

proach at 5 miles. On closer inspection, I noticed that where the tube of my water bottle from under my seat comes up it sits right on the hand throttle and I think it got caught under the throttle when I have pushed it down, thus reducing the power but not fully. No doubt about it, I have learnt many things on this trip. I am so glad I came along.

With the fires as their backdrop Derek and Dave made it safely to the airport. As the fires were so close, with just the road separating us from them, some of the crew quickly moved some of the microlights into an open hanger. Unfortunately in their haste, the aerial to my radio was snapped off. Time for me to take a quick walk around the car park!

News filtered through that Angus had a fuel problem and that they were able to get his engine started at Halls Creek. Roger was going to stay with the microlight overnight and fly it up at day break and Angus drove up tonight, finally getting in at about 1am.

Day 16 – July 27

(Warmun to Kunnunurra, 178.6 nm, 3.4 hrs) Word of the Day – “Kunnunurra”. Ian tried and tried with today’s word, but after about 30 different attempts we gave up and said “close enough!!!”.



Before heading off to Kunnunurra this morning, a few of us flew back to the Bungle Bungles. I took Richard with me so he could take some photos and video, because during yesterday’s flight he was battling the over exposure of sunset light and not many of the photos worked well. In this morning’s light we had a much better opportunity to take some great clear photos and video. With the Bungle Bungles being a very popular scenic flight area, we were joined at close proximity by two helicopters during our flight up “V Gorge” and “Deep Gorge”. That

was pretty neat.

The flight to Kunnunurra today took us alongside Lake Argyle. It was so nice to see lots of water again. The lake is home to many birds, but I didn’t see any crocs on the banks of the lake. The water was ‘mirror like’ in some areas, making a perfect reflection of the hills. I can’t wait to see how the photos turned out.

Day 17 – July 28

(Kunnunurra to Timber Creek, 114.5 nm, 2.5 hrs) Another early start to today’s flight. Today’s flight also marked the departing of Western Australia and the entering of the Northern Territory. It has taken us to Day 17 to finally have flown up the coast and out of the state. Just two more states to go! It was just a short hop by comparison to the past few days, so during the later stages of the flight we had managed to gather 5 microlights in close proximity that I suggested we try to create a photo opportunity by flying in a line so Richard could capture the group. I’m not quite sure how successful we were in staying together given our differing speeds, but it was something different to do during a flight. We peeled off from our loose formation and headed for Timber Creek. I was the last one in from our group and was expect-



ing a little more than just a small tin shed beside the runway, but not to be. Fiona soon arrived as the first ground support vehicle and we put on lunch as there was nothing around for miles. The town site of Timber Creek was over 5km away and nothing much other than the roadhouse.

Day 18 – July 29

(Timber Creek to Noonamah, Darwin, 209.0 nm, 4.2 hrs) Today was the earliest start we had made so far on the trip. The sun was just rising as my wheels left the runway. I took some great photos on the ground as we prepared for takeoff as twilight ended and dawn broke. Thankfully this far north the morning weather was just nice and not too cold. Conducting the preflight by torchlight though was a first for me.

Our first stopover today was at Daly River. This is an Aboriginal Community which would have to be the best kept and most well behaved community I have ever seen. It is an alcohol free town, and it is amazing what can be done in a community with good leadership and the absence of alcohol. If only the rest of the communities would follow suit.

After we left Daly River, I flew with Derek and Dave, and we found a few of the old World War 2 abandoned airfields south of Darwin. I flew just a few feet off the old runways to see if they could still be landed on but most were full of pot holes. Closer to Darwin we found one that looked in very good condition and set down. There were silhouette paintings on the ground of the old mosquito fighter and a bomber. We placed our microlights on top of them to get a comparison of their

size to our modern day microlights. The owner of the airfield saw us land and came out to greet us. He told us of the history of the airfield and the surrounding area, which was quite interesting. I'm glad he made the effort to come out as he made the stopover much more interesting than I could have ever have done for Dave and Derek.

The wind was picking up so we thanked our historian very much and made the final 25nm hop to Darwin (Noonamah).

The ground crew arrived just on 5:00pm. I notice a small piece of thread on the right rear tyre of our car. As I pulled on it slightly, I realized that it was the thread of the tyre and that it was about to disintegrate. Oh dear, time for a new tyre. A quick couple of phone calls determines that there were no tyres of the same stock in Darwin with the tyre companies that I was able to contact after hours. Tyre-power promised to follow up in

the morning to see if they could get the stock in from their wholesaler. Given the unsafe nature of the tyre, we decided to leave the car at the airport and caught a lift with Fiona's sister back to Darwin.

Day 19 – July 30

(Darwin) Rest day in Darwin. Went sightseeing and visited the Aviation Museum.

Day 20 – July 31

(Darwin) Unfortunately my work requirements mean that Fiona and I have to leave the group in Darwin and start making our way back to Perth. It is with a sad heart that we leave them as it has been a lot of fun getting to Darwin so far and I'm sure it will continue to be, all the way to Brisbane. We have really enjoyed the experience, both in the air and on the ground, and especially with this group of people. I hope it isn't too long before we meet up with most of them again. ■



Day 18, 29 Jul 08, Rob, Derek & Dave at WW2 Airstrip (Darwin)

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