

# GATWICK TO YARRAM

It was 1955 when Nancy Leebold accepted an assignment to ferry a Miles Messenger aircraft, powered by a Gypsy Major 4 cylinder air-cooled engine, 14,000 miles from England to Yarram, Victoria, Australia for Clifford Wynne.

After 6 months preparation she and newly wedded husband Arthur Leebold flew out of Gatwick Airport, destination Yarram.

Preparations included change of ownership documents, diplomatic clearances, aircraft and fuel carnets, and planning navigational procedures. An additional fuel tank was installed in place of the rear seating and an additional feed to the oil tank was fitted to allow topping up of lubrication. Much was done to reduce weight and personal clothing was limited to 20 pounds each. About 100 pounds of surplus upholstery, sound proofing and fittings were removed.

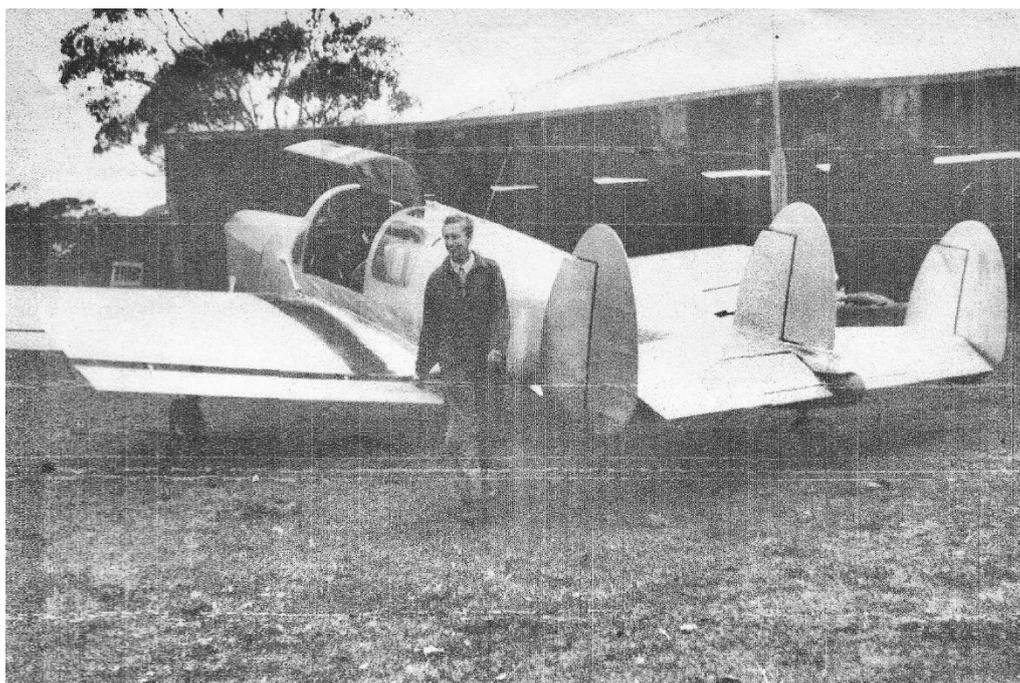
Warnings had been conveyed about insurgent activities and aerodromes that it would be very unwise to visit.

The first stop was Le Touquet on the French Coast which narrowed the Channel crossing.

From there the flight took the Messenger through 17 countries with stops at Paris, Lyons, Nice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Brindisi, Araxos, Athens, Rhodes, Cyprus, Damascus, Baghdad, Kuwait, Bahrain, Sharjar, Jiwani, Karachi, Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Allahabad, Calcutta, Akyab, Rangoon, Mergui, Phuhet, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Palembang, Djakarta, Semarang, Bali, Wangapui, Koepang, Wyndham, Darwin, Daly Waters, Tennant Creek, Cloncurry, Longreach, Charleville, Bourke, Dubbo, Sydney, Moruya, Mallacoota and Yarram. The longest water crossing was the Timor Sea but not far behind was that from Rhodes to Cyprus; a distance of 300 statute miles. This crossing was made with a low cloud base and haze making forward visibility impossible. With no radio compass, reliance was on dead reckoning holding an accurate compass course and correct estimation of wind drift.

The Messenger gave no trouble and it received more than its normal quota of servicing and maintenance along the way. A daily inspection was made of the aircraft and to reduce the risk of condensation, it was routine practice to refuel immediately after each flight so tanks were always full when on the ground. The main problem with fuel was ensuring that fuel obtained was of a suitable quality and octane.

The Messenger was delivered to well known instructor and aviation enthusiast Cliff Wynne on a bright chilly Sunday afternoon at the first Yarram Air Club.



This brief summary was compiled by Laurie Edebohls of Yarram Aero Club from an article by Nancy Leebold in the October 1955 "Aircraft" magazine. A copy of the full article can be seen at the Yarram Museum.