

AUTUMN FLY-IN LONGDOWN MARCH 6-8 2015

Our Autumn fly-in was held at Chief George Mills property at Longdown which is right on the edge of the Launceston control zone. Many of us were looking forward to spending some time on the beautiful island of Tasmania and George's property is an absolute gem. About a week prior to the event George sent all attendees a set of notams including all the instructions about contacting Launceston Tower and advising them of our movements. George had arranged for a Mobil fuel truck to be present but a few days prior to the event the Mobil distributor had managed to contaminate his fuel and could not be present. George however did help out a couple of aircraft with his own personal avgas supply. Personally I thought that the tower did a great job and was very accommodating of our movements. I was given a clearance direct from Devonport to overhead Launceston and then direct to Longdown. It was a bit of a challenge to identify the Longdown strip from the other fields and crop areas but the trusty GPS did not lead us astray. The strip itself is a beautifully prepared grass strip with a moderately long taxi to the front of George's property. There were two hangars appropriately named Longdown Domestic and Longdown International. There were 10 aircraft and 23 people attend.



Unfortunately the weather was a bit ordinary over the ranges in Victoria and at least three aircraft could not make the journey. This was a real shame because the weather in northern Tasmania that Friday afternoon was spectacularly beautiful. Jim Barry tried hard but was forced low and could not get over the ranges so he returned home to Swan Hill. After afternoon tea and coffee we were transported the short

distance to the Homestead. What a beautiful Homestead and rural property. Very appropriately the architectural style of the homestead was Georgian. We enjoyed a great barbeque and drinks in the garden and George and Maree were great hosts. We were all fascinated by a beautifully restored steam tractor puffing away in the back yard. After dinner we boarded a coach for the 30 minute drive to our accommodation at the Launceston Country Club.

The next morning dawned with low cloud and some drizzle. By bus we travelled to an old coach inn for morning tea. I was in contact with Jim Barry who was having another attempt. Modern telecommunications are amazing when you can talk to a pilot half way across Bass Strait with no background noise at all. The inn is the oldest continually licensed inn in Tasmania and was originally run by three women who seemed to have no trouble managing the somewhat riotous behaviour in the bar. The licensee did not believe too much in following Government rules and eventually had her licence revoked. That probably did not affect the consumption of alcohol very much however.



We were to attend Pearn's Steam World but they advised that they had sent most of their machines to the Sheffield Steam Rally which has become an iconic event in Tasmania so off we went to Sheffield as well. The group spent a fabulous 4 hours observing and inspecting all the working displays. One of the great features of this show was that you could get up close and personal to the engines and tractors. No roped

off barriers and you could feel the heat being emitted. It really was a great afternoon and by this time Jim Barry had safely arrived. Jim was the only attendee who flew a single Comanche across, all the rest were twins. I guess there is still some reluctance by many to flying across water in a single.

Reluctantly it was back in the bus to the Country Club. We were told that the dinner was at a surprise venue which would require about a kilometre walk. It soon became obvious that the dinner would be at the restaurant in Cataract George. Walking over the suspension bridge was a real adventure. Thank heavens it was before dinner and drinks, and the departure was by another route. The dinner was excellent and seeing the gorge by night was spectacular. It was a very relaxed and tired group that eventually tucked themselves into bed that night.



Next morning it was another 30 minute bus trip back to George's property at Longdown for the General Meeting. The meeting was convivial and lots of issues were discussed. Following the meeting it was time for morning tea and departure. I had the feeling that quite a few were a bit reluctant to leave and we were all very grateful for the hospitality provided by George and Maree.

Several of us (including yours truly) were so reluctant to leave that we stayed another night and headed off on the Monday but not before George gave us an escorted tour of his property.

Overall a great fly-in.

Tony van der Spek