

# ***Chapter 3 Further Exploration Essential***

## ***3.3 Flight to Wilsons Promontory.***

The time had arrived: 1 p.m. Saturday. It was quite sunny, but with scattered small cumulus clouds at about 3500 feet. There was plenty of sunlight all around, good visibility.

All flight calculations had been completed, flight time versus fuel required, with sufficient fuel for emergencies if the plane could not land at Tyabb. On the strip, all preliminaries had also been completed.

"Traffic Tyabb, Piper Cherokee, Sierra Tango Foxtrot, departing runway 17 for a flight to Wilsons Prom."

Shane, the pilot and owner of the plane, eased the throttle forward, slowly letting the toe brakes off. Within 30 metres the plane rapidly accelerated. At about 100 metres the pilot pulled the nose up gently to unstick the nose wheel from the ground, engine screaming at full power. Shane's finger touched several dials as he went through a final mental checklist, deciding whether to abort or continue the take-off. A gentle lurch to the left and the plane was airborne at 70 knots.

The Cherokee quickly reached the circuit turning height of 500 feet, and was quickly pointed on climb across the Marina.

There it was, the beautiful view of Bass River. Coiled like a snake with stomach ache, from its entrance in the bay to the Main Road bridge at Bass township and beyond.

"We did an awful lot of rowing, fella's, when we ran out of fuel," Phill commented into his headset speaker.

After quite a bit of chatter, pointing and looking out of the plane, they all realised that it would have been a tiresome task, and time consuming, to obtain fresh water, after negotiating the curved entrance channel, and rowing about two or three kilometres, then probably walking the last kilometre after the rowing, fighting the tide and mud banks.

Further eastwards the Wind Farm windmills, south of Wonthaggi, stuck out like giant statues. Then there it was, the Prom's southerly point, with numerous islands scattered about.

"Okay, fella's, if I turn north now, we should get a very good view of Corner Inlet. We have timed for low tide so you can see how big an expanse of water it is, with the great expanse of mud and sand banks."

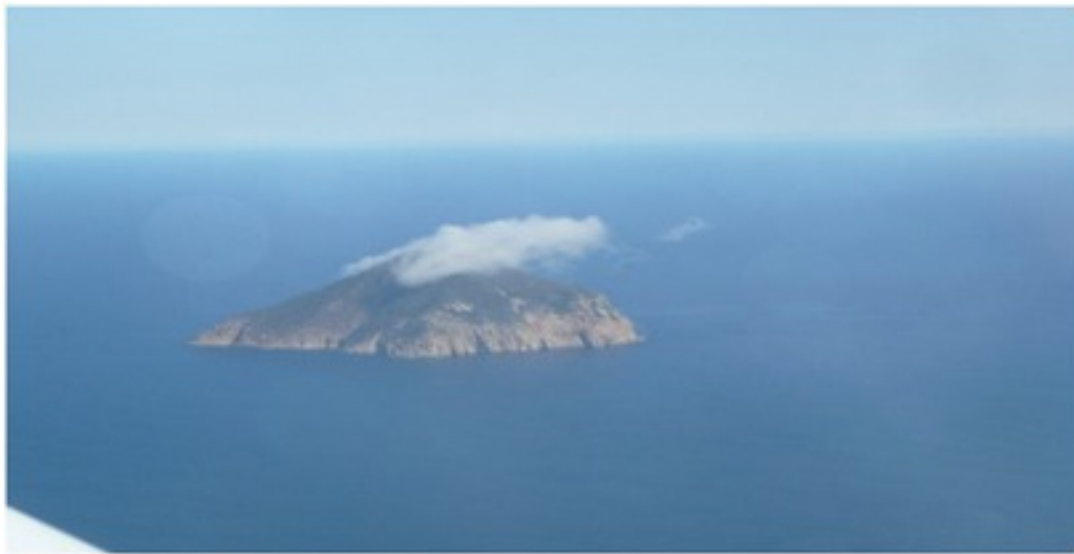
Corner Inlet is like a big dish of water that is sometimes full and sometimes empty. it is just around the corner from the tip of the Prom.



***View looking south over Corner Inlet towards the tip of Wilsons Promontory***

Phill commented: 'It's easy to see now, how the escaped convicts that Bass found would be confused about trying to get north-east to follow the coast up to Sydney. Particularly as they only had the rising and setting sun to help point north. No modern maps or tide tables to help. A shortage of food and water would destroy morale, and fear of the unknown would send them nearly crazy. Apart from the two Bass kept in his boat when he saw them later, they all died in the bush.'

The plane turned east then south over the inlet, and headed south to the tip. It was easy to see the Seal Islands group. Past Refuge Cove and then rocky Rodondo Island sticking up like a thumb south of the tip. A small scarf of sea mist or cloud just hung onto the top of the island.



### ***Rodondo Island***

Now they were at the tip, it was time to practise taking bearings. Using the previously drawn connecting lines on the map, Chris took out his pocket compass and indicated the direction to Naracoopa on King Island, bearing 245 degrees true on the map, minus 12 degrees meridian adjustment, which gave 233 degrees magnetic. Tristan then used his compass and pointed out the direction to Stanley Point on Flinders Island, bearing 119 degrees true on

the map, minus 12 degrees meridian adjustment, which gave 105 degrees magnetic. The fellas did a good job working out and compass bearing.

During conversation, all tried to imagine the courage or foolhardiness of Bass and crew sailing south past Rodondo for about 70 kilometres without sighting islands or land, looking for Providence Island. They turned back only when the weather turned nasty with huge waves, and the boat sprang a dangerous leak. Bass would have hit the north coast of Tasmania if he had kept on sailing. His longitude was about 146 degrees east. It should have been 148 degrees east. He turned south far too late.

Flying over and seeing Glennie Island, none of the guys wanted to be marooned on it. How did the convicts survive?

"Okay Tristan, that's the magnetic compass heading, that's the altitude, I'm handing over the flying to you."

Tristan swallowed and said "Okay." For at least half an hour Tristan maintained the course heading and, more importantly flew the plane straight and level. This meant that Chris and Phill in the back did not feel like they were in a lift, going up and down quickly. That's a sure way of getting air sick.

"Well done, Tristan! Taking over now," said Shane.

"I'm going to fly through those small wispy bunches of small grey clouds dead ahead. Because they are nearly standing still you will get an idea of our speed."

The plane speared through the wispy bits at 165 knots at 2300 metres. Grey cloud tore past nearly quicker than the eye could follow.

"Want to fly over the Phillip Island race track, fellows?" You betcha!!

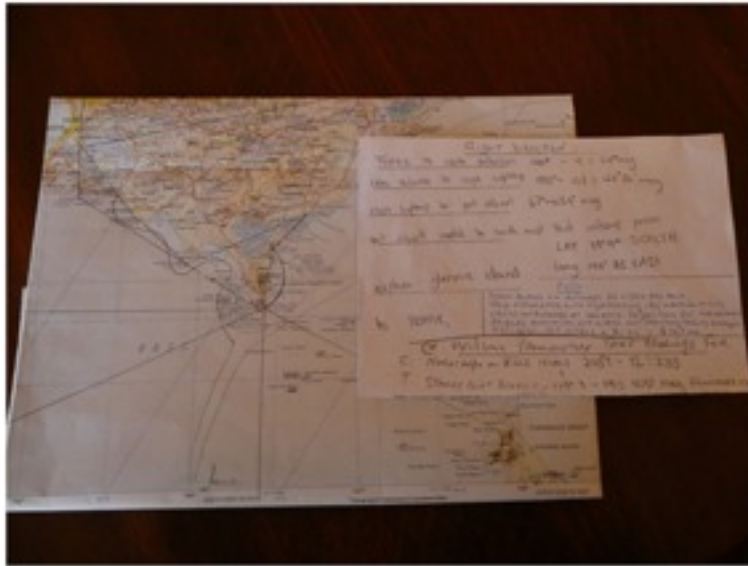
By turning and banking, and slowing the plane down, all on board had a panoramic view of the track. They could even see some cars on the track, obviously tearing around, but from 650 metres appeared to be moving at walking speed.

Back at Tyabb, the plane was refuelled to its capacity of 325 litres. Log books were filled out and the plane driven over to its hangar.

On the grass, Tristan and Chris were given some rags, a quick tour of the plane's outer surfaces, and asked to clean the plane by rubbing off all the bugs that had accumulated during the flight. Shane and Phill opened some deck chairs, plonked themselves down, watched the fellas cleaning, and started yakking about flying.

Ten metres from the Cherokee, a very modern helicopter was parked on the grass. It naturally attracted the guys' attention. The pilot walked out of his hanger next door and hopped in. He started the blades rotating. as the rotation got faster and faster, the copter lurched off the ground. For a couple of minutes longer it hovered slowly, then moved across to the runway, and with a burst of engine power it was up and away.

While Shane and Phill were still yakking, the fella's started a new game. Standing cross-ways on soft drink bottles with the screw tops on, they placed the heel of one foot on the top, quickly jerked their foot backwards to their toes. With luck, if the air pressure inside the bottles was high enough, and the foot action quick enough, the tops flew off a few metres. It was great fun.



**Working chart and flight planning notes**