

# PETE & PAUL

Words & photos by Jon Davison

My long-time aeronautical friend Werner Buhlmann suggested I go down to Serpentine airfield on the weekend and try a formation shoot with Pete and Paul. I thought 'Okay, don't know who they are, but knowing Werner, it's bound to be fun'. For some reason I imagined they were a couple of Canadian aviators, maybe singers as well but without a Mary, so I figured that after the shoot there may be a BBQ and a sing along, that's the path my mind was going anyway. I should have clarified this with Werner I know. All I knew was that Pete and Paul had some link with Bert Filippi who owned a collection of classic aircraft at Serpentine, part of the Sport Aircraft Builders Club (SABC). Again I figured that these guys had an aeroplane that Werner and Bert wanted to fly with. Werner mentioned that Graham Hewitt would be there as well, so it seemed Graham knew Pete and Paul also? I met Graham back in 2003, when I photographed him in his RV6, for my book "Beneath Southern Skies". But then, Graham was about 70, so that would make him ..... mmm somewhat older. Okay so he's probably going to watch something.

I arrived at Jandakot to a clear winters day with hardly any cloud, though a front would be coming in that night, so I had to be back at Jandakot by 1700. I would fly down with

Bert in his Tiger Moth 'Lady Caroline', and Werner's partner Gail, would follow in her lovely Cessna 170 for the 20 minute flight south to Serpentine. Werner would follow in a Cessna 152 Aerobat flown by Bert's wife Carol. 'Were all these planes going to meet Pete and Paul ' I thought? Every time I was about to clarify who Pete and Paul were, something else cropped up. During the course of the day I heard there were two Pete and Paul's involved, so I was now really confused. Bert casually mentioned in hushed tones that Pete and Paul were very rare.



**MAIN IMAGE:** Bert in his Pietepol. **INSET:** Carol and Werner in the Cessna 152, from the Tiger.



Often it seems that if you are confused about something, and it's not really an issue, just a curiosity, there comes a point where it's just too embarrassing to actually ask what it's all about, well that's where I was on the flight down. So I busied myself with my camera settings, changed lenses and took a few shots of Carol and Werner in the Cessna 152. The flight was easy and it was very nice to be back in a Tiger again. As I knew we would be doing air-to-air (A2A) work, and knowing from experience that it was never easy to shoot from the Tiger Moth - unless you was kneeling in the pilots seat facing aft! - I wondered what the cameraship would be.

Serpentine came into view and we came in after the 152, and rolled up to Bert's hangar, where we were greeted by Grahams wife Robin sitting on a chair in the shade. At once Bert was into action, the hangar doors opened up to reveal his collection of exotic machines. A Sopwith Pup, a German and Japanese Bucker Jungmann, a French Nord 3202 and a little red single seat thing that looked like a toy. Overhead something was busily flying like a bee around the airfield, and looking up I could see that it was similar to Bert's 'little red thing' but a two seater, sporting a blue and red livery. It soon came into land, rolled up to the hangar and out stepped a sprightly 83 year old Graham Hewitt!

It transpired that Graham had just spent the last seven years building this machine. To me it looked very similar to Bert's red one, which was now out of the hangar and was busily being shampooed and cleaned by a small army of people that had suddenly appeared. So it seemed that a lot more people knew about todays activities. I casually looked at the little engine of Bert's one, a Ford Model A (38HP) engine! built in 1932. Wow! A light bulb began to glow somewhere inside me. Mmm, better look for the name plate. Ah yes there on the side. What's that 'Pietenpol'? Oh gawd ... the penny drops, Pete n Paul!

The pieces of the puzzle fell into place. So there was to be no sing along at the BBQ



**TOP:** Bert topping up the radiator on his Sky Scout.  
**ABOVE & OPPOSITE:** Grahame Hewitt.



with Pete and Paul, minus a Mary. This little red thing was one part of the equation, and Grahams blue and red one was the other.





**OPPOSITE TOP:** Bert and Graham getting into position behind the Cessna cameraship.  
**OPPOSITE LOWER:** Graham, Bert and Werner.  
**BELOW:** Bert pulls in close for my camera.





So it appears that Bert's Sky Scout is a very rare bird indeed, as it is the actual original No2 aircraft built by Bernard Pietenpol all those years ago, and it is still flying. How it ever left the US is incredible and another story in itself. But this now priceless piece of aviation history is alive and well in old Western Australia. To my thinking they were Pete and Paul, so I decided to keep the names so I would know which was which in the air. So this was the event, an A2A photo shoot of these two little homebuilts.

For those like me who had no idea what these aircraft were, here is some background from Wikipedia.

**The Pietenpol Sky Scout (Bert's single seater) is a parasol wing homebuilt aircraft designed by Bernard H. Pietenpol in 1933.**

**The Sky Scout was a lower cost follow-on to the Pietenpol's first homebuilt design, the Pietenpol Air Camper (Graham's two seater). Using a lower cost engine, rather than the more current Ford Model A engine of the time.**

**The aircraft was redesigned for the heavier, lower power engine by reducing it to a single person aircraft. The new pilot location required a section called a "flop" to be installed, essentially a section of the wing that was hinged up to allow the pilot to stand up when getting into and out of the aircraft. The aircraft was designed to be built of spruce and plywood. One of Pietenpol's goals was to create a plane that was affordable and easy to construct for Home builders.**

**Building an Air Camper requires basic woodworking skills and tools. Builders also need to fabricate some metal fittings to attach the wooden parts together. Some welding is required. The plans for the Pietenpol Aircamper were originally published in a four-part serial in the "Flying and Glider" Manual of 1932-33.**

## THE A2A SORTIE

I tried crouching in the Tiger facing aft, just to see if I could shoot from it, but with no way to stop me falling out, it was considered a no-go (I would have, you know, just for the shot!). In the end we found that the door could be easily removed from the C170. With me straddling the right hand seat and facing aft, I had a perfect shooting position to get those hard-to-get three quarter head-on shots. The idea was that we would meet upstairs with Bert and Graham and formate on Bert first, then a two ship formation, followed by Graham on his own, all the while keeping radio communication. That was the plan anyway. Once upstairs of course, the things that you have not allowed for, even though you have thought about it, do happen. Grahams radio cut out, so that was it, the plan fell to pieces. With no communication, Graham pulled away and decided to land. Bert came alongside and Werner got us very close with some amazing side-slips that I never knew a Cessna could do. The two aircraft did the normal aerial ballet in the



slightly turbulent air, with each trying to get into the agreed 4 O'Clock position. The open door of the Cessna gave a magical view of the world outside, and both Werner and I could pretty much keep an eye on where Peter and Paul were at any one time.

This was the first aerial shoot with my new Nikon D800 camera, with a (then) whopping 36 Megapixels, so I was eager to see what detail it could record. I have used the Nikon D3 for a few years now and found it to be a great camera, but this new one, whew, (later in post) you could see every detail on Berts smiling face!

After a good 30 minutes in the air it was time to land, regroup and have a cup of tea, cake and sandwiches, graciously prepared by Robin and Carol. The predicted front looked like it was approaching as the sky was darkening. So we decided to do one more sortie, this time with a repaired radio, plus a 'dirt dive' on the ground to work out how we were going to formate in the air.

On the ground we stood behind the Cessna in its 4 O'clock position at the right distance, and decided that this would be the plan.

In the air it worked perfectly, with Bert locking on to our 4 O'clock and pointing his nose directly at us. With the front gaining in intensity and the sky darkening, we decided to head for home. As we approached Perth, the sun just managed to find a clear space just on the horizon over Fremantle.

Looking out from the 170 over to the Tiger, the spectacle was just perfect. The all round view from the 170's front screen was pretty amazing and I could appreciate why Gail loved her machine.

The golden sun illuminating the clouds, whilst silhouetting this classic aircraft and reflecting on the River and ocean, really made me appreciate just what a privelege this aerial perspective really is. To me it was a perfect end to a perfect photo shoot.

Having fun on the weekend with classic aeroplanes, making new friends, getting introduced to Peter and Paul! and working with some very passionate and talented aviators. Nothing much beats that.

Jon Davison

Sadly not long after we did this session, Graham passed away in December 2014.

Grateful thanks to Werner, Bert, the late Graham Hewitt, Gail, Carol, Robin, and Steve.

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*My point-of-view from the open door of the Cessna, as Graham pulls up behind us.*



Bert up close!





*Berts Tiger at sunset with the cranes of Fremantle Port in the background.*







*Gail lifts off from Serpentine airfield. The visibility from the front of the Cessna 170 is fantastic. Note the front starting to roll across the sky, getting darker towards Perth.*

