

# LET L-200A MORAVA

AUSTRALIAN CIVIL AIRCRAFT REGISTER - THE FIRST 50 YEARS  
LESSER AIRCRAFT TYPES IN AUSTRALIA

*A series by Geoff Goodall describing aircraft types that appeared on the Australian Civil Register only in small numbers. These types may have enjoyed success overseas but few were seen here.*

Only a single example of the Czechoslovakian L-200 Morava range of 5-seater touring aircraft was imported to Australia.

Evolved as a successor to the Aero 45 and 145, the L-200 Morava series was built at the same Czechoslovak State Factory No.17 at Kunovice in Moravia. The manufacturer is also referred to as SPP (Czech initials) and Omnipol, the latter being the Government marketing arm. The prototype L-200 Morava was first flown 8 April 1957. The major production model L-200A had various improvements and more powerful closely-cowled six cylinder inverted in-line supercharged 210hp Walter M337 engines fitted with 2 blade variable pitch propellers.

The Morava was all metal construction, with permanent 25 gallon wing tip tanks and hydraulic retractable tricycle landing gear. The twin fins and rudders were designed to increase the effectiveness of the rudders in the propeller slipstream, at a lower weight and height of a single tailplane. Novel features included buttons in a control box to select propeller pitch for takeoff, climb and cruise, and the complete instrument panel being hinged to allow it to be swung downwards for easy access to all instrumentation and wiring.

Many Moravas were sold to Aeroflot for air taxi services in Russia and other Soviet countries, and they were used by the Egyptian Air Force for training. The final Morava model, the L-200D, appeared in 1962 featuring a 3 bladed propeller and strengthened undercarriage.

Australia's only Morava was imported by Dulmison Aircraft Pty Ltd in 1961, as part of a stable of current production Czech aircraft brought to Sydney and offered for local sale. Company founder, Sydney electrical entrepreneur Phil Dulhunty, believed Czech built aircraft were superior to equivalent American types and there was a market for them in Australia. Accompanied by flying friends from Bankstown, Dulhunty had gone to Czechoslovakia in 1960 and despite various misadventures of

innocents abroad dealing with a wary Communist regime, had gained the Australian agency for Omnipol, the Czech Government export body. The Australian party then ferried two Aero 145s home from Prague and Dulmison Aircraft went on to import four Aero 145s, nine CZL L-40 Meta Sokols, a Zlin Trener Master and Blanik metal gliders. After three years Dulmison abandoned the Czech agency, unable to compete against the marketing of US mass production light aircraft imports.

Dulmison's demonstrator L-200A Morava OK-OHC was delivered to Australia by factory test pilot Vladimir Vik, transiting Cyprus on 2 April 1961. He carried out demonstrations en route in the Middle East, India and Indonesia and did not reach Bankstown Airport, Sydney until 20 May 1961. The very next day Dulmison held a flying display at Bankstown to show off their Czech types, the highlight being the flying display by Czech world aerobatic champion Jiri Bahia in Zlin Trener Master OK-OND. The Morava gave a much more sedate demonstration.

At the end of June 1961, Dulmison Aircraft's Czech aircraft set off from Sydney on a demonstration tour to Melbourne and Adelaide via country centres. It was well publicised by Dulmison as a "flying circus", and generated a lot of press coverage; photographs being published of the Zlin Trener flying upside down at low level at Parafield, Wagga and Belmont Common, Geelong.

Back at Bankstown, experienced instructor Keith Robey flew the Morava for his Air Test series, in *Aircraft* magazine, instructed by Czech demonstration pilot Jiri Blaha. In his article in the July 1961 issue, Robey reported that he found the aircraft pleasant to handle, with a good performance and docile stalling characteristics.



OK-OHC photographed at Moorabbin Airport, Victoria, on 30.5.1961 by Neil Follett.





VH-EMV photographed at Mackay, Qld., on 26.9.1964, soon after being purchased by Ansett-ANA. Photo: Neville Parnell.



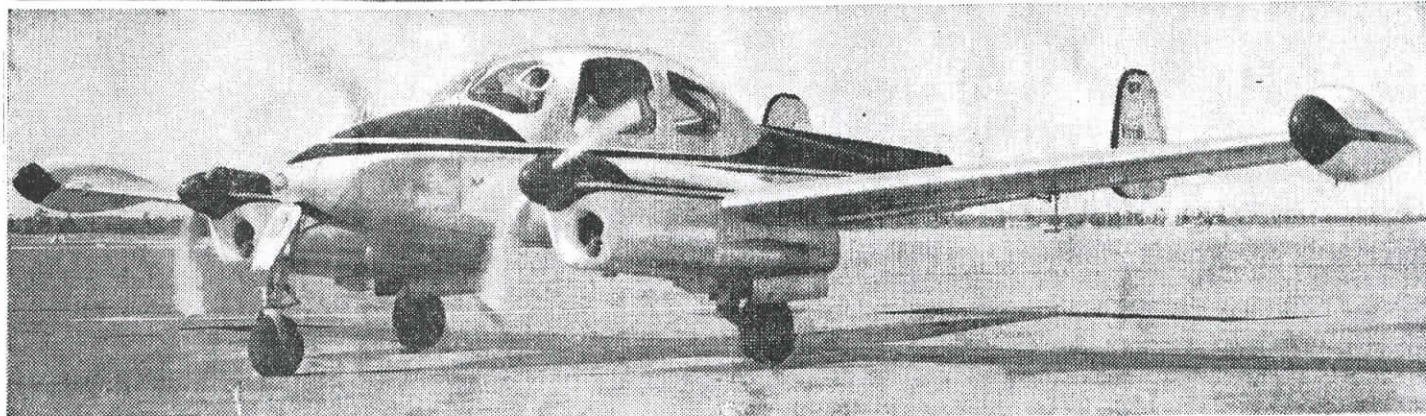
VH-EMV at Bankstown, NSW, on 22.8.1981, soon after being restored to the register. Photo: Neville Parnell



After a rebuild and repaint with name "Morava" on the nose, VH-EMV arrives at a fly-in at Joe Drage's farm airstrip at Wodonga Vic. in September 1984. Photo by Geoff Goodall.



## TAKING OFF FOR NEW BUSINESS IN MACKAY



A Courier-Mail newspaper cutting from the Roger McDonald collection. New light aircraft seldom receive such publicity.

*"The large roomy passenger cabin is entered from the upper surface of the wing by way of very large entry doors which the designer has thoughtfully provided on both sides of the fuselage: this feature compares more than favourably with competitive executive types which almost without exception have a cabin door on only one side. Cabin furnishings are attractively finished and interior trim is generally of quite high standard. The individual front seats are adjustable fore and aft and pitch, and the rear of the cabin is occupied by a large bench type seat which can accommodate three persons. Baggage space is provided behind the rear seat in a special compartment which is accessible either from the cabin or by means of a luggage door conveniently situated on the port side of the fuselage immediately behind the trailing edge of the wing. The size of the luggage door is sufficient for the loading of quite large suitcases. Representing as it does an Eastern European interpretation of the established formula for a modern light twin, the Morava makes an interesting comparison with its American competitors. The severest critic would say that it lacks the final polish of some of the more expensive American types, but he would have to admit that the price at which it is appearing on the Australian market is attractive and that it is a sensible, robust and practical aeroplane."*

Similar comments were repeated in a later flight test report published in the British *Air Pictorial* magazine June 1964 issue *"...after fifty air tests, one has no hesitation in rating the Morava as having as good flying characteristics as any of the fifty, and it must therefore be rated as outstanding. Coupled with the high quality of its construction and obvious durability and strength, the low price becomes remarkable."*

Dulmison Aircraft now approached the Department of Civil Aviation to commence the Australian type certification process for the Morava. As well as engineering and design approval, cockpit instrumentation had to be changed from European metric displays. DCA would not accept the system for elevator and rudder trim, whose hand controls were down between the front seats and the only indication given to the pilot of trim setting was indicator lights which lit up only when trim in neutral position. While the requirements for Australian Certificate of Airworthiness were worked on, the aircraft was hangared at Bankstown wearing its Czech registration for the next year until a sale was negotiated - to Coastal Airways of Surfers Paradise, Queensland.

The Morava was registered VH-EMV on 14 December 1962 to Coastal Airways, who named it the *Starliner*. It departed Sydney three days later on delivery, flown by Coastal Airways' founder

**STARLINER** — a Czech-manufactured two-engine, five-seater light aircraft — which flew into Brisbane yesterday on its way to Mackay, where it will be used for charter work.

The *Starliner* will be employed by Coastal Airways in charter work. Pilot of the *Starliner*, Mr. Jim Tilse, said yesterday he was confident

there would be plenty of work for her in Central Queensland and along the coast.

"She will be used

mainly for charter to tourists who want to see the islands from the air and cattle buyers going to sales," he said.

Jim Tilse, stopping over at Brisbane Airport for publicity photographs, before continuing to Mackay the following day. James W. Tilse was a former wartime RAAF pilot, later flying with TAA and Queensland Airlines, who had founded Coastal Airways in 1958 with Cessna 182As VH-EMS & -EMT for charter work, which rotated between bases at Mackay and on the Gold Coast. Early charter work out of Mackay was so promising that Coastal Airways placed an option with Dulmison for a second Morava for delivery in May 1962, but it did not firm to an order. Instead, associated company Gold Coast Air Services Ltd at Surfers Paradise purchased a Dulmison demonstrator Meta-Sokol in March 1963, and reregistered VH-EMR, it was leased to Coastal Airways at Mackay. Jim Tilse justified buying an aircraft from behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War days by saying *"I'm absolutely delighted with the *Starliner*. The *Starliner* is the only aircraft available that will operate within DCA's Group 4 without a weight penalty. The Cessna 310 won't qualify. Apart from that the *Starliner* is just about 10,000 pounds cheaper than the 310. That's the *Starliner's* fully instrumented price against the 310's basic price."* Much of VH-EMV's charter work at Mackay was connected with Ansett-ANA and TAA, carrying freight and passengers. A regular run was taking tourists who arrived at Mackay by airline flights on to Shute Harbour to board boats to various Great Barrier Reef island resorts. DCA approved a seating modification to allow 5 passengers.

In August 1964 the Morava changed ownership to Ansett-ANA but remained based at Mackay. It was given an inspection in the Ansett-ANA hangar at Brisbane-Eagle Farm and repainted in the airline's red white paint scheme. VH-EMV now operated a twice weekly scheduled return service from Mackay to the inland coal mining centre Collinsville. The Morava was nicknamed "Eggs Meat and Vegetables" by airline staff and flew the Collinsville run until replaced by Ansett-ANA Piaggio 166 VH-PGA. The Morava was briefly leased to Ansett-MAL in Papua New Guinea, but the Piaggios had become the standard light aircraft for the Ansett group, and the Morava quickly became an unwanted orphan. It was ferried to Archerfield Airport, Brisbane where both Walter engines were removed for maintenance in February 1966, and it became a forlorn sight parked outside in the weather with a tarpaulin covering the cabin for the next few months.

Ansett-ANA decided to bring the Morava to Melbourne for resale, and it was ferried to Essendon via Sydney Airport on 14 July 1966. It spent six months parked among retired DC-3s, DC-6s and Viscounts in the aircraft graveyard parking area at Essendon Airport, still wearing full Ansett-ANA paint scheme. Finding a buyer for the Morava took time, and in February 1967 it was



ferried across to Moorabbin Airport where it was parked in an aircraft sales lot with *For Sale* signs, alongside one of the former Ansett-ANA light aircraft division, Cessna 182 VH-BVC.

On 1 June 1967 VH-EMV was sold to James Kemp of Currumbin Qld, who based it at Coolangatta Airport as a private aircraft. Kemp liked the Morava and enjoyed flying it, attending several airshows in southern Queensland. His ownership was tragically cut short because on 28 October that year Kemp was killed in the crash of Cessna 210A VH-CVO which ran into a glider winch wire while landing at Beaudesert Qld. After his death the Morava was given a 100 hourly inspection by Air Gold Coast at Coolangatta and test flown on 21 November 1967, at which time its logbook gave total flying time as 654.25 hours.

The Morava's next owner was Cliff Parsons of St George Qld who recognised the value of its roomy cabin for charter flying. A RAAF pilot during the war, Cliff started his charter business C.H. Parsons Pty Ltd at St George in 1952 using an interesting fleet of DH.87B Hornet Moth VH-UXO, Miles Messenger VH-AVD, and in 1960 imported the first radial engine Cessna 195 VH-AVZ to Australia. Next came Cessna 180 VH-DPG and he entered the aerial agriculture field in 1966 with a pair of Jacobs-engine Avro Cadets VH-AFX & -AFY. Cliff later said that both were so productive he had paid them off in two weeks flying.

However Cliff Parsons unfortunately ran into legal problems over the purchase of the Morava from James Kemp's estate and after a year attempting to untangle the aircraft, he asked DCA to cancel its Certificate of Registration and the aircraft was parked disused in his hangar at St George Aerodrome from 1969 to 1980. In the meantime Cliff Parsons was killed in a car crash and the business was continued by his two sons using Cessna Agwagons.

In 1980 the Morava was sold by Cliff Parson's estate to Ralph Simpson, Sydney. It had been undergoing a slow rebuild in the hangar at St George, so was further dismantled and taken by road to Windsor near Sydney for a rebuild, involving a world wide search for parts and technical manuals. Repainted in an attractive new paint scheme, VH-EMV was restored to the Civil Register on 20 May 1981 and test flown at Bankstown that month. Ralph Simpson flew it as a private aircraft and it was a regular visitor at airshows and fly-ins. As a nice touch, the name "Morava" was added to the nose.

In 1995 ownership was transferred to Ralph Simpson's son

Bruce who was a senior Qantas pilot and operated a warbird restoration business at Bankstown. After the Morava was given another thorough restoration at Bankstown, it was flown again in June 2005, by which time its airframe logbook recorded its total flying time as only 843.42 hours. VH-EMV was repainted in the Ansett-ANA colour scheme it wore back in 1964.

A final change of ownership took place in June 2012 to the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, based at Albion Park Aerodrome, near Wollongong NSW. There our one and only Morava 200 can be seen, in Ansett-ANA markings.

#### LET L200A Morava c/n 170411

.61	Imported by Dulmison Aircraft Pty Ltd, Sydney
20.5.61	<b>OK-OHC</b> arrived Sydney on delivery from Czechoslovakia
14.12.62	<b>VH-EMV</b> Coastal Airways, Surfers Paradise Qld: based Mackay Qld. "Starliner"
7.8.64	Ansett-ANA, Mackay Qld
2.66	Retired at Archerfield.
7.66	Ferried to Melbourne for resale
1.6.67	James Kemp, Currumbin Qld.
4.6.68	C. H. Parsons Pty Ltd, St George Qld
1.10.69	Struck-off Register due delay in processing ownership paperwork
.80	Moved by road from St George to Sydney
20.5.81	Restored to Register VH-EMV: R. D. Simpson, Sydney NSW
13.9.95	Bruce D. Simpson, Sydney NSW
17.6.12	Historical Aircraft Restoration Society Inc, Albion Park NSW Current



VH-EMV photographed on 17 July 1966 by Neville Parnall



A second Morava was surprisingly imported to Australia during 2010, a L-200D model VH-OKP for a Brisbane owner. It was previously Czech registered OK-RHJ but had been based on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea prior to the move to Australia. VH-OKP is seen here at Watt's Bridge, Qld, on 25.8.2012. Photo: Bob Livingstone.





VH-EMV departing Schofields, NSW, on 9.11.1985. Photo: Neville Parnell



Essendon in original Ansett-ANA markings. Photo: Fred Niven



Richmond, NSW, 1991. Photo: Barry Maclean



VH-EMV at Albion Park, NSW, 21.11.2010. Owned by HARS, but painted in Ansett-ANA markings. Photo: Neville Parnell.