

# BUZZING about



Driving down the East Coast from Brisbane to Sydney during a holiday from Perth I took the opportunity to drop in at Australian Aircraft Kits and meet Ole Hartman at his new premises in Taree. Ever since Ole grinned at me from the cover of the RA-Aus – magazine October last year while flying the new Wasp-trainer I was keen to have a closer look at the plane and also catch up with Ole. He had been kind enough to take me up in the first Hornet that had been finished in Western Australia by Alan Sattler and I was hoping to get a chance to compare the two unique designs.

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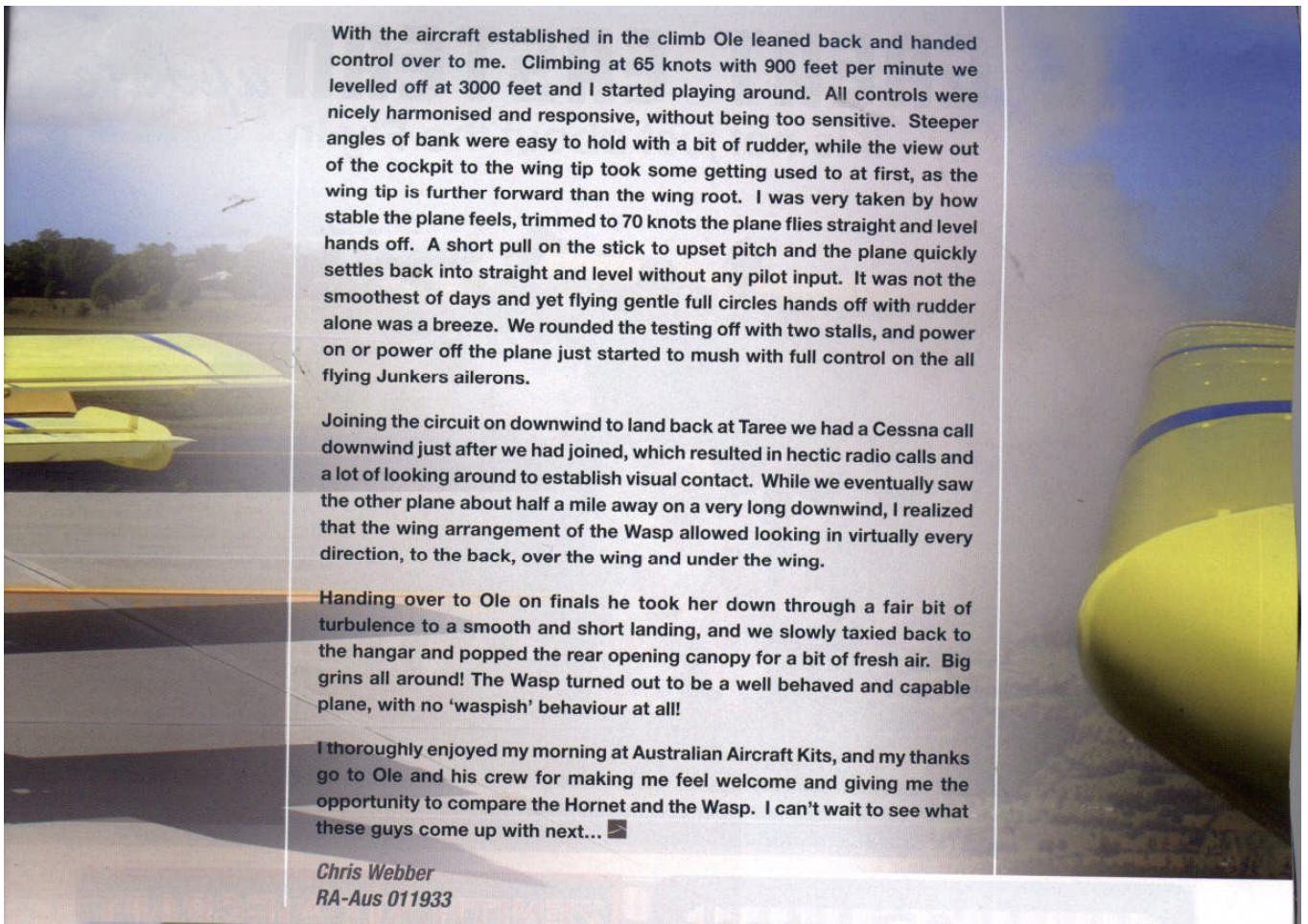
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Coming to Taree Airport the new hangar was easy to find, and while inside some walls still needed finishing the place was humming with activity. Ole and his staff were busy producing Hornet kits, and no fewer than three Hornets were there, from a basic fuselage frame to a big orange radial engined beast at the back of the hangar. The Hornet never fails to impress me, at six feet four I don't find a lot of light planes that allow me to stand under their wings without ducking, but with the Hornet I could wear a hat and still manage!

Next to the Hornet stood the Wasp, and the two planes could not be more different. Where the Hornet seems to be the cousin of the De Havilland Beaver and Pilatus Porter, with its high wings, big everything and tail wheel, the Wasp sits there and doesn't really look like anything else at all. Larger close up than one would guess from the photos, the unique mid wing arrangement with the short strut bracing, the Junkers flapperons and the forward angled wings make the plane look very different. With a large luggage compartment behind the seats it allows you to pack enough gear for a camping weekend away. Sitting in the cockpit after a period of poking and prodding around I noticed the first similarity with the Hornet, the centre stick. Having started out on the centre stick Zodiac 601 this feels very natural to me, and gives extra room for the legs when getting in and out of the cockpit.

We pulled the Wasp out of the hangar, and after a thorough pre flight took off from runway 04. The takeoff run was short, with brisk acceleration from the Rotax 912S.



With the aircraft established in the climb Ole leaned back and handed control over to me. Climbing at 65 knots with 900 feet per minute we levelled off at 3000 feet and I started playing around. All controls were nicely harmonised and responsive, without being too sensitive. Steeper angles of bank were easy to hold with a bit of rudder, while the view out of the cockpit to the wing tip took some getting used to at first, as the wing tip is further forward than the wing root. I was very taken by how stable the plane feels, trimmed to 70 knots the plane flies straight and level hands off. A short pull on the stick to upset pitch and the plane quickly settles back into straight and level without any pilot input. It was not the smoothest of days and yet flying gentle full circles hands off with rudder alone was a breeze. We rounded the testing off with two stalls, and power on or power off the plane just started to mush with full control on the all flying Junkers ailerons.

Joining the circuit on downwind to land back at Taree we had a Cessna call downwind just after we had joined, which resulted in hectic radio calls and a lot of looking around to establish visual contact. While we eventually saw the other plane about half a mile away on a very long downwind, I realized that the wing arrangement of the Wasp allowed looking in virtually every direction, to the back, over the wing and under the wing.

Handing over to Ole on finals he took her down through a fair bit of turbulence to a smooth and short landing, and we slowly taxied back to the hangar and popped the rear opening canopy for a bit of fresh air. Big grins all around! The Wasp turned out to be a well behaved and capable plane, with no 'waspish' behaviour at all!

I thoroughly enjoyed my morning at Australian Aircraft Kits, and my thanks go to Ole and his crew for making me feel welcome and giving me the opportunity to compare the Hornet and the Wasp. I can't wait to see what these guys come up with next... 📧

*Chris Webber*  
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