

# THE 60'S & 70'S

A Personal View

by Stan Tilley

Because of my interest in skiing, mountains, sky and clouds had always held a certain fascination which flying could perhaps fulfill.

The opportunities were there. In the early fifties the RAAF was recruiting for the occupation forces and the University had its own squadron operated through the ACST with the flying subsidised by the Government.

Yet my first encounter with a light plane, the venerable Tiger Moth, was not what I expected. It was noisy, smelly and slow. Even a couple of 'half-price' offers in the Mercury Flying Scholarships failed to tempt me. Also, on a couple of visits to the Club I was not impressed by the 'lads' hooning around in Davy Crockett coonskin hats and go-carts.

Ten years passed. I had a family and my own business and other business connections. Flying could perhaps be useful – so I joined the Club.



Lloyd had gone and Nick Tanner was in charge. It was still a bit casual. With a busy business schedule I had to insist that my bookings were adhered to but Nick and the other instructors were great guys and we were 'in to it'.

The Tigers and the Chipmunks had gone, but not quite. There was still the odd opportunity to get hold of one and enjoy some real flying because by this time the bug was biting and like many others I was keen to fly everything. The Tri-pacers were being replaced by the first Cessna 172 in 1963 and in 1966 Cherokee 140's were added together with the pride of the fleet, a Comanche 260B. This aircraft had replaced a Beech Bonanza. But the ubiquitous Cessna 172 was proving to be the best aircraft for both training and general use. At a cost brand new of \$14,600 the Club could and did change aircraft every couple of years. The Cessna RPI was my most regular training aircraft.

The Club was booming. Training, private flying and charter were all up. In 1970 the Club flew over 5700 hours – so I guess it was not surprising that some politics started to raise their ugly head. Some members felt that the charter ser-

vices were being favoured and others decided that they should enter the flying business themselves. The result was a splurge of new aviation companies with names like Cambridge Aviation, Tasmanian Aerial Services, The Tasmanian Pilots Club and Par Avion... Except Par Avion, all of these failed but in the meantime they did provide different aircraft for the Club members to use when the Club planes were busy. It was also a great incentive to Club management to do even better and they did. I was very fortunate. One of the failed companies had a Victa 100 MRJ which was re-possessed. The Finance Company involved allowed me to use it as I wanted to so I foolishly taught myself aerobatics. Eventually MRJ was sold. It had 1100 hours total time and sold for about \$3500. Why didn't I buy it?

It was not long before I was using the Club aircraft for business, flying regularly to Directors meetings in Launceston and making a few business trips to the mainland. In those days ATC were wonderful. On contact with LT tower I would request that they order me a taxi, which would be waiting on the ground when I arrived. What fantastic service!

The Club was active in providing opportunities for fun flying and social activities. Airstrips were built at Maria Island, Swansea and in the Huon. By 1965 charter services had grown so much that it was decided to form a sepa-



"WITH A MINOR ADJUSTMENT  
ONE CAN GET FAR  
MORE REVS, PLUS  
BETTER GROUND."

rate commercial company. TASAIR was owned half by the Club and half by Club members. The first twin was a Piper Apache, then a Cessna 310 which was replaced by the first Aero Commander 500s EXQ. Tasaair also bought that great workhorse the Cessna 206 PQT.

It was very apparent that the Club, as well as being a lot of fun, was a serious business and before long I found myself on the Club Committee.

## Then LAKE PEDDER HAPPENED.

For years the Club had enjoyed the beautiful pink quartzite beach at



Pedder in the summer months. Lloyd Jones had published several books of magnificent photos and had lobbied strenuously for its preservation as a National Park. But now it was threatened. No! It was decided that the lake would be flooded and everybody wanted to explore, measure, map and detail or just visit before the fatal day.

Club aeroplanes were totally booked out. My brother Ray had an Auster J1b which he and I had taken to Queensland in 1968 so I hired it for a



couple of years and when Club aeroplanes were not available took my friends in to Pedder. Over the next few months I personally flew more than fifty trips to the Lake not only in the Auster but in the Club's 172s, 182, 206 and the Comanche. One member owned a lovely old Cessna 170 which I enjoyed flying as well.

The lake sparked another interest. A Lake amphibian was operating in Northern Tasmania. I did an endorsement, purchased the Buccaneer ETX and with other Club members formed Tasair Amphibious to operate within the Club. The flying boat was fantastic fun for the many members who flew it and many humorous stories resulted. Eventually, I was the one that broke it, so ending a glorious couple of years.

Navigation trials had always been a Club feature; they were always popular with members. In 1977 and '78 full blown Air Races were held. These attracted entries from all over Australia



A: Lake Pedder beach. B: Lake Buccaneer



and we had about fifty aircraft flying. Our life member Greg Walker was responsible for the handicap speed/ fuel consumption figures to be used and I remember telling him that "No way" could the Victa 115 I had entered cruise at 110 knots and only use 25 litres an hour. With proper monitoring we achieved within 10% of those figures, so for future travel in the Victa I planned 10knots faster and added another hour's endurance. Club foundation member Jack Koerbin and I came second in the '78 Air Race.

Jack was also responsible for getting the Club Formation team going after he was told that "Nobody flies formation in high wing aeroplanes".



1979 Formation Pilots probably, Jack Koerbin, Pat Cliffe-Hickling, Robbie Burns & Stan Tilley

Jack, Pat and I became the regulars and every Saturday morning for years we would practice at Cambridge at 7:30 AM. There were some 'interesting' moments like touching wings in flight but we developed two routines; one for competition and one for displays. The display routine was very popular at Regattas and Shows.

By this time Club members were entering the Australian Light Aircraft Championships.

Member Chris Davey was the first to win a medal. We took time to get our



C206 TSR at Melaleuca 1972 in original colours, TSR still flying with Tasair.

Formation Team into winning mode and I don't think it actually happened until my place was taken in later years by Robbie Burns. The most memorable flight was in Perth WA. Our leader Jack hated flying high so did the whole sequence at 500ft. Although it was competition, the sequence we chose was the display routine which finished with the two wing aircraft breaking away to do a 360 degree turn which brought them back traveling head on towards each other, in the meantime the lead aircraft

had done a stall turn and was also approaching the same spot. It worked beautifully. I always knew it was good when the three aircraft, traveling in three different directions, crossed right over the chosen spot and as they crossed I heard the blast and felt the vibration of the other aircrafts' exhaust across the wing. We were disqualified. Jandacot Tower had pressed the 'Emergency' button thinking that they had a triple collision!

Club members were also encouraged to use the Tasair twin. I was endorsed on both the Aero Commander and a Baron that was available. At the time Baby Safety Seats for cars were very popular but were incredibly difficult to get. On one occasion I flew the Aero Commander to Melbourne to collect a shipment of baby seats for sale.

Other interesting aircraft brought over for various periods for Club members to try out included the Mooney M20E and 201 and the one I like best of all the SF260.

The 60's and 70's were exciting years. There were some crashes, sometimes serious, sometimes funny. MTL which was owned by Club Life-member John Archer, was crashed at Lake Edgar in '74. The wreck was purchased by my brother Ray and I helped him to rebuild it, then bought it in '76 and again put it on-line. Mistake! A member crashed it again at Cambridge in 1977. Nine years later I bought the wreck again and had it rebuilt as a 160HP.

At the end of the seventies the Club was in fine shape both financially and in the strength of its Members. There have been more changes in the last twenty years, but it is still a great Club.