

Cobram

Air Races

by Ken Thomas

The telephone call came less than a fortnight before the event. I had been expecting (dreading?) it for weeks so it was hardly a surprise. Our beloved Editor was asking if I would do the "show and tell" bit for the second staging of the large scale air racing at Cobram, where once again he was taking the role of Contest Director. My slight reticence about accepting the request was due to the fact that it would be my first two-day, out of town meet since my triple bypass 12 weeks previously. And I knew that I would not have a hope of keeping up with the scoring whilst taking the necessary dozens of photographs. However, Steve managed to convince me that this was not a problem, and that my role was just to give an overview of the event. So, thus reassured, the darkness before the dawn on Saturday, 23rd June, saw number 2 Son and I heading north toward the NSW border.

We arrived at approximately 9am to find all the infrastructure in place (pylons, pylon stations, lap-counting equipment, scoring computer and public address system) and Steve rushing from, place to place so involved in trying to get everything ready on time that he did not even say "hello"! I could understand his concerns. He had put months of work into the preparations and had even participated in a television interview to promote the day. It must also have been at the back of his mind that the 2011 event had gone so well that it was going to be a hard act to follow.

COBRAM/BAROOGA

Last year I waxed so eloquently about the attractions of the twin towns (Barooga is on the NSW side of the Murray) that this time I will limit myself to mentioning only two instances where the locale played a part in the visit. One would expect these to be sleepy little hamlets especially at night (Cobram population 5500 – Barooga even less), but not so! Number 2 Son and I went to three pubs/clubs seeking an evening meal to find that they were all booked out and really jumping. We settled for take-away from the local Chinese restaurant (excellent food by the way) and ate it back at the Colonial Motor Inn where we were staying (nice room and very friendly service).

The next incident happened on the Sunday when Number 2 Son borrowed the wagon



Arguably the hardest working entrant in the event, Richard Mudge from the Border Model Flyers in SA competed in 4 classes and won 3! This is his Formula 1 entry – the Cosmic Wind "Minnow". 81" span – CRRC 55cc engine



Another South Australian competitor placed 2nd, Peter Smyth from the Holdfast MAC displays his 2m El Bandito. A DLE 55 provides the mumbo

After the scores were re-checked, Bob McEwin (another Sth Australian) took out 3rd place in F1 with his own design El Bandido



Victorian Sales Manager Harper from Fisher Paykel presents Richard Mudge (SA) with \$1000 cash first prize for F-1





Byron Simpson from Gosford, NSW, proudly holds his new – and class winning – 86" Top Flite P40, DA 60 at the pointy end



Perhaps Anthony Curzon from the Bacchus Marsh (Vic) club is staging a little controversy here. Note the Japanese Kamakazi pilot in his America Texan. His father (Frank), a stickler for scale authenticity, will be mortified



We welcome Wally Burston to his first large scale air racing event. Wally, who flies at the Nepean Club (Rosebud, Vic) is certainly starting on the right foot by fielding two Texans previously campaigned by Michael Farnan



This standout 84" KR4 "Firecracker" was entered by Iain McLeay from the Constellation Club in SA



Richard Mudge certainly must have a large hangar back home in SA. This is his pretty Staggerwing entered in the Golden Era radial class

at 9:30am and headed off with his camera to do the touristy thing. He did not return until 3:45pm claiming that he had taken 200 photos and had not scratched the surface of the "what to see and do". He is 24 years old, has travelled the world, and is not easily impressed.

SATURDAY AT THE RACES

It was cold. In fact, it was bloody cold. Only Stephen Green could program his event smack dab on the Winter Solstice (shortest day of the year) and get away with it so successfully. This was helped in no short measure by the absence of wind and the presence of bright sunshine which,

along with the racing, soon made everyone forget about the temperature. For the very few who are not aware of large scale air racing (plugged ad nauseum in this rag) this is a very spectacular discipline of radio controlled model aircraft flying where top pilots from all over Australia congregate to compete in six categories of racing around a triangular course. This is especially exciting from a spectator point of view because they are watching very expensive models

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The Northern Connection! L-R: Adrain Coggins (Qld), Paul Griffiths (Qld), Brian Sawtell (NSW), Ken Wood (Qld), Robert Young (NSW). Front: Kathy Griffiths (Qld). All fly with the Lower Tweed Heads Flying Club



Low flying is okay but please don't hit the lights



Byron Simpson's striking Turbo Raven takes to the sky in the Red Bull series. 30cc petrol power

that actually look like real aircraft constantly being put in harm's way by flyers competing for prizes valued at thousands of dollars.

After the mandatory pilots' briefing, the thrills (for the onlookers anyway!) started early, in fact, in the second heat when the Red Bull entry of Bendigo legend Les

Davis rolled to the left just after take-off and went into the ground in a big way. To the observer this gave every indication of aileron reversal, which for the near unbeatable team of Les and Steve Davis borders on the unthinkable! But stranger things have happened. By lunchtime, after an extremely busy session of racing, the program was right on schedule and they

Supreme confidence? Steve Davis from Bendigo claims that he can do a winning job sitting down! He was actually competing when this pic was taken. (Shouldn't his father Les be sitting there? ED)



were able to introduce demonstration and novelty flights between rounds to add a little extra spice for the paying public. Over the two days, these included group helicopter flights, miniature EP models buzzing everywhere, a demonstration flight of the raffle prize, and even a race between a helicopter and a I/C model car.



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As an entry level into scale air racing Red Bull is creating plenty of interest. Easy to fly, not too expensive, fixed gear and your choice of 20 cc glo or 30cc petrol



In between flying in Red Bull and F-1 Cliff McIver helps out on the PA. Cliff placed 3rd in Red Bull with a Seagull Extra 260

A few of the prizes on offer





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Frantic activity in the start-up area for a heat of the Golden Era in-line class. Start, turn model around and take off



Once again the members of the Moira MAC carried out their duties faultlessly



Libby Russell added a welcome touch of glamour to the scoring staff

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A “plus” because of the cold weather was that the canteen did a roaring trade over the entire meet, offering top-quality hamburgers, bacon and eggs rolls, hot and cold drinks, etc.etc. But no dim sims. This near criminal omission must be addressed forthwith! I put on 2kg over the duration because I had to live on those lovely hamburgers – true!

MEIN HOST

After 63 years’ involvement with model aircraft, it is probably safe to say that these days it takes a lot to impress me. The Moira Model Aircraft Club does. Under the leadership of Bryan Harper and Jason

As part of the between-rounds entertainment, Jason Sagaidak, flying the Hughes MD 500 helicopter raced up and down the length of the runway several times against Scott White from Pro Hobby, driving an associated RC 8T car



Sagaidak it seems to achieve more than some clubs do with five times the number of members.

And this is done by hard work and clever thinking although the assistance of the Moira Shire Council should also be acknowledged. Again I will limit myself to just two examples. Several weeks before the event the club instigated a simple colouring competition in the local newspaper and school newsletter. Every entrant received a free chuck glider (50 of which were donated by the VMAA) and the chance for some really good prizes in a Lucky Dip at the meet. Every child

got something. Furthermore, any child not in the competition who attended also received a free glider. All up, 126 gliders were distributed. 126 gliders means 126 children. 126 children means a lot of adults through the gate – at \$10 per head ... And, of course, there is always the chance that one or two of these could catch the bug!

The second innovation that got my attention was the club’s “education program”. Pupils at the local High School are offered a program in which they can attend the field for 2 hours per fortnight and be taught to assemble model aircraft, learn radio and engine techniques plus maintenance, and



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SUNDAY

Came the dawn and the weather was looking somewhat miserable. Although not as cold as Saturday, the sky was overcast with very dark clouds that suggested rain at any time, which as it transpired, only resulted in one or two drizzly showers for the whole day. This did not stop the flying – these guys are a tough breed! It also developed into a day of above average attrition. VMAA SFI Murray Ellis started the rot when his long-serving “Sundowner” went “off the air” and ploughed into the hill on the far-side of the runway. There was not much left of the now hard-to-get model. A little later, Rob Lauder from the Bel-larine (Geelong) Club, and Paul Griffiths from Queensland, raised gasps from the crowd when their Red Bull entries had a spectacular mid-air collision, showering the



One of many heats in the chuck glider competition – a clever innovation on the part of



Matthew Austin, Josh White and Nick White did a great job assembling and repairing the gliders



The kids entered the colouring competition with their gliders and Lucky Dip prizes.



Adrian Coggins, Ken Wood and Brian Sawtell from the Lower Tweed Heads Club show their Micro Boomerangs with which they terrorised other contestants in the pits. These tiny EP models come complete with transmitter, charger, and spare battery, for \$85. By the time I tried to buy one, the on-field Pro Hobby Shop had sold out!

then learn to fly the finished products. Two Cessna trainers, two radios and two .40ci engines were kindly donated by Pro Hobby, the model shop at Shepparton.

When last heard, ten pupils had enrolled in this free extra-curricular course. If only half of these go on to join the club it would be pure gold to a club with just over 20 members.

If the boys are silly enough to do it that is their problem, but Tris Thompson deserves a medal for standing in the rain to call for Bruce



Is there a Spitfire somewhere under there? And can we charge Richard Mudge for malicious damage to a pylon? Perhaps not – it's all part of the game!



Phoenix Top Model P-47



First time racer VMAA Secretary Chris Caulcutt after his MX2 and Bruce Thompson's Superstar argued over the same piece of sky. Chris is already looking for a replacement



Holding full right aileron and half right rudder Bruce Thompson pulled off a brilliant emergency landing



Well boys, perhaps we could make one out of the two!" The result of a spectacular mid-air collision between Rob Lauder and Paul Griffiths in the Red Bull class

course with "confetti". Not to be outdone, Chris Calcutt and Bruce Thompson tried to emulate the above, but somehow Bruce managed to get his Superstar back to earth with a large section missing from the port wing, Chris was not so lucky.

Richard Mudge from South Australia is used to winning awards. He is a prolific builder and fierce competitor - often in at least 4 of the 6 categories. But, in the closing hour of the event, he attracted attention that I'm sure he could have lived without when he sliced about 600mm off the south-

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Winner of the
2012 Cobram
Dump award

Zippedydodah
Piaggio Zip 100



ern pylon. His new Reno class Spitfire did not fare too well either!

CONGRATS AND COMPLAINTS

All good things must come to an end and so it was as the sky darkened on Cobram 2012. It had been another outstanding success for the Moira Model Aircraft Club, proving once again, that if you put in the effort, the rewards will follow. My lasting memory of the event is of Steve riding his 100cc scooter at full speed from pylon to pylon, collecting any data from the marshal that could not be conveyed by radio. It may have looked funny, but it is an idea that is sure to be copied until fully automated pylon scoring makes these positions redundant. This is not far away.

Despite the paragraph heading, I did not hear one serious complaint over the two days – except from me! (the aforementioned lack of dim sims). Several of the interstate competitors who had to drive long distances home and then go to work the next day, told me that they would have preferred the event to have been held on the previous long weekend as per last year, but said that this would not deter them in the future. (The date was changed because of a crowded calendar on the Queen's Birthday Weekend, and more pilots were available on the revised date – 63 in 2012; compared to 45 in 2011). No doubt they will have another look at this before next year.

Many heart-felt thanks to our Sponsors
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Australia, Concept Hobbies, Pro Hobby, VMAA, Betta Electrical Cobram, Fisher Paykel and the many local business in Cobram who also got behind the event.

From my point of view it was once again a happy event, and I finished the weekend tired, but without a hint of the puffing and panting that has been a part of my life for more than 2 years. *(no more dim sims. Ed)*
I can't complain about that!

Ken Thomas

CLASS WINNERS

Texan	Steve Davis (Vic)
Red Bull	Steve Davis
Golden Era Inline	Richard Mudge (SA)
Golden Era Radial	Richard Mudge
Reno Unlimited	Byron Simpson (NSW)
Formula 1	Richard Mudge

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