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LET L-200 MORAVA

Only two Czechoslovakian L-200 Morava 5-seat touring aircraft were registered in Australia.
By Geoff Goodall



*L-200A Morava VH-EMV as she looks today, restored in Ansett-ANA markings.
Photographed at Albion Park NSW in November 2010 by Neville Parnell*

Evolved as a successor to the Aero 45 and 145, the L-200 Morava series were built at Czechoslovak State Factory No.17 at Kunovice in Moravia. Chief designer was Ladislav Smrcek and the prototype 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 210hp Walter M337 engines with superchargers.

The Morava was all metal construction, with retractable tricycle landing gear. The roomy cabin has a large door on both sides, two separate front seats and a bench seat for 3 passengers behind. One feature was the complete instrument panel can hinge down to allow easy access to all instruments. Many Moravas were sold to Aeroflot for air taxi services in Russia and other Soviet countries, and used by Egyptian Air Force for training. The final Morava model, the L-200D, appeared in 1962 featuring a 3 bladed propeller and strengthened undercarriage.

A flight test report in the British *Air Pictorial* magazine June 1964 gave the Morava an excellent review "...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 price becomes very remarkable."

Australia's first Morava was imported in 1961 by **Dulmison Aircraft Pty Ltd** 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. With three 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. They ferried home two Aero 145s and Dulmison Aircraft went on to import four Aero 145s, a Zlin Trainer Master nine CZL L-40 Meta Sokols, and a large number of 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 Aircraft's demonstrator Morava was a new model L-200A OK-OHC, built in 1960. It was flown to Australia, arriving at Bankstown Airport, Sydney on 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 Blaha in Zlin Trener Master OK-OND. At the end of June 1961, the Czech aircraft set off from Sydney on a demonstration tour to Melbourne, Tasmania and Adelaide. It was promoted by Dulmison Aircraft as a "flying circus", and generated a lot of press coverage. Jiri Blaha gave aerobatics displays in the Zlin at each stop along the route.



OK-OHC at Devonport Tasmania during the June 1961 demonstration tour.



Jiri Blaha flew an aerobatic display in the Zlin at each stop of the "Dulmison flying circus" tour.



The demonstration tour at Parafield Airport, Adelaide in June 1961. All three photos via Michal Orlita

Despite this promotion campaign, there was no immediate sale offering for the Morava, which retained its Czech registration and was hangared at Bankstown, emerging to be included in a Dulmison exhibition for a Bankstown air show on 1 April 1962.



OK-OHC displayed at Bankstown during an airshow in April 1962. Photo by Neville Parnell

Later in 1962 Dulmison negotiated its sale to Coastal Airways, a small charter company based at Surfers Paradise, Queensland. Inspection for Australian certification got under way at Bankstown by Kingsford Smith Flying Services, who carried out maintenance and assembly of all the Dulmison Czech imports. Application for Australian registration was submitted to the Department of Civil Aviation on 18 August 1962 by Coastal Airways Pty Ltd, signed by company director Mr. D. A. Maile.

Following a lengthy DCA first-of-type approval process, Certificate of Registration was issued on 14 December 1962 as VH-EMV and Certificate of Airworthiness issued the same day at Bankstown, quoting the manufacturer as Czechoslovakian Aircraft Works, Kunovice and the type as *S.P.P. Morava L-200A*. Coastal Airways came up with their own more stylish name for promotion purposes, *Starliner*. It departed Sydney three days later on delivery, flown by Coastal Airways' founder 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, before founding Coastal Airways in 1958 initially with Cessna 182As VH-EMS and VH-EMT for charter work, rotating between bases at Mackay and Surfers Paradise.



The Courier Mail newspaper, Brisbane 18 December 1962.

Courtesy Roger McDonald

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 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 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 modification inside the cabin to allow 5 passengers. In August 1964 the Morava L-200A changed ownership to Ansett-ANA but remained based at Mackay. It was given an inspection in the Ansett-ANA hangar at Brisbane-Egle 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 an Ansett-ANA Piaggio 166 VH-PGA. The Morava was briefly leased to Ansett-MAL in Papua New Guinea, but Piaggios had become the standard light aircraft for the Ansett group, and the Morava became an unwanted orphan. It was ferried to Archerfield Airport, Brisbane where the Walter engines were removed for maintenance in March 1966, then the following month it was a forlorn sight parked outside in the weather with a tarpaulin covering the cabin.

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 another of the Ansett-ANA light aircraft division Cessna 182 VH-BVC.



Ansett-ANA's Morava VH-EMV at Sydney Airport on 12 July 1966 during ferry from Queensland to Melbourne for disposal. Photo by Neville Parnell



February 1967 at Melbourne-Moorabbin with Ansett-ANA markings removed. Photo by Peter Limon

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 he 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-reengined Avro Cadets VH-AFX & AFY. Cliff later said that his Cadets were so profitable he had paid them off by their first two weeks flying. Unfortunately Parsons ran into legal problems over his purchase of the Morava from James Kemp's estate. After a frustrating year attempting to untangle the aircraft ended in a stalemate, he requested 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 Parsons was killed in a car crash and his two sons continued the agricultural business using Cessna Agwagons.

During 1979 the Morava was acquired from Cliff Parson's estate by Ralph Simpson, Castle Hill Sydney. It had been undergoing a slow rebuild in the hangar at St George, so was further dismantled and taken by road to a workshop in the outer Sydney suburb Windsor 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 by Ralph's son Bruce. It was now flown as a private aircraft and was a regular attendee at air shows and fly-ins. As a nice touch, the name "Morava" was added to the nose.



Sydney-Bankstown in September 1982, looking very smart after a rebuild. Photo by Mike Vincent



*Now with name "Morava" on the nose, VH-EMV arrives at a fly-in at Wodonga Vic in September 1984.
Photo by Geoff Goodall*

In 1995 ownership was transferred to Ralph Simpson's son Bruce who was a senior Qantas pilot and at that time 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 the Logbook gave its total flying time as 843.42 hours. In 2008 it was donated to Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, based at Albion Park Aerodrome, near Wollongong NSW, the official ownership change being recorded 17 June 2012. Suffering from the whims of local bureaucracy, the airport was to be renamed Shellharbour Airport, then Illawarra Regional Airport. The Morava can now be seen at HARS, no longer airworthy but maintained to display standard painted in accurate Ansett-ANA markings.



VH-EMV at Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, Albion Park NSW in March 2011. Photo by Phil Vabre

LET L200A Morava c/n 17-0411

Registration	Date	Owner/Event
	.60	Built at Kunovice, Moravia
OK-OHC	.61	OMNIPOL
	5.61	Delivered by air to Australia by LET test pilot Vladmir Vik, who demonstrated the aircraft enroute in Egypt, India and Indonesia
	20.5.61	Arrived Bankstown from Czechoslovakia to be a demonstrator for Australian agents Dulmison Aircraft Pty Ltd, Sydney .
	21.5.61	Flying display of Czech aircraft at Bankstown held by Dulmison Aircraft Pty Ltd, with world aerobatic champion J. Blaha flying Zlin Trener OK-OND. Flying displays by CZL Meta Sokol VH-DUP and CZL Morava OK-OHC
	1.4.62	OK-OHC noted Bankstown Air Show in public display enclosure with Zlin Trener and Aero 145 VH-DUH
VH-EMV	14.12.62	Added to Register: Coastal Airways, Surfers Paradise Qld
	17.12.62	Delivered from Sydney to Mackay via Brisbane Airport
	12.62	Based Mackay, entered service just prior to Christmas on charter work with Coastal Airways, named <i>Starliner</i>
	7.8.64	Change of ownership: Ansett-ANA, Melbourne
	26.9.64	noted Mackay, in Ansett-ANA livery. It operates twice weekly scheduled services Mackay to Collinsville
	65	Used by Ansett-ANA on twice-weekly Mackay-Collinsville service
	3.66	in hangar Archerfield, engineless and covered by tarpaulin, Ansett-ANA
	1.5.66	parked outside Archerfield, "Ansett-ANA" titles, cabin covered by tarpaulin
	25.6.66	noted in hangar Archerfield
	12.7.66	ferried via Mascot, "Ansett-ANA" titles
	7.66	noted at Essendon "Ansett-ANA" titles, parked among retired Ansett-ANA aircraft
	2.67	arrived Moorabbin, parked in aircraft sale lot
	12.2.67	noted at Moorabbin
	19.2.67	noted at Moorabbin
	5.67	parked at Moorabbin with "For Sale" signs
	1.6.67	Change of ownership: James Kemp, Currumbin Qld .
	4.7.67	noted Coolangatta, now based here
	8.67	noted Coolangatta
	17.9.67	visited Amberley air show
	21.11.67	Testflown Coolangatta after a 100-hour check performed by Air Gold Coast; TT 654.25 hours
	4.6.68	Change of ownership: C. H. Parsons Pty Ltd, St George Qld
	1.10.69	SOR <i>due delay in processing change of ownership paperwork</i>
	69/79	stored in Cliff Parsons' hangar at St George Qld, dismantled for overhaul
	17.5.73	noted St George Qld in hangar
	.79	Purchased in dismantled condition by Ralph Simpson, Sydney NSW
	.79	moved by road from Queensland to the Sydney outer suburb Windsor where rebuild commenced in a workshop
	7.80	moved by road from Windsor to Bankstown for reassembly in the Fawcett Aviation/ Illawarra Flying School hangar
	.81	Rebuild completed at Bankstown, repainted in new paint scheme
	20.5.81	Restored to Register VH-EMV: Ralph D. Simpson, Sydney NSW
	25.5.81	first test flight Bankstown after overhaul, pilot owner's son Bruce Simpson
	3.8.81	noted at Bankstown, new paint scheme
	2.82	noted at Bankstown
	29.12.83	noted at Maroochydore Qld
	9.84	visited fly-in at Wodonga Vic
	2.88	noted in hangar at Bankstown
	13.9.95	Ownership transferred to Bruce D. Simpson, Sydney NSW
	.08	Donated by Bruce Simpson to Historical Aircraft Restoration Society Inc
	20.11.10	noted at Albion Park NSW in Ansett-ANA colour scheme and titles
	17.6.12	Register Change of ownership: Historical Aircraft Restoration Society Inc, Illawarra Regional Airport, Wollongong NSW
		<i>Currently held by HARS</i>

A surprise second Morava arrives in 2010

A later model L-200D Morava was imported in 2010 for a Queensland owner. It was registered VH-OKP, in a clever acknowledgement of its Czech heritage.

LET L200D Morava c/n 17-1402

	65	Built at Kunovice, Moravia
SP-NAC		Registered in Poland
SP-NXY		
(OK-MAL)		
OK-RHJ		
	7.9.05	OK-RHJ noted Antwerp, Belgium
	8.9.05	OK-RHJ noted at Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic
	29.1.06	OK-RHJ noted Isle of Man-Ronaldsway Airport
	18.2.07	OK-RHJ flew Isle of Man to Brighton, England
	5.4.07	OK-RHJ noted Isle of Man-Ronaldsway Airport. Also 20.5.07
	26.8.07	OK-RHJ noted Sherburn-in-Elmet, England
M-RAVA	.08	Registered in Isle of Man series
VH-OKP	23.2.10	Registered VH-OKP: Rhucross Pty Ltd as trustee for P. D. Cooper Family Trust, Brisbane Qld
	25.8.12	VH-OKP visited Watts Bridge Qld fly-in
	23.8.13	VH-OKP flew Oakey Qld to Watts Bridge Qld
	30.5.14	VH-OKP visited Watts Bridge Qld flyin
		<i>Current</i>



*New arrival L-200D model Morava VH-OKP at the annual fly-in at Watts Bridge Qld in August 2012.
Photo by Bob Livingstone*

References:

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