

BRISBANE VALLEY FLYER

FEBRUARY 2026



Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield, Cressbrook-Caboonbah Road, Toogoolawah, Qld 4313.

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Mystery pilot? Name our Lightwing pilot and win. Well probably no tangible prize but your friends will have to bump you up to a standby information source.



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From the President....

Greetings Members,

Who's for desert? The Club Christmas was truly a lunch to remember. The Club shared a Dining area at the Grand Hotel in Esk with the White family Great Grandmothers birthday. Eventually someone asked why 60 odd people in white and one very happy lady in green. Yes, it was the White family day. BVSAC members wished them well, but kept to our tables and told true aviation tales of the 2025 year. The catering was excellent and all left for their various homes and holidays with an assurance of getting back to the airfield and more proper aviation in 2026.

Although quite a rowdy Christmas party all who attended were well pleased.

Best wishes

Peter Ratcliffe
President BVSAC

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Twice through the Pass

A small plane and some unsuitable cars tackle Austria's tallest Alpine peak

A Covidian spring of cancelled trips and fly-ins led firstly to a bout of frustration followed by obsessive hiking in the Vienna woods. As lockdown dragged on towards summer those walks went deeper and deeper into the green hills but creative inspiration remained elusive. Each day I returned from those woods without a waltz or even a single tale. Another Covid escape strategy was needed.

Let loose at last



By mid-May 2020 Austrian aviators were again allowed to exercise their wings while travel by ground bound vehicle also gained the green light. How to make the most of these freedoms was the conundrum. Around that time my flying buddy Martin Hirczy mentioned his failed attempt to fly over the Großglockner, Austria's highest mountain. His choice of aeroplane was probably not ideal - the not very powerful Motorfalke with its VW derived Limbach motor. Lack of thrust along with cloud obscuring the pass combined to force his retreat from the snowy heights. Martin has flown many hours with me in the Kitfox including being along on the test flight to establish the service ceiling so he knew that running out of puff before the summit would not be an issue. We agreed to tackle the "big bell" in OE-AMJ as soon as work and weather provided the necessary window.

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Window, weather and Grossglockner all coming together



The following week, during a conversation with motoring mates, isolation-busting plan No. 2 was born. Why not drive Austria's highest Alpine pass as well as fly it? There were four of us, all Morgan owners, whose plans to drive to the Le Mans Classic race meeting in France this summer was stymied by Covid restrictions. To drive the route of the historic Grossglockner-Hochalpenstrasse would provide some compensation. Maps were consulted, cars were serviced and partners pacified. As with the flying attempt, weather would determine the dates; no point viewing dramatic Alpine scenery from the inside of a cloud. Our first ground assault was scheduled for early July but this coincided with poor conditions and so was abandoned. The Kitfox attempt then moved into pole position becoming an aerial reconnaissance for the later land-based expedition. Somehow it seems necessary to seek justification for doing the completely unnecessary.

Sunday July 5th brought perfect flying weather across central Europe so Martin and I seized the opportunity and at 09:30 AMJ lifted off from our base at Stockerau 30 km NW of Vienna, heading SW. With full fuel (100 L) we were about 30 kg under MTOM with nearly 2.5 hours flying ahead of us to reach the start of the historic Hochalpenstrasse. Cruising at about 7,000 ft we followed the east-west passes through the main Alpine range. Peaks in this area vary from around 6,000 to 8,000 ft. The higher terrain, including the Grossglockner, lies further to the west so we delayed our climb to 10,000 ft until approaching Zell am Zee. Some of you will be familiar with this lake-side tourist town and its popular airfield.

The original plan had us landing at Zell, drinking coffee, breathing deeply of mountain air and then taking off again, circling and climbing in the valley until reaching 10,000 ft. We would then head south into the pass which would take us past the peak. However, approaching Zell we were already at 10,000 ft, quite comfortable and could see no point in throwing away 7,500 ft for a cappuccino

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only to scale those heights again. A call to Wien Information advised them we were changing the flight plan and would now land at Lienz-Nickelsdorf (LOKL) on the southern side of the Alps about 20km from the Italian border. This was accepted as a diversion and we began to focus on finding the correct valley to enter. It was important to get this right as there are two north-south routes across the Alps in this area - a modern one to the west of the Grossglockner peak and the historic route, the one we wanted to follow, to the east. There are also several valleys which, like the sirens of Greek mythology, will lure aviators into their beautiful interiors but fail to provide an exit. Martin was an aircraft accident investigator in a previous life and reckoned that while Greek sailors could blame their shipwrecks on sirens this excuse would not read well for us should we become an accident report. After a little probing we found the siren-free valley, stoked the Rotax fire, and began a steady climb towards the summit.

Martin raises an eyebrow as the Rotax gives a small cough



The weather was as suitable as it could be; little wind, quite warm on the ground but pleasant at altitude with downy clouds draped across the higher peaks. Bliss. But as the altimeter edged past 11,000 ft the atmosphere in the cockpit lacked not just oxygen but composure as well. There were several reasons. About fifteen minutes earlier, before turning south, the Rotax had given a little cough. Not a dry hacking cough - more like a polite little attention getting "ahem." Martin raised an eyebrow. I raised my best sang-froid. A few minutes later there was another little clearing of the Rotax throat. I explained to Martin that the motor had done this on a previous trip to the mountains and this was "just a little ice" being swallowed. We talked about it. The 912 ULS installation in the Kitfox keeps the motor nice and cool in the summer but just a little too cool in winter. The twin Bing pressure-compensating carburettors at the rear of the motor rely on warm air gathering there to keep ice at bay. There is no separate carburettor heat system. In winter I partially cover the oil cooler and coolant radiator with aluminium tape, raising the under-cowl temps sufficiently for carb ice not to have been a problem in 300 hours of flying. But on this summer day at 10,000 ft with clouds forming over the peaks we experienced excellent icing conditions but were failing to provide sufficient heat under the cowls. The solution was to climb harder using lower airspeeds and a higher

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power setting to generate sufficient heat to melt the ice. Obviously this technique has its limitations as sooner or later one has to descend but it solved the problem on this flight. A better solution is being investigated.

Altimeter reading just over 11,000 ft and the transponder transmitting a flight level of 11,100. We levelled off after 12,216 ft but pilots and plane still had some puff.



Also introducing edginess into the cockpit was the confined route we were forced to fly. Austria created a special bird sanctuary (the High Tauern national park) around the peak in 1986 and although we had wings the Kitfox does not appear on any list of protected bird species. Only in a narrow corridor of airspace above the winding 1930s-built road could we mix it with bearded vultures and golden eagles.

But where was the road? Raising the nose and power levels to keep temperatures elevated meant limiting forward visibility. Can you see it? No, you must be able to see it! Of course it was right there directly under us and some gentle turns soon revealed those looping curves, like a drapers carefully folded cloth, a legacy left by men from our great-grandfather's era who with picks and shovels and sticks of dynamite laboured through searing summers and withering winters. It took them five years to build Europe's highest alpine road and when they were done, well they weren't! In the winter of 1935, the first after the opening, 350 men picked up their shovels and tossed aside 350,000 cubic metres of snow to keep one lane open.

Talk about bleeding blisters. Last year around 900,000 people crossed the Alps via this depression era employment project.

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Like a draper's cloth carefully folded – The Historic High Alpine Road



Meanwhile back in the Kitfox euphoria replaced edginess. Who could fly through the belfry of nature's grand cathedral and not experience some sort of tingling?

Hang on, could we be confusing religious ecstasy with hypoxia? Actually we were both quite cool and not just because the Kitfox has no heater. As best as we could judge we'd not experienced any oxygen deficiency symptoms. We'd been at 10,000 ft for about 30 minutes, climbed to a maximum altitude of 12,216 ft for an unrecorded number of minutes - perhaps 5 - and then begun our descent into the valley of the Drau on the southern side of the Grossglockner, enjoying the long gradual descending turns between steep valley walls to achieve a circuit height of 2,000 ft. I plonked the plane down without finesse (ok I bounced) on Lienz' short tarmac strip and we broke out the stale sandwiches and warm iced coffee. After filling the tanks and taking a short rest we were off again, debating and finally agreeing on the best alpine passes to take us home to Stockerau. At the end of the day we had logged 5.5 hours flying time but our living and learning time spanned a vast chasm.

Grossglockner in the left of the frame

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Postscript: 10 days later four old Morgans drove the Hochalpenstrasse over the Grossglockner. Starting in Vienna the trip took 3 days and covered 1,000 non-autobahn kms.

Morgans size up the Grimming before tackling the Grossglockner



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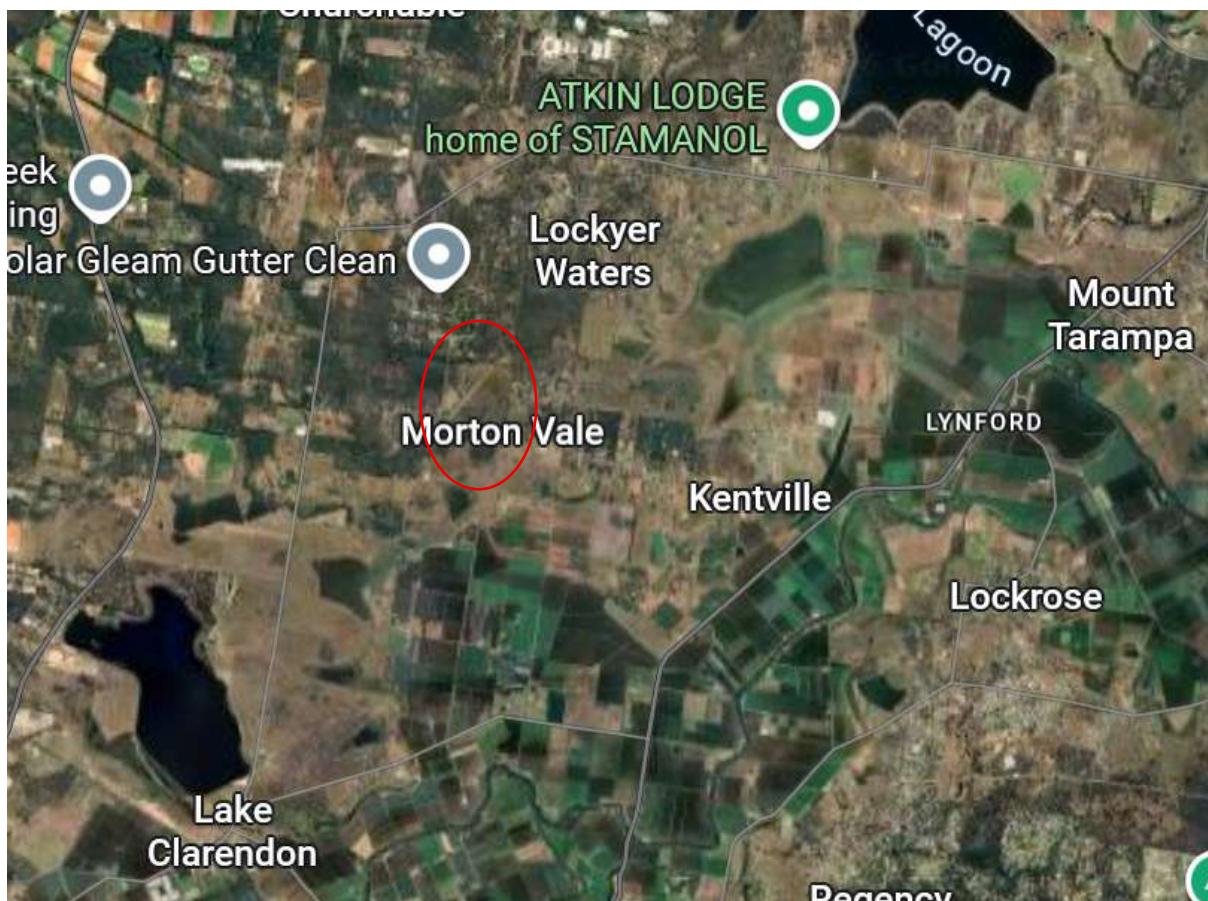
Some extra info.

The Grossglockner, literally “Big Bell”, at 12,461 ft (3,798 metres) is Austria’s highest mountain. By comparison Mont Blanc in France is much taller at 4,810m. The historic “high Alpine road” passes to the east of the peak, climbing to 8,215 ft (2,504m) via the Hochtor Pass, linking the provinces of Salzburg and Carinthia. Proposed in the 1920’s as a scenic toll road and job creation project the idea was ridiculed by many. Completed in 1935 it was an immediate success and traffic, mostly motorcycles at first, began rolling over those cobblestones plain with such care and toil. Today the road attracts tourists from all over the world who pay a hefty toll to drive its sweeping curves.

The first to fly over the Alps was French-Peruvian pilot Jorge Chávez Dartnell who launched his Bleriot from Brig in Switzerland and crash landed at Dormodossola in Italy 51 minutes later on September 28 1910. He collected the large cash prize for which he was competing but died four days later from injuries suffered in the crash. It’s reported his last words were “higher, ever higher.”

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Any Port in a Storm - This is first of a series of possible forced landing sites in the region. No knowledge of the condition, ownership or what is actually there is implied. Just from ground observation or if available, an aerial shot. Local knowledge may be a lifesaver, and surely anyone will not begrudge an aviator in distress.



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Editorial

How was your Summer holiday? My aviation activities did not quite meet "holiday" criteria. A cyclone up in North Queensland had us scrambling to fit all Auster bits under cover. A fuselage here, a pair of wings there. Kerry, my wife has the attitude, 'if you're silly enough to have this old stuff, we had better keep it safe or you're worth nothing'. We pushed and heaved... Finally got 2 fuses, J5F and Beagle A109 in the shed, 2 pairs of wings in the art studio and all the Mk 6 stuff under the house. The poor old J something fuse got the dud spot down in the bush shed. (Probably strong, but smelly.) My fear of wrath is when I announce that the two fuselages ended up the wrong way round and have to come out again. Sure is a sight having Kerry H hanging onto the tailcone and keeping it down to ground to fit the Com aerials and bits under a roller door. It certainly required some take away dinners to get that over the line.

We have taken to identifying aircraft going over as they skirt AMBERLY control zone. Some very inventive flying along our ridge lines gives us a chuckle.

Happy New Year and hope to see us all getting up and away in 2026.

Mike Hetherington



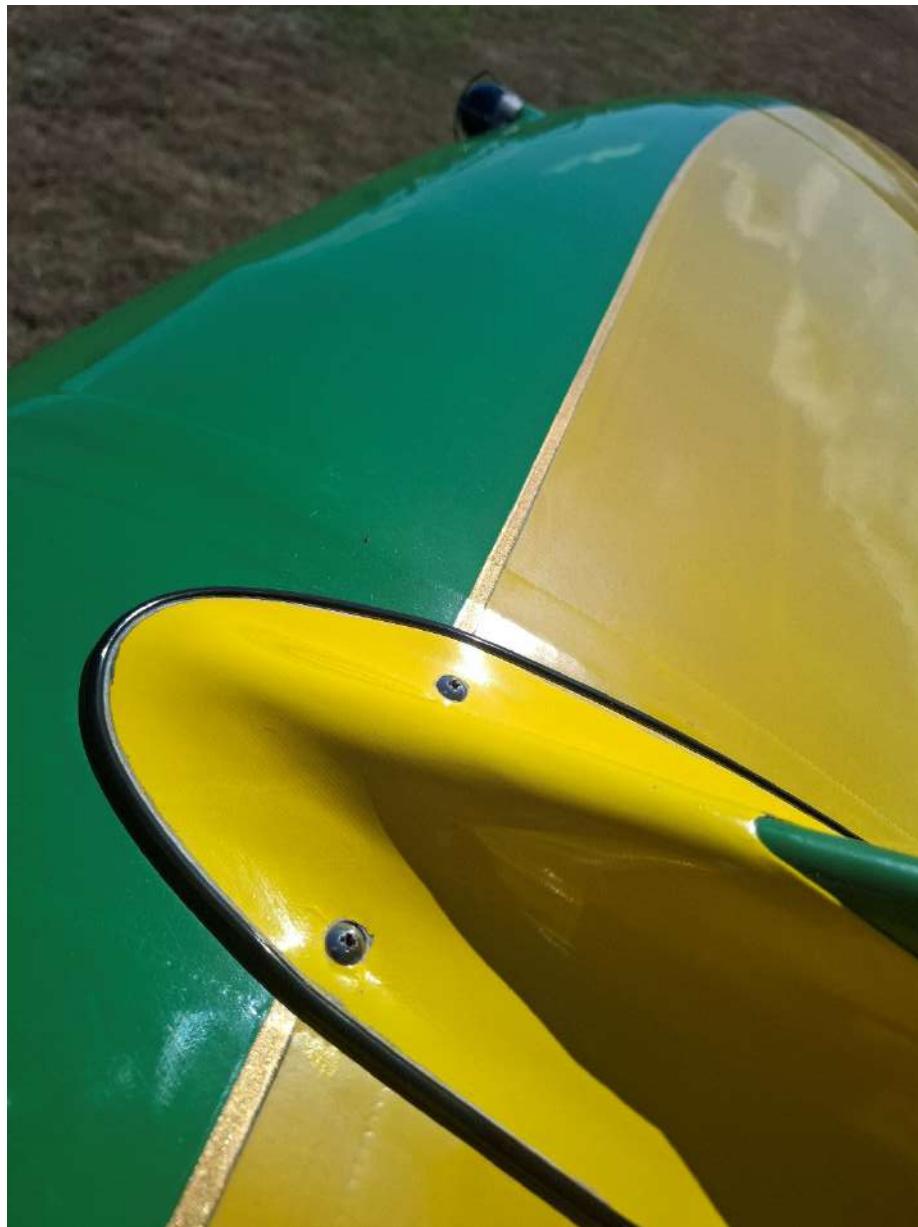
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Engine stuff CORVAIR

As is obvious, mister google can show hundreds of Corvair engines going into home-builts. These 100hp flat engines are spread around our region as well. We are planning to out-google google and have the local engines and the story that goes with them in the coming months.

That's all for now regarding Corvair, but once we have covered them, maybe we'll look at some others.

Mystery Aircraft – Was at Watts Bridge.... What is it?



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Aircraft Books, Parts, and Tools etc.

Contact Rob Knight on mobile – 0400 89 3632

Tow Bars

Item	Condition	Price
Tailwheel tow bar.	Good condition	\$50.00

Propeller Parts

Item	Condition	Price
Propeller spacers, Assorted depths, all to fit Rotax 912 UL/ULS propeller flanges	Excellent	\$100.00 each
Spinner and propeller backing plate to suit a Kiev, 3 blade propeller, on a Rotax 912 engine flange.	Excellent	100.00

For all items, Contact Rob Knight on mobile – 0400 89 3632

Or email me at:

kni.rob@bigpond.com

Wanted for AUSTER J5F. 1. Oil pressure gauge. The yellow oblong is a military gauge which is “proper” for a Mk 6 AOP. So, wanted, Old style round job, 1950’s look. Small-ish. 2 ½ inch approximately with British numerals.

2. Stitts POLYFIBRE Medium weight. Not much required for the elevators. Just slow, slow to get a hold of. Hoping someone has some left overs.

Call Mike Hetherington 0403012501, but signal is sketchy. Please leave voice mail. Or landline 0754270827 at around 2000 hrs local. (or 8pm)
Cheers



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Aircraft for Sale

Kitset - Build it Yourself

Reduced Price
\$1,480.00 neg

DESCRIPTION

All of the major components needed to build your own aircraft similar to a Thruster, Cricket or MW5.

- Basic plans are included, also
- Hard to obtain 4" x 3" box section, 2 @ 4.5 metres long.
- Wing spar & lift strut material - 6 tubes of 28 dia. x 2 wall.
- 20 fibreglass ribs plus the moulds,
- 16 spar webs plus the moulds,
- 2 fibreglass flat sheets for the leading edges - 4 metres long x 1.1 metres wide.
- A ballistic parachute,
- A 4-point harness,
- Set fibreglass wheel pants, and
- More.



Box sections and tubes



Support parts – Harness etc.

A very
comprehensive
kit of materials



Ribs, tubes, spats, etc

Colin Thorpe. Tel: LL (07) 3200 1442,

Or Mob: 0419 758 125

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Aircraft Grade Bolts for Sale

Aircraft AN Bolts - \$500

AN3, AN4 & AN5 bolts, all bagged

- 500 bolts in total.

Today's cost – approximately \$5,500

A list can be supplied if required

Contact Colin Thorpe –

0419 758 125



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Sky Dart Single Seat Ultralight for Sale.

\$4,500.00 NEG

A single seat, ultralight, Taildragger. Built in 1987, this aircraft has had a single owner for the past 18 years, and is only now I am regretfully releasing it again for sale. I also have a Teenie II and am building another ultralight so I need the space.



The landed Sky Dart III rolling through at YFRH Forest Hill

TTIS airframe is 311 hours, and the engine, TTIS 312 – is just 1 hour more. Up-to-date logbooks available. 2 X 20 litres tank capacity. To be sold with new annuals completed.

It is easy to fly (for a taildragger), and a great way to accumulate cheap flying hours.

Call me to view, Bob Hyam, Telephone mobile 0418 786 496 or Landline – 07 5426 8983, or Email: bobhyam@gmail.com



Landed at McMaster Field after my flight back from Cooma just West of Canberra. In the cockpit with me is GeeBee, my dog

Single Seat T84 Thruster, disassembled and ready for rebuild.

I have a T84 single seat Thruster project in my hanger at Watts bridge.

The fuselage is on its undercarriage, the wing assemblies are folded up and the skins are with them.

Included is a fully rebuilt Rotax 503 dual ignition engine and propeller.

And, most importantly – the aircraft logbook!

Asking price \$5000.00

Contact John Innes on **0417 643 610**

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Aircraft Engines for Sale

Continental O200 D1B aircraft engine

Currently inhibited but complete with all accessories including,

- Magneto's,
- Carburettor,
- Alternator,
- Starter motor,
- Baffles and Exhaust system, and
- Engine mounting bolts and rubbers.

\$POA

Total time 944.8 hours. Continental log book and engine log are included.

Phone John on 0417 643 610

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