The crew turned out to be an interesting mix. One of the Captains Trevor Stailhut used to work for Sunstate Airlines flying Shorts throughout Queensland on their RPT services and he claims to have more than 8,000 hours on type.

Trevor was working for an organization in the Dominican Republic, so he had to be flown back to Brisbane for the preparations.

Trevor has several years experience as a Check and Training Captain on type and he ends up being a considerable asset for the trip across the Pacific.



Shorts 360 over the Rocky Mountains heading towards Salt Lake City

As the aircraft had been sitting for three or four years they needed a little attention before test flights commenced.

Richard McDonald joined the crew, Richard had worked for Hazelton Airlines for several years and although he did not make Captain (due to seniority), he did have 2,000 on type.

Richard was flying a crop duster in Warren and was more than happy to get out of the back blocks of New South Wales and into some serious adventure.

We should mention that Richard also runs a business called Mig Jet adventures and he's often seen at air shows all over Australia showing off his Mig15, so he's not afraid of some adrenalin, not that we expected any on this trip.

Flying at incredible speeds coupled with unmatched agility is no more than a dream for most adrenaline junkies. Only a select few navigate the hurdles to achieve the elevated status of a fighter pilot.

Richard McDonald has 20 years flying experience; he has accumulated a total of more than 12,000 hours during his career. 6,000 hours has been as an agricultural pilot and 5,000 hours has been as an airline pilot. And now he's accumulated several hundred hours flying ferries across the Pacific for Australian Air-Ferry.

The Mig flights not for everyone, but it's quite a ride if you've got the time and inclination.



Richard McDonald pictured with Mig15 after joy ride in Bundaberg

Another experienced Shorts Captain, Garry Mitchell was recruited for the journey. Garry was a Check and Training Captain for Hazelton Airlines on the Shorts 360 – 300 Series.

Hazelton Airlines purchased three of these aircraft brand new in the late 80s, so several of its more senior captains flew the Shorts for many years.

The departure date arrived everyone had completed their check rides and were deemed to be competent, all the aircraft checks were completed and they were ready.

On the momentous day Trevor was eager to depart, he'd fired up and was gone before the trio had time to group, VH-SUL required a battery cart to complete the start sequence successfully so two aircraft departed shortly after Trevor.

The second and third aircraft taxied under water fountains which were provided by the airport fire brigade. This was a fitting fair well from an airport that had watched them come and go for two decades.

Sunstate Airlines Shorts 360 and 330s serviced regional and coastal areas throughout North Queensland, communities like Maryborough, Bundaberg, Emerald, Rockhampton, Mackay, and Townsville depended on this service. These old Shorts were a vital link for these areas during a bygone era.



Shorts at Brisbane Airport just prior to their final departure from Australia

Six flight crew and three engineers synchronized very quickly as the trio (Shorts) headed out through Moreton Bay towards Norfolk Island.

The first leg was important, it's short and whilst the aircraft are never far from land in either direction it gives us time to double check everything.

Everything ran perfectly, no problems with the aircraft, we've charged the batteries and run some kerosene through these old engines.

The following day we headed for Western Samoa and this time we managed to maintain a long distance formation. Even the Australian Air Force would have been proud.



Samoa feast for a crew that had come so far

The next few days pass reasonably quickly and without incident. We find ourselves in Scotts Bluff Nevada, where we'd stopped to refuel and have some lunch. We're only three and a half hours from Milwaukee.

After refueling and dining in a fantastic restaurant, conveniently located on the airfield, this motley crew clambered back into their aircraft for the final leg.

Unfortunately VH-SUM has igniter problems and is unable to start the right engine. An engineer based at the airport solves the problem by installing the only igniter he had. "There's probably four or five starts left in this igniter," he says. So reluctantly we spent the night and attached a ground cart for the start next morning. It's bitterly cold, the wind blows straight through you and there's plenty of snow lying on the ground, we're eager to get going again.

Initially there was indecision with regard to fate of SUM, and this had been resolved by the time we arrived. VH-SUM was going to the Shorts graveyard. Shortly after arriving we're asked to make one last hop with SUM, its going to a very small airport just south of Milwaukee.

Richard gets assigned the job of landing this old Shorts into the short strip; the crop dusting experience will come in handy on this occasion.

Four crew members climbed into SUM, one was from Milwaukee with vital directions (and local knowledge), we're all eager for the experience and don't want to miss anything. The landing was perfect and the aircraft stopped well short of the piano keys.

We climbed out and said farewell to VH-SUM, who had come all this way only to be abandoned in a graveyard. And we left an igniter with three more goods starts.

It's a sad thing to destroy an aircraft, but with 18,000 hours on the clock it's hard to argue that an extensive rebuild is the best option.



Shorts winging their way to Hilo Hawaii

Pocket Rocket

The Mooney is a sophisticated, swift, agile machine and Australian Air-Ferry recently ferried an Ovation 2 from California (USA) to New South Wales (Australia). This Mooney joins one other Ovation 2 in Australia.

Australian Air-Ferry will deliver the next generation Ovation II registered VH-VVV July 2005, this will be the first Ovation II GX in the country, the first “glass Cockpit” Mooney, (G1000).”

Mooney’s objective with the Ovation 2 project was to increase its top end speed. The Eagle had made its debut in 1998, also fitted with an IO-550 G engine, but the Ovation 2 had a \$70,000 USD premium, so the factory decided that it needed something more.



Mooney at Christmas Island Airport

Mooney chose a propeller with one less blade, lopping one blade of the three bladed propeller gained another seven knots, on top of what was an already quicker machine, Ovation 2 was now literally miles ahead.

The new owner wanted the old three bladed propeller so it had been fitted prior to the aircrafts departure.

We quickly find out that this birds no slouch, taking off at a maximum take-off weight of 3,368lbs it climbs at 1,400 fpm and it maintains that rate so effortlessly, the climb rate is noticed to have dropped of to 1,250 fpm at 6,000 ft. Still that’s not bad for a single piston engine aircraft.

At 8,000 ft the aircraft will indicate 170 knots (CAS) and true airspeed will be approx 190kts. During the last six hours of the Pacific crossing between California and Hilo Hawaii VH-VTC comfortably maintained a ground speed of 190 knots or better.

A new generation of Moritz Corporation gauges helps the pilot, everything is easy to see and read. Moritz refined the analog portion of the display and made a few other changes for the 2000 models. The gauges, which show both digital and analog readouts, make engine management easy.

VH-VTC came with a long list of extras; a sophisticated Garmin 530 / 430 package. A two-axis autopilot with flight director and altitude / vertical speed preselect, HSI, a BF Goodrich Stormscope, Shadin Fuel-flow computer and oxygen. Leather interior is stock standard and the leather yoke is a nice touch.

So we had the perfect aircraft, it was a perfect day for our departure from California, so what could possibly go wrong.

Federal Aviation Authority, three words that instill dread and apprehension into fellow pilots. They are usually very helpful, and are really nice guys when you get to know them. But, when something goes wrong they are people who assume you're guilty until such time as you prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that you've done nothing wrong.

When VH-VTC departed California the transponder (digital) transmitted a registration signature code for N22000, the old US registration assigned to this aircraft. We had VH-VTC displayed on the sides of the aircraft, but that was of little consequence as we were already at sea when the alarm was raised.

So the fact that we'd headed to sea in an aircraft that was in the system as having been deregistered caused all sorts of alarms to be activated.

When we arrived in Hilo and phoned the FAA in California, he asked whether, "we'd been dragged kicking and screaming from the aircraft by several Federal Police with huge batons". But no we'd been met by one airport security guard who was curious as to what all the commotion was about.

Life is pretty laid back in Hawaii, regular travelers through there make friends and when they heard that it was Australian Air-Ferry that had caused a concern they knew that it must have been a mistake.



VH-VTC in Hilo Hawaii

A couple of quick phone calls and the concerns were resolved, after a good nights sleep we were on our way again.

The Mooney makes short and easy work of the Pacific, the only problem was with the oil temperature. It had climbed higher than we'd like during our transit through the equatorial regions, there's no cowl flaps to open and running a few more gallons an hour solved the problem.

Surplus Equipment

We have a 406 Mhz (digital) PLB locator beacon for sale, this is the latest in search and rescue niceties, it transmits your lat/long via satellite to NOAA every few minutes for 24 hours. We'll sell it near-new to you for \$950 Australian dollars and you can register it to your own person / organization. A must have for bush walkers and outback Australia flights.

We also have a black and white Lowrance 1000 GPS available for \$1,150 Australian. They're equipped with a pacific international database, and have seen very little service. We've also got a six-man life raft that has all sorts of inclusions, never used. Talk to Darren Gibson about these items.

FastFind



ELT with GPS

AirMap 1000 GPS



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