

Take Care of the Bickies

by Ian Bawden

As a follow-up to Jim Foster's story "Wild West Adventure" in the previous edition of Triker News, Ian Bawden, the other student pilot involved, has added his thoughts and comments on the same adventure. It's always interesting to get another point of view.

0720 AM - Departed Bunbury for Murray Field in loose trail with two other 912 Streak 3 trikes, myself and Paul in my brand spanking new SST, Jim F and Brendan, and Jim P.

The flight plan was to maintain 1500 feet, tracking via Kemerton and the powerlines north to Pinjarra, then to Murrayfield. Return tracking was planned to be direct to the coast north of Mandurah then coastal at 1000 feet to Bunbury.

Weather enroute was pretty much as forecast, expecting up to 15-20 knots from the northwest at 1500 feet increasing to 30 knots above 3000 feet. Cloud base on departure was about 1000 feet and abeam Kemerton, due to mild turbulence, we climbed to 2000 feet to get on top of about 3-4 octas of broken Cumulus.

The leg to Murray Field provided few clues as to the weather we were going to experience on our return leg, however we did note that our ground speed indicated an actual head wind of about 20-25 knots and the turbulence in the circuit area at Murrayfield was significant right down to the runway 05 threshold. We had expected surface conditions in the 5-8 knots northerly range but it was significantly more than that, probably closer to 10-12 knot from the northwest.

Once parked up we realised the wind at surface level was too strong to chance leaving the machines unattended and pit stops were coordinated. At about this time Paul and Brendan and Jim P concluded that our best course of action was to depart as there was no fun to be had holding down the wing of our trikes out in the open in 10-12 knot

winds. Landing alternatives to Bunbury were discussed with Busselton and Blair Howe's limestone strip at Lake Preston being options. We had only been on the ground at Murrayfield for approximately 30 minutes.

0915 AM - Departure was briefed for runway 05 and Jim and Brendan got away without any dramas. We then observed a Cessna 172 on a very, very slow finals leg contending with significant turbulence which was our next clue that things were hotting up.

Jim P lined up and commenced his takeoff run only to find himself off runway alignment heading with his into-wind wing slightly down due to a strong gust, Jim powered down, straightened up and recommenced his roll all in one smooth sequence. Once airborne, we noted that Jim required significant yaw to maintain runway heading.

Paul had briefed that we would maintain full power and hold the aircraft on the runway until well past normal rotation speed. It felt like we lifted off at about 65 knots and I was glad to be climbing away nicely and impressed with the crisp manner in which we had got clear of the runway.

Now passing to the east of Mandurah and now tracking direct for Bunbury, I recall noting that the turbulence and wind had increased and the sky was no longer blue with some white clouds but now was smudgy, streaky grey. The cloud base and visibility was down to 800 feet and the temperature was dropping. Any water on the ground clearly showed the wind was now up to 30 knots plus, we were evidently riding within a cold front

and whilst exciting to see a GPS ground speed of 95 knots with 65 indicated, the reality that we had to find somewhere to land was looming large in my mind.

When we got abeam Lake Preston Jim and Brendan made an approach to the limestone strip while we stayed at 800 feet. Even from that height we could see their trike rising and falling in the rotor turbulence from the coastal dunes and trees upwind. It must have been an exciting ride down there, and no surprises when Jim and Brendan broke off the approach and radioed that Lake Preston was not an option.

The wind-lines and whitecaps on Lake Preston and any other water for that matter were impressive as we found that the smoothest air was coastal at about 800 feet and that's where we stayed until approaching Bunbury.

As we approached overhead it was clear that Bunbury was not a landing option for us due to the cross-wind so we continued coastal to Busselton. At about Peppermint Grove Beach I got the feeling that we were now coming out at the rear of the cold front as the visibility was much improved and the sky was turning blue again. The northerly wind was still around 20-25 knots and as we made our approach to runway 03 and I noted that the turbulence was now considerably less. Now clear of the front that we had been within, it showed visually as a line of low dark grey cloud covering the horizon to the north of us.

All three aircraft landed without any further dramas and we enjoyed the hospitality of the Busselton

Aero Club members.

The wind improved and after a cuppa and bickies, and a quick top-up of 20 litres of avgas we started to think about getting home to Bunbury. A few calls to the Bunbury Aero Club confirmed that the wind was on the decrease but still from the north-west. After about 90 minutes or so at Busselton we decided to fly back up to Bunbury to have a look. Mother Nature hadn't finished

with us just yet but all three aircraft made successful landings at or near the crosswind limits of our 912 machines.

What did I learn that day?

1. If you're leaving the circuit think long and hard about your fuel requirements and possible diversions.
2. Strive to be an excellent pilot because, just as the above

demonstrates, someday you will need those excellent flying skills.

3. Have trust in your Airborne trike — they are tough little buggers.
4. Always be respectful of the weather, and
5. **Don't leave the bickies in front of Brendan !!**



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