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October 2007 Newsletter

Flying Blind ?

Every month we bring you an adventure from somewhere around the world, this month we're staying closer to home. Our American friends love stories from the Australian Outback, so this month's edition is dedicated to the Great Australian Outback.

Several years ago I was asked to fly throughout the western region of Queensland, carrying the editor of Blues Country Magazine, who wanted to gather stories from various characters in the outback, for feature stories in the magazine.

There was some debate over what aircraft might be perfect for our trip into the Outback and eventually it was decided that we'd take a Cessna 210, this model proved hard to find, there's not too many in flying schools with rent me signs attached, but we managed to find an old run down aircraft in Brisbane that we were told was in very good condition, mechanically. I'm sure you've heard that as well.

We departed Brisbane heading west, and the customer required several stops throughout the western and north western regions of Queensland.

On the morning of our departure from Brisbane the weather was perfect for the flight, we'd started early to take advantage of smooth conditions and light winds from the west.

With these trips it's usually a good idea to leave early in the morning to avoid strong thermal activities and strong head winds which increase in strength as the afternoon progresses.



A little after midday we arrived at Dirranbandi, which straddles the Queensland-NSW border, the parkland is renowned for its variety of bird life, It's in the centre of a cotton-growing area. Dirranbandi's population almost doubles at harvest time when backpackers flock into town to pick the crop. Nearby Cubbie Station is believed to be the largest, privately-owned cotton farm in the Southern Hemisphere.

The 'capital' of the Balonne Shire, St George is just a short drive to the north-east. The Beardmore Dam is situated on the Balonne River that links the two towns, it irrigates much of the south-west of the state, offers excellent freshwater fishing for yellow-belly, freshwater Jew and the incomparable Murray cod.

After spending the night in Dirranbandi we headed for Quilpie, where again we stayed overnight and visited a couple of local characters.

The next day is where it gets very interesting, we're heading for Windorah. In this part of the world they do not have a Met office, the nearest met office is Brisbane, and you can phone to get a Windorah TAF, although ringing the source seemed to make more sense.

So we called our destination direct, the ERSA (Enroute Supplement) is a great source of information and it provided us with a telephone number for the local refueller (FBO for the Americans).

An elderly gentleman answered the phone and we informed him that we'd be over to get some fuel, and by the way what is the weather like there currently.

Our informant was not aware of the importance of this question; he merely thought someone was trying to make conversation with him.

He replied, "I heard them talking of rain earlier, but I haven't heard any falling outside, the winds are from the west, so if there's going to be any rain it'll blow in from that direction. We haven't had rain for quiet a while so if we do get any today it'll be very welcome."

And from this conversation we assumed that all is well and so we climbed into our 210 and headed over to get the fuel before continuing onto Bedourie, that night.

After making a landing at Windorah we called the local refueller who promptly arrived at the airport to unlock the pump and assist us with our Avgas requirements.

Here's where it gets interesting, the old gentlemen whom we'd been talking with was driven to the airport by a younger woman who he works with, because he is blind. Yes we'd gotten the weather from someone who is totally blind. He made his way to the aircraft with the assistance of his offsider and started making preparations for the refuelling. Describing to us how to open the lock on the pump, and where everything was. It dawned on me at this stage that he was telling me exactly what he could, he'd heard people talking about the weather, but he couldn't actually see anything.

I remember this day vividly, although it was several years ago, what happened was so bizarre that I have never forgotten it, we got weather from a blind man, lovely guy though.

Before heading over to Bedourie shortly after refuelling, we again phoned our destination. One of the first question was "are you blind," to which the guy was a little offended, however, we wanted to make sure we we're getting good advice regarding the weather.

The publican was our point of contact, he managed the pub, the accommodation and the airport.

This leg was also interesting, Bedourie is a small place with no taxi service, so we were informed by the Hotel owner to fly low over the pub, "and make lots of noise so I can hear you," he said. "I'll come out to the airport and pick you up." To which we responded, "shore we can do that," music to my ears, not the sort of thing you hear people say often.



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There's a couple of wingers who live close to Sydney International Airport who could learn a thing or two from someone like this, I thought.

Bedouries population is 120, it is located in Central West Queensland, Australia, lying on Eyre Creek. It is located 1600 kilometres west of the state capital, Brisbane, and 200 kilometres north of Birdsville.

Bedourie is the administrative centre of the Diamantina Shire (a huge area), which also comprises the towns of Birdsville and Betoota. Total shire population is 326. No zeros missing, that's 326.

This remote area encompasses some of the Simpson Desert and has an atmosphere all of its own, it's harsh country, but picturesque, with a charm you'd only find in a remote area. You can see why painters and artist come to places like this for inspiration.

The Simpson Desert is the common name given to the area between Birdsville in the South West Corner of Queensland to Dalhousie Springs in the far north of South Australia near the Northern Territory border and actually lies across the corners of 3 States - South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The Simpson Desert can be crossed from West - East or East - West, depending on your preference. Tracks are defined only by the ruts and wheel marks in the sand - there is no grading or grooming of the track at any point of the trek.

As promised the Bedourie publican arrived at the airport shortly after we'd flown over his pub, the town folk were friendly and we ended up in a conversation with a property manager from just south of there.

His property had it's own airfield, to which fresh fruit and vegetables were flown in each week.

A back packer had wondered through, fallen in love and was now the wife of this property Manager. She flew over to the east coast to visit with her English parents whenever they came down to visit, she said they would not be up to staying on the property with them, and that they'd never been invited, no Earl Grey Tea I'd suspect.



The Bedourie Hotel

During muster they had eight helicopters on the station for several weeks, and this cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars, all of which was well and truly worth it he explained. "You'd never get the number of cattle out of here that we do without them."

One thing they never run short of is beef, bread is baked on the station, they have there own Chickens for eggs and milking cows etc, but the fresh fruit and vegetables would be much appreciated.

There's a company based in Adelaide (south of here), that loads a Cheiftan each week, with boxes of fruit and vegetables. Each property visited (all have there own airport) on its trek north refines there weekly order as need be. This service runs all year round, with extra aircraft used during Christmas. The stations all contribute to the running costs of this service, which is not cheap, but the only way you can get fresh fruit and vegetables out here. We continued on the following day to Mt Isa, and then returned down through Longreach and Mitchell.

The Australian Outback is a great place to fly into and despite its appeal, you just have to be careful not to ask blind people what the weather is doing.

Cessna 210 gets Glass Cockpit

New aircraft sales in Australia are at an all time high with a few new aircraft arriving each month from the USA and European manufacturers.

One of the current incentives for buying a new aircraft is the strength of the Australian dollar against the USD, and of course another motivator is the appeal of the new glass cockpits.

Until now the only way you could get a new glass cockpit was to order the aircraft that went with it, but now there are two alternatives that will allow you to retrofit your old Cessna 210, or the like, with a full glass cockpit.



Avidyne have announced that the Envision system, basically a second-generation Entegra EFIS suite, will be available for retrofit in the Cessna 210 series. Avidyne is developing the STC for the Centurion line jointly with Crownair Aviation, a San Diego-based mod and maintenance shop at Montgomery Field.

The STC platform is a T210M, N98WR. The aircraft also will be refurbished with new paint, a new interior and engine modifications. The 210 and T210 were once Cessna's top-of-the-line single-engine piston aircraft and are still widely used IFR cross-country cruisers. About 8,400 were built between 1959 and 1985.

Envision systems are now available for retrofit in King Air 200 and 90-Series turboprops, Cessna 300 and 400 Series piston twins, and pre-Entegra-equipped Cirrus SR20 and SR22 single-engine piston aircraft.

"Envision is quickly becoming the leader in integrated flight deck retrofit systems for light GA with a growing number of available aircraft and models," said Avidyne President Dan Schwinn. "Our strategy to make GA flying safer and easier includes developing advanced avionics that are intuitive and simple to use. It also includes making retrofit systems easy to install as we work with experienced partners like Crownair Aviation to add more aircraft to the Envision STC list. It's good for pilots, for avionics shops and for all of GA."

Pricing and Availability

Retail pricing for the *Envision* integrated flight deck for Cessna 210 and T210 aircraft begins at \$29,995USD for the EXP5000 PFD and \$13,995USD for the EX5000 MFD. Pricing for the Crownair Centurion STC kit will be available from Crownair Aviation. Availability is expected in the first quarter of 2008.

For options and pricing or more information, visit www.avidyne.com.

Diesel powered Cessna's

After an extensive market survey and flight test, Cessna Aircraft Company, a Textron Inc. (NYSE: TXT) company, announced it will offer the Thielert turbo diesel engine in its Skyhawk 172S aircraft with deliveries set to begin in mid-2008.

The Skyhawk TD (turbo diesel) will feature a Full Authority Digital Engine Control (FADEC) equipped Thielert Centurion 2.0 liter engine. The DOHC (double overhead camshaft) in-line four-cylinder turbocharged engine develops 155 horsepower, is certified to operate on Jet-A fuel, liquid cooled and drives a composite three-blade constant speed propeller.

“The Skyhawk is already the best-selling, most-flown airplane ever with more than 43,000 delivered, and this option further expands the market due to the worldwide availability of Jet-A fuel,” said John Doman, Cessna vice president of worldwide propeller aircraft sales.

Thielert has a supplemental type certificate (STC) for the Skyhawk, allowing Cessna to offer a factory-installed Thielert engine. The engine features low specific fuel consumption, electronic engine control systems and improved hot-and-high engine performance.

“With the Skyhawk TD, we will incorporate standard aircraft design changes to ensure simple installation and full STC integration,” Doman said. “Pilots will enjoy a number of benefits in addition to lower fuel cost, such as simplified engine management and exceptional reliability.”

With increased range and endurance, the Skyhawk TD will offer an ideal solution for special mission applications like forestry patrol, wildlife conservation efforts, pipeline/power line patrol, traffic reporting and airborne law enforcement.

Cessna To Acquire Columbia

Cessna Aircraft Company has signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) with Columbia Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation to acquire selected assets and certain liabilities of the Bend, Oregon-based aircraft manufacturer.



Columbia 350 and 400 Could Join the Cessna Stable

combination of this superb product line and Cessna’s world class support structure and brand will be unbeatable.”

Columbia filed a voluntary petition for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

“We have explored many options over the past months,” said Columbia Chief Restructuring Officer Carl Young. “This path enables the Company to manage its present cash flow and liabilities while pursuing a plan that enables us to continue operating until a final sale can be completed.”

Columbia submitted a motion with the Bankruptcy Court seeking approval of the sale to Cessna and establishing bidding procedures that enable other interested bidders to submit offers and bid at an auction to be held in November.

The sale to Cessna is contingent upon the approval of the Bankruptcy Court and the satisfaction of the closing conditions set forth in the LOI, including the execution of a definitive purchase agreement with Cessna.

According to Cessna Chairman, President and CEO Jack J. Pelton, “Columbia’s unique capability in the high-end single-engine piston market makes it a perfect complement to our Next Generation Piston product line and could provide our customers with the option of an outstanding low-wing, high-performance

piston airplane. We believe the

“The sale of Columbia Aircraft Manufacturing assets to Cessna offers the best avenue to maximize value for all of Columbia’s stakeholders and existing and future customers. Cessna is excited about the prospect of adding the Columbia products to its product line and will provide additional capabilities, world-class processes and financial strength to effectively serve existing Columbia customers and grow the business. Under the agreement reached with Cessna all product warranty and service issues will continue to be honored post-acquisition and customers should expect an enhanced customer experience once the deal closes,” Young said.

Mooney edges forward in pace race

Mooneys Acclaim–Type S, its performance Leader increases its maximum speed to 242 Knots. Mooney Airplane Company has announced that the world’s fastest piston single is



now even faster. Thanks to a combination of aerodynamic refinements, the latest version of the Acclaim will now fly at a top speed of 242 knots and be known as the Acclaim-Type S.

The 280 horsepower, turbo-normalized Acclaim, which established a new standard for aircraft in its class with a speed of 237 knots when it received its Federal

Aviation Administration certification in December of 2006, has set a number of speed records since entering service. To date, more than 50 have been delivered.

“The Acclaim rightfully claimed the title of ‘the fastest production piston single in the world’ when it was introduced. Its performance in the air and in the marketplace ensured that the airplane lived up to its name,” stated David Copeland, Mooney’s vice president of sales and marketing. “But its speed advantage over the competition has now been increased, resulting in two new titles— the Type S and ‘the best Mooney ever.’ The Mooney Acclaim-Type S is unquestionably the fastest single...period,” he added.

Priced at \$599,500USD, deliveries of the Acclaim-Type S are forecast to commence during the first quarter of 2008. Powered by a Teledyne Continental Motors IO 550-G engine, it is equipped with dual Kelly Aerospace turbochargers that allow it to maintain sea level manifold pressure all the way to its service ceiling of 25,000 feet.

“The Type S has benefited from a series of refinements that, by themselves, wouldn’t appear to be significant, but taken together, have notably increased its performance. We have added some impressive new engineering talent during the past year and have tested and incorporated their refinements into this updated design,” Copeland pointed out.

The latest version of the world’s fastest single is equipped with Garmin’s G1000 avionics suite and GFC 700 autopilot as standard. A TKS anti-icing system is also available, making it the only airplane in its class approved for flight into known icing conditions.



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E Citation

Five years ago, the best performance and flight planning data available from Cessna came in a series of tables in two different books, the AFM and the Operating Manual (3 books if you count weight and balance separately).

Now every new Citation comes with a package of software that makes short work of takeoff, landing, weight & balance, and enroute performance calculations. This quantum leap is also available to many legacy Citation operators.

CESNAV is a Windows-based package of software that will run on practically any PC, Laptop, or Class 1 or 2 Electronic Flight Bag. Each CESNAV CD-ROM contains three calculators: CPCalc, EOM, and CLCalc; and an electronic library: AFM, OM, Checklists, and MMEL Procedures. CESNAV packages are available through Technical Publications for 14 Citation models, from the Mustang and CJ, through the Sovereign and Citation X.

MacAir Airlines

MacAir Airlines service the areas mentioned in this months feature story.

MacAir provide vital services to these small but important communities throughout regional Queensland.



MacAir announced the appointment of eight new pilots and 13 new flight attendants, to help accommodate continuing strong growth in the State's regional markets.

General Manager Kevin Gill, said "This year, we have introduced two additional 34-seat SAAB 340B aircraft and a 50-seat ATR 42-500 – the first of its type in Australia – to increase seat numbers on existing routes or introduce new services."

"Most MacAir services in the Gulf of Carpentaria have now been upgraded from 19-seat Metroliner aircraft to the larger SAAB 340Bs, while the ATR42-500 is now replacing SAAB 340Bs between Townsville and Mt Isa, as well as flying contract services for mining companies."

"Many of the destinations that MacAir operates to, including remote communities in the Gulf and western regions of Queensland, are multi-stop and are challenging on both aircraft and our people. MacAir therefore places special emphasis on careful management of both our equipment and human resources to ensure that we are able to continue to service our customers."

The current modern MacAir fleet of 11 aircraft includes the SAAB 340B and new generation ATR42-500 series. For more information about MacAir, please visit www.macair.com.au.

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