



## Queensland Fire and Emergency Services Operations at Watts Bridge

For a number of years volunteers and staff from the Fire Service have been using Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield as a training ground to improve and test their skills when it comes to establishing an airbase. Across Australia many Fire Services use aircraft to assist fire fighters on the ground to fight fires. Aircraft do not put fires out completely, but they are valuable resources that support fire fighters on the ground.

Managing aircraft, keeping track of the aircraft, loading the aircraft with water and foam, looking after the pilots welfare can only be achieved effectively, when an airbase is established. On the 15 and 16 August 2014,

Queensland experienced the hottest driest period possible, and fires had the potential to cause devastation. As part of the pre-deployment and strategies employed by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, (QFES) and a number of volunteers across the South East Region supported the establishment of an airbase at Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield.

The airbase was joined by two helicopters and two 802 Air Tractors. These aircraft each play a vital part in supporting fire operations on the ground. Each aircraft has specific duties and has allocated tasks when it comes to fire operations.



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## President's Corner

The festive season is upon us and we know some of you will be travelling away for family reasons. Please keep safe and enjoy your holidays.

I would like to thank every one who took the time to attend the AGM especially those who have come from afar. For those who could not make it, we appreciate your proxy votes.

One of our Work Experience students, Hannah, has been successful in her application for an apprenticeship position with a defence helicopter company. We are very happy for her and would like to congratulate Hannah, who is also a member of QVAG, on her new endeavour.

The Board of Management and myself would like to extend our compliments of the season to all our members and their families.

*Blue skies,*

**Bruce Clarke** President BoM



### ***Upgrading the Fuel Depot***

Many of you are aware of the issues we have experienced with connecting to Telstra at the Fuel Depot. Thanks to the work of John Innes, we have a new directional aerial installed at the fuel depot. Since the installation, Bruce Clarke has not received any phone calls advising a connection problem.

Our local birds have also taken a liking to the aerial so John has fitted several zip ties to the antenna to discourage the birds from sitting on it. The constant presence of birds sitting on the antenna has the potential of moving the antenna's alignment.

### ***Gate Entry to Air Chalets ACFA, ACFB and ACFC***

The piped crossing to the above air chalet sites has headwalls formed on the pipe ends. A large damaged section of the pipe has been repaired. This work was undertaken by Ross Stenhouse, Peter Freeman and his friend Richard Riedel. Ross Stenhouse helped with the initial excavation, Mark Foy helped with the excavation of the second end and the final site tidy up.

Richard and Peter set up the formwork and poured the concrete for the headwalls. David Thorne who had travelled half way around the world assisted in setting up and pouring a concrete repair over the damaged section of the pipe. This work was completed at no cost to the airfield.





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For example the 802 Air Tractors carry a water capacity of around 3,200litres, they can split their water loads and lay water out over a long distance, however there are limitations around houses and steep country.

The established airbase at Watts Bridge supported fire operations at Crow Nest, Esk, Kingaroy, Brisbane and Beaudesert. The base allowed QFES to support a number of firefighters on the ground. The Helicopters provide valuable intelligence for the crews to manage their fires, as these aircraft map fires as well as suppressed fires.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service wishes to thanks the members of the at Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield for their assistance.



We also wish to acknowledge the support of the local pilots and residents in the vicinity of the airfield in supporting the volunteers to establish an airbase that supported aircraft, which assisted the fire fighters on the ground.

Article by Tony Johnstone - QFES

Photographs by QFES, Peter Freeman, Richard Faint



## Laughter on the Wing

Monitored one Christmas Eve was this conversation:

**CATHAY 101 :** "Darwin, Cathay 101."

**DARWIN:** "Cathay 101, Darwin, Go ahead."

**CX101:** "Cathay 101, err, roger, err... do you err... have any traffic at our level, Flight Level 350?"

(Stunned silence from Darwin..... )

**DARWIN :** "Cathay 101, Darwin, negative"

**CX101:** Ahhhh Darwin, Cathay 101, we've just passed very close to an unusual type of aircraft. It was in red livery and had a pair of skids for undercarriage. The Captain was dressed in a red flying suit and seemed to have a very long white beard. He actually called us on the VHF, but all he said was '**Ho Ho Ho !! Merry Christmas Darwin !!**'



YOU ARE GOING TO LOSE AN ENGINE ON TAKE-OFF...

# Charlie Echo Goes West

An adventure with  
Peter Biddle

Something I had always wanted to do was to fly out to places like Longreach and Winton, being the birthplace of aviation in Queensland. Previous aircraft I have owned, Auster (don't tell) and Tiger Moth were a bit slow for this sort of trip, but now I have the Cessna 170a there was no excuse.

On a Tuesday morning in late July, with the promise of a week of fine clear weather Charlie Echo and I set off from Watts Bridge towards Longreach with a planned overnight stop in Charleville on the way.

First stop was Roma for fuel as due to headwinds Charleville was right on the edge of my fuel range doing it non-stop. There is an amazing amount of traffic around Roma on a morning, multiple Dash Eights and King Airs etc. all full of mining/construction workers. After refuelling, back in the air and on to Charleville.

The flying is absolute magic, clear blue sky and at 8,500 feet visibility of 50 miles and not even a suggestion of turbulence. As can be seen in the picture the country is very dry. Navigation is easy, just follow the road all the way from Chinchilla.

Called Charleville at 10 miles and got an immediate response from the guys at South West Air Services to see if I need fuel. On arrival I was made welcome, fuel and coffee were provided. When I asked the best way to get into town they handed me the keys to a car (free of charge) for as long as I needed it – now that is what I call service. So if ever you are out that way look these guys up, you can't miss them they are right next to the fuel bowser.



If you are in Charleville overnight I can recommend a visit to the Cosmos Centre & Observatory. The clear winter skies made for great star gazing through the large telescopes. Next morning I was back at the airport planning an early departure for Longreach, over 200 NM of fairly inhospitable country. However this was not to be, as on arrival I found I had a flat tail wheel. After some more help from the guys at South West Air Services we got it looking round again and I headed for Longreach. Again the same magic weather as the day before, even a slight tail wind, and navigation by iPad the whole way. On landing at Longreach it was obvious the tail wheel was again no longer round so after refuelling I went in search of some assistance, which came in the shape of Longreach Aircraft Maintenance who within 48 hours had sourced and installed a new round inner tube. Again that excellent country service.

One of my main reasons for going to Longreach was to visit the QANTAS Founders museum. This is right on the airport and is well worth the visit. It provides a history of QANTAS and aviation in Queensland in general. Outside they have a number of notable aircraft parked, including a DC3, Catalina, Boeing 707 and 747. These aircraft all flew into Longreach and except for the 707 are now in a very disappointing condition, although I believe some work has recently been done on the Catalina. Inside there are a number of replica aircraft on display including the Avro 504, DH50 and DH61. The museum is well worth a visit but I would suggest



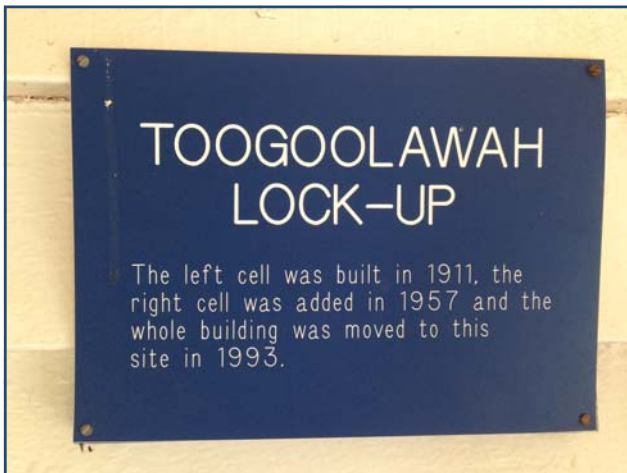


giving the tour of the 707 / 747 a miss, the inside of the 747 is in very poor condition. Across the road from the airport is the Stockman's Hall of Fame, a world class exhibition and definitely worth visiting if in town.

My original intention was to fly up to Winton but as the airport is several miles out of town and no hire cars to be found in Winton, I hired a car in Longreach and drove up for the day. It is just under a two hour drive and it is not recommended you do this at night or early morning due to the large number of very large kangaroos on the road.

Apart from being the birthplace of QANTAS, Winton is also on the dinosaur trail through central Queensland. The Australian Age of Dinosaur Museum is home to the world's largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils. Located 15 km from Winton on top of a huge mesa plateau called "The Jump-Up", which is a wonderful attraction in itself with huge rocky outcrops, cliffs, canyons and spectacular distance views. Tours of the dinosaur collection and fossil preparation laboratory are available.

After three nights in Longreach it was time to head home. The plan was to overnight in Emerald with a stop in Barcaldine on the way for breakfast. Barcaldine airport is right next to town so a 20 minute walk gets you to breakfast and coffee. While Barcaldine is famous for the Tree of Knowledge situated in front of the Railway station and celebrated as being the central meeting place for the Shearers' Strike during the upheaval in 1891, Barcaldine is also the home of the Australian Workers Heritage Centre, custodians of the rich history, heritage and traditions of all working Australians. While wandering around this museum I came across this building. Some local history a long way from home.



Mid-afternoon I headed on to Emerald. Heading east now so tail winds are a bit easier to find and still the clear blue sky and smooth flying at 7500 feet.

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# Building Air Chalet ACBD

Hi Everyone. We have recently finished building a new air chalet. I have had hangars built for me at other places interstate and locally on the coast. This is the only one I can cook, sleep and bath in.



I first set foot on Watts in late 2005 when I moved back to Brisbane from Melbourne and ferried VH SLO back from Kyneton Vic. I hangared SLO in Ian and Annette Purdies "Air Chalet"- silly name I thought when I first heard about it from Melbourne. Ian and Annette were very kind to me and invited me to use the spare bedroom when I needed.

A few years later after spending a fair bit of time at Watts and driving Peter Freeman mad on all the different building options, I stumped up and bought a vacant site facing NE which was my preferred aspect. I worked out a layout with my architect and then gave the plans to builder Kevin Werner who turned them into something he could build.

We spent a few months getting the plans approved - you need to be patient as Council and SEQ Water also need to approve them. Kevin was contracted to deliver the whole building to lockup - 14m wide x 15m deep hangar and 5 m wide living quarters down the side with a veranda off the living / kitchen. We have two bedrooms, combined bathroom toilet and an alcove laundry. Access to the hangar is opposite the laundry / bathroom so you can walk straight in for a clean up.

After lock up we moved a plane in and then spent the following months having the living quarters fitted out. Kevin was happy to let me arrange some of the sub contractors myself e.g. electrical, tiler, air conditioning and a gas fitter (thank you Brendan Scilini !) which was a bit time consuming but meant I got what we wanted. All the sub contractors were helpful - again you need to always remember it's not a metro location and patience is needed. Kevin is an old school builder - he builds things which are plumb and done properly. He did a great job and we are really happy with the finished product. Our building has many refinements and features worked out from previous jobs e.g. there is no flashing above the main hangar doors and the hangar floor is ramped so one person can move a plane in and out more easily.

I really enjoyed picking the all the kitchen and bathroom laundry fixtures and finished working out the lighting and switching and where I can mount the TVs on the walls. Our living area is 5 m wide and just under 15 long. That's fine for us. We only have a 3.5 m long kitchen along a wall but full height cupboards work well. I have been doing the painting myself and did the hangar floor myself, saving some money and investing some of my own energy in the building.

Having slept many over nights in the AAC clubhouse, I really can't explain how wonderful it is to wander down the hall way in the morning after waking up and looking into the hangar at the planes waiting there. Investing in building or buying on the airfield is a lifestyle decision, there may be better ways to build personal wealth for retirement. We prefer to spend our spare time their rather than with the maddening crowds at the beach.

If you have an aircraft or are planning to buy one and you like to escape to the bush for weekends away it's worth serious consideration.

**Cheers !! Mark Foy**

PS. My wife's advice - air conditioning all rooms is mandatory for summer and insist on plenty of bedroom and kitchen cupboard storage.





# BVSAC Christmas Party

The Brisbane Valley Sport Aviation Club wrapped up a successful year with the traditional end of year Christmas Party. This is always a great opportunity to catch up with friends new and old, share a story or two and generally ring in the festive season. This year in excess of forty members and their families were treated to a wonderfully relaxed three course meal served up in the club's meeting rooms.



BVSAC brings together a diverse group of pilots and aviation enthusiasts covering the whole spectrum of aviation including recreational and general aviation, microlights, rotor craft and powered parachutes. More information about the club can be found on the Watts Bridge Website.



## Diary Dates

A complete Watts Bridge Events Calendar can be found on the website.

Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield	
TBA February	Early Aviation Seminar
25th April	ANZAC Day Remembrance Service
30th May	All-In Fly-In 2015
4th July	BVSAC Fun Fly Poker Run
4th July	AAC-QC Christmas in July
24th - 26th July	Queensland State Aerobatic Championships
29th - 30th August	Gathering of Eagles - Australia

Australia and International	
9th - 11th January	Great Eastern Fly-In, Evans Head, NSW
15th March	Darling Downs Fly-In, Clifton, QLD
12th April	Barossa Airshow, Rowland Flat, SA
03rd May	David Hack Classic Meet, Toowoomba, QLD
11th - 17th July	Farnborough International Airshow, UK
20th - 26th July	EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, USA
18th September	Wings Over Warwick, Warwick, QLD

## Watts News Summer Edition 2014

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So after six days, 14 hours flying and 360 litres of fuel I was back home at Watts. And just to prove I was there below is a picture of CEI tied down at Longreach.



### WBMA BoM & Airfield Council

WBMA BoM	
President	Bruce Clarke
Vice President	Ron Dunn
Secretary	Liz Cook
Treasurer	Cheryl Brown
Maintenance & Infrastructure	Rod Mill

WBMA Council	
AAC - QC	Mark Foy
BVSAC	Richard Faint
CGC	No Representative
Lease Holders Group	John Innes
QVAG	Peter Biddle
SEQGC	No Representative

