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polite reminder to ATC that the animals were there. As they shut down on the apron, there was a party waiting for them...

Maurice was ready to admit that he had been, in *Private Eye* parlance, tired and emotional at the time. However, he insists that he was not the pilot in command (he'd not signed the flight plan) until there was a problem with communications, and his early radio commentary had been transmitted by accident, rather than design. His lawyer assured him that the worst he might expect would be a £50 to £100 fine (this took place in pre-air rage times). Instead, the other pilot was produced as a prosecution witness, as was a ground engineer who said that the aircraft had taxied under the wing of an airliner he was working on... "Not an offence," says Maurice, "but a story that would raise visions of a near and, no doubt, fiery accident in the minds of a jury."

Instead of a fine, Maurice suffered the loss of his licence—for seventeen years, it turned out—and a lengthy spell in prison, and he was taken from court to court to face further flying-related charges. Considered an escape risk, he was detained in a cell below ground level for six weeks, dressed, he says, only in his underpants. However, not one of the other cases stuck. "We beat the bastards," he says with a snarl. "I was happy to play the fool and allow them to wax eloquent—till I had them by the testicles."

This whole legal issue—Maurice's continued battle with the CAA and an astonishing string of motoring encounters with the police and courts in South Wales—could fill a book, never mind the rest of the space available here. Instead, I was anxious to get him onto the universally accepted, and generally much admired achievement of getting a 90 hp Cub to Australia.

It turns out that Maurice first became aware of the race from a conversation with his ex-wife, in November 2000. She felt it was just the sort of thing he ought to get involved in, but Maurice could see no way of raising the £35,000 entrance fee in time. It was not until four weeks before the start the he got a call from Wilf Barker, the project manager. "Somebody in Arizona has written a cheque," said Barker. (That

someone was race entrant Lyle Campbell, and he had decided to back Maurice on the strength of his website—yet another sign of the power of the Internet, if any were needed.)

I had given no credit to the rumour that Maurice's first choice for a race mount was his replica D.H.2 (a WWI pusher biplane fighter that he had displayed at Farnborough), but he confirmed the story himself. However, the problem was that the D.H.2's configuration only allowed extra fuel to be stowed internally, forward of the C of G, and Maurice felt the machine would just be too frail for such a long distance flight. His second choice, an Auster (the thirteenth he has owned), was also out—which left him with the L-4 Cub, a 1943 spotter plane said to have been used to transport General Patton in WWII.

An L-4 would not be a rational man's first choice for a 14,000 mile flight to Australia. In standard 65 hp trim an L-4 cruises at something like 75 mph and has an absolute range in still air of perhaps 200 miles. The first leg of the race alone was 600 nm, from Biggin Hill to Cannes. Maurice's solution was to seek PFA approval for the fitting of Piper Cruiser tanks, to supplement the standard ten-gallon fuselage tank. One can imagine the PFA's trepidation in dealing with a man of Maurice's combative, anti-authoritarian reputation, but, to their credit, they approved at least the configuration in which the Cub started the race.

In the short time available, Maurice rushed to have the Cub fitted with a more powerful (but thirsty) Continental C-90 engine with a special oversize sump that stuck out of the side of the cowling, for additional cooling. He also had a three-instrument blind flying panel mounted up by the main spar—not the ideal location for maintaining a scan, but the only space available. The blind-flying instruments, all classic forties RAF types, were driven by duplicate ten-inch venturis to one side of the fuselage. Putting these in the same location (and thus making them liable to ice up simultaneously) was, Maurice reckons, one of his less clever bits of preparation, but it did leave more room for sponsors' logos on the other side!