

THE PITTSWORTH SENTINEL

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Pittsworth to Pittsburgh in a loaded little Cessna

If you're feeling a little bored with the same old this week, here's a story to stir the adventure in us all - about a chap who departed our region last week in a little plane for an island-hopping trip home to the United States.

Ross Edmondson had spent the night at Irongate, at one of Queensland's most unique accommodation options, Fig Tree Country Retreat, where visitors can make use of the airstrip if they have a plane handy.

Which Ross did. His interest was piqued when he heard about the unique retreat Ken Edwards and Ruth Ashburner-Gorse have established, so he managed to slot in a visit before departing for New Caledonia last Friday.

He'll be island hopping across the Pacific all the way home to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the US.

To achieve the last big stretch of his homeward flight, from Hawaii to California, every spare bit of space in his little single engine Cessna 182 will be loaded with fuel.

That includes the wings and the space behind him where he's removed the two passenger seats to fit in another tank.

That 4000 kilometre trip



Adventurer Ross Edmondson, left, with Irongate's Ken Edwards, and the Cessna 182 Ross is flying home to the US.

will take him some 17 hours.

But let's go back to the beginning of this story, to May 2019 when English-born Ross departed his home in Pennsylvania for a round-the-world trip he figured would take about a year.

He'd crossed around 25

countries off his list when an unexpected global shut down threw a spanner in the works.

"Everything was going to plan right up until I reached Australia and New Zealand in about February of 2020 at which point it all ground

to a halt," he said.

"Because the next part of the trip was to cross the Pacific, I'd need to land on a lot of the small Pacific Islands to refuel and they were all shut up, really until the end of last year."

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A cool year for cotton

The finalists have been announced for the Australian cotton industry's most prestigious awards in 2023 and the Sentinel paid a visit to a local finalist to see what he's doing that's new and how the season is shaping up.

Brookstead's Johannes Roellgen is one of the three finalists in the Bayer Grower of the Year category for the Cotton Australia Awards to be announced in August.

He and his wife Scarlett came to the area and began farming here almost 30 years ago.

Mr Roellgen said their practices on the land, and

the cotton industry as a whole, have both evolved greatly in that time.

For example, genetic modification to include a protein in the cotton that is toxic to problem heliothis moths had been a game changer.

"When we first started in 1994 a crop like this one would have been sprayed

up to 14 or 15 times with insecticides, like every week," Mr Roellgen said.

"This year 80 per cent of our cotton wasn't sprayed a single time and the 20 per cent was sprayed once."

He said there was also much more information available now on keeping beneficial insects present.

"Every week we have

agronomists taking note of all the beneficial insects, in every paddock."

The Roellgens are about half way through their picking in what has been an average season.

"This is very good cotton but we've got quite a bit that doesn't look very good," Mr Roellgen said.

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Pittsworth to Pittsburgh in loaded little Cessna

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Needless to say, Ross Edmondson has seen a lot more of Australia than he ever anticipated, a couple of circuits in fact.

"I've absolutely loved it. Australia's a fantastic place to fly, one of the best in the world in my experience," he said.

"You have the size, which makes it a sensible way to get around and you have a good airport infrastructure, nearly every small town has its own airstrip and they're very accessible and the community is incredibly friendly and helpful.

"It's been a really good place to be stuck."

Ross said he had reached out to the flying community for suggestions of places to see, after realising he'd be in Australia for a while.

"Fig Tree was one of the recommendations and when I had a look I thought oh yeah, I can't miss this opportunity.

"It's really beautiful, I love the airstrip and the amenities."

The retreat sits high on a plateau with vast views over the cotton country towards Millmerran.

Converted silos are among the options where you can lay your head for the night.



A Google Maps view from his website shows all the stops Ross has made - Irongate, Pittsworth and Millmerran are all in there somewhere.

Having started flying at the age of 21 (he's 39 now), Ross' taste for adventure was unleashed.

He was studying civil engineering at Cambridge at the time.

He has worked in the oil and gas industry, is now involved in bio fuels, and is using some accrued holidays to get this last homeward flight done.

"One of the best things about travelling around the world in a little plane like this is that it has made the world feel like a very big place again.

"When you jump on

an airline and go half way around the world in 24 hours everything feels very small, but when you're doing 200 kilometres an hour, you get an appreciation for just how large and varied it is... and you meet a huge number of interesting people along the way.

"It's quite an unusual thing to do so people tend to be quite interested."

Ross records his worldly wanderings on a website *katamarino.com* and collects donations, 100 per cent of which go to a charity which is building schools in Kenya.



The view from Fig Tree Country Retreat, Irongate, looking over cotton fields towards Millmerran and, below, the intrepid traveller just before his departure from Irongate.



Holiday games are back

KidsGames 2023 will present an action-packed program for school students this school holidays at the Pittsworth Uniting Church on Briggs Street.

The all day program from 8.45am to 3.30pm will be offered from Tuesday, June 27 to Thursday, June 29.

Morning tea is supplied, BYO lunch, hat and water bottle.

Registration is \$40 per child; \$60 for 2 children and \$70 for 3 or more children.

You can register online at sua.brushfire.com/KidsGames/552931 or for more information contact Karen Pomerence on 0429 151222; or Leah Moore on 0428 931586.

Bee talk

Learn all about native bees in an informative free workshop presented by Landcare Millmerran and Pittsworth this Saturday at the Pittsworth Function Centre.

Sign up to secure your place at events.humantix.com/native-bee-workshop/tickets

ALL DAY PROGRAM 8.45AM TO 3.30PM
Tuesday 27th – Thursday 29th June
at Pittsworth Uniting Church, Briggs Street

Morning Tea Supplied, BYO Lunch, Hat & Water Bottle

KidsGames 2023

Enquiries & Information: Karen Pomerence 0429 151 222
 Leah Moore 0428 931586

PLEASE REGISTER AT
sua.brushfire.com/KidsGames/552931

PRICES \$40 per child • \$60 for 2 children • \$70 for 3 or more children

Motorcyclist dies in highway tragedy

A Pittsworth man, 24, died at the scene after a collision on the Gore Highway at Umbiram on Sunday.

Police said preliminary inquiries indicated that the yellow Triumph Daytona motorcycle and a white Subaru Forester were travelling north east along the highway between Southbrook and Westbrook on Sunday afternoon when the collision occurred, with

a Mazda CX-3 travelling in the opposite direction being struck by the motorcyclist.

An off duty nurse provided assistance to the injured man but he died at the scene.

Police said the driver of the Mazda, a Pittsworth woman, 21, was treated for shock at the scene.

Both she and the male driver of the Subaru, 56 and

also from Pittsworth, were uninjured.

The accident occurred around 3.30pm and the highway was closed for several hours with local diversions before re-opening around 7.30pm.

Police are appealing for witnesses who may have observed the motorcyclist riding in the area to come forward.

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Drink driver charged

A young driver was charged with drink driving, with a reading of .026 in Pittsworth in the early hours of Sunday.

Police said this serves as a reminder that drivers on provisional licenses must

return a zero blood alcohol reading.

The driver, 18, also faces charges over the contravention of a previously imposed restriction on driving between the hours of 11pm and 5am.

Have you seen this car?

Police would like to hear from anyone who may have information about a car with reportedly stolen number plates seen in Pittsworth and Millmerran last weekend.

The silver Holden Commodore with the registration 626GMN is alleged to have evaded police on the Gore Highway early on Saturday morning.

Hooper Accountants

ha Pittsworth Office 132 Yandilla Street Pittsworth 4356
 TEL: (07) 4637 9363
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