

# How did what?

By Kathy Mexted

American escape artist, Harry Houdini, is credited as the first person to achieve sustained powered flight in Australia. On March 18th, 1910 in his Voisin bi-plane, he took off at dawn from a field at Digger's Rest in Victoria. Having achieved the record, he packed the Voisin into a crate and trucked off back to England, never to fly again. Thankfully, that hasn't stopped the rest of us.

It doesn't take Carolyn Salter long to pack for a trip away in the Gipsy Moth. Its "baggage compartment" is about the size of a small esky and loading aeroplanes is a skill she has honed over 40 years of marriage to David. Both vintage aircraft enthusiasts, David regularly takes time out from farming and ag flying to perform in one of their collection, which also includes a Tiger Moth, Harvard, Beaver and a C180. On this occasion, David performed a solo routine in the Gipsy Moth, and a formation flight in company with two Austers and an Avro Cadet.





*Above: Owen Zupp and his wife Kirrilly travelled from Bowral for the weekend. To celebrate the Centenary of Flight, Owen will circumnavigate Australia in a Gazelle between 5-23 May, starting and finishing in Bundaberg. Funds raised will be donated to the RFDS.*

*Left: You've got to start somewhere. Youngsters Daniel & Josh try their hand with some paper aeroplanes.*



*Carolyn Salter calls the checklist and flicks the switches, while David hand starts the Gipsy Moth.*



*Warren Stewart keeps her steady in the Beechcraft Debonair VH-GIP, while his flying partner Chris Sperou performs the mirror image manoeuvre.*

*Left: Rainer Huefner has been flying (mostly aerobatics) since he was 16. Building the DR107 took five years and 4500 hours. It is available for aerobatic displays across Australia. Contact Rainer on 0418 800 010 or rainsal@hotmail.com  
Video footage at [www.youtube.com/dr107egt](http://www.youtube.com/dr107egt)*

The Air Show celebrating 100 years of Powered Flight in Australia went off without a hitch. A variety of aircraft was on display including a scale replica of the Voisin aircraft Harry Houdini flew, the Taylor Glider, the 1925 Gipsy Moth, Grumman AgCat, Tiger Moth, Australian built Victa Airtourer, 1946 Aeronca Chief, 1949 Piper Cub Special, Yak 18T, a Czech built L-39 Albatros jet trainer. The crowd estimate was around 3000, of which around 50 arrived by plane. Interests and experience spanned a broad range, from the kids honing their skills on the paper planes, to the more visible antics happening overhead.

Joining the throng, and coming at aviation from a new angle, was Steve Visschur and Grant McHerron of Plane Crazy Down Under Podcasts. Steve arrived home from the USA with a commercial pilot's licence just in time for the '92 recession we had to have. Unable to secure work, he walked away from flying, and says he has regretted it ever since. While kick starting his career again now, Steve is enjoying the new podcast project which was inspired by the successful U.S. concept "Airplane Geeks Podcast", where Steve began as the "Australia News Desk". For the Aussie version, he and Grant include interviews with local aviation

personalities, aviation journalists, analysts, air traffic controllers and others. There are regular history segments, and they've recently introduced a new segment giving a view of the industry from the outsider's perspective.

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Thirteen times National Aerobatic Champion, Chris Sperou however, is no outsider. But he has a unique perspective, and he was interviewed about his 49 year involvement in the Australian flying scene. When the post-interview conversation turned to the possibility of him writing about his experiences, Steve quickly retrieved his recorder as Chris hinted at what such a book might contain, starting with the day he lost the prop. Yep. That's

right. The bloody thing just sheered right off. It's all in the podcast.

From the flight line, it was a cut lunch and a compass to the bright red beacon at the other end of the field where Skytraders were displaying one of their two ski equipped C212-400 aircraft which had returned from Antarctica just two weeks before. Each summer, the aircraft spend over four straight months on the icy continent supporting the science programs of the Australian Antarctic Division. Dan Colborne, a pilot, writer and photographer allowed me a peek at his laptop. I'd already drooled over his website photos some time before. Dan hinted that he's keeping the best for a proposed coffee table book of aerial photos of Antarctica, collected over his six years of working down there. "Books about penguins have kinda been done to death, and I get a unique perspective flying so much over such a pristine, untouched landscape. The patterns, colours and texture of the continent are absolutely unbelievable - sometimes after a flight it seems like it was a dream," said Dan. With the speed of a Gazelle, I tried to grab the laptop with the gorgeous images and run, but he's used to that reaction and held fast, with a grip from which even Houdini couldn't escape.



*Graham Hosking takes family friend Hayley Smith for her first flight in an open cockpit aeroplane on the trip home to Mt Eliza. Graham has owned this 1941 Ryan STM S2 for twenty years. He recently purchased floats for it, and hopes to have them restored and fitted.*



*Left: Grant McHerron interviews Andrew Temby, owner of this YAK52 based at Coldstream, Vic.*

*Inset: Clint Ashton-Martin has a laugh as he plays aeroplanes with the formation flight walk through.*

*Below: The formation flight L-R Red Gipsy Moth VH-UAR, Yellow Auster VH-KBA, White Auster VH-AUD*



## THE MORNING AFTER THE DAY BEFORE

A gentle purr above the house drew us out, like mice from a hole, at 9 o'clock on a clear and mild Sunday morning. What a delight to see the red Gipsy Moth VH-UAE flying above our airstrip. It was the day after the commemorative airshow at Melton, Vic, and the Moth was at the start of her five hour journey home to Walcha, NSW. Two arms waved a great big friendly hello from aloft. The pilots in their leather seats and helmets and goggles, beamed at us from the open cockpit, smiling broadly with the wind in their faces. We waved back enthusiastically, and the little moth seemed to wink as she purred away to the north with nary a care in the world, leaving us with our thoughts, and our envy. If aviation were ever to be romantic, it was this morning, watching Australia's oldest flying aircraft quietly do her thing, far from the noise and distractions of yesterday. I wanted to call after her, "Pleeeeeease, please come back! Don't leave me standing here." ■



## WEBSITES

### Owen Zupp

<http://thereandback.com.au/>

### Dan Colborne

<http://remoteadventures.com/>

[jobs.Antarctica.gov.au](http://jobs.Antarctica.gov.au)

### Podcasts

<http://www.planecrazydownunder.com/about-us/>



*Left: Boys playing aeroplanes. The formation flight walk through.*

*Top right: It reads [jobs.Antarctica.gov.au](http://jobs.Antarctica.gov.au). The Antarctic team try to advertise their website, and their penguins, but it was all a bit tricky.*

*Above right: Rob Fox and his combat veteran Cessna O-1G Birddog. Built in 1953, this aircraft served with the U.S. Army from 1968 and saw much action with the Army's 216th RAC before being handed over to the South Vietnamese Air Force in 1971. It was captured in 1975 and after the war flew in VPAF colours. It was recovered in 1989, and after a lengthy authentic restoration by Rob, flew again in 2001.*

*Right: Chris Sperou in his Pitts Super Stinker*

