



This page: the Cub alongside sponsor Lyle Campbell's Grumman Albatross; Saudi greeting; publicising the website; aha! That's where the oil is going.

Heath Robinson fuel system

There was not time to construct a special seat—an oversight Maurice came to bitterly regret, as we shall see—and the new tanks, when filled the day before parting for Biggin Hill, leaked seriously and had to be resealed in a mad rush, at the last possible moment.

Maurice took his personal preparation for the flight seriously too. He gave up alcohol and tobacco completely, and pared 28 lb off his weight. Malaria would be a serious hazard, but more dangerous, assumed Maurice, could be the side-effects of anti-malarial drugs—especially drowsiness. "I wore socks to keep the mosquitoes from biting my ankles."

Thus Maurice Kirk's entry to the race was not quite as hare-brained as it might have looked from the disarray evident on the start line. "My personal plan was to stay alive," he says. His second priority was to preserve the aircraft, and his third to preserve his records: he took film and video cameras, plus a high-resolution digital camera bought expressly for the trip.

Prior to departure, he was issued with one of the infamous data-loggers (see Paul Smiddy's account of the race, *Pilot*, December 2001) and, amongst other items—including survival gear—a set of Jepps' charts. (Some measure of how much use he made of the charts is the fact that he was still able to rummage under his desk and plonk the complete, sealed package into my hands, long after the race was over.) He was also presented with a Garmin 195 GPS, although he claims not to have had any idea how to use it, at least at first.

Things continued to go wrong as Maurice left the runway at Biggin Hill. The artificial horizon failed as he entered cloud, leaving him with just the DI and turn-and-slip (all the way to Australia, as it turned out). Two other early casualties were the wind-driven generator, which never charged satisfactorily, and the electric fuel lift pump for his auxiliary cabin fuel container. Thus, from early in the race, he had to use his back-up handheld radio, and transfer fuel using the standby foot pump—a caravan fitting more commonly found pumping sink water.



Fuel problems of one sort or another dogged Maurice throughout the race. Prior to departure, he most certainly had not flown with a full fuel load. The wing tanks held 27 gallons making, with the standard fuselage tank, a total of 37 gallons. These fixed tanks were supplemented with a Heath Robinson (or even bag-lady) array of plastic containers arranged in front of Maurice (and one behind), holding about 25 gallons more. When the caravan foot pump failed, an event that plunged Maurice into despair, he bought a wobble pump from the engineers at Genoa. This pump had been used for dispensing lubricating oil but, after the long, barrel-feed pipe had been cut to length, it did sterling service in keeping the fuel flowing. The sawn-off end of the pipe eventually cut through the bottom of one of the fuel containers, fortunately when it was nearly empty.

Experience taught Maurice that taking on as much fuel as he could accommodate was a fundamental mistake. Flying nose-high, the overladen Cub was very draggy and excessively slow. Climbing at 52 to 56 mph, it would consume seven gallons per hour. High fuel consumption seriously eroded the (simple) theoretical advantage in range and endurance. Although it could fly for fourteen hours loaded like this, it proved to be a far safer bet to take on less fuel, fly faster and arrive with more daylight to spare. With the right fuel load, the Cub would drone gently along at 60 mph, burning 4 gph at 11,000 feet (the sort of altitude at which most authorities insisted he fly). Even the lighter fuel load put the trim beyond the standard range of adjustment, so Maurice rigged up a makeshift bungee chord arrangement, to ease the load on the stick.

Maurice's flight planning let him down at Cairo, where he set down at the old airfield, rather than 27 October, its curiously-named replacement. This was a costly mistake, in terms of time lost, and Maurice got away nine hours later only after angry "eyeball-to-eyeball" confrontation with officials. "At least I can claim the last international departure from the old Cairo airport," he says. His departure instructions included keeping the sun on his left and the Nile on his right—"What if I