



Australian Convention a Great Success

Around 150 delegates and 33 aircraft assembled at Hamilton Island, just off the Queensland coast, in early August for the 2006 International Convention, the second such event hosted by the Australian Tribe.

The word “International” in the ICS name was underscored with seven countries represented – Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.

Hamilton Island proved to be an ideal location. The resort offered a very relaxed atmosphere, excellent facilities, easy access to the Great Barrier Reef, good accommodation and best of all, its own jet capable airport within walking distance. Flying in was easy whether on the airlines or by Comanche.

Despite the recent upsurge in security measures at Australian RPT airports no problems were encountered by our visiting Comanche pilots. The YBHM staff went out of their way to help and all airside activities went off without a hitch.

Alan Breen contributed to the international flavour by flying his well maintained PA30 across the Tasman Sea from New Zealand via Norfolk Island to Brisbane, and then up the coast to Hamilton.

Unseasonal, blustery winds made conditions on the first couple of days slightly uncomfortable, especially on the 35 nautical mile catamaran journey out to the Reef. Three metre (10ft) waves challenged the seaworthiness of delegates but most came through unscathed.

Conditions at the Reef improved during the day providing the many snorkellers with a great view of the brilliant coral and abundant fish life.

Perfect conditions prevailed for the second boat trip to Whitehaven Beach on nearby Whitsunday Island where white, almost pure silica sand stretches for six kilometres. It was a wonderfully relaxing way to spend the last day.

A highlight amongst highlights was the Gala Dinner and Bush Dance held in the hangar with entertainment provided by the very popular Briagolong Bush Band. It was a major departure from the traditional formal dinner but greatly enjoyed by everybody. The mood was buoyant and the dance floor crowded.

Guest speaker for the night, Captain Glenn Todhunter, inspired all with his story of fighting back after a double leg amputation to again fly fixed and rotary wing aircraft for the Australian Army.

Speakers and seminar presenters were of an exceptional standard, making the formal sessions both interesting and entertaining.

We were greatly honoured to have the official opening performed by a former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Tim Fischer, thanks in no small part to the influence of our Tribe Chief, John Macknight. Mr Fischer is a speaker who both entertains and informs and his presentation at Hamilton Island was no exception.

Ferry pilot extraordinaire, Aminta Hennessy, gave us a revealing insight into the world of transoceanic light aircraft pilots. Did you know for example, that the fuel from the ferry tanks is fed into aircraft's tanks via a line running outside along the leading edge of the wing and through a modified cap? The reason? To avoid any disturbance of the aircraft's fuel system.

Australian Tribe member, Dr Tony Van der Spek, spoke about how pilots can take some simple measures to maintain their health and remain fit to fly into old age. Elements of his talk were based on recently published research. The information was welcomed by delegates as very useful.

Mike Gahan took us inside the world of air traffic control with special emphasis on planning for a future air space system. It was something of a revelation to understand the breadth of considerations required. The proliferation of unmanned aircraft is a major issue that most of us would not have thought about.

Australian Technical Director, Roy Sneesby, is a font of knowledge. He focused mainly on the Comanche landing gear system using many unassembled parts to demonstrate his points. Most Australian members have heard him speak frequently but we always find there is something to learn and understand. It's fair to say the reduction in landing gear incidents (touch wood!) in Australia over recent years is largely due to his work.

Thanks to now ICS President, Lawrence Paratz, we welcomed the attendance of Lycoming South Pacific and South-east Asia representative, Adrian McHardy. He spoke candidly of developments Lycoming has in store and in a nutshell it's good news. Most importantly, he assured us that all enhancements of their technology will be retrofitable.

Adrian was most generous with his time. It was a golden opportunity for Comanche owners to discuss engine issues.

Informal feedback from delegates was very positive. The island resort environment provided the perfect blend of space and proximity. It was a relaxing setting but delegates roamed around a relatively small and confined area which encouraged mixing.

On behalf of the organising committee I extend a big thank you to the delegates who made it such a successful the event. We know Australia is "at the bottom of the world" and appreciate the considerable effort made by our northern hemisphere friends to attend. And our Australian Comanche owners also deserve a special commendation – well over half the total membership attended.

We are also indebted to our Professional Conference Organiser, Jodie Parker of Iceberg Events, who worked on the project from early 2004. The smooth running both before and during the Convention was due in the main to her efforts and those of her staff. We recommend strongly to future Convention planning committees that they consider employing professional assistance.

When we started planning this Convention four years ago we set out to provide a uniquely Australian experience, something different. Monica and Friedrich Rehkopf from Germany sent a note to the committee after their return that suggests the goal was achieved: "*We enjoyed the*

Convention, the setup, the venue, the people, the weather, the food, the entertainment and just everything immensely. Your convention was so refreshingly different and exceptional”.

We hope everyone enjoyed the Convention as much as we enjoyed hosting such a wonderful group.