



**Recovery of GA-8 Airvan VH-WRA,
from Lake Eyre SA, May 2013
by Dave's Camair, Riddells Creek, Victoria**



On 3 May 2013, VH-WRA was reported to have performed a precautionary landing on Lake Eyre, requiring the services of Search and Rescue to rescue the occupants.



Late on 7th May Dave's Camair was given the task of recovering VH-WRA from Lake Eyre. On 8th May Brad and Rodi departed Riddells Creek in the 4WD and 32 ft trailer loaded with the recovery gear and Dave and Jace departed in Dave's Cessna 180.



Trailer loaded and about to depart Riddells Creek Vic for the 22 hour drive to William Creek SA, where the aircraft was based.



Dave and the 180 refuelling at Broken Hill on the 8th May



Dave and Jace arrive in William Creek late on 8th May



Rodi and Brad battle the Oodnadatta Track.



Only 200 kms of gravel left to go to William Creek



Not everybody makes it to William Creek!!



Whilst waiting for the recovery trailer to arrive, Dave co-opts the services of Bob, a local tracker, to help look for a route to gain access to a shoreline point nearest to WRA



William Creek, the starting point for the route



Tracey's Trk turnoff. The entrance to the access track.



Fence line track down to edge of the Lake



Edge of Lake 26 kms from WRA site. Note no track from fence line to Lake



WRA 6 kms from nearest shoreline



WRA sitting firmly in the salt



**Following the reconnaissance survey, the route selected was:
travel 48 kms Sth down Oodnadatta Track to Tracey's Track,
then 50 kms down fence line to edge of Lake, 20 kms along edge
of Lake to Pt Bonython and finally 6 kms across the Lake**



With heavy rain predicted in two days, after which access would be impossible, the plan was that Jace, Brad and Rodi would use the 4WD and quad bike to try to get to the closest shoreline point and Dave would provide air support in the 180



Unfortunately we got bogged near the start



We got bogged again beside the Lake!!



We got bogged again with only 18 kms to go but as time was running out before dark we had to turn back



With a ruined tyre on the 4WD we called in air support for a replacement for our 4 hour trek back to William Creek



The next day a new plan to use borrowed quad bikes to carry the recovery gear to the site was put into play. The trip would be over 80 km return on the quad bikes. Equivalent to riding from Riddells Creek to Echuca without going on any roads!!!



Restrapping the load with 40 kms to go



Nearly to the edge of Lake with only 26 kms to go



On the edge of the Lake with only 20 kms to go



**The edge of the Lake is not as smooth as it looks from the air!!
Only 18 kms to go.**



Some parts of the Lake were very hard



We made it to the closet point on the shore to WRA, Point Bonython.



**Even the quad bikes broke through the crust down to the mud
while crossing the Lake**



We finally made it to WRA



Fortunately the fibre glass cargo pod is stopping it from sinking



With the A-Frame and lots of digging WRA is nearly back on the surface



Main wheel being dug out and boarded up



Lots of mud and water



Mud and water on both sides



With the rain heading towards William Creek the attempt has to be abandoned and we head off on the 125 km trek back to William Ck.



The rain hit overnight and the next morning we find the road out via Coober Pedy is closed



Water is flowing in the “Main Street” of William Creek



**As the rain continues Dave and Jace head back to Riddells Creek
in the 180**



Brad and Rodi have to sit it out till the next day in the hope the roads will be passable by then



After the rain WRA is observed to be still sitting on top of the salt.



With the weather cleared, a Huey helicopter is called in from Sydney to lift WRA from the Lake and place it on a clay pan.



Recovery team having breakfast at the clay pan while waiting for the Huey to arrive. The location was chosen as the lifting range of the helicopter was limited and it was away from any public areas where people may have been put at risk



We were not alone. A dingo came to see what was on the menu!!!



Dave and Jace watch the Huey land on the clay pan.



Helicopter is refuelled



With the Huey on the clay pan, Dave and Jace get a briefing from the loadmaster/rigger on the lifting operation



WRA rigged and waiting for the Huey to return for the lift



Starting the lift



There it was and then there it wasn't!!!



Up up and away!!



Coming in low over Brad's head at the clay pan being positioned for touch down



Safely on the ground at the clay pan



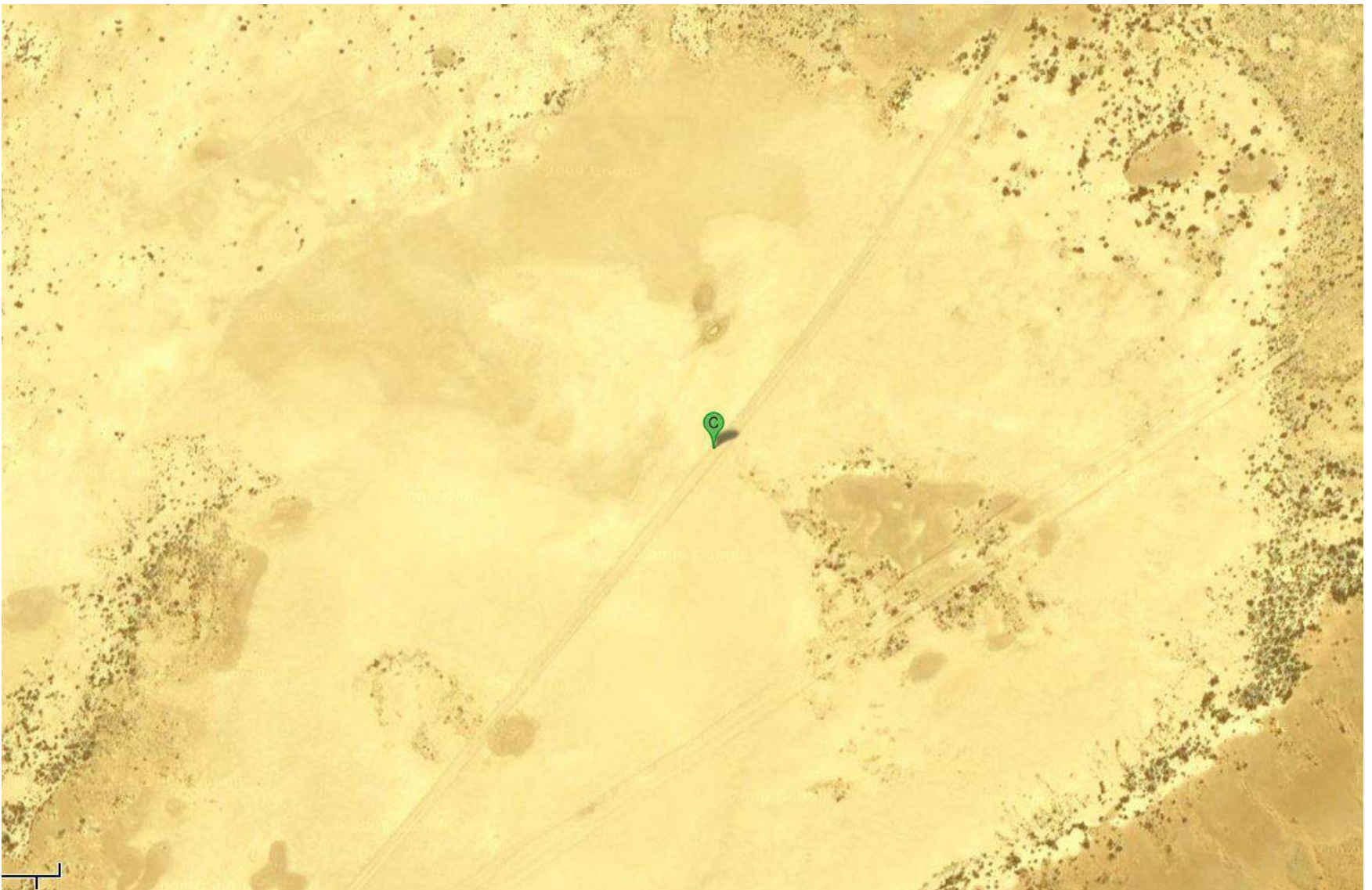
WRA on the clay pan as seen from the Huey



Site all cleaned up, with only our foot prints remaining



With all the necessary components changed out WRA is ready to leave the clay pan



Clay pan from the air showing the “runway” with take-off to the NE



Coincidentally a new demonstrator Airvan just happened to be going past William Creek!!



The four female Wright Air pilots sit on the wing of the demonstrator Airvan for a photo shoot.



WRA about to lift off the clay pan headed for Riddells Creek Airfield



WRA is airborne



WRA safely back at Dave's Camair at Riddells Creek Airfield



Brad halfway home with the WRA engine and recovery gear



The day after WRA arrived back in Riddells Creek heavy rains lashed the Lake Eyre region. All roads into and out of William Creek and the Lake Eyre region were closed. Vehicles were stranded along the roads.

Recovered by Dave's Camair
Aircraft Recovery Specialists
Riddells Creek Airfield
280 Websters Road
Riddells Creek Vic 3431

National Coverage, Anywhere, Anytime
A proven track record that no recovery is too hard

Contact Dave on 0402 042 015
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