

Gunnedah - it's a long way from Belrose

I thought I'd nip up to Gunnedah for their scale rally after seeing the advert in the MAS magazine I didn't realise it was quite so far! Anyway, I got there Friday eve, checked into the Red Chief motel and had a quick meal at the pub.

I got to the field at about 10 the next morning to find at least 30 planes already there. I had taken the Tiger Moth, the He 46 and, as a final thought "just in case" my venerable Flivver. I registered with Ken Hartley, brother of Paul the club President, and fuelled up. It was a bit daunting looking at their field - it's HUGE. There are some trees in the distance, the town dump and re-cycle plant in another direction and nothing but FLAT space in between! No friendly hills, no tree grabbing trees - very strange - here it is, is, is, is (did you hear the echo?) and look at all that sky!



They have sheds, a kitchen, cover AND a flush toilet with HOT SHOWERS for campers.

Here's what was there waiting to fly in 8 different categories.

So I flew the TM, it gets better every time, a joy to just cruise round slowly and chuck the occasional lazy loop, now the Heinkel is sorted that flew well and, since I'd brought it, I flew the Flivver as well. It was a great day, no wind, sunshine and sausage sandwiches for lunch and coffee, tea and cakes all day.



There was a range of planes from Laurie Riley's highly suspect electric Mustang (looked nothing like one but he claimed it was) to the two finest models I've seen for a while, Bruce Knight's Dart Kitten and Phil Thichener's Tiger Moth. The latter had very smart instrument panels with hand turned instrument bezels! Here they are



This is very detailed with a real OS 160 twin and was built from his own plans. The bits of metalwork are particularly smart as is the neat wooden surround to the wing step.



The Moth is from the Flair kit with operating "doors", proper flat flying wires and the corrugations on the wing tank made from plastic material used on model railway buildings - oh and a sprung u/c too.

That evening we all met in the local Bowling & Services club for dinner and the usual chat. I then snuck off to the pub to watch the Wallabies v S Africa game (we won in case you don't know).

The next day, Sunday, I got up early and arrived at the field just too late for the eggs and bacon (they start early in the country) and pulled my planes out of the "leave-em-at-the-field-assembled" shed.



I was soon flying but it was too early! The sun was at an awkward height (a bit like at Luskyntyre) so when you turned it was easy to just see a silhouette and completely lose orientation (ahem you remember Col?).

Then we had the "nasty". I was standing talking with Bruce when someone yelled "Look out!" I ducked and a plane shot past and belted into Bruce's upper arm! He yelled, the plane smashed and it was clear he was badly hurt. An ambulance was called, they cut off his sleeve, treated lacerations and took him off to hospital (subsequent x-rays showed the arm wasn't broken much to our surprise).

Inspection of the wreckage (a 45 powered ARF crop duster) looked like the cause was the battery becoming disconnected. Was it vibration? Was it pulled apart by a servo catching the lead? We will probably never know but it emphasises again the need to ensure a physical method of holding the plugs together and not to have the lead flapping about inside the fuselage. Checked yours recently?

At midday we had the prize giving and to my surprise I picked up the pilot's choice in "Under 70" civilian" for the Flivver though my vote went to another Mike and his Pou de Ciel with an OS 26 FS - you gotta be a brave man to fly one of them though he reckons it's a doddle! In case you don't know the real one had a nasty habit of refusing to pull out of a dive steeper than 15 degrees and killed quite a few owner/builders until they sorted the problem.



And so to the long drive home including the obligatory rain and heavy traffic on the freeway. Well worth it though, it does you good to get out and see the world.