

# FREEDOM OF FLIGHT

Eugene Reid experienced the freedom of flight when he was still in nappies flying in Tiger Moths with his father Vern Reid. However he didn't initially get into flying, motorbikes were the go, he got his bike licence at 16 was state champion for 3 years in the 1970's and operated a motorcycle shop from the family JET BP service station in Sandy Bay. If he



**Eugene Reid and his training Jabirus at George Town Airport**

wanted to go flying he could just go with his dad Vern.

"In 1981 the first Thruster came along for around 4K, at the time, I was enjoying flying and selling them. Training was a problem though you would talk people through their first flight over the radio, they had never flown before you can just imagine, they were their own test pilot "I said Eugene.



**Vern right and TAC Chief engineer Duncan Sloan 1963**

"Then along came the first legal 2 seat Ultralight Trainer and I bought one of the first 8 off the assembly line and started teaching". Eugene has now clocked up 12,200 hours in recreational aircraft, most of it in the instructional role. "I still enjoy it after all this time, I thought perhaps I would have grown sick of it and done something else by now, but no - I just love it".

Eugene obtained a 30 year lease on the George Town Airport and seven years ago moved his recreational aviation training business there. He bought a Jabiru an in-



**Professional stunts Vern & Eugene a regular at Royal Hobart Show.**



**One of the Tigers Moths at Rokeby**



**Amphibious Thruster on Lords Beach, Sandy Bay.**

stant success with students because "it looks like a real aircraft should". and soon another.

"Although the Jabiru is harder to fly than a C150/C172 there is less study with the recreational licence and I find all the theory scares most people away". said Eugene

"Dad had the first Tiger Moth on floats in the Southern hemisphere, he always used to tell me, and I suppose that where I got my ambition to fly float planes, from Dad", said Eugene. "Such a shame all 3 planes were destroyed in the 1967 bushfires. They used to be hangared in the paddock which is now the Rokeby Police Academy skid pan. I had the first Thruster on floats, that was fun, makes a lot of sense really with so many waterways in Tasmania".

The average age of a recreational pilot is 53 years, a bit of the empty nest syndrome, and I must do it now before it's too late. Because of the low operating and ownership costs around half the pilots buy their own aircraft. "I don't see a lot of continuing hire it is more about teaching new people to fly in my business. Cost is the major reason recreational aviation has really taken off, it is affordable, aircraft and engine reliability has improved and fuel consumption on most average aircraft is around 15 lph".