

The Bilby Experience.

This experience started with a phone call from my friend Rusty Jenkins. He asked me if I would like to present myself to Kilcoy air field and have a last look at the Bilby as we are moving to W.A at the beginning of August 2005. My response was yes I would love to if I was allowed to bring some members of the family. "Please do", was his reply. The time was stipulated and in due course we arrived at the nominated time and in the right location.

On arrival we were met by Jess and Rusty and after the usual howdy doo's and hi's, we were treated to the introductions and meetings with the rest of the club members (those present) and the inevitable cuppa, we were ready to have another look at the Bilby.



The Bilby is a very highly modified and enhanced T300 that has taken a lot of hours and tender loving care to bring it to the state it is in now. The workmanship that has gone into transforming a T300 into the Bilby defies description.

The crowning glory came when he asked me to climb in and go for a bit of a fly with him.

After settling in and running my eye over the (office) instrument panel, I was a bit overwhelmed by the arrangements of all the instruments and switches, a definite brief was required to overcome initial layout on this lot.

Rusty was quite good at explaining the various switches and gauges and their uses. The overall cockpit layout was quite good and user-friendly. The next phase was starting the engine and do the preliminary check on gauges and switches. We were ready to roll, engine temp was right, switches set and no other traffic in sight. The taxi to the strip was smooth with a pneumatic tail wheel installed at the

tail end. Makes for an easy, smooth ride and a lot less wear and tear on the airframe. We were airborne in, less than you can say, snap my braces. The climb out was a staggering 900 fpm 2 up and ¾ full of fuel. The weather was less than perfect with 0 cloud and variable wind from 5 – 12 kts. The Bilby took it in its stride and performed its stuff like a veteran that has been doing it for years. The circuit was flown and a departure was instigated to the training area where people usually do their stuff. A climb to 3800 ft was instigated and the A/C was trimmed.

The A/C is a delight to fly in, the view magnificent with Somerset Dam below and slightly to the right, the Glasshouse Mountains over the horizon, was etched against a deep blue sky, the thing dreams are made of. After reaching our altitude and the A/C was trimmed for level flight, Rusty demonstrated some of the characteristics of this beautiful machine by putting it through its paces. The straight and level stalls were a virtual non event. Even with an accelerated stall, it was benign with a height loss of just over 500 ft. The steep turn right and left was executed with minimal fuss, leaving you feeling in total control. After the demonstrations, Rusty asked me to take the controls and have a bit of a play and use the controls and try the A/C out. After putting the machine through some of the manoeuvres, I was quite convinced that this A/C was a one off. I've not had the pleasure of handling an A/C with the smooth handling capability of the Bilby.



A letdown to circuit height was commenced and a rejoin conducted. The landing under somewhat gusty conditions was handled by Rusty without any problems. With a grin from ear to ear, my jaw dropped, when Rusty asked me to fly a circuit. After regaining my composure I said, "May I"? His answer was, "Be my guest". After pre-takeoff checks were completed and lining up, it was a case of increasing gently to full power and keep her straight. Once the tail came up it was a breeze as the airspeed increased, which happened very quickly. We then became airborne. The climb out was painless, after a slight tweak on the trim. The Bilby did not take long to reach circuit height, due to its drag reduction mods and builds up speed like you would not believe. Substantial power reduction was required to keep her under control. Again a slight tweak on the trim had her flying as smooth as silk. Downwind pre-

landing checks completed saw our aim point on our left. Reducing power and height on Base leg saw us slightly high on Final. Sliding down the slope saw us over the fence at 55 Kts. Flare and hold off was smooth, as was brushing the wheels on and rolling to taxi speed. The look on my face must have told all. After taxiing back and getting out it was an anxious Jess who wanted to know what I thought and my feelings about the Bilby.

Well what could I say? The Bilby is something that comes along because someone believes in a project and sticks with it until it is completed to his or her total satisfaction.

Rusty has shown that with the right attitude and perseverance, almost anything is possible.

WELL DONE RUSTY.



Rusty and Jessie Jenkins.