



Day 11, 22 July 08, Charles' eccentric hanger (Broome airport)

group of reporters, from TV, radio and print. Also there to greet them was the Airport Fire and Rescue Services, who also wanted to show off their new multimillion dollar fire trucks. They joined in for the group photo placing their trucks behind the microlights and spraying a huge jet of water in an arc behind the planes. It looked spectacular and the media lapped it up. Most of the pilots were interviewed by the press, but Ian disappeared into the cab of the new Fire Truck to play with the water gun!

I introduced the team to Charles and we took them down the airport service road to Charles' place. I had deliberately not told them about his unique abode as I wanted to see if they would have the same reaction as Fiona and I did a few days earlier. I was not disappointed.

The wind died right down in the late afternoon and we took some of the Firemen and they partners up for a sunset flight along Cable Beach. It was fantastic. I flew with just my shorts and jacket as the temperature was nice and mild. I flew my passenger along the beach until the sun set and then we did a rapid climb to see the sun set again. Two sunsets in one day!

Getting back in again was

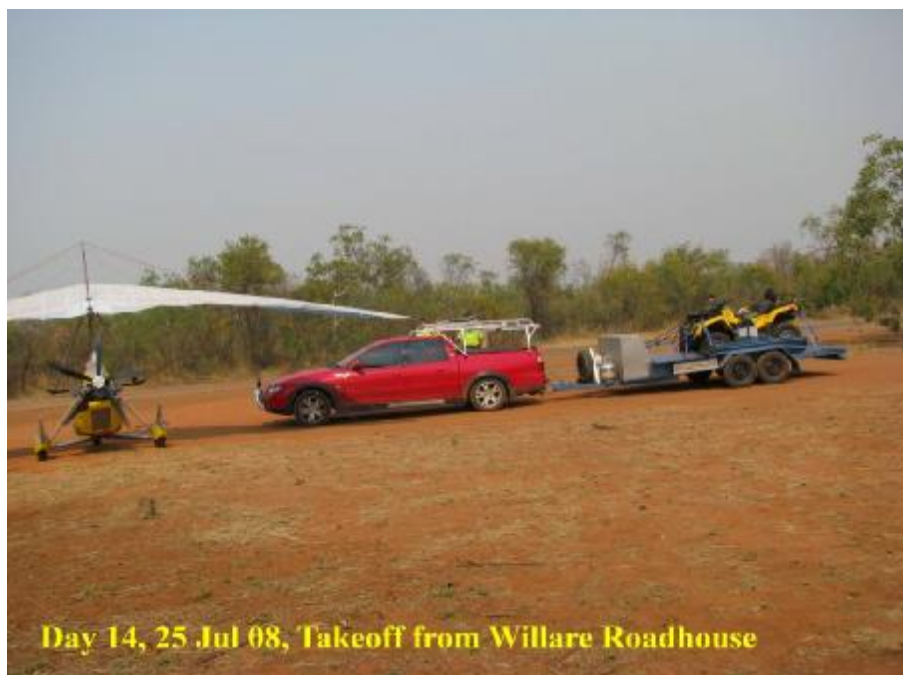
busy, as every other scenic flight was also returning from their sunset flights. Broome airport landed 28 aircraft in 25 minutes! Now that was a lot of radio chatter.

Day 14 – July 25

(Broome to Fitzroy Crossing, 245.4 nm, 5.1 hrs) With a degree of sadness we departed from Broome this morning. Charles and the Broome Airport Management had been very accommodating and will be missed. For the next few days we are flying inland, so we also said goodbye to the ocean. We still had headwinds but not as bad as the last few days. As we

approached Wilare Roadhouse, a waypoint on our flight plan, and fuel stop if required, we flew into the smoke from a very large bush-fire. There was no way around the smoke as it was too dispersed so we dropped down from 5,000 feet to just 800 feet so we could see. The roadhouse appeared below us and we landed on Highway One right in front of the roadhouse. I quickly followed Ian and Jon in, and then acted as Air Traffic Control for the rest of the crew. Our arrival at the roadhouse was novel and quite unique to the many drivers who were already there. This created a lot of interest very quickly and required a bit of organisation to help get the other pilots down safely. Howie was enjoying the attention so much he decided to do three fly-bys!! Derek gently tapped one of the road signs with a wing tip but no damage done. By the time we went to take off, our makeshift runway (Highway One) was lined with spectators. It was quite a buzz.

By the time we reached Fitzroy Crossing, the wind had died completely. We met a few of the locals at the airport who were very intrigued by our journey and wanted to donate for a flight up the Geikie Gorge. I had never heard of the



Day 14, 25 Jul 08, Takeoff from Willare Roadhouse



Day 15, 26 July 08, Peak hour traffic at Fitzroy Crossing airport

Geikie Gorge, so I took Fiona up for a flight to see what it looked like. It is a hidden treasure. Out of the flat lands surrounding Fitzroy Crossing, come jutting out of the earth, these spectacular rock formations and river gorge system.

Day 15 – July 26

(Fitzroy Crossing to Warmun, 332.7 nm, 6.6 hrs) Started playing a new game over the chat channel with Ian and Jon – Getting them to correctly pronounce the names of our towns we were either overflying or approaching. Today's 'Word of the Day' was "Warmun". It sounds simple but proved far more difficult (but amusing). We flew into "Halls Creek" for lunch and I overheard Ian call it "Hells Creek". I was just about to correct his pronunciation when upon reflection I realised that he probably got it right!

From Halls Creek we all took on a passenger so we could take as many of the ground crew with us to fly around the Bungle Bungles. This is another World Heritage area. Now the second of three World Heritage areas I will fly over on this trip. (The rest of the crew will fly over 5 of Australia's 20 World Heritage Areas on their trip to Brisbane – Shark Bay, Bungle Bungles, Kakadu, the Daintree and the Great Barrier Reef).

I had to fly a slightly different route as Fiona still had to drive to the Bungle Bungles. So I left Halls Creek early to meet up with Fiona on the roadside. I'm beginning to enjoy this landing on the road and gathering a small crowd. Anyway, we flew off towards the Bungle Bungles and conducted a quick landing at the airstrip just to its south where they have an information area about the rock formations. Just as we were about to land I caught Howie's faint radio call indicating that Angus was still stuck at Halls Creek due to engine troubles. We decided to cut short

our fly around of the Bungle Bungles and just flew around the first large rock formation before heading back to our cars, where Roger was, to send him back to meet up with Angus.

Once I dropped Fiona off and sent Roger back to Halls Creek, I flew up Highway One towards Warmun. There were some big bushfires around the Warmun airport, which was very beneficial as Derek's GPS decided to play up and left him without good directions. We talked him through the problem and directed him towards the fires and to the airport. Never before had I thought a fire would be so handy in navigation.

I was on final to land at Warmun and a mere few feet off the deck when I realised I had a problem, my engine would not power down when I took my foot off the accelerator. I aborted the landing and went around for another attempt trying to figure out what was wrong. I lined up again and had the same problem, so I turned off the engine at late final and conducted a very silent landing. Warren came over to see if he could help and he quickly discovered that my hand throttle was still a little open. OOPS! The strange thing was that I remember turning it off as part of my airport ap-



Day 15, 26 July 08, Deep Gorge in the Bungle Bungles