

ICS 2016

BY JULIE SOUTH

Once Upon A Time

Once upon a time – back in October 2013 – in a distant land known as Renmark, Australia – somewhere around where the 34th Parallel intersects with 139 degrees - one passionate Australian was talking to an equally passionate Kiwi; how to get ICS2016 Down Under.

A deal was made. The Kiwi assured and promised the Australian that if he could sell the idea to the Americans at the 2013 convention in Renton (WA) she would organise it! As they saluted each other with a chink of glasses, the kiwi crossed her fingers and wondered just how she'd explain all of this to her husband when they got back home. But she'd cross that bridge if and when she ever came to it.

In March 2016 – in an even more distant land known as Queenstown, New Zealand – not far from where the 45th Parallel intersects with 168 degrees longitude – 106 enthusiastic Piper Comanche aircraft owners and their partners converged to talk about all that was great about life and all things Piper Comanche Aircraft.

For five days 106 people lived, ate, breathed and talked nothing (almost) but Piper Comanches. They travelled from far and wide all over the globe to visit this distant place Down Under.

Queenstown New Zealand - NZQN

Queenstown – where there is only one road in and one road out.

Queenstown - known for its adventure tourism. Where the founder of bungy jumping - AJ Hackett – launched the world's first commercially operated jumping platform.



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Bungee Jumping Kawarau Gorge, Queenstown

Queenstown – ‘just up the road’ from the Croydon Aircraft Company – which first started rebuilding two DH Tiger Moth vintage aircraft back in 1986. That was the year most people saw Halley’s Comet for the very first (and only) time, the same year *Top Gun* was the highest grossing film of the year and “Rock Me Amadeus” by Falco was the #1 single of the year.

People from all over the globe from the International Comanche Society hit Queenstown in March 2016. They travelled from the UK (6), the USA (33), South America (2), Canada (2), Australia (54) and New Zealand (9).

A bit of a Chinese Puzzle

At the registration desk attendees picked up their Goodie Bags. Not only did they encounter the rather fast kiwi accent of Julie South, it came with instructions to “listen up and listen good”.

The Chinese Puzzle – as it became known – provided a tempting dare many found too irresistible to walk away from.

Who was going to beat Kate Burrows' or CJ Stumpf's first attempts to repack the windscreen sun shield sub-10 seconds?



PHOTO: Chinese Puzzle ICS 2016 windscreen sun screen - cropped

As it turns out no one did, although Jeff Hutchinson and Alan Burrows gallantly accepted the challenge. Jeff took 2:03 min and Alan 2:21 min.

The women set and held the speed record for the entire Convention.

Women pilots make up 10% of ICS2016 attendees

Julie South was excited to discover that women pilots comprised 10% of ICS 2016 pilot delegates. This is well above the [reported](#) average of women representing 6% of the total pilot population.

Kate Burrows (EU), CJ Stumpf (US), Sandra Payne (NZ), Glenda Smith (AU), Blythe Biel (NZ) and Jenna Davies (AU) attended ICS 2016. They covered the spectrum from airline to private pilot ratings.

Former top gun RAAF pilot opening night surprise guest speaker

Matt Hall – a former top gun pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force – who now owns Matt Hall Racing – but is probably best known to most because of his [Red Bull Air Racing](#) fame – launched the convention as after dinner (and surprise) guest speaker on Tuesday night.



Matt Hall – source: <http://matthallracing.com/flight-experiences/the-matt-hall-exclusive-experience/> {photo ref: matt-hall}



PHOTO: source: Julie South – Australasian Tribe Chief Nigel Wettenhall and Matt Hall. {photo ref: Matt Hall 02}

Sincere and special thanks go to Julian Fraser and [QBE Insurance](#) for sponsoring Matt's presence at this convention.

Matt started his flying career in gliders then obtained his PPL prior to joining the RAAF. During his time in the RAAF he flew the F18 Hornet becoming the Chief Instructor of the Fighter Combat Instructor Course.

Matt also served in the USAF on an exchange programme and flew the F15 Strike Eagle and did active service in the Middle East. He resigned from the RAAF to take up a full time career as race pilot.

Matt spoke on his flying career: from his early flying right through to his Red Bull air races. One of Matt's messages was that everyone makes their own luck. In reality luck has nothing to do with anything: you have to put yourself in the right place at the right time and be prepared physically and mentally.

Coming close to crashing in Windsor, Ontario, in June 2010, when he skimmed his wingtip into the water recovering from a stall, Matt said he let his ego get in the way that day. It was a wake-up call to him about how he approached his flying and how he ran his race team.

With the 20/20 vision of hindsight Matt knew he shouldn't have flown that day. There were many factors that came into play and he knows he is extremely fortunate to be able to look back and learn.

He would tell you his preparation was poor and he allowed bad situations to continue. For example, the aircraft wasn't handling well but he was putting up with it as he thought he could handle it.

Another thrust of Matt's talk was don't let your ego get in the way of good decision making. You need to know your limits and abilities.

To paraphrase, don't let your ambitions exceed your ability.

Matt's speech was motivational and educational and was very well received by everyone present. To top that off Matt mentioned during conversation at dinner that he was considering a Comanche as a personal aircraft.

A long flight across the Ditch

A visit to Queenstown International Airport on Wednesday morning gave everyone the opportunity to view the nine Comanches flown to the convention.

Five of the nine had flown 'across the Ditch' (the Tasman Sea) from Australia. Their route was via Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island to Kerikeri then down the length of the North and South Islands to Queenstown.

The straight line one way distance for the five Australian aircraft varied from about 2000 nm to over 2500 nm.



Photo: source: Ray Fey {photo ref: Airport Day – NZQN}

A theme of 'the Kiwis know how to do food' was starting to emerge

Although it started to rain on leaving the airport and the view from the top of the Skyline Gondola was not one of blue sky and sunshine, it did not detract from the magnificent vista over Lake Wakatipu and the surrounding mountains.



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Alan Burrows & Kate Burrows inside Gondola



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Ann and Ray Fey inside Gondola, Queenstown

The buffet lunch at the Skyline Restaurant went some way to form the opinion that the kiwis have great food and know how to cook.

The remainder of Wednesday afternoon was free for attendees to explore Queenstown before boarding the *TSS Earnslaw* later.

Some chose to get a dose of adrenalin (what Queenstown is famous for) while others kicked back and put their feet up. Home was, after all, a long way away and body clocks were somewhere half way between there and New Zealand.

Sheep up close and personal plus a singalong

Dinner on Wednesday was at Walter Peak Station – a 24,000 hectare sheep farm at the southern end of Lake Wakatipu.

The BBQ at Walter Peak cemented the fact the kiwis *really do know how to put on a feast*. The only complaints Alan Breen or Julie heard were “food: there’s just too much good food!”.

After dinner a live sheep shearing and sheep dog demonstration gave attendees a quick insight into part of New Zealand’s agricultural history. As one American said “I’ve never seen so many sheep in one place at one time as I’ve seen in New Zealand! Ever!”



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Sheep Shearing at Walter Peak Station {photo ref: sheep shearing 02}

True to the *Earnslaw's* vintage, a sing-along around a grand piano was held in the saloon on the return trip to Queenstown. Many Comancheros sung with gusto from the songbook of songs like "It's a long way to Tipperary" and "Oklahoma!"

Of course, the evening would not have been complete without finishing with "Auld Lang Syne" – the Robert Burns poem most famous for being sung on New Year's Eve in many places around the English-speaking world.

The *Earnslaw's* pianist timed the last bar of "Auld Lang Syne" beautifully with docking back at Queenstown wharf.

Plan B implemented on account of the weather

The weather put a bit of a spanner in the works on Thursday for those who had planned to fly into and out of Milford Sound. Unfortunately flying was no longer an option.

Milford Sound is known as the wettest inhabited place in New Zealand and one of the wettest in the world. With a mean annual rainfall of 6,813 mm (268 in) on 182 days a year it was always a possibility Plan B may need to be put into action.

Plan B for those who still wanted to go to Milford Sound was to travel by road there and back. This resulted in a very long 14 hour day. However, there was a temporary break in the weather and eight members opted to take advantage of the opportunity to return to Queenstown via helicopter.

Having the absolute worst time of my life complaint

At the Australasian Tribe Dinner – and much to Julie South's horror she was bailed up over a glass of New Zealand's finest chardonnay.

"Julie, I have a complaint to make. I'm having the absolute worst time of my life. Today I had to travel by road through magnificent scenery where I ended up having a great time at Milford Sound. From there I just had to ride back in a helicopter. Of course I just had to play in the snow when the opportunity presented itself! And,

even more worse – tomorrow all I have to look forward to is horse-riding! I just have to complain” (sic).

This complainant, of course, was having the time of her life and was thrilled to be part of ICS2016.

Those visiting the [Croydon Aircraft Company](#) in Mandeville also got to experience one of the region’s finest downpours in a while. This resulted in the choice of either *run* or *get very wet* when moving between the café, the museum and the aircraft company buildings.

Unfortunately, those visiting Mandeville Aerodrome (NZVL) were also denied any scenic flights on account of the weather. However, the rain did not detract from informative tours around the onsite museum or vintage aircraft restoration factory.

Miss Cocoa’s Café at Mandeville further helped reinforce that the kiwis know how to do food after another buffet Plowman’s-style lunch.

Tribe Dinners on the Thursday night were enjoyed at various local restaurants.

The Europeans met at Queenstown’s best fish and tip restaurant (according to David Buttle), the North American tribes all combined and went to the Prime Waterfront Restaurant and Bar and the Australasian tribe completely booked out the Foundation Restaurant at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

At the Australasian Tribe dinner four recent birthdays were toasted: Max Pearson, Bill Buchanan , Roy Sneesby and Bob Pope.

On behalf of the Australasian Tribe, Chief Nigel Wettenhall, presented Alan Breen and Julie South a specially made trophy (part of a very polished propeller) to say thank you for organising a very successful ICS 2016.



SOURCE: Evan Slatyer – Alan Breen receiving thank you prop from Ken Holdsworth

Valuing the Future Business Day

Good Friday was ICS business day with brainstorming and discussions held around different aspects of the convention's theme "*Valuing the Future*".

The aim of the day was to look at how Comancheros maintain the value of their Comanche aircraft. There was a series of topics brainstormed during the day

Comanche Attributes

The day started examining the attributes of Comanche aircraft which are many and varied: speed, range, payload, reliability, cost of operation, and several more.

Identifying the Comanche market

Potential Comanche owners were identified:

- Someone upgrading from a lower performance aircraft
- First twin owner
- Self employed

Promoting Comanche attributes

Next up Comancheros discussed how to promote the Comanche to potential owners.

One new owner related how he had been looking for a twin and had filtered his options based on models built in the 1980's and 1990's. However, it wasn't until he couldn't find anything that matched his requirements that he looked at older aircraft and discovered the PA30 fitted his needs exactly.

Several avenues of promotion were listed, this then raised the question of whose job was it to undertake this promotion. One valid point was made that with new aircraft (or cars) there was always a spec sheet in the window. A template spec sheet will be produced which all owners can print and laminate.

Members will be able to place this spec-sheet in a side window whenever their aircraft is parked. People passing will have the opportunity to learn about the Comanche's excellent performance figures, speed/range/payload etc.

Another idea – which is especially relevant in today's digital world – is for owners to create their own blogsite and blog (journal) about the trips they make in their Comanche. There are a number of options where you can reasonably easily set up your own blog site:

Wordpress.com, Blogger.com and Tumblr.com

Panel Upgrades

A session on panel upgrades brought out some good ideas. For example, suggestions about ICS being a repository for panel templates.

SketchUp.com was suggested as a good resource for designing panel layouts.

With the increase in popularity of mobile devices thought should be given to fitting panel mount USB power supplies.

Panel upgrade mistakes to avoid also brought forth lots of great ideas. For example, consider electrical load, compatibility of components, tidy up and remove old redundant wiring.

Repainting your Comanche

Barry Payne presented “Repainting Your Aircraft” where he covered looking at the reasons for a repaint – protection and presentation. He talked about new generation paint strippers and other stripping methods like water blasting and beads blasting. He stressed that all stripper residue of any kind needs to be completely removed - especially from seams.

Painting your aircraft isn't a quick exercise and to be done properly you need to remove all removable items and remove any corrosion. You also need to be aware of the need for proper certification and logbook entries and a re-weigh of the aircraft.

Spend plenty of time ensuring you have the right paint scheme to suit the aircraft.

Barry also touched on the different types of paint and their pros and cons.

What are the best upgrades for Comanches?

Popular items were, Stormscope, TCAS, Cherokee door latch, alternators, new style cowls, gap seals.

A general discussion was held on what upgrades gave the best return on investment. Two items that rated highly were engine monitors and fuel totalisers. One point made was it is important that they are calibrated correctly.

The relative benefits of two-blade *versus* three-blade propellers were discussed. The points made were that while the three-blade propeller looked and sounded better than a two blade prop it was slower and cost more to maintain.

Looking After Comanches

This session came up with the following ideas

- Fly it regularly
- Wash and vacuum it regularly
- Hangar it
- Keep the bladders wet
- Practice good airmanship
- Have a good relationship with your maintenance provider

When Should you Decide to Sell Your Comanche?

One thing every Comanche owner faces is that one day s/he will need to part with their Comanche. How do they decide when that is?

One rule of thumb mentioned was when your utilisation has decreased and as a result the running cost are rising to an unacceptable level and/or your enjoyment in flying has diminished it's time to sell.

Perhaps you reached the point the aircraft need dollars spent on it, eg, new engine or the avionics are badly out of date. You won't recoup the money you spend if you sell in the near future. It may be better to sell now.

Don't wait and hang on. An aircraft that isn't flying loses value quickly.

What is a good way to sell?

- Bring in a partner/s. Even if you no longer hold a medical you can still enjoy flying in the aircraft.
- Succession planning
 - o Mentor a younger pilot, with the right approach they may want to buy your aircraft at a later date
 - o Plan your move to your next aircraft e.g. twin to single

How to prepare your Comanche for sale.

- Clean the aircraft inside and out as well as engine bay
- Remove all personal stuff
- Clean oil in the engine
- Ensure logbooks are up to date and tidy
- Prepare a spec sheet
- Have good quality photos for any adverts
- Make sure the aircraft is airworthy and insured

Operational tips

The last session of the day was a chance to share operational tips. The main tips put forward were:

- Drain the fuel bowls at the end of the day to stop any water lying in the bowls causing corrosion.

- Run the cross feed regularly in the twin.
- Regular replacement of the fuel flap rubber seals and fuel cap rubbers.
- Make sure nose leg is greased when on jack and then again when the aircraft is sitting on its wheels.
- Install alternator fail lights

Convention Dinner

Once again everyone was treated to a wonderful meal at the Convention Dinner. In the early part of the evening everyone was treated with the magnificent backdrop of the Remarkables Mountain Range with the sunset lighting the scene magnificently.

The evening's guest speaker was author Stephen Harris who wrote "*Under a Bombers Moon*".



SOURCE: Ray Fey – Stephen Harris at the Awards Dinner. {photo ref: Stephen Harris Awards Dinner}

The book is about his uncle who was a RAF navigator-bomber in WWII who died in the skies over Europe. The book traces his uncle's fate but at the same time traces the life of a

German night fighter pilot who was defending Germany against the bombers Stephen's uncle flew in.

Stephen met this German pilot while researching his uncle's fate. It was after meeting him he decided to include another side of the story in his book.

Stephen showed a montage of WWII photos while he gave an interesting talk on the research for his book.

Several members took the opportunity to buy autographed editions of Stephen's book.

President Av Shiloh made a short speech and presentations were made to Hank Spellman and Bill Case for their dedication to ICS.



SOURCE: Ray Fey – President Av Shiloh.



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Hank Spellman receiving his Golden Circle Award {photo ref – Hank Awards Dinner}

Hank was awarded the Golden Circle Award and was presented with a nice wall plaque.

Bill was awarded the Annual Achievement Award which John van Bladeren received on Bill's behalf.

Presentations were also made to the five Australian pilots and their crew who flew across the Tasman Sea to the 2016 ICS convention.



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – five Australians and their crews {photo ref: AU flyers Awards Dinner} From left Tony and Angela Read VH-MEG, Graham Bunn and Glenda Smith VH-PBH, Tony and Jan van der Spek VH-TSJ, Phillip Reiss and Jeff Muller VH –HPR, Nigel Wettenhall Australasian Tribe Chief (making the presentations) Manfred Melloh (partially obscured and Malcolm Smith VH-MAC. All aircraft are PA30's.

President Av also thanked Alan Breen and Julie South for organising ICS 2016.



PHOTO SOURCE: Ray Fey – Alan Breen & Julie South – awards dinner {photo ref: Alan Breen Julie south Awards dinner 001 png}

Warbirds Over Wanaka International Airshow

From torrential rain on Thursday's outings to scorching sun for the internationally acclaimed Warbirds Over Wanaka airshow on Saturday.

The grand finale of ICS 2016 was nothing but WOW!

Silver passes to Warbirds Over Wanaka Biannual airshow were included in the registration. This airshow features a wide range of aircraft including rotary and fixed wing, vintage, warbird and military.

The weather was spectacular – perhaps too spectacular with a few getting sunburnt – Julie included who said she should have known better.

As the name suggests the focus is on Warbirds, with an emphasis on WWII aircraft. A non-stop show started at 10:00 am and concluded at 4:30 pm.

The airshow was amazing – the UASF Boeing C-17 so graceful in the air for such a huge aircraft. From the ground it was almost impossible to comprehend her winglets stood 9m (29.5 foot) high. While the runway was long enough for it to land the pavement strength was not high enough so unfortunately we did not get to see it on the ground.

Four air forces were represented, the Armée de l’Aire (French Airforce), RAAF (Royal Australian Airforce), USAF (United States Airforce) and RANZAF (Royal New Zealand Airforce).

A wide range of Warbirds were displayed, including Curtis P40 Kittyhawk, P51D Mustang, Goodyear FG-1D Corsair, Consolidated PB4Y Catalina, Douglas Dakota C47/DC3, Supermarine Spitfire, and two special aircraft the Buchón ME-109, star of the film “Battle of Britain” and an Avro Anson, the only airworthy example of this type in the world.

Photo library

Ray Fey took over 500 photos of his and Ann’s memories of ICS 2016 and these can be found at <http://bit.ly/ICS16NZ>.

Evan Slatyer (AU tribe) memories of the Australasian Tribe Dinner Night can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/ICS2016-Evan>

Julie South (wife of Alan Breen – AU tribe) has uploaded the photos she took at <http://bit.ly/ICS-2016-Julie>