

# Southern tour, 11th to 18th April 2015

(The Hawthorne Version)

## Day 1, Saturday 11th April: Warwick to Taree

Five planes ended up joining this tour. Kelvin and Denise, Graham and Liz and John and Louise all flying Jabiru J230's, Ian and Maree in a Jabiru J160 and Doug and Robyn in their Technam Sierra.



Our original plan to fly coastal to Taree was dashed when we awoke to forecasts for coastal showers scattered along the NSW coast. We were originally going to meet the McCulloughs and Reids at Lismore and fly with them. Instead we flew down via Tenterfield, Glen Innes and Armidale. Ian and Maree were in Armidale so we let them know we were coming that way so they could join us. It was cloudy between Armidale and Port Macquarie where we were to land for fuel so we flew

high. On landing at PM and after letting 'Bobcat 3' (three planes practicing formation flying) go ahead of us, we were met with the coastal showers. We fuelled up and had a cuppa while waiting for Ian and Maree. We heard that Doug and John had been held up by rain. Doug at Coffs Harbour and John at South Grafton.

We flew on to Taree through intermittent cloud and showers, dodging here and there to miss what we could with Ian behind us. We arrived safely and settled into our motel to wait for the others. Everyone arrived in time to wander up the street for a late lunch before having a lazy afternoon. Poor Robyn had lost her wallet in Lismore so that was a pretty miserable start to her holiday.



Dinner at Fish Fish Fish was lovely and enjoyed by all amid the excitement of looking forward to the days ahead.

## Day 2, Sunday 12th April: Taree to Wollongong

BIG day today. Our first time ever flying a VFR route through restricted airspace - Williamtown Airforce base, before the big trip down Victor 1 - past Sydney Heads, to meet up with Kelvin and Denise in Wollongong. They flew down on Friday, straight to Wollongong for a couple of days of catching up with rellies.



The four planes left Taree early, filled with anticipation (and nerves I suspect). It was only 15 minutes and we were in the VFR channel at 2000 feet, descending to 1600. Easy as! Once we left the Williamtown airspace at Maitland, we travelled south to Warnervale, passing west of Newcastle then coastal past Wyong, Tuggerah, Newport and Wyong to Long Reef reporting point which marks the start of Victor 1. We witnessed some spectacular country and gave us a taste of what was to come. We all descended to the required 1000 feet and flew the trip of a lifetime past Manley to Sydney Heads where we then descended to the required 500 feet. We enjoyed views of Sydney Harbour, the bridge and opera house, Maroubra, Botany Bay and the beautiful craggy outcrops and exclusive beaches. Absolutely amazing! To quote Louise...'now we can tick that one off the bucket list!' I was surprised at how quickly the leg went after so much planning and anticipating. None of the pilots missed a beat. We left Victor 1 at Jibbon Point and ascended to 1000 feet and then 1500 feet.

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We flew on past the amazing Seacliff bridge and more truly spectacular scenery past the main part of Wollongong and rusty coloured Port Kembla to land at Wollongong airport with a straight in approach over Lake Illawarra. We refuelled, secured our planes and found Denise who had arrived to meet us. We also found out on arrival that Robyn had lost one of Doug's socks out her small window while trying to dry it. Somewhere there is a stray sock dangling on something, possibly being a curiosity or a nuisance! It could only happen to Robyn!



We went to our Albion (Wollongong) motel by cab and had Macca's (next door) for late morning tea/lunch. After lunch, some of us went on a guided tour (Kelvin was the guide) to Kiama by train. What a beautiful little spot. It made me think of a cross between Burleigh Heads and a quaint seaside village in England. We walked up to see the Kiama blow hole and lighthouse. The weather was windy and cold making it more English than ever! The only down thing was that I left my handbag hanging on the back of a chair at the ice cream shop. Grah jogged back and some kind person had handed it in and everything was present and accounted for. Phew, what a relief! The forgetfulness that comes with old age is quite frustrating!





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We returned to our motel and found that the police in Lismore had contacted Robyn to let her know they had her wallet and all cards and money were intact. What great news. Such a relief for her and for Doug too I imagine! The Reids will kindly arrange collection and despatch after they get home.

We ate in at the Hotel Motel restaurant that night and enjoyed the meal despite an average review by our obviously very fussy taxi driver. The food was great with plenty of variety to choose from.

### Day 3, Monday 13th: Wollongong to Merimbula

Up early and out to the airport; destination Merimbula today. It wasn't a long flight but it sure was a beautiful one. The coastline is so spectacular. We were met at Merimbula airport by members of the Frog's Hollow Aero Club who ran us dropped our gear off and went in to with them and all got to know one go back to work so he kindly lent the who had a few go with him down to Robyn, Denise and I did the town the river to our motel when we were



in to our motel in their own vehicles. We a lovely coffee shop right on the waterfront another. After our coffee break, Neil had to boys his vehicle and they followed Bob, Eden and around on a sightseeing tour. over on foot and wandered back across done.

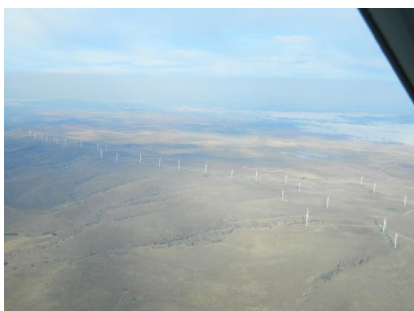
We enjoyed dinner at the Lakeview their wives, Bob and Marya, Drew meal prepared by a chef who was was as good as it gets. We were so local knowledge of the Frog's

Hotel with the three local boys and two of and Judy and Neil. It was a really special once the chef at the Lodge in Canberra. It lucky to enjoy the company and Hollow Aero Club members.



### Day 4, Tuesday 14th April: Merimbula to Echuca

The boys headed off early to get the planes ready and once again Bob came to our rescue, picking the girls and luggage up and dropping us at the airfield. We all got away safely and headed towards Tumut where Pat was waiting with a cuppa. We flew over Bega and the Frog's Hollow airfield before gaining height and following valleys over the Snowy Mountains. We flew over lots of water, a wind farm then on to Jindabyne, over Lake Jindabyne and Lake Eucambene. We turned north west at Adaminaby, flew over Talbingo and Blowering Reserve until we eventually reached the western edge on the mountains and landed at Tumut which is less than 900 feet above sea level. We were all a bit surprised at that. Today was very hazy and not good for photo taking.



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After fuelling up and a cuppa with Pat Malone (yes, that's his real name) and John, plus sitting out an oncoming shower which turned out to be virga, we headed off around Albury centre to meet the mighty Murray River and follow it to Echuca, travelling via Corowa, Yarrawonga and Tocumwal. It's a huge river system and winds (and I don't use that term loosely) its way across the top of Victoria.



We arrived in pretty Echuca safely and called a taxi to town where we settled in to our cabins for a two night stop over. Everything was just perfect, with the cabin park just a short distance from the Port of Echuca, the shops and cafe's etc. We headed in for food and booked our paddle steamer ride on the way. Our helpful taxi driver gave us the drum on the best tour, which included sailing on the Canberra which included lunch at Morrison's Winery. It's good to be armed with some local knowledge.

We wandered the streets after we ate and looked at the many gift shops, chocolate shops etc. - very nice. Robyn and I wandered along the river on the way home and checked out the houseboats as we went. We found hers, called 'Froth and Bubbles'. We ended up at the caravan park eventually. That night we dined at an Italian restaurant where the food and service were great. We also had a shower of rain and ended up wandering home in the light rain. In the early hours the next morning we had lots of thunder and lightning and some more rain. We were glad we'd covered our Jab.

By now it had become obvious that we needed to get going north a day early or we would be stuck in Echuca by a rain front that was coming through from the south west, so we made the decision to cancel Swan Hill and leave Echuca on Thursday and head north for Narromine a day early. Denise looked after the accommodation changes with her usual efficiency. Too many work commitments on Monday to risk it.

### Day 5, 15th April - Echuca

We woke to a beautiful day and headed for Beechworth Bakery for brekky. What could be better than a bee sting and coffee first thing in the morning! Grah headed home via the Port precinct after we'd eaten and I headed for the main shops to get a few bits and pieces. It was quite a good walk so I felt I walked the decadent breakfast off!



Just as we were getting ready to head to the Port for our paddle steamer ride I received a call from Doug to say Robyn was in hospital. I was sure he was joking! But....no, sure enough she was in emergency after being run over by a taxi! She was crouched down behind the cab taking a photo and the driver didn't see her. The wheel ran over her foot so they wanted to X-ray etc. She insisted Doug go on the boat as she has been a few times before. So Doug came with us and Robyn had all the required medical attention (luckily there were no broken bones) before catching a taxi home via a



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drive through bottle shop so she could get something to settle her nerves from the shock of the accident.

Our paddle steamer cruise on the Canberra was most enjoyable. We went up the river past the old original huge wooden wharf then turned around and went the other way, passed another paddle steamer and lots of moored houseboats, to our stop at Morrison's Winery for a very enjoyable lunch and some wine tasting. We caught the boat home at 3.15pm and went to see how Robyn was. She was propped up on the bed and surprisingly bright all things considered and ready for our dinner date that night.



We were able to get the courtesy bus to and from the Echuca Worker and Services club for dinner, so we were home nice and early ready for another early start the next morning.

### Day 6, Thursday 16th April - Echuca to Narromine

Our pre-arranged taxis collected us at 7.15 am and we headed out to get the planes ready and load up. Our morning tea stop was Temora where the lovely Carol Richards had everything ready for us and had even cooked a slice and a cake. It's so nice to be greeted by friendly faces. Aero Club president Rob and local airfield resident Marlene were there to help out as Carol had to dash off to get her flu shot. We were even joined by a couple of airline pilots who were filling in time.



We taxied out through the beautifully restored war birds which I think they were getting ready for a weekend air display.

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The flight from Temora to Narromine was uneventful and we left a leisurely last. We had a really good tail wind for the first time on the trip, so managed to get up to over 140 knots at times.

We diverted slightly over Parkes so we could see the dish. We missed the big circular mine at Peak Hill, catching instead the Tomingly mines. We arrived at Nita and Peter's friendly accommodation at the Narromine airfield, settled in and caught the maxi-taxi to town for lunch. We split up and went to different spots and we found a bakery that sold (you guessed it) bee stings! We enjoyed lunch with John and Louise and then I got the call from Robyn! She'd found the local Vinnies, so I met her there for a browse. We wandered up the street and down the other side before meeting up with the mob at the Services club and catching the cab home again. We had a lazy couple of hours watching Midsomer Murders on TV before heading back to town for dinner at the Services club.

As this was our last night together we enjoyed the customary toasts and it was lovely to hear that Ian and Maree (our newbies) had thoroughly enjoyed the trip and our company as we had theirs. Then after we had finished eating we laughed and listened to Robyn's famous trip poem. She has bits written on all sorts of pieces of paper because she writes things down as they come to her. We all had a thoroughly enjoyable night!

## **Day 7, Friday 17th April - Narromine to Warwick**

We woke early (4.30ish for me - yawn) and got up and going about 5.30. We were able to have brekky in the communal kitchen where Nita provides cereal and toast including home made sourdough bread. We loaded up after pulling the planes out onto the tarmac and realised there was no Doug or Robyn. Finally Doug appeared but Robyn's bad ankle was really painful so I headed back over to help her while Doug got their plane ready.

Nita very kindly drove her to the plane and it turned out Doug had slept in after setting his alarm for the wrong day. Not to worry, we all got away together for the longish flight to Moree past the spectacular Warrumbungles and the 'nowhere to land' Pill

John and Louise parted company at Narromine as they were heading for Armidale then on to Lismore. There is always a chance of showers on the coast so they got away first. We heard John on the radio after we left Moree and they were still progressing towards home, so that was good.



Cuppa and toilet break done at Moree and on the last leg to home. Doug and Robyn headed off in a slightly different direction because they were heading direct to Caboolture. That left just three Jabiru's heading for Warwick flying into a good headwind.



The only tiny issues we had all trip were a loose spat on Kelvin's plane (fixed at Merimbula) and a flat battery at Echuca on Ian's plane. As usual our Jabiru J230 performed faultlessly and used very little oil, plus it was economical on Avgas.

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Phil and Mary had arranged a welcome home lunch for the pilots and navigators of the three Warwick planes. It was good to see them, the Brandsens and Gwen T and good to get home to the family, our pets and our own bed!

