

QUEENSLAND ULTRALIGHT ASSOCIATION JUNE 2010 NEWSLETTER

Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield, Silverleaves Road via Toogoolawah, Qld

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Your newsletter interviews Mike O'Sullivan – the email address says it all:

Spitfire@supermarineaircraft.com



So, who is Mike O'Sullivan, you might ask? Well, to begin with, he's a QUA member of long standing, just an ordinary Queensland bloke who's interested in aeroplanes, a country boy who grew up on an outback cattle station actually, who ran away from both school and home at the age of fourteen, who joined the army not as a conscript but because he believed in it and to whom life delivered some very hard early knocks. But more than that, he's a bloke with a touch of the extraordinary about him, a bloke who, after that run of very bad luck, decided to turn his life around by building a Spitfire, and who then went on to develop a multi-million dollar international business manufacturing and selling what is probably the world's most iconic aircraft. But, even more than that, he is a bloke who quite obviously strives for perfection in every sense. The Spitfires that Mike and his skilled team now make and market to the world are real Spitfires. With the first-hand blessing of the daughter of one of the original company founders, who told him that her father would have been so proud to see him reviving the company name solely to recommence quality manufacture of the company's most famous product, Mike acquired the rights to the Supermarine brand. Mike's company makes and markets one hundred percent authentic Supermarine Spitfires. His company is none other than the Supermarine Aircraft Company, but no longer based at Hazel Road, Southhampton, England, being now located at Moggill, on the outskirts of Brisbane, Australia, and since 1997 this extraordinary aircraft company has sold 92 genuine Supermarine Spitfires to enthusiasts in every major country around the globe.

Mike's son, Mark, prepares the wing of a factory finished plane for riveting.



Mike's story started in the early fifties on a couple of outback cattle stations, one in Charleville and the other in Goondawindi. There were just two kids in the family, Mike and his sister. Like most farm boys, Mike helped his dad. However, from the beginning, his horizons went beyond the fence line. His extended family, particularly his uncles stoked his imagination. For instance, two of them flew Spitfires during the war. There is even a FNQ airfield named after one. Mike vividly remembers being told as a lad what an excellent plane the Spitfire was to fly, better than any other before or since. He believes it was this early vision of aerodynamic perfection that eventually led him to build his own.

Then there was Uncle Ormsby, who lived on acreage at Fig Tree Pocket in Brisbane. Ormsby was a man with an eye for a bargain. In the immediate post-war period, petrol rationing continued to make car use problematic, but there were plenty of ex-military vehicles being sold at bargain-basement prices from the Brisbane army disposal sheds. Ormsby realised that it was army policy to sell every vehicle with a full tank of gas. Now, in the case of a General Grant tank, that was a lot of gas, and at ten pound a tank, it was pretty cheap fuel. So Uncle Ormsby got seriously into the ex-military vehicle business and the Fig Tree Pocket property was soon bristling with more hardware than the Enoggera Barracks. It wasn't just vehicles either because much of the stuff was sold in assorted lots. Mike recalls that there were many crates of aircraft parts in the massive collection. Unfortunately, this enterprise eventually led to Uncle Ormsby's demise when he was killed at Toowong while driving home in a military grader. This wasn't before he had ripped out the rail tracks at Chelmer with a General Grant, though. Apparently the Council had raised the level of the road under the bridge without altering the signage. Ormsby was used to driving his tanks at full throttle under that bridge, having worked it out to the last centimetre.

The cockpit of a Mk 26



Mike O'Sullivan



As a kid, Mike was not a good scholar. At high school he had a particularly hard time of it. Queensland country schools of the day were not the most sympathetic places to be behind the eight ball. In addition, things were not working out well at home. At the age of fourteen, Mike felt he had no choice but to hit the road. Like so many before him, he went west looking for work. He found it on a sheep and cattle station and was soon supporting himself. Shortly after this, he discovered gliding and that must have been where most of his wages went because it was only a year or two before he was instructing at a place called Tallwood. About this time, Vietnam was getting into full swing and with Mike's family background, how could he not believe in the cause. Firstly he volunteered for the Air Force but his mathematics were not good enough. Then he tried the Navy but likewise no luck with the theory. The army of the day, however, only required their recruits to be breathing without apparent difficulty, so he was immediately accepted, given an SLR and sent to Puckapunyal. But before he could be put on that C-130 bound for Nui Dat, Gough got in and it was all over. I know exactly what he's talking about here because it was Gough in, me out as well.

With no war to fight, Mike left the army and went to Western Australia where he spent four years. Then he came back to Queensland to do what he knew best which was to manage cattle stations. He also drove D9 bulldozers clearing miles of scrub for farming. He did other types of earth-moving as well, particularly around the Charleville area. Everything was going reasonably well, he was earning good money and he had the right girl, when in 1983 he suffered a terrible accident in a four-wheel drive. He was left with severe spinal injuries and told he might never walk again. His girl, Karen, stuck by her man however, and they were married in 1985. In all, his recuperation took ten years but even today he suffers from lower back pain. That accident and its aftermath was a very low point in his life.

Some time after the accident, Mike bought the Moggill property with his mother. Despite his back problems, he tried to start a landscape supply business. However, the enterprise was doomed from the start because the property where he contracted to source his sand and gravel was deemed sacred ground by the local aboriginal group and, after a three year legal battle, they won.

In the eight years or so following the accident, Mike saw quite a few doctors about possible operations to restore his mobility and he gratefully recalls the advice he finally got from one of them. This guy told Mike that back operations were very risky and that he should forget about the idea. If he left his back alone, there was the possibility that the vertebrates might regenerate. Instead of morbidly dwelling on his disability, he should find a passionate interest in his life and pursue it. He told Mike that if he didn't find that passion, he would probably put a bullet through his head after a year or two like so many other mobility-impaired men he had known. Mike remembers the drive home from that life-changing interview. Somewhere between the surgery and his house, he got the idea that he was going to build a Spitfire.

Watts Bridge Festival of Flight 2009



These were the early days of ultralight aircraft. Mike was attracted to the idea of democratic aviation, a movement that promised to put the piloting experience within the reach of the common man. He made two very good friends, John McCarron and Terry Cronk, both of whom were intensely interested in his plan to build a Spitfire and who gave him both encouragement and assistance. His first plane was 70% scale with a fixed undercarriage. He made everything adjustable, not knowing exactly what would work and what wouldn't. Unfortunately, this plane had an engine failure on its very first flight. Terry responded by giving Mike a brand new Rotax. John told him to stick with it as well.

Mike became more and more obsessed. He pushed himself to his limits. He started to forget about his back. He stopped taking pain-killers. He built a second plane. This one had a retractable undercarriage. It flew OK. Word started to get around. People started phoning. One night, Mike had a call from England. Someone wanted to buy a Spitfire. More interest came in from other parts of the world. Mike tried to keep it quiet but the media were on to him. Mike says now that he was afraid of being humiliated if he had failed. But the enquiries just kept coming. He started making kits for other people. In 1995, he began to realise that perhaps there was a future in the Spitfire business. Then he made the mistake of seeking expert advice. That cost him dearly both in money and confidence. Luckily, he met a guy called Mike Burns who told him that he should put his trust in his own judgement, his own abilities, and forget about the others.

By 1997, Mike had a fledgling Spitfire business, but there were still many problems to overcome. He needed to expand production if the business was going to prosper, but that required capital. It was at this stage that Mike's friend, John McCarron, offered to finance him. If there was one person who had faith in Mike it was John. So Mike set up shop at Archerfield Airport in John's hangar. Mike had acquired the Supermarine brand at this stage so he legitimately began designating his Spitfires following on from the Mk 24 last made in 1947. His 75% scale design had already become known as the Mk 25 and the 80% Mk 26 was being made prior to moving to Archerfield. The Mk 26b, introduced in 2004, upped the scale to 90% and was aimed at Spitfire enthusiasts who were looking for a comfortable two-seater with the same performance as the single seaters. The prototype took just over 8 months to complete with all the tooling, CAD drawings and setting up for production.

This V8 Chevy Mini-Merlin weighs 164kg and develops 430hp. Now that's a motor!



Mike's business is now back at Moggill and that was where I caught up with him. It was immediately apparent to me as I walked into the hangar that this is a family business. The first person I met was Karen, Mike's charming wife of 25 years. The second person I met was John's only son, Mark, who was busily inspecting the leading edge of one of the wings of the latest factory complete Spitfire. Then I met Clint Jordan, Supermarine's highly skilled production manager. When Clint left Corinda State High School to join Mike at Archerfield in 2001, he must have been the first aeronautical apprentice to cut his teeth on Spitfires in more than fifty years.

Exporting Spitfires to the world. This Mk 26b kit is bound for Europe.



The Spitfire market is mainly European and most of Mike's planes leave the factory as kits manufactured under the 51% amateur construction rule. However, Mike usually has one factory complete aircraft under construction at any one time. The aircraft I saw was just about to be fitted with its motor, a Chevy V8. Mike has developed this particular motor himself, in conjunction with GM and Motec. After many attempts at using other people's engines, Mike has decided that the only really reliable Spitfire powerplants are his own. He has become so successful with his "Mini Merlins", as the V8s and V6s are branded, that his engine business is a right unto itself. For instance, that Chevy V8 develops 430hp for a total in-aircraft weight of about 164kg – that's better than 2.5hp per kilo! Furthermore, the motor develops maximum torque at only 4200rpm. Mike sells the complete motor, including his own thoroughly tested reduction drive, for \$48,000, which, compared to other motors of the same power, is an absolute bargain.

On the way home from Moggill my mind was occupied with all kinds of schemes for buying that brand new factory-built Spitfire Mk26b. Mike told me that Dick Smith would be arriving two weeks down the track and he would have his cheque book with him. At the time of writing, I've still got one week left to work out how I'm going to get in first. My wife just doesn't understand why here's ever been a better time to sell the house.



The Monto Fly-in (from Mal McKenzie)

The Monto RAAus Fly In was well attended with in excess of 250 aircraft flying in over the weekend. At times it was cold and windy which gave the many folk camping on the airfield a great experience. Several QUA Inc members either drove to Monto or flew in. There were trade displays of aircraft and supplies plus the food stalls. The RAAus also presented a range of forums for folk that were interested to participate. The aircraft that flew in ranged from vintage GA Cessnas, Pipers, & Ercoupes to Trikes Drifters, Jabirus plus many of the various recreational aircraft that are available today. There were many aircraft that would have been assembled from kits or plans by their owners. The standard of quality of the aircraft at Monto was impressive.

The Monto Fly-in (from Keith Broughton)

I went to Monto with Barry Evans, another Kestrel owner. We had a great but very cold camping weekend meeting up with our illustrious leader and others from the QUA. The locals made us very welcome with great food and beverages. The home-made soup and bread were especially good in the cold evenings as was the port wine from the local vineyard. As usual, Jabs were there in abundance. I was made very welcome by the agent for the new Piper Sport aircraft as featured in the May issue of RAA magazine. I mentioned that, though I was never going to be a serious contender for ownership of one of these beautiful machines (they cost \$148,000), I was asking for info for our magazine. [Ed: Keith's Piper Sport air-to-air photographs will be in next month's issue.]

Monto Photos:

Vintage Cessnas



One of many Drifters that flew in



A very nice looking amphibian



A classic Fisher ultralight



Gary Morgan's Sierra (available as a kit) with matching panel – very nice indeed!



Yellow Corby Starlet



This KR2S's owner camped alongside



A vintage Ercoupe



Mike's Spitfire



Steve Donald's Aeropup



180hp Texas Tail dragger - once a C150



FUN FLY POKER RUN



THE EVENT

The Queensland Ultralight Association's Fun Fly Poker Run will be held on Saturday the 10th July 2010.

Starting time is 9:00am and finishing at 2:00pm.

It doesn't matter what you fly— Recreational, Homebuilt, General Aviation, Gyroplanes — we would love to have you join in the fun !!

THE GAME

Fly to any three of the participating airfields, Bradfield, Kilcoy, Gatton Airpark or Mc Carron's Field and collect an envelope which contains a playing card from underneath the primary windsock.

DO NOT OPEN ANY ENVELOPES UNTIL REGISTERING AT THE QUA CLUBHOUSE—WATTS BRIDGE

You can start anywhere you like and go to the airfields of your choice in any order that suits you.

Then just fly on to Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield where you pay your entrance fee of \$5.00 and register your hand.

BBQ Snacks & Drinks will be available all day long.

THE WINNER

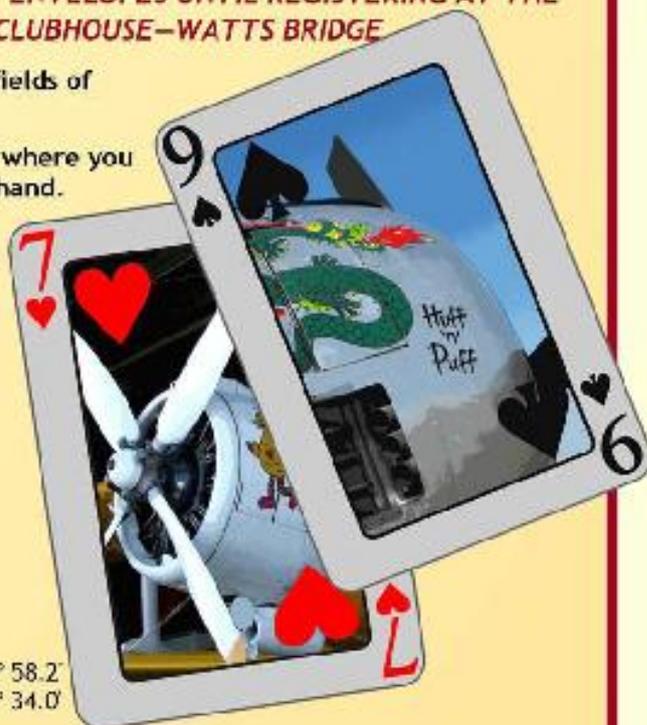
At the end of the event, the organizers will draw two cards at random. These cards will complete the five card hands for all players.

The best Poker Hand wins the Trophy for 2010.

**THIS IS A FUN FLYING AT ITS BEST
SO COME ON AND GIVE IT A GO !!**

AIRFIELD LOCATIONS

BRADFIELD	S 27° 25.1' E 152° 24.1'	KILCOY	S 26° 58.2' E 152° 34.0'
GATTON AIRPARK	S 27° 35.4' E 152° 15.4'	Mc CARRON'S FIELD	S 27° 05.9' E 152° 36.2'
WATTS BRIDGE	S 27° 05.9' E 152° 27.6'		



Richard Faint

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If you have any questions :
please contact :

Helmets

They keep our heads warm and also protect us. My bone dome, a Comtronics HP, finally arrived from Aircraft Spruce. As usual, S & S stuffed things up, but the CEO came to the rescue (again as usual) and the correct patch cord for my ICOM radio is in the mail. They sent me the correct size, thank goodness, and it's a very comfortable fit, but I'm not sure if I like the style. Also, I got caught with the exchange rate. I wanted a quick-release connection, which took 3 weeks to manufacture. In that three weeks, the dollar crashed from \$US.92 to \$US.81! All up, I paid \$A750. I would have been better off buying the Micro Avionics helmet advertised in the RAA magazine.



Coming events:

Jun 26-27 Birdsville, QLD, Birdsville Gymkhana and Motorbike Event
Jun 27 Watts Bridge Airfield near Toogoolawah, QLD, 80th Anniversary of the Genairco Moth's Birthday
Jul 3 Luskintyre, NSW, LAFM Lunch with the Tiger Moths ****CANCELLED****
Jul 3-4 Bedourie, QLD, Bedourie Campdraft, Rodeo & Gymkhana
Jul 4 Wagga Aerodrome., NSW, Aeroclub Lunch
Jul 4 Yarrowonga, VIC, Wagga Aero Club BBQ
Jul 4-9 Lake Eyre , SA, QRAA Lake Eyre Tour
Jul 6-8 Beijing, Oth, Aviation Outlook China 2010
Jul 7-8 Beijing, Oth, Aviation Outlook China 2010
Jul 10 Bedourie, QLD, Bedourie Camel Races
Jul 10 Watts Bridge Airfield, QLD, Christmas in July Dinner
Jul 10 Watts Bridge Airfield, QLD, Fly Fun Poker Run
Jul 16-18 Mia Mia, VIC, Duigan Centenary of Flight - Mia Mia 2010
Jul 17 Dunwich, North Stradbroke Island, QLD, Straddie Breakfast Fly-In
Jul 17 Yarrowonga, VIC, John Duigan Centenary
Jul 23-Aug 8 Darwin, NT, Northern Territory 2010 Safari
Jul 24-25 Watts Bridge, QLD, AAC QLD Practice in the Box

New Websites

I've discovered it's very difficult to have anything reprinted in the RAA magazine. Even the article on the Professor that they said they would reprint seems to have been forgotten. However, I recently discovered two recreational aviation websites, both of which are very keen to build on-line communities among pilots by freely publishing thoughts and photos. I suggest we give these sites our full support. The URLs are as follows: <http://www.recreationalpilots.com.au> (this site has an expansive and up-to-date image gallery), and <http://www.recreationalflying.com.au/>

Break and enter at Forrest Hill Airfield

Some expensive tools were stolen and one aircraft was hit with spray paint (but we were there in time to safely remove it). I got off lightly - my canopy was marked (but it all polished out nicely), and I lost a new pair of gloves. The thieves dug in under the hangar walls. The police responded very quickly and very seriously. They did an impressive investigation of the crime scene. With Col Hooker's help, I made the following poster for our outside hangar walls. Feel free to copy it.

WARNING



ANTI-TERRORISM ACT (2005)

**TAMPERING WITH AIRCRAFT IS A
CRIMINAL OFFENCE PUNISHABLE
WITH MANDATORY PRISON
TERMS FROM 2 YEARS TO 14
YEARS.**

**In the event of a death, you will be
charged with murder.**

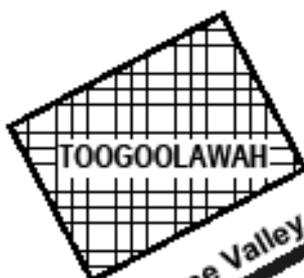
**Think seriously about being locked up for the
rest of your life before entering these
buildings.**

These laws apply regardless of age.

NOT a 'NO-GO' area
but avoid overflying due
to intensive skydiving

RAMBLERS
DROP ZONE

Fly Neighbourly
Areas
surrounding
Watts Bridge
Airfield



Toogoolawah
Brisbane Valley Hwy.



Watts Bridge Memorial Airfield
S27° 05.9' E152° 27.6'
ELEV 300'
CTAF 127.3 Mhz
AREA 129.0 Mhz

Main Runway is 12R-30L
Parallel Runway 12L-30R
Predominately used
by Gliders and Gyroplanes
Cross Runway is 03-21
All Circuits are Left Hand

NO aircraft operations other than
NORMAL departures or arrivals
before 0700

Low level operations over
buildings on the airfield and in
the surrounding area are to be
avoided at all times

**Aerobatic Operations
Conducted from SFC to 5000'
AMSL**

WEB SITE:
www.wattsbridge.com.au

Mt. Beppo Rd.

Lower
Cressbrook Rd.

Cressbrook
Caboonbah Rd.

RIVER

Silverleaves Rd.

HOUSES

HOUSE

S27° 05.59'
E152° 26.88'
ELEV 280'



WATTS
BRIDGE
AIRFIELD

AEROBATIC
BOX

HOUSE

LUTHERAN
CHURCH

S27° 07.98'
E152° 26.97'
ELEV 480'

HOUSE

S27° 06.80'
E152° 28.92'
ELEV 400'

CABOONBAH
CHURCH

RIVER

Esk-Somerset Dam Rd.

Note: This map is not to scale

The above information is supplied for general reference only and is NOT to be used for operational purposes.

DESIGNED BY
Tony Hayes

File No. _ Rev No.: WBMAG4_0
Date: 20/8/2010 RM

Xmas in July - very good food and the very best company!



Christmas in July
Place: AAC Clubhouse Watts Bridge
Saturday 10 July 2010 19:00

Menu

Nibbles

Soup – Pumpkin & Bread roll

Roast – Pork, Beef and Lamb

Apple Sauce, Gravy & Mint Jelly

Roast Potatoes & Pumpkin

Mornay Vegetables

Plum Pudding with Brandy
Cream & Custard

Coffee, Tea with Chocolates

Drinks: BYO

Cost: \$35.00 per person

Bookings are essential as places are limited – Contact Liz Cook 5411 4120 or 0419 369 963

To assist with catering please email lizcook1@bigpond.com to advise attendance before Friday 30 June 2010
Please also deposit cost of ticket to Westpac BSB 034115 Account No. 16-4115
Using surname as reference by Friday 30 June 2010

We look forward to seeing you all at Watts Bridge Airfield in July

**The next QUA meeting is on Monday July 5th at 8pm at the
Archerfield Terminal Building. Be there or be square!**

PRESIDENT: Peter Ratcliffe 0418159429 TREASURER: Ian Ratcliffe 0418728238

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MINUTES OF JUNE 2010 GENERAL MEETING

MEETING OPENED 11.02 am on 5th June, 2010.

APOLOGIES Richard & Glenda Faint,
Richard Sweetapple, Ivor Parsons

VISITORS Doug Robson

ATTENDENCE Twelve.

(Continued next page)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thanks to the people who helped in this morning's working bee in the clubhouse. The cold water shower is now working. Some wall battens and insulation were installed. The power cables need to be run. A suitable kitchen bench top has been donated by Tom. Thanks to the people who helped in the clubhouse selling the drinks at the All in Fly in. Sales were \$502.80. Tomorrow is the Gatton Breakfast Fly In. Next weekend is the RAAus Fly In at Monto.

TREASURERS REPORT

Opening Balance	\$ 6,538.05
Deposits	\$ 1,751.80
Withdrawals	\$ 733.98
Closing Balance	\$ 7,555.87

SECRETARIES REPORT

We currently have fifty financial members.

Correspondence received from CASA regarding new procedures for Non Towered Aerodromes. The Amberley Control Zone is now reduced from the north.

WBMA REPORT

It is important that people use the correct frequency for Watts Bridge when operating at WBMA. The old QVAG power pole is to be removed. Shale is to be used to top dress the clubhouse roads. The failure of the sewerage plant has now been fixed. Congratulations to Richard Faint on the success of the All in Fly in at Watts Bridge. It was well attended. A camping fee of \$10.00 per night per site now applies for non members who use the WBMA camp area. Bruce has visited the local schools to encourage interest in Aviation and Applied Science. A Safety Management System may help to save insurance costs at Watts Bridge. A Safety Officer may be nominated to organize this. A grant for the new toilet/shower block is to be applied for. This will be for those using the camp ground too. It is recommended that camping at the Festival of Flight Fly In be done in the designated camp area.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Sandy Walker proposed that the QUA investigate having solar power installed on the clubhouse using a grant. Idea is to sell excess power back to the supplier.

Motion Proposed	Sandy Walker
Seconded	Scott Meredith
Motion	Carried.

Sandy to do research and report back with the findings. Sandy has also offered to supply and sell ice creams at the QUA Clubhouse at the Festival of Flight Fly In. The QUA stickers and sew on patches are still for sale. A DVD of the recent All In Fly In is available. **Poker Run and the Christmas in July Dinner** is planned for 10th July from 09.00am. QUA to provide soup, drinks and a BBQ Sausage Sizzle during the day.

Next QUA meeting is on Monday, 5th July at Archerfield.

THANKS

MEETING CLOSED

To Peter for providing the BBQ once again.

12.12 pm.