

ting sun was now playing a major role in the events to follow. The radio chatter I was listening to indicated that the Pardoo landing strip was now their access road and not the airstrip (due to its disrepair). Care had to be taken as there were a few trees very close to the edge of the road that had to be avoided, and the occasional car still arriving at the station! With the sun now set and the light now quickly deteriorating, I decided to land on the road at the Cape Keraudren camp site. I figured that at least there were people here and therefore food, shelter and communications. Not only that, I was able to clearly see the road and its landing conditions here, whereas if I pushed on, it would likely be dark at Pardoo Station with an awkward landing site. Well I figured, it's better to be safe here than unsafe there! So land here I did, which brought all the local campers out to see what was going on. At least I knew I wouldn't be lonely! I secured the plane and answered all the questions from the local campers, even getting a \$10 donation from one. Anyway, the local campers provided me with a meal and shelter before the ground crew were able to catch up with me and collect me.

At our briefing tonight we reviewed the weather for the next few days and it wasn't looking good. Strong winds were due to hit at about 2:00AM tomorrow and were expected to remain for the next few days. Fiona and I decided to drive back to my stranded plane and secure it more than just the wing tie downs and to camp there overnight.

Day 9 – July 20

(Pardoo Station) Well, true to the weather man's predictions, at about 2:00AM the wind really did pick up. Thankfully when Fiona and I arrived back at the plane late last night we had lowered the wing, parked the car in front of the plane and put so many tie downs on it, it must have looked like the



Day 5, 16 July 08, Exmouth Airport and campsite

giant tied down from Gulliver's Travels. We had concentrated so much on the plane last night that by the time it was secured we just quickly threw up the tent and went to bed. We should have spent just as much time securing the tent as we did the plane because when the wind hit our tent was flapping around so much I thought it was going to take off. Had it not been for the weight of its now two very awake occupants, I think it would have gone. That was the last of the sleep gained for the night!

Ranger Steve came around in the morning and charged us for the

“camp site” we had created on the side of the road. He then refused to assist us to try and get a message to the rest of the crew at Pardoo Station. “It's a bit inconvenient for me” was his excuse. I couldn't believe I was hearing this from a Park Ranger. I think a letter of complaint is definitely going to be sent to the Shire of Carnarvon over this. It has surprised me on this trip how we have met a number of individuals who have been absolutely appalling in their behavior. I have found it a bit embarrassing when we are hosting our good UK friends around Australia



Day 6, 17 Jul 08, Fortescue River

and they see this “Ugly Australian”. I know every country has its bad eggs, but we have met so many on this trip, more than I have ever met in my life combined, that it has been very disappointing.

By midday the wind had not abated and one of the campers was able to get the weather report for the next few days for us. More of the same, strong winds! Our choices were, stay here on the side of the road (and no doubt be charged for the privilege again by Ranger Steve) for the next few days or drive on to our next destination, Broome. Tough choice really! So Fiona and I packed up the microlight and drove to Broome.

Days 10-12 July 21-23

(Broome) You would think that a few days in Broome would be lovely and relaxing. Not that it wasn't, but it was also 'full on' in preparing for the arrival of the rest of the crew as soon as the winds died down enough for them to fly up to Broome. We were quickly introduced to a very lovely and eccentric Englishman who runs “Broome Trike Flights”, Charles. Charles would have to be the most fascinating man I have met in quite a few years. If you ever get the chance to go for a fly around



Day 7, 18 Jul 08, The well maintained airstrip at Fortescue River

Broome, make sure it is with Charles. It will be a trip you will never forget.

Charles is looking after a property on the very edge of the airport and has direct access to the airport. This would have to qualify as the most privileged aviation residence (outside of John Travolta's) in the world, or at least Australia! He has surrounded himself with his colourful past and toys. He lives in an old double-decker bus, that he drove around Australia some 10 years ago, via mostly unsealed roads. He has an outdoor bathroom. And by outdoor, I mean

no walls, no roof, no floor. Just the hessian tied around a few star pickets for modest privacy. His toilet though was a fully operational indoor toilet, just located outside for the world to see. Given the close proximity of the runway to Charles' place, you could almost see the passengers as they took off and landed while you were doing your business. In its own way it was strangely beautiful, but not something I would choose to do beyond these few days. As you approached the toilet area you had to give a whistle to indicate your intention of going to the toilet. If you got a whistle back it meant that it was already occupied. Primitive, but it worked.

Charles helped us to get onto ABC Pilbara for a radio interview and progress report. Charles also organised for the Airport Security and Fire Services to be available for the arrival of the rest of the microlights, as well as introducing us to many of the real Broome people, many of whom gladly donated towards our cause. Our stay in Broome will always be remembered because of the tireless work and enthusiasm of Charles.

Day 13 – July 24

(Broome) The rest of the microlights flew into Broome this morning. They were met by a



Day 6, 17 Jul 08, Howie near Onslow salt lakes