

DAILY BLOG - YOU'VE GOT WINGS

by: Rob Donaldson

(Continued from previous issue, #113): We left Rob's story when he had just limped into Coral Bay after helping in the rescue of Dave and Sharon despite being inconvenienced by a wing problem due to a missing batten. The story continues on the afternoon of Day 3 of the trip at Coral Bay.

This issue of Triker News sets a record in that it is the first issue in our eleven year history that an entire issue has been devoted to just one story.

I slowly limped into Coral Bay and made a nice gentle landing. At least Richard was very impressed given our issues of the day.

Upon landing we heard that Dave and Sharon had been found and picked up. We also found out that Jon and Ian had also only just arrived before us. This surprised us as they bypassed Carnarvon and should have been here hours before us. A common weather pattern along the west coast of Aus-

tralia is for the winds to pick up in speed considerably during the middle of the day and to drop off later in the afternoon. They got caught in 25-30 knot head winds after Carnarvon and calculated that they would not make Coral Bay on their remaining fuel. Jon landed at an airstrip along the way hoping to be able to flag down a passing motorist for some fuel. Unfortunately no motorists came by for the next few hours. Luckily

for them another plane landed at their airstrip and flew Jon to Coral Bay to top up a Jerry can and then flew him back to his microlight. When Richard and I landed at Coral Bay, this Good Samaritan of the airways was just about to land his boat plane when he aborted just feet from the deck. He had just realised in time that he had not put his wheels down for landing. That was very nearly an expensive landing. Later, we met up with the pilot of the boat plane again at dinner. He mentioned to Ian that we were doing this flight around Australia the hard way as the winds were predominantly anti-clockwise and we were flying in a clockwise direction. Ian tried to explain that it was for the beautiful scenery and the desire the end up in Brisbane that we flew this way. Anyway I think Ian is getting so tired of everyone saying we should have flown from Brisbane to Perth that he is considering renaming this journey "Wrong Way Round"!! Don't worry Ian, I'm loving the trip this way.

Day 4 – July 15

(Coral Bay) Today we decided to stay in Coral Bay and enjoy the sights and natural treasures of this little community. With my aircraft in need of a new wing batten which we were able to source in Exmouth (only 150 kms away) and with Ian's replacement radia-



The Blogmaster, Rob Donaldson, with his beloved XT-912 Outback S3

tor apparently ready for collection in Exmouth, I drove Ian and Derek to Exmouth in search of our spare parts. Unfortunately for Ian, his promised radiator was not there, as it had not yet left Perth. Fortunately for me, I was able to meet up with Peter from Ningaloo High, a microlight club and business taking tourists for joy flights. Peter generously donated his wing batten to me which we were able to slightly modify to fit my Streak 3 wing. Once again, thanks Pete. So with a disgruntled and disappointed Ian in the passenger seat, we headed back to Coral Bay!

The ground crew had been busy while we were away. My microlight had developed a small leak in a back tyre overnight and they showed Fiona how to repair it. Great job done. They also reviewed Dave's machine and were able to make sufficient repairs to get it back in the air for tomorrow, once a little engineering job was done on the axle. A few quick check flights and "donation" flights were conducted in the late afternoon.

Day 5 – July 16

(Coral Bay to Exmouth, 117.8 nm, 2.2 hrs) Today we had a small but spectacular flight up the coast and around the peninsular to Exmouth. All the way along this stretch we were flying along the Ningaloo Reef. We could clearly make out the diverse sea creatures along the coast; dolphins, turtles, rays and schools of fish. The water was so clear and a beautiful aqua color. This is really a fantastic section of coastline, probably the most beautiful of all the coastline we will fly.

Ian's radiator arrived in Exmouth today. Someone was a very happy boy! He quickly went to work to install it, run it up and finally got to fly again.

Day 6 – July 17

(Exmouth to Fortescue River)

Day 7 – July 18

(Fortescue River to Mundabullangana Station)



Day 3, 14 Jul 08, Refuelling at Carnarvon Airport

Day 8 – July 19

(Port Hedland to Pardoo Station, 87 nm, 1.6 hrs) We rejoined the group today at Port Hedland airport. It was a bit windy, so rigging up the wing proved interesting. We waited around for a while to see if the wind conditions would start to die down. Crunch time came at about 3pm when we had to decide whether to fly or stay. Ultimately we decided to push on and take off. The first 500 feet were quite bumpy but we found a nice tail wind at 4,000-5,000 feet.

I have had this niggly problem

with my microlight ever since taking delivery earlier this year. The radio has been put so far down the panel, that I cannot read the display whilst sitting up normally.

As we had to change to three different frequencies on this trip I had to perform an in-flight aerial contortion act to lower myself to be able to see the changing frequency. I didn't do this until quite late in the flight and I lost sight of Derek during this contortion act. In so doing, I overflew Pardoo Station by 30nm before turning around and heading back. As we left Port Hedland so late the set-



Day 5, 16 Jul 08, Ningaloo Reef