



From the President

Around the World in 80 Days

That's about how many days it took Pete Stuart Smith and his wife Trish to complete their historic circumnavigation of Australia in their seaplane, returning home to Canberra about a week ago. A fantastic journey and you will get the story in an upcoming newsletter.

In the meantime I have returned from the island of the long white cloud where I assisted a fellow seaplane pilot with a ferry flight from Balclutha way down below Dunedin to the beautiful Nelson Bay area at the northern tip of the South Island. Wow, what a knock out flight that was. There is an amazing enthusiasm for aviation in NZ and their CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) actually promotes a "Can Do" attitude. Their "Microlight Category" (our RA Aus equivalent) is growing in leaps and bounds. Rangiora Airfield, just north of Christchurch, is bursting with excitement and small kit/experimental type aircraft.

We have recently had our AGM and I am delighted that our membership has increased. My sincerest thanks to the office bearers and committee members who have so generously given up their time to keep our vital association alive and well.

Congratulations to our first female office bearer, Suzanne Dehlsen (also known as the Scone Queen for her award winning scones) who has accepted the role of SPAA Secretary.

The NSW and Sydney "focus" of SPAA activities remains a concern. This phenomenon has arisen because Phil Dulhunty lives in Sydney and he is a wizard at recruiting volunteers. However, in the next year I hope to see more focus on, and involvement from, other states.

Until next time Fair winds, gentle ripples and many safe alightings.

Rob Loneragan (VH-CRA)

From the Editor

Intoxicated by beauty

I made a fabulous discovery this month while exploring the Eyre Peninsular of South Australia. I discovered the spectacular beauty that marks the boundary between land and sea along a stretch of the great southern coastline.

In 4 days of glorious flying I experienced sections of the coast that are open to the full force of the southern ocean with pristine beaches and long deep ocean rollers lining up parallel to the beach with great surf, pictured above. Other sections of the coast are protected by offshore islands which eliminate the swell and are perfect for open ocean landings in still conditions

Some tracts have towering cliffs of sculptured sandstone, with sea caves, natural bridges, arches and sea stacks that offer a maze of pleasurable manoeuvring.

But it was the bays, estuaries, inlets and coastal lakes that really got my attention. The water is often shallow but quite suitable for seaplane operations.

The August days were still, the water sparkling clear and often glassy and the only spectators were swans and dolphins - it was unbelievably beautiful and alluring. The desire to drop down and "kiss the water" at each new site was overpowering. In one day between Port Lincoln and Ceduna I made 47 water landings, all at different locations including lakes, bays, inlets, estuaries and reef or headland-protected beaches.

On each of the beckoning glassy landings I reminded myself that the "Lady of the Lake" is unforgiving of poor piloting technique, and although I was intoxicated by the beauty, I can assure you, I kept my mind on the flying!

Gear UP to "kiss the water" # #

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)

The Mermaid

News item by Ross Vining
SPAA Newsletter Editor



The Mermaid (Defn/ - An object of great beauty, but possibly illusory)

In just 8 years Czech Aircraft Works (CZAW) has become a significant producer of light sport aircraft. They primarily build American-designed but use the skilled Czech workforce. CZAW is closely associated with Sport Aircraft Works Inc of Palm City Florida USA.

Their flagship aircraft is the SportCruiser, a 2 place, all metal, Rotax powered, aircraft. Many hundreds have been sold worldwide.

Their amphibious aircraft is **The Mermaid** which they describe as "**an LSA certifiable, roomy amphibian that will be affordable, reliable and fun to fly. With a Cruise of 118mph it will be a practical transportation device.**"

Key design features of the Mermaid include:

- Solid-riveted aluminium construction
- Wings removable for storage or transport.
- Hydraulically operated tricycle gear
- Slotted flaps for low stall speed (<35 kts Vso).
- Clean design with cruise speed of 100 knots.
- Strong landing gear with shock absorption, and large tires for rough field or beach operation.
- Certified in the Special Light Sport Aircraft (SLSA) and built Ready-To-Fly).

It certainly looks like an impressive little aircraft. By Nov 2007 two experimental builders had completed and were flying their Mermaids and the company said they wanted to develop a quick build kit and supply finished aircraft but could not

estimate when that might occur.

In July 2008 the future of the Mermaid looked unclear as you will see from the extracts below taken from an open letter distributed by Sport Aircraft Works.

Mermaid update (July 2008)

. . . there's still no resolution of the manufacturing and problems we are having at CZAW.

1: CZAW is not bankrupt or insolvent, our business partners and fellow shareholders have been campaigning an internal hostile takeover.

They've tried to accomplish this by threatening us in every way including petitioning for bankruptcy and insolvency. . . .

2: CZAW is currently producing SportCruisers . . . (and) . . . we continue to encourage the factory to start production on the Mermaid once again after their court battle is won.

3: Sport Aircraft Works is still receiving airplanes & delivering to customers on a regular basis. . . . As I see it we have two options for getting the Mermaid back into production.

1: we can wait till the court makes their ruling and hopefully convince the factory to put the Mermaid back into production. . . . but without resolution and elimination of our hostile shareholders this is unlikely.

2: there's the possibility of manufacturing in the U.S. And several Mermaid enthusiasts have brought these opportunities to my attention. . . .

We continue to fly and fine tune the Mermaid . . . The Mermaid is still in my opinion the best choice in the light sport category for flying boats, there is nothing that even comes close to the quality of workmanship and usability.

I'm sure it's a disappointing to my loyal Mermaid followers that we're still in this position. I continue to do everything within my powers to get the Mermaid into serial production.

SPORT AIRCRAFT WORKS

e-mail: info@sportaircraftworks.com

I contacted Sport Aircraft Works and they verified the authenticity of the above letter and provided another letter which includes

Thank you for your continued interest in the Mermaid flying boat. We . . . think that the Mermaid is the only viable LSA certified light sport flying boat, our advanced aluminium construction sets us apart from the lighter ultralight type and our heavier composite competition. We acquired LSA certification almost 2 years ago, and since then our customers that are flying the Mermaid are extremely happy with its performance. . .

Although Czech Aircraft Works has been extremely successful with the SportCruiser it has neglected the Mermaid production for quite some time.

Because of our continued commitment to this project we determined the only way to fulfil



our customers requests was to take control of producing the Mermaid. We were able to purchase all existing Mermaids in production and to acquire the rights to manufacture. This essentially means our new company will produce outside of CZAW.

We will be able to start limited deliveries as the new production ramps up. We currently have several substantially completed aircraft which are available, so let us know if you're ready to get wet.

BR Danny # # #



Whether it is a kit plane or a fully built certified aeroplane, it's a long hard road from initial concept, to preliminary design, to prototype, to finished design, to flight testing, to establishing efficient production and then having your aircraft accepted with an established market share.

Many start the journey, few reach that destination.

My best wishes go out to any that are brave enough to start the journey. (Editor)

Dear Editor

A short note to thank the association for the support I have received from the President. It has meant a lot to me as a floatplane pilot.

We corresponded recently with regard to my operations within the Port Stephens Marine Park and consequently the association is continuing the fight, for all its members, to maintain the current operational rules and status that we all enjoy.

We are seeing our freedoms being eroded and over controlled by governments and our only chance to keep what we now enjoy is to group together as an association with a united voice.

Please pass on my thanks to all volunteers who keep the SPAA running

Steve Ridley.



A quad City Challenger on Floats - similar to the one Steve Ridley operates



Lake Como Italy

Lake Como seaplane base in 1927

Looking for somewhere interesting next time you are in Europe? Why not visit the international seaplane base of Como. The base is operated by "The Aero Club Como" the only water flying school in Europe.

Seaplane flying in Como goes back a long way; in 1913, the city of Como hosted a seaplane competition and The Club was founded in 1930.

The location is picturesque. Check out a 360° panorama on their web site at www.aeroclubcomo.com.

The club will host foreign pilots undertaking seaplane training. You can hire a seaplane, go on a scenic flight or just sip a cafe latte in one of the cafes in the main street which abut the base.

The base is strongly supported by provincial planners and the city itself. Leonardo Carioni, President of the Provincial Administration, says

***"...the Aero Club is a landmark for Como
... its historic hangar is famous all over
the world. The Provincial Planning Scheme
foresees a further development of the Aero***

Club as it represents a significant drive for sports and tourism."

Jack Peters visited Como in 2004, he says

"I did my my Italian float approval at Como with Gabriel (God is my co-pilot and instructor)

Lake Como is an international Water Airport, with very interesting procedures! The runways and taxiways are buoyed and separated from the busy ferry traffic operating only 100mtr away.

Once taxi has commenced you depart from the airport-buoyed area in search of a suitable flat takeoff path. Wake trains are the norm as ferries come and go in close proximity, many a sharp turn during take off and on alighting is expected. The small Museum at the Aero Club has some beautiful old photos, including The Piaggio PC- 7 a 1928 single engined floating aeroplane that sinks onto its high wing, at rest, was propelled onto skis by a water propeller then the forward aero prop came into operation.

Well worth a visit" - Jack Peters

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The Republic RC3 'Seabee'



Compiled by Ben Hunter, SPAA Merchandise Coordinator

Designed by aviation pioneer Percival Hopkins "Spence" Spencer, the RC-3 Seabee was one of few amphibious light aircraft to be produced in any sort of numbers. The Seabee was conceived at the end of WWII when the US aircraft manufacturer 'Republic' began to look beyond its massive wartime contracts for a peacetime role.

The original concept for a 4 seat light aircraft that would cost about the same a family car!

easier to manufacture and this cut the purchase price in half.

Seabees became popular in the USA & Canada & in countries with long coast lines, or many islands, or lakes or large wilderness areas. By the time production ended, 108 Seabees had been exported & dealerships were established in numerous countries including Brazil, Cuba, Panama, Venezuela, Argentina, Fiji, New Caledonia, South Africa, England & Norway

In the 1950's, the Seabee became a popular bush plane and air ambulance. Seabee pilots often made "impossible" takeoffs and landings from small lakes to deliver supplies and equipment or rescue injured people.

Modifications over the years have included an increase in engine size & length of wing, 3 blade prop, a revised internal structure



The original prototype Seabee was the RC1 (Republic Commercial design #1) in 1944.

A punishing testing & development program followed. One test involved an intentional wheels up landing on a concrete runway. The RC1 passed this test, the only damage being a small metal shaving from the keel.

The RC1's structural integrity was beyond dispute, but Republic redesigned the RC1, to reduce production and acquisition costs.

Then followed the RC3 Seabee, a four seater powered by 215hp Franklin piston engine. This 2nd generation Seabee had increased seating, was lighter, built with far fewer components,



*Specifications - Standard Single engine Seabee
Powerplant: 215hp Franklin 6 cylinder in line piston engine with two blade propeller
Performance: Max cruising speed 90kt. Initial rate of climb 700ft/min. Range 485nm
Weight: Empty 885kg, MTOW 1360kg*



to provide additional cargo space, flight control enhancement and various cabin improvements.

Seabee conversions included a two-engine variant known as the Twin Bee, with the addition of two tractor style engines mounted in the wings.

1,060 Seabee's were produced in little more than 1 year. Then in October 1947, despite healthy

Seabee sales, Republic ceased production to concentrate on its lucrative military business.

In 2006, over 250 Seabees were still registered (none in Australia) and flying, a number that is increasing yearly as new aircraft are assembled from parts and wrecks. A few Seabees are still operating commercially as bush planes & air taxis.

Cessna 206 Floatplane • For Sale

This versatile aircraft (serial # U206-05313) would suit commercial tourism or private use. It is well suited to charter & joy flights in Australia, the Pacific or New Zealand. It would also suit owners living in remote locations.

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The A5 Concept is launched

On 12 June ICON launched their amphibious aircraft the ICON A5 amid great hoopla - see pictures & artists impressions on this page.

They had a really a great web site (www.iconaircraft.com), superb computer graphics, an incredible management and engineering support team, great marketing and a sexy looking prototype – but at that stage it had not yet flown.

The impact on the aviation community was spectacular. The internet was a buzz with comment about the new kid on the block. I have abstracted a few of the comments I saw on web discussion sites:

- Very nice looking aircraft.. I checked out the website but no prices. Anyone know what it will retail for?
- \$139K with a 3 year wait, trust me there are tons of people out there with lots of money who will buy this plane, they'll line up with deposits.
- The electric folding wings would be a big factor for most peoples decision to buy an aircraft like this considering hangarage costs.
- A useful load of 430 pounds on a paper airplane? With full fuel it is a single pilot machine (maybe). It is a non-starter for anyone but the light weights. And it will be hard to get out of those small side windows when the airplane is upside down in the water. Then let's see how it flies.
- I wonder if all those people that paid \$100 deposit on the Mermaid will put up \$5,000 on this one. These guys have big marketing plans. I hope it works for them.
- Wow! They sure have great graphic artists on staff!
- This is a boondoggle, yet another aviation

tribute to P.T. Barnum, if I ever saw one.

- Maybe, but one guy running this company is already a billionaire and several others are quite wealthy. I'm not defending them, but it doesn't fall into the same category as many plane startups.
- It is refreshing to see new ideas!



- Aviation history is chocked full of failed projects that seem to follow the same formula.
- I really like the design, but I think it needs to go on a diet. I like the ideas of folding wings, the t-tail and the seawing. I don't like the idea of 'removable' side windows, I'd prefer a manual slider to replace them.
- I'm Skeptical. A prototype is only a small piece of the puzzle. To be successful they need to develop a factory with experienced staff, training & engineering support, parts availability, and (most importantly) a generous





Icon's maiden flight 9 Jul 2008

cadre of experienced owners/builders available to carry each other through endless challenges. Without that, an owner is left standing around holding an aero-grenade with its pin dangling.

- So far, Icon is all foam and no beer. But I am trying to keep an open mind.
- If flair could fly, they'd be a mile high.
- I don't know if this aircraft will ever actually be launched or get off the ground, but if someone out there doesn't try then we will never know what might have been. Stop being pessimistic and try to keep an open mind, the more wheels turning the better off we'll all be. All smoke and mirrors, could be... but if that's what it takes to gain huge financial backing then this just might fly, so there!

The Prototype Flies!

On 9 July ICON Lead engineer and experienced test pilot Jon Karkow conducted the successful maiden test flight off the water in California. The video was released on their website.

And the web discussion took a new turn:

- Well, well, well, looks like the paper airplane is up and flying just as I suspected. There are too many good people and money involved in this amphib for it not to succeed.
- Did you notice they launched it from a trailer? Obviously they don't have the gear installed in the prototype. It seemed to have an aft taxi

stature... I'm not sure about its water handling. Still, it's an impressive plane.

- I like it, except for the canopy. It would be hard to get out of if it flipped.
- I like the idea of dropping the gear out of sponsons. With a low CG & mounted well aft, it may survive a gear down water landing.
- A carbon-composite, monokote design airframe will have a major weight advantage. The pylon's width dimension allows a good engine mounting platform and elimination of wing struts.
- Don't know about those sponsons. Displacement taxiing seems to have been omitted from the clip, along with the total T/O run starting at displacement mode. The powered wing folding thing is a gimmick. But I personally think they're off to a roaring start
- Very Pretty, but I wonder if there is enough length & body in the nose to prevent nose over. Traditional water birds have more out front. Shorter the front the easier the nose over
- It's a great looking aircraft, the clean carbon fibre fuselage and accurate airfoil will mean less drag, good performance & less fuel consumption. The only drawback is cost.

So there you have it.

If you want a place in the "general" queue it will cost you a \$5,000 deposit.

If you want to be in the queue for one of the first 100 to be delivered – well, that costs a little more. \$100,000 in fact.

An interesting design concept, a prototype that has flown and apparently a lot of people and money backing it.

I'll keep you posted. (Ross Vining-Newsletter Editor)



The water takeoff on Icon's maiden flight 9 Jul 2008



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New member profile

The newest member of the SPAA is Dick Sims who brings with him more than 50 years of aviation experience.

In the early 1950s, armed with his Private Pilots Licence Dick was able to join 22 Squadron of Sydney Reserve. Initially he was based at Schofields where he flew Wirraways, Mustangs and Vampires. Then the squadron had to move to Richmond with its longer runway when they began flying Meteors. For almost 10 years, Dick was paid to fly these aircraft in his spare time - who says they weren't "the good old days"!

Then Dick was involved with Victa aircraft where he started out flying the airshow performances and doing the production test flying, before moving onto being Sales Manager.

Around this time Dick also did some float flying for



a Palm Beach based operator though he never actually had a float endorsement. "It didn't seem so important in those days," Dick said.

In the early 60s he bought a wrecked Ryan Trainer, which stayed that way until he had the time and money to restore it in the 90s. Now VH-RSY is part of the collection at the Temora Flying Museum.

Recently on holidays in Europe with his wife he had a couple of weeks to spare and went to Lake Como and did some float training with Francesco Cereda, their chief flying instructor. So now he is hooked on Seaplanes again and is keen to actually get his Float and Floating Hull endorsements.

We welcome Dick back to the wonderful world of seaplane flying after an almost 50 year interval in the wilderness.

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