

MELBOURNE AVIATION GROUP



Sept 2008

Chairman's Comments



CXZ continues on its own way with the booking sheet still reflecting its popularity. You can generally find slots for NBE most times, but you need to plan a bit forward for CXZ should you wish to use it over an extended period.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Board has determined that we now require a minimum of 5 hours/week (or pro-rata) to be flown in the event of an extended booking for either aircraft. If you fly more than 5 hours in the week, you will, of course, be billed appropriately.

This decision was made after discussion regarding fair access to aircraft by shareholders.

See below for some of the statistics for our fleet from 30-6-2007 to 30-06-2008.

Aircraft	No of Landings	A/S Reading	Tacho Reading	Av Fuel Burn/Hour
CXZ	489	314.6	344.0	50.70
NBE	406	216.9	237.61	35.05

A few members have joined Angel Flight recently and there are two reports on activities from Michael Ralph and John Riley below. Angel Flight is a recognised charity and has a number of people working full time to organise flights. The passengers are people with various illnesses and their families who need to travel to Melbourne (and other Centres) for treatment. A mission flown recently by myself was in fact the 48th for a young man with Leukaemia and his mother.

The organisation is Australia wide and is administered from offices in Queensland.

Board Meeting Friday 12th September

1. Refurbishment of NBE

This is still an ongoing issue however, the Maintenance Director in attempting to minimise costs has not yet identified the best way to make the required aesthetic improvements needed. We have had some reasonably serious costs associated with mandatory maintenance of NBE recently including some Airworthy Directives that were required to be undertaken.

An interesting byline to our Archer is that RVAC enquired of Piper recently regarding the availability of purchasing new Warriors/Archers for their fleet. The response from Piper was that they were not sure if they will manufacture any this year and perhaps not next year either.

In a way, for us, this is good news as it will tend to help to maintain the value of any existing Piper aircraft that are well presented and serviced.

2. Booking System

We have had some difficulties in contacting the person who writes the software for our system. He is a very busy person and I guess we are not exactly at the top of his priority list. Squeaky wheel Russel Barnes has undertaken to get the required changes made in the next weeks hopefully.

The system is working quite well at the moment and the changes required are just improvements in the facilitation.

3. Finance

We are still trading quite well with a small surplus.

For new shareholders not used to our financial planning, this 'surplus' is calculated taking into account funds which should be put aside for required maintenance against the hours flown. The actual bank balance total as of 30-06-08 is \$99,216.20.

4. Annual General Meeting.

The AGM for MAG will be held on Friday 24th October at 8 PM in the Terminal Building at Moorabbin Airport. Company Secretary Russel Barnes will circulate a formal Notice of Meeting and Agenda in the next weeks.

We would encourage as many as possible to come and participate. After the formal component of the AGM there will be opportunity for a general discussion on the way forward for our group. You may recall that at the last AGM the meeting confirmed the Aircraft Replacement Policy of a five year rotation of our fleet. As a result of this decision, NBE is due to be replaced in 2012.

There are currently three Directors who will stand for re-election at the next AGM, namely myself, Andrew Stopp and Rodney Hunt. This is a three year rotation system and it is possible that I will stand down as a Director after that period.

In general, it should not be taken for granted that people will fill various roles for extended periods of time and that it is good to have new people coming in with new ideas to move MAG forward in the future.

5. There was a general discussion on the future of MAG in the light of fuel prices and other costs and their influence on General Aviation. We are still flying quite reasonable hours and the more expensive aircraft is now the most utilised. It was generally felt that MAG will continue to trade as it has for some years to come. A watershed will be the replacement decision for NBE in 2012. We have decided when, but at this stage, not with what.

5. Training Videos

MAG has a number of King Training Videos on VHS. It would be more convenient if they were transferred to DVD. The Board is asking if any shareholder has the equipment and time to undertake the task. If so, please contact Rodney Hunt to organise a pick up/delivery.

Angel Flight – John Riley

Angel Flight is a charitable organisation whose objective is to provide transport to enable people from remote and regional areas to access medical treatment. Angel Flight is not an alternative to the RFDS or Air Ambulance as the service is not provided to persons requiring medical care whilst being transported. Transport is provided to persons fit to travel, but for whom the journey is arduous or economically taxing.

Whilst the aviation side of the service is the most visible, its success is as much dependent upon the people who manage the charity out of Brisbane and the “Earth Angels” who provide ground transport for clients when they arrive at their destination.

I had been aware of Angel Flight for a number of years but had not sought to get involved. However Michael Ralph stirred me into action in June when he asked me to be a back up for his first mission. This required me to become registered with the charity as a pilot so it was logical that once registered I should do something positive.

The internet and mobile phones are critical to the operation of Angel Flight. The management team, who coordinate the requests for transport from doctors on behalf of their patients, simply post forthcoming missions on a “Missions Billboard” on the Angel Flight website and notify pilots in the area by EMAIL that the job is up for grabs. An interested pilot then makes a bid, and if allocated the job, receives a briefing package, again by EMAIL. The package provides all of the details of the persons to be transported - there is normally two or more as it is preferred that the person seeking treatment have somebody to accompany them. As children are often involved, this is essential. In addition the ETD and ETA for the journey are nominated as well as the various phone numbers and details of the people providing ground transport. Drop off and pick up points at the different airports are defined, as too are any operational issues at the airports (eg security issues at Essendon).

As a volunteer pilot I provide the aircraft and the competency to carry out the mission. The cost to me of doing this is offset by the provision of a fuel use reimbursement, (100% of fuel used for the mission from YMMB and back to YMMB) plus a waiver of landing fees at the various aerodromes used and a waiver of the Airservices charges. This reduces the cost to me of flying our aircraft at dry rates with no add on charges. Angel Flight covers the fuel costs (AF pilots are issued with a carnet card) through donations they receive and have negotiated a waiver of the aerodrome and airways charges with the service providers.

As of 1/9/08 I have completed 10 missions plus one assist with Michael Ralph for a total of 33.4 hours. Most of the missions have been flown in the C182 as this is the preferred aircraft based on performance, equipment, load carrying, and range. Range is important for missions such as to Mildura as refuelling adds to the time needed to complete the allocated task.

All of my missions are planned and flown IFR as this adds some certainty to the scheduled departure and arrival times. I have made 5 instrument approaches (Portland 2, Essendon 2 and Albury 1). The approaches have all been GNSS NPA, even at Essendon as I don't have an ILS rating. I was a little apprehensive about having to make approaches into Essendon, but I have found that by letting Centre know early that a GNSS NPA will be required there have been no problems. The final tracks for the 26 ILS and the 26GNSS NPA are pretty much identical.

I have enjoyed the work with Angel Flight to date, I have flown more than I thought I would, but with it being winter and having an IFR rating, I have received a few direct requests when other pilots have dropped out. I expect to slow down a little as the weather warms up and the days lengthen.

The people I have transported have all be grateful for what Angel Flight does for them, and I have enjoyed being a part of the service provided.

Angel Flight – Michael Ralph

On the staging flight from Moorabbin to Essendon I was reprimanded by the Essendon Tower controller for flying over the CBD: "Next time fly around the City." Well he was the one who told me to track direct to Moonee Valley when I was at Albert Park!

I landed at Essendon, at 4:00pm to collect my AF passengers. The arrival was a little untidy because landing aircraft were directed to 26 with departing aircraft on 17. The result was a 12 knot crosswind.

The Earth Angel had dropped the passengers at the terminal at 3:30pm but hadn't waited around to hand them over to me, so I had to go & find them. They were in the terminal, but still... I had to find a local pilot to open the door for them.

My passenger was a six year old girl, Leah, who had contracted meningitis which left her 100% deaf in one ear and 70% deaf in the other. She had come to Melbourne for assessment for a cochlear implant. I was taking her & her parents home. She is the eldest of three children. Her parents have a property near Casterton and run Hereford cattle and sheep. Skylines Pilot Shop at Moorabbin Airport are selling me \$15 pilot teddy bears for \$10 for AF kids, so I gave one to Leah to keep her Angel Flight bear company.

We were airborne at 4:40pm and tracked to Avalon to dog-leg around the high ground. Avalon had a bit of traffic in the area. I climbed from 1,500' to 2,500' but someone was coming in from the west at 2,700' and there was so much sun glare that I descended to 2,000' until he reported that he was behind me.

After reading the forecast I'd called the Met Office for reassurance about my "go" decision; he said it would be OK. However I ran into a band of low cloud west of Avalon which forced me below 1,700' for ten miles. I was worried about encountering it on my return after dark because the lowest safe altitude on that sector is 2,500'. Beyond that, the weather cleared; blue skies. I could see cloud ahead as the sun set, 30 minutes out from Mt Gambier. I'm night-rated but not instrument-rated, so I have to remain clear of cloud.

I wasn't as chatty on this Angel Flight as I was on my first - I was thinking about the weather conditions and I wasn't sharing the mission with another AF pilot. I did talk to Leah's father about farming, the drought, kids, etc. Leah fell asleep in the backseat, sitting next to her mother.

A Rex flight was inbound to Mt Gambier but we determined that I'd be on the ground before he got there. I landed beautifully on 18 and taxied up 24, missing the first taxiway and going to the end, then around 11 to get to the terminal. I saw the Rex flight on long final as we taxied in.

I spent 30 minutes on the ground, farewelling Leah & her parents (the pilot bear earned me a solemn handshake from Leah), calling my wife ("so far, so good") and the Met Office for more

reassurance. They reported rain in Melbourne's northern suburbs but otherwise OK. The Rex flight departed as I did my pre-flight checks. I started up and taxied for 18. The windsock lights began flashing; the runway lights were about to go out! I blipped the radio (on the correct frequency) but the windsock continued flashing. I was about to taxi back to the terminal to seek assistance when another Rex flight reported inbound. I called them and they reactivated the lights.

I took off on instruments as required (fortunately to the south so I could see the township when I lifted my eyes at 500' AGL). Almost as soon as I did look outside I ran into a heavy rain shower. I could still see the ground but I was worried that I might blunder into cloud. I called the inbound Rex flight and they told me they broke clear at 4,000'. The distraction of the rain meant I climbed to 2,700' before I stabilised at 2,500' and set the GPS & autopilot. I escaped the shower a minute later.

From there it was smooth flying home with a 20 knot tailwind. It was very dark, although I could see Hamilton, Portland, Warrnambool & Colac as they passed on either side. I could barely discern the horizon; I could see the occasional ground light to the front. For much of the trip I could see the stars but 50 miles out from Avalon the sky became overcast again however I didn't encounter the band of low cloud again. It had been several hours, so it must have moved through.

At Avalon I had the reassurance of the lights of Geelong & Melbourne. I crossed the bay listening to the Moorabbin ATIS: Cloud was scattered at 1,400', broken at 3,600' and overcast above 5,000'. Wind was 9 knots but as I flew on it increased to 13 knots, then 15 knots. I could see that conditions were OK over the City but immediately south of Moorabbin it appeared to be much darker. I reported inbound at 9:00pm with the intention to fly three circuits. After four hours of smooth air, as I crossed Rickett's Point at 1,500' I ran into driving rain and the aeroplane began bucking wildly! I could see scraps of cloud below me, even as I joined crosswind on 31 at 1,000'. I revised my intention re the circuit and advised that I was doing a full-stop landing! The landing was... OK - good for the conditions.

I taxied to the fuel bowser and waited a few minutes for the rain to stop. Refuelling was fun! The aeroplane was wet and there was no-one around to pass the hose up to me. As I filled the second tank it began to rain again. I shielded the inlet with my hand but I trust that the next pilot to use the Cessna 182 does test the fuel for water!

I'll have to fly a few circuits at night to tie the bow on my NVFR currency but that Angel Flight was an experience. I haven't flown that far west before. My aerial range now extends to Mt Gambier (SA... just), King Island (TAS, technically!), Forbes (central NSW) and Mallacoota (far east VIC).