



# The Western Port Flyer

Woolleys Road, Crib Point, VIC

[www.wpmac.com.au](http://www.wpmac.com.au)

WPMAC Newsletter

January 2010

## Greetings WPMAC Members

Well, we are well and truly into the new year now, and I've already surpassed my previous record, by writing off my heli, a mere 10 hours after new years eve. Its a usuall new years break trick for me, so no problems there, except trying to obtain Gohbee parts. Apparently, Hobby Headquarters are no longer bringing Gohbee to Australia. Ahh well - better get that lathe going. So good luck and happy flying to the rest of you.

No meeting minutes for Jan - There was a committee meeting at which we discussed the finer points of noise abatement procedures and working bees, but these issues will no doubt be discussed in detail at the next general meeting, to be held Tues Feb 9th.

## Upcoming Events

2010 27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Hastings day display
9 <sup>th</sup> Mar	WPMAC's 20 <sup>th</sup> Birthday
28 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Working bee 9am-12pm
10/11 <sup>th</sup> Apr	VMAA Trophy weekend
18 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Tyabb Airshow
2 <sup>nd</sup> May	Non ARF Scale day
16 <sup>th</sup> May	BADMAC Mid May Muster (Refer below for details)

## At The Movies

Ask most people what the best helicopter movie of all time would be, and you would be sure to get mentions of "Apocalypse Now", "Black Hawk Down", possibly even 007's "Goldeneye" and "Tomorrow Never Dies", which have some great visuals (but terribly unrealistic in the latter). The list could go on and on, but the best (in my opinion) would have to be Blue Thunder.

It was back in 1983 that the menacing looking helicopter known as Blue Thunder, graced our movie screens. If you haven't seen it, then get onto the VMAA video library and ask them to make it one of their titles (shame on them). This is one very well kitted out chopper.

The actual heli was a modified Aerospatiale SA-341G Gazelle, well actually there were two of these that were modified by Hughes Helicopters for the movie. In addition to this, there were two models used in the filming or Blue Thunder, which also started life as Gazelle's, but these came from Japan, not France. After filming, the movie props went from collector to collector until about 10 months ago when one of them landed in the lands of one Lee Malone, the owner of the Motion Picture Prop Company (US).

Lee started collecting movie props in the 90's, and keeps in regular contact with special effects companies like Lucasfilm. His collection contains props from films including Black Hawk Down, Saving Private Ryan, Armageddon and Starship Troopers. When he was first offered a chance to own one of the Blue Thunder models, he jumped at the opportunity. Although he was first to make an offer, that was already too late. But a couple of years later, he got a call from the then owner, who apparently never handed over the money owed on the chopper, and was asked if he still wanted it. The rest is history, although he informed me that it is about to be sold to another collector, who also has a Hughes 500 model used in the film.

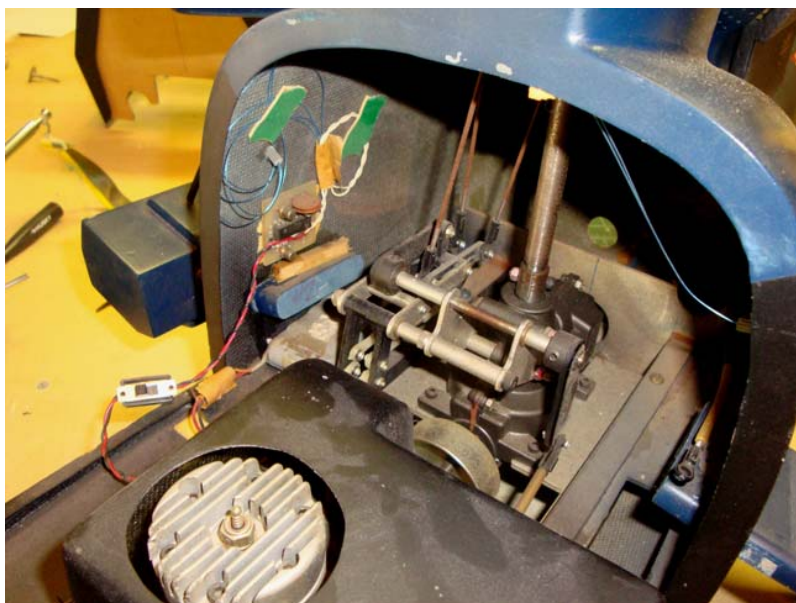
Of the two Blue Thunder models, one has a shock absorber looking thing mounted halfway up the skids, matching the full scale helicopter. The second model is missing this, and you can just make out this difference after Blue Thunder flies through the exploding Hughes near the end of the movie. The model performing the loop just before this is the other one. But in both cases, you can make out the flybar and paddles and the twin rotor head, that differentiate them from the full scale machine that has a three blade head. If you have the movie on blue-ray though, then you might be looking a bit harder, as Lee says its not visible. Probably due to some CGI work to make that version just a bit better.

Apparently, the original model maker, kept the molds with the intention of mass producing Blue Thunder fuselage kits for budding model heli pilots, but a building fire put an end to those plans.

The model Gazelle used, was actually a 1/6 scale Hirobo kit, sold in the days before ARF became an abbreviation. The Gazelle kit includes the full 6 blade shaft driven fenestron fan at the tail, quite a different mechanism (compared to today's) for mixing collective and pitch / roll actuators - actually a separate unit that huddles up next to the base of the main shaft. As a result, the rotor head mechanics look overly simple from the outside. Hirobo took this flatbed mechanics design and sold it with at least six different body / tail combinations as a JetRanger, Tow Cobra, Lama, Enstrom, Iroquois as well as the Gazelle. Other specs include wooden main blade diameter of 1.58m. Engine is 60 size aircraft, NOT a Helicopter motor. Weight 5.2kg. Fuselage approx 1.4m.



One of the original Blue Thunder models.



Inside shows the top of Hirobo's flatbed mechanics, and what looks like a flasher circuit wired up to the nav lights on the rocket launcher pods.

With the Blue Thunder modifications, the heli sits less than 10mm from the ground. The interior is modelled up in balsa, and for the movie, a Ken doll took the pilots seat and strapped on an American football helmet. The chassis mods are done in fibreglass and the gun turrets are just painted wooden dowels. Main blades are silver covered to make them look the part too.

Overall, the Blue Thunder model is still in very good condition, and Lee has had offers to rebuild the electronics, but he wants to keep it in original movie prop condition. So needless to say, it doesn't get flown any more.



If anyone is interested though, other companies are currently producing both Gazelle and Blue Thunder body kits, if you have a spare few thousand dollars.

Many thanks to Lee and his MPPC for his time with my interview, and for his photos of the model.

## Web Links

Vintage RC Helicopters - <http://www.vrhc.co.uk/>

Hirobo Helicopters - [http://model.hirobo.co.jp/new\\_products/index-e.html](http://model.hirobo.co.jp/new_products/index-e.html)

One of the better Blue Thunder movie web sites - [http://www.gregdonner.org/blue\\_thunder/bt\\_movie.html](http://www.gregdonner.org/blue_thunder/bt_movie.html)

## The Gallery



A recent photo of an original Hirobo Gazelle model produced about 1976.

Photo courtesy  
<http://rc.runryder.com>



Another LIPO battery fire in a recent accident. If you're using Lipos, keep a bottle of salt water with you.

Photo courtesy S. Talman

## WPMAC Committee

Refer above for your members. Just a few contact details this month.

President	Scott Talman	ph: 0419 007 889	email: <a href="mailto:srtalman@people.net.au">srtalman@people.net.au</a>
Secretary	Matt Carter	Ph: 0419 461 397	email: <a href="mailto:matt@bytethis.net.au">matt@bytethis.net.au</a>
Treasurer	Geoff Lord		email: <a href="mailto:cambria2@netspace.net.au">cambria2@netspace.net.au</a>
Floor Officer	Alistar Cox	ph: 0438 101 610	email: <a href="mailto:aj.aero@bigpond.com">aj.aero@bigpond.com</a>
Media	Hardy Maxa	ph: 0423 029 731	email: <a href="mailto:editor@wpmac.com.au">editor@wpmac.com.au</a>

Committee members can be contacted on the above numbers or via the WPMAC.com.au website, or via snail mail to PO Box 90, Bittern, 3918

## Newsletter Submissions

Articles by members for publication are welcome and encouraged. Please contribute something so that others can benefit from your experiences. It is preferred that they be submitted electronically (via email) to [editor@wpmac.com.au](mailto:editor@wpmac.com.au). Remember, this is YOUR newsletter - please contribute to help make it a better publication!

If you're really board, you can use ball link pliers to make real nice patterns on your credit card..

Thanks to Lee Malone, Scott Talman and the above mentioned websites for their contributions to this issue.

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**Mid May Muster on  
again! 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

**YES! Scale and Stand-off-Scale fun fly Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

As in previous years, there will be prizes and catering and enjoyable flying for all.

**EVERYONE IS INVITED TO COME AND FLY . (Bronze Wing Std. Minimum.)**

**SPREAD THE WORD PLEASE.**

More detailed information closer to the day.

# *WPMAC CLUB* *MERCHANDISE*

Yellow shirt - with club logo on front + name

**\* WPMAC on back \$ 55**

**\* HASTINGS HOBBIES \$ 45**

Jacket - with club logo on front + name

**\* WPMAC on back \$ 125**

**\* HASTINGS HOBBIES \$ 100**

Payment required in full with order.  
Please circle which items you require.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIZE: SHIRT M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_**

**JACKET M \_\_\_\_\_ L \_\_\_\_\_ XL \_\_\_\_\_**

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