

Showstopper

Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield All-In Fly-In

By Richard Faint

The weather started out fairly benign on the day in May planned for the Watts Bridge All-In Fly-In at Toogoolawah in South East Queensland.

Early in the morning there was just a little fog hovering over the Brisbane River with minimal cloud. But there was also a 'red sky in the morning' and we all know how that one goes.

Sure enough, the weather eventually took a turn for the worse and intermittent showers skittered across the airfield. But it did not dampen the spirits of the big crowd which turned up.

Watts Bridge is the home base for the Queensland Vintage Aeroplane Group, the Brisbane Valley Sport Aviation Club and the Queensland Chapter of the Australian Aerobatics Club. That guarantees the fly-in will always have a great diversity of aircraft types. This year was no exception.

Among the rare birds on display were a Grumman

G-73 Mallard, a de Havilland Dove, a US Air Force T-34A Mentor, a fine example of the Mignet HM290 Flying Flea and the amazing scale Grumman F9F Panther jet, which is always a show stopper.

The aim of the fly-in is to celebrate and promote recreational aviation, regardless of aircraft type. And throughout the day we saw gyroplanes, aerobatics specialists, warbirds, homebuilts, trikes, recreational, classics and vintage aircraft, as well as a large contingent of GA types. All in all more than 90 aircraft attended with many more people electing to stay below the weather by driving in.

A local community group, 'Beyond Limits - Supporting Youth through Education', did a fantastic job with the on-field catering.

The runways and associated infrastructure of Watts Bridge airfield were built in 1942 as part of the Australian World War II defence program. In the early 1980s a small group of dedicated recreational pilots re-discovered the

field. The runways were overgrown and the site was being used to graze cattle. The original management committee had a wide ranging vision to promote and develop the airfield as a centre for all forms of recreational aviation in South East Queensland.

After a lot of hard work two grass runways were restored to excellent, fully operational condition. Now, many years later, Watts Bridge features an airpark style development with air chalets, private and commercial hangars, along with AVGAS and maintenance services.

By any measure the fly-in was a great success. It was obvious everyone who made the effort to come had a good fun day out. All things being equal the All-In Fly-In should be a 'must do' highlight of next year's calendar of events.



>>>Two Tiger Moths



>>>The CT 4s



>>>The Panther jet



>>>The 1948 Grumman Mallard



>>>More than 90 aircraft attended



>>>Lots of GA types turned up

An extensive photo gallery of aircraft that attended the All-In Fly-In this year can be found at www.wattsbridge.com.au/events/aifi2014.php.