

"CHEAP AIR TRAVEL . . ."

## Touring In The Airtourer

*If you plan a Sydney-Brisbane flight in a light aeroplane, or propose purchasing a Victa Airtourer, this report will help.*

by KEITH ROBEY

A RECENT flight from Sydney to Brisbane in the third production Victa Airtourer, VH-MVD, gave an interesting opportunity to assess the touring capabilities of this attractive Australian designed and built aircraft.

My companion on the trip was Mrs Hazel Mayes (pictured above with MVD before takeoff from Bankstown), of Victa's Aviation Division. Hazel obtained her Private Pilot's Licence at the Royal Aero Club of NSW approximately thirteen months ago and had completed her Airtourer conversion the day prior to our flight.

The distance from Bankstown to Archerfield by way of the slightly devious track followed by light aircraft is approximately 420 nm. While a non-stop flight would have been well within the capabilities of the Airtourer, two up and a full tank does not leave much weight to spare for the carriage of luggage, and we therefore decided to plan the flight in two easy stages and make an en route refuelling stop at Coffs Harbour. A further reason for this decision was the fact that the aircraft was brand new, having completed its test flying the day before our departure, and I regarded our flight as something of the nature of a "shake down cruise" which, I felt, should not extend the aircraft to the limits of its performance in any way.

We planned on a mid-morning takeoff from Bankstown and were gratified to find that the weather man had turned on absolutely ideal conditions for a north-bound VFR flight. BCTA winds were SW 10-15k and virtually cloudless weather existed all the way along the New South Wales coast and on into Queensland.

A very good feature of the Airtourer is the quite large luggage compartment situated behind the seats. When the fuel load permits, up to 100 lb. may be carried in this compartment, which has a capacity of 7.5 cu. ft. As I was returning to Sydney by airline the same evening I did not have any luggage, but Hazel Mayes was equipped for a two weeks' stay. We stowed her bags aboard, plus some coats, a cross-country kit and a picnic lunch and still had enough room for a rather bulky parcel containing some engine spares for one of my own company's aircraft which was operating out of Brisbane.

Having completed our flight planning and checked the Airtourer over we started up and taxied out at 10.48 local time. It was a Saturday morning and traffic was heavy at Bankstown. We advised the Tower of our destination and joined a procession of assorted Cessnas, Pipers and Chipmunks taxiing towards the end of the 23 strip. To save the contents of the luggage compartment from too much of a shaking up on the rough grass surface we requested the use of the gravel runway and were airborne at 10.55 hours. Our request for a right-hand turn on to course was granted and at 10.57 I called the Tower and advised that Mike Victor Delta had departed for Coffs Harbour.

Light aircraft traffic from Bankstown must first pro-

ceed around the light aircraft corridor west of Parramatta and via Castle Hill to Barrenjoey before joining the coastal route to the north. This track keeps them out of the Sydney Control Zone, but unfortunately crosses some very rough country. Another unsatisfactory feature of this arrangement is the fact that the corridor is not particularly well defined. It is not unusual for pilots unfamiliar with the local geography to stray into the Control Zone by mistake and thereby arouse the great wrath of Sydney Tower who detect them on their radar screen.

Having safely negotiated this corridor we joined the coast at Barrenjoey and set course for Newcastle at 11.14. The forecast wind was 250 deg./10k which gave us an estimated ground speed of 110k and a time interval of 25 minutes to Newcastle. The flight up the coast to Newcastle is very pleasant on a bright sunny day, there being a succession of scenic lakes and inland waterways with numerous check points which make navigation very easy.

The winter sun was high in the cloudless sky and had quite a bite in it. The rear part of the Airtourer's bubble canopy is painted, but this does not give any protection when the sun is directly overhead or in front of the aircraft and I began to wish that I had brought a cap or headgear of some kind.

There are two light aircraft strips between Barrenjoey and Newcastle and at 11.22 we passed over the first of these at Wamberal, a mile or so south of the entrance to Tuggerah Lakes. Marshall Airways usually have a DH.84 Dragon or a vintage Puss Moth joyriding from here at week-ends, but the strip is a rough one and not used very much by private owners. Further north near Belmont there is a well-equipped private airfield known as Aero Pelican. Situated right on the lake by the side of the main road Aero Pelican has a radio equipped control tower, hangar, fuel bowsers, telephone and all modern conveniences. It is a splendid example of what private enterprise can produce and has been developed by Newcastle aviation identity Keith Hilder. Now that Broadmeadow has closed down Aero Pelican is the most convenient airfield for Newcastle, which is only ten miles distant by road.

We were one minute behind our ETA at Newcastle and passed the smoky city at 11.40. Fortunately it was a Saturday and the RAAF base at Williamtown was not flying, so we had been cleared to proceed along Stockton Beach at 1500 ft. The usual diversion around the RAAF restricted area at Williamtown is one of the trials associated with flying a light aircraft between Sydney and Brisbane. This diversion route takes light aircraft into high country west of the RAAF base and is quite rough, unsuitable for forced landings and difficult to negotiate when the cloud base is low.

Our next turning point was to be Taree and after

## AUSTRALIA'S FIRST TYPE-APPROVED LIGHT AIRCRAFT

The Victa Airtourer 100 is the first Australian light aircraft to be granted Type Approval. Its performance in flight has exceeded original estimates and it outperforms any comparable aircraft. Stressed to 9 g's, its strength and quality make the Victa Airtourer 100 superior in its class to any in the world.

The Victa Airtourer 100 is ideally suited for personal, commercial and executive use as well as being a fully aerobatic club trainer.

Powered by the proven Continental 100 H.P. engine (type O-200A) and fitted with a maximum performance McCauley metal propeller, the Airtourer will reach a maximum speed of 133 m.p.h. Cruising speed is 126 m.p.h. It will climb at 800 f.p.m. and has a service ceiling of 14,000 ft. Range at cruise speed, at 6,000 ft.—800 stat. miles, 700 naut. miles. Fuel consumption is 4.5 gallons per hour at cruising speed, giving a maximum endurance time of 7 hours.

Victa features include: All-metal construction. Full-span ailerons and flaps, interconnected for minimum stall speed and maximum manoeuvrability. Side by side seating for two. Panoramic all-round visibility. Dual control. Sound-proofed cockpit. Cockpit ventilation. Heating and demisting. Cockpit light. Nose wheel steering. Hydraulic disc-type brakes. Parking brake and gust lock. Fail-safe undercarriage attachment. Double-skinned fuel cell. Electric starter. 12V generator and aerobatic battery.

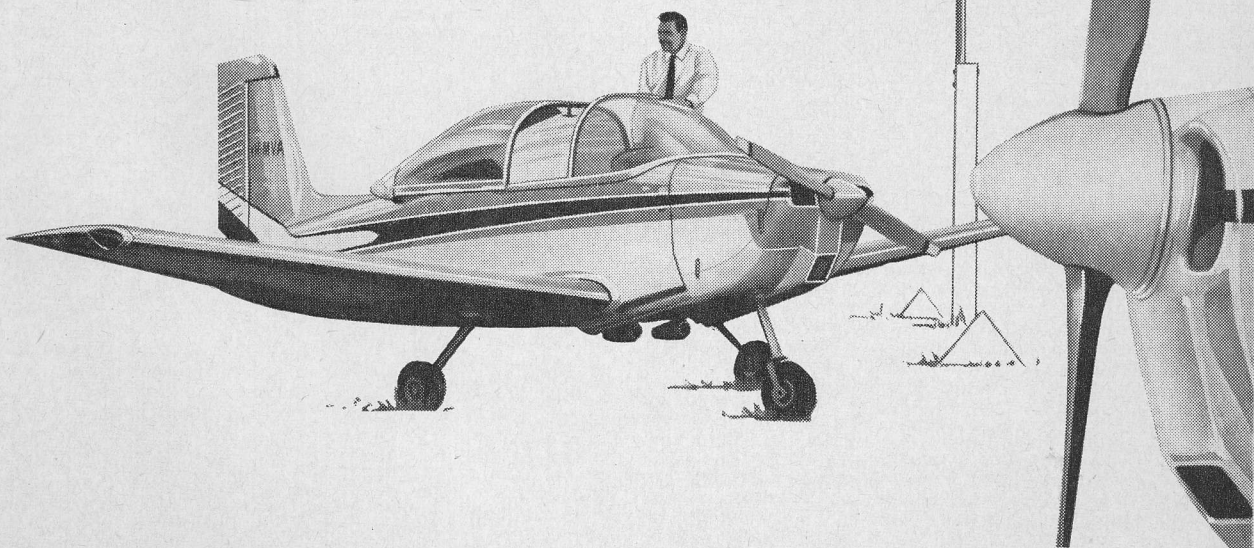
# VICTA

## AIRTOURER 100

**VICTA AVIATION DIVISION**

A UNIT OF THE VICTA GROUP

Horsley Road, Milperra, N.S.W. Telephone: 77-0122



passing Port Stephens and the tea gardens we crossed the Myail Lakes. This distance from Newcastle to Taree is 71 nm and at a calculated ground speed of 110k the time estimated for this leg was 38 minutes. Past Port Stephens the country becomes a little rugged and as we were now clear of the 1500 ft. restriction we climbed to 2500 ft. Noise level in the Airtourer cockpit is a little too high to engage in unnecessary conversation, but the seats are comfortable and I found plenty of room to stretch out. The roomy cockpit also leaves ample space for the usual collection of maps, brief cases, computers and other odds and ends that one seems to accumulate on a cross-country.

Cruising at 2500 revs the Airtourer was indicating 103k and as the outside air temperature was 10 deg. C I computed our TAS as 108k. At 12.05 the airstrip on Wallis Island, which is used by Airlines of NSW, for Forster and Tuncurry, came into view about six miles east of track and at 12.14 was passed directly over the top of the old abandoned wartime airstrip at Nabiac.

At Nabiac we made a ground speed check and found that the Airtourer had covered the 59 nm from Newcastle in 34 minutes which meant our ground speed appeared to have dropped to 104k, but this was at least partly due to the climb to 2500 ft. after passing Port Stephens. Our revised ETA for Taree was three minutes later than the original estimate and at 12.21 we set course again, this time for Port Macquarie which is 33 miles north of Taree. Time interval for this short leg was an estimated 18 minutes and our track ran parallel to the coast about six miles inland. We crossed the main North Coast railway line at Kendall at 12.31 and from there could virtually see the Port Macquarie strip. The very good all-round visibility from the Airtourer cockpit simplifies map reading, an important consideration for the inexperienced pilot flying over unfamiliar country. The nature of the country north of Taree changes, being mainly low lying coastal country up to Port Macquarie with many small lakes and waterways. There is quite a lot of timber interspersed with large cleared areas and one or two isolated hilly outcrops, the highest of which is 1608 ft. just behind Laurieton.

The long gravel strip at Port Macquarie is situated about four miles west of the town and stands out as a most distinctive feature. We were over the top at 12.40 which was one minute behind the ETA and set course 004 deg. N for Coffs Harbour. The Airtourer's deviation card showed no deviation on this heading so we steered the magnetic course on the Pioneer compass and estimated Coffs Harbour at 13.20. Coffs Harbour Air Radio had been booming in on the Skyphone VHF receiver for the past 20 minutes or so and after settling down on our new heading we advised our ETA and requested that the fuel man be alerted. The Airtourer is fitted with a cabin speaker mounted in the rear of the canopy, but I found that over the longer distances the headset gave more comfortable reception.

The sun was now almost directly overhead and the cockpit had become quite hot. I found that the temperature could be adequately controlled by the airvents located on the cockpit walls, but that the sun caused some discomfort. I think that this problem could be overcome by increasing the size of the painted section of the canopy, but, unfortunately, this could only be done at some expense to the excellent all-round visibility.

We had left Bankstown with 20 Imp. gallons of fuel which gave us an estimated endurance of four hours. We had by now been in the air for two hours and although the fuel gauge was fluctuating slightly, the reading was averaging out at 10 gallons which indicated fuel consumption was as estimated.

At 13.00 hours we passed the new oil refinery at Trial Bay and began our descent to 1500 ft. for the final run along the coast to Coffs Harbour. The direct track from Port Macquarie to Coffs Harbour actually runs about three miles offshore at this point, but we deviated slightly and hugged the beach along past Nambucca Heads, Urunga and finally into Coffs.

Smoke trails from various fires along the coast had indicated on this final stage that we were losing any advantage from the wind which was apparently going around to the east so we were not surprised to find that we were four minutes behind our ETA at Coffs and we actually touched down at 13.28, two hours 33 minutes after the wheels left the runway at Bankstown.

Coffs Harbour is a large, well-equipped aerodrome situated right on the coast, and has a hangar, passenger terminal facilities and an Air Radio station. There are three long sealed strips but only two of these are used, the third having been abandoned some time ago. We parked VH-MVD on a broad concrete apron by an electric fuel pump and found the oil company representative already waiting to refuel us. We took on 15 gal. of fuel, checked the oil (it didn't need any) and had a look around the aircraft. Having assured our-

## Production and Sales Program at Victa

FIVE Airtourers have so far been delivered by Victa—two to the Latrobe Valley Aero Club, and one each to Hastings District Flying Club, Darling Downs and Rockhampton Aero Clubs — and, in December, another completed aircraft was awaiting delivery to Tamworth Aero Club. Actually nine have been completed: two are being used as demonstrators and another, the first Airtourer, VH-MVA, has been re-engined with the Lycoming 115 hp engine and is currently being used for Type Approval tests.

Victa reports that completion of a further two Airtourers, which could otherwise by now have been delivered, is delayed pending this Type Approval. All the current production run are 115s. At present production rate is approximately one aircraft every nine days, but this will be increased to one a week by mid-1963. Between 40-43 Airtourers, including both 100 and 115 types, will be produced during 1963. Some of these will meet current orders from the Royal Queensland Aero Club, and the Royal Aero Clubs of New South Wales and South Australia.

Victa has acquired a large sales and service hangar at Bankstown aerodrome, Sydney, and similar hangars are to be acquired in each of the State capital cities to provide an Australia-wide sales and after-sales service.

Aero club experience with the Airtourer is already causing some downward revision of operational cost data, it is reported. Latrobe Valley, the only operator so far using more than one of these aircraft, have suggested that service costs will be considerably less than for comparable aircraft. Their first Airtourer is scheduled to have reached about 475 hours by the time this is read; both have been operating on less than 4.5 gal. an hour!

Victa has recently raised the retail price of the aircraft from £3950 to £3998, but the all-over color scheme, previously an optional extra, is now standard.

Next phase of development, the production of the four-seater Aircruiser version, will commence early in 1964.

selves that everything was in order and signed the fuel docket we strolled across the apron to the passenger terminal only to find that as is usual on most country airports the doors were securely locked. The view is apparently that passenger terminals are for airline passengers and not for those who are foolish enough to travel by light aircraft unless they happen to arrive at the airport at the same time as an airliner.

Back at the aircraft we disposed of the picnic lunch thoughtfully provided by Hazel and soaked up some warm sunshine before climbing aboard for the second stage of the flight. Then, having refuelled man, woman and machine, we started up, taxied out and were airborne again at 14.10 hours. We took off towards the south on the main runway which runs parallel to the beach and turned left over the sea onto course. Climbing out over the artificial port we called Coffs Harbour Air Radio and advised that Mike Victor Delta was on course for Archerfield at 12 minutes past the hour. The first leg of the second stage of our flight was from Coffs Harbour to Coraki, a small town on the Richmond River about 10 miles inland from Evans Head. The detour in to Coraki is necessary to avoid the RAAF bombing range situated right on the coast at Evans Head.

There was a slight movement in the air now, but the Airtourer rode smoothly through the little bumps and gave a very easy ride. We slowly drew away from the coast as our track took us in towards Coraki and we crossed the broad Clarence River at Maclean about eight miles west of Yamba at 14.45 hours. Maclean is almost directly on track and a 500 ft. hill beside the town is a useful recognition feature. A ground speed check at this point disclosed that our speed over the ground had dropped off to 95k and a fresh calculation gave an amended ETA of 15.04 for our next turning point. We could just make out the runways of the old RAAF aerodrome at Evans Head as we passed abeam Woodburn and arrived over the top of Coraki right on the amended ETA.

Having passed the prohibited area we now turned to starboard to intercept the coastline again and fly around the high rugged country in the McPherson Ranges which lie astride the direct track from Coraki to Archerfield. The next leg was to Coolangatta and, as the distance was 51 nm, we estimated the time interval as 31 minutes. The terrain undergoes another change after crossing the Richmond River and we were now flying over gently undulating sparsely timbered country with plenty of fields suitable for a forced landing, but judging by the healthy sound of the smoothly running

**OPERATING COSTS (AVERAGED) FOR AIRTOURER 100**

**ANNUAL CHARGES**

Comprehensive insurance—(7½% full price £3998)	£299 17 0
Depreciation (20% residual after 7 years)	456 19 0
Hangarage (estimate)	52 0 0
Passenger and 3rd Party Liability	17 10 0
Certificate of Airworthiness — (3 yearly) — per annum (average)	50 0 0
	<u>£876 6 0</u>

**RUNNING COSTS PER HOUR**

Fuel — 4.5 gal/hr. at 4/- gal (average)	18 0
Oil	1 3
Maintenance — 100 hour checks at £25	5 0
Engine and Propeller overhauls (£400 for 800 hr.)	10 0
Sundry maintenance	2 6
<b>Total cost per hour</b>	<u>£1 16 9</u>

**TOTAL OPERATING COST PER HOUR FLOWN**

Hours p.a. utilisation	200 hr.	600 hr.	1000 hr.
Running costs per hour	1 16 9	1 16 9	1 16 9
Annual charges per hour	4 7 8	1 9 2	17 6
<b>Total hourly operating cost</b>	<u>6 4 5</u>	<u>3 5 11</u>	<u>2 14 3</u>

**MILES FLOWN at 125 mph**

cruising	25,000	75,000	125,000
Cost per aircraft mile	1/	6½d.	5¼d.

O-200A Continental the possibility of needing such a field seemed very remote.

Hazel Mayes had been doing most of the flying, but I had formed the opinion that the Airtourer was not a fatiguing aircraft to fly over long distances. The pilot's flying position is comfortable and the controls are conveniently located, the centrally mounted control column being particularly good in this respect as it allows one's elbow to rest on the central armrest. And the Airtourer is a very stable aircraft.

At 15.15 hours we were abeam Cape Byron, rapidly closing the coast and at 15.20 we called Coolangatta Tower on 118.7 and requested a clearance through their Control Zone. Coolangatta Tower came back five at the first call and after passing their QNH cleared us as requested. Radio chatter on the Tower frequency was heavy indicating plenty of light aircraft activity at the popular Gold Coast aerodrome and we kept our

eyes peeled for other traffic as we approached their circuit. The Tower directed us to proceed along the beach past the airport before setting course for Archerfield and at 15.37 we were cleared out of the Coolangatta Control Zone with instructions to call Archerfield Tower from Beenleigh.

The final leg to Archerfield is 45 nm and we estimated a time interval of 29 minutes. The country between Southport and Beenleigh is heavily timbered, but once past the reporting point the suburbs of Brisbane come into view and the railway line from the South Coast leads the uncertain visitor right into Archerfield.

Archer Tower cleared us into their busy circuit, landing NE QNH 1010 mb and very shortly we were on final. We touched down at 16.07 hours, 1 hr. 57 minutes out of Coffs, making a total of 4 hr. 30 min. flying time from Bankstown.

Flying back to Sydney that night in the luxury of a TAA Electra I reflected that notwithstanding RAAF prohibited areas, light aircraft corridors and other difficulties that are put in one's way, there is still a lot of fun in flying across country in a small aeroplane. I had motored from Sydney to Brisbane a few weeks previously and that experience had certainly been more tiring and demanding. The crowded roads are hazardous and beset with difficulties and by the time overnight motel expenses are taken into consideration the cost is not dissimilar.

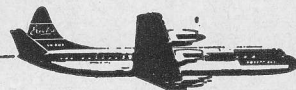
I can say without hesitation that the Airtourer has good cross-country qualities. Victa, of course, when designing the Airtourer had cross-country performance primarily in mind and, additionally, training capability. This dual objective has worked out well in practice. The Club pilot accustomed to undertaking this type of flight in a Chipmunk, or even a contemporary type in this general category, will greatly appreciate the generous luggage space and longer range. And the cruising speed is more than competitive.

Operating costs should be very reasonable and sample figures produced by Victa for a private operation show that with high utilisation hourly operating costs can be brought down as low as £2/14/3 per hour or 5¼d. per mile. In actual fact, however, these high utilisations are seldom achieved in a private operation and costs based on a commercial Club type operation must be expected to be a little higher. There is no doubt, however, that the Airtourer offers cheap air travel at a high standard of comfort and safety for a comparatively small capital outlay. **END.**

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