



Here we are with another deadline approaching and guess who's got writers block – again? I find the hardest part of writing an article is always gathering the inclination to open Microsoft Word and start typing. Until you do this your mind is continuously churning through ideas; what am I going to write about? How do I start this article? What if I was doing 160knots as I entered that inverted loop instead of 120knots? Whoops there I go again - distracted.

And why not be distracted, it often leads to some interesting discourse. You know, I was just browsing through the previous issue of VOZ Powered News again to get some inspiration when I came across a photo of my friend Matthew Tomkin. He was sitting in front of a huge LCD monitor that lies within the sanctum of the Orb-X development studios in Melbourne. It appears that Matt will be suffering RSI in the near future as he cranes his neck left and right scanning the panoramic display of Orb-X new textures. Not that he looked worried; indeed it was hard to see anything but joy in the photo.

At our first Brisbane get-together, I remember Matt and I discussing the dream of working full time on Flight Simulator texture design. Now Matt is living the dream

which can only be viewed as a positive and inspirational anecdote for any of us who need a little aspiration.

Scenery design can be like that you see. It isn't a chore, nor an imposition; scenery design gets under your skin and becomes a passion. It has nothing to do with the countless hours spent modifying, compiling or tweaking, but everything to do with the joy of seeing something just "fit". Well that is where my passion leads anyway. Grabbing hold of something that is not right, and masking it, recolouring parts, layering and desaturating components, adjusting levels and curves, and twisting that texture to my minds image of what it needs to look like. And when I finish – there is a joy in my heart and a buzz in my brain that tells me this is right.

A great example of what I am talking about are the new textures for Willowbank and Helidon. Let me see if I can find some before and after shots to illustrate what is achievable.

Here we go, over on the right I have found a couple of images of the Willowbank Skydiving (YWIN) strip. This little field was introduced by Mark Lee in VOZ1.3. It is a neat little airfield near Amberley RAAF Base, just outside Ipswich in south-east

Queensland. In the new release VOZ1.5 I have reworked Marks original texture to blend seamlessly with Matts Dry Custom Landclass files. Mark has added some trees around the dams and voila – a completely different, more natural flavour is added to the great south-east.



*Original Willowbank texture—VOZ1.3*



*Modified Willowbank texture—VOZ1.5*



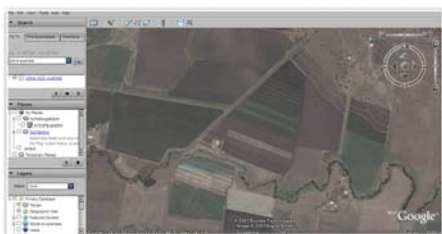
*The Five Mile—New England National Park*



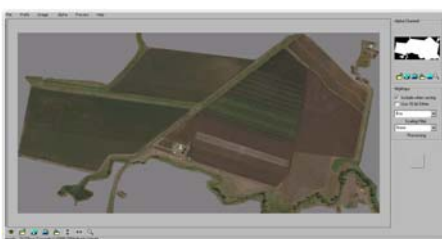
*Allora Farm Strip texture incorporated into VOZ1.5*

This process of creating a photo texture is relatively straight forward. The first task you will be faced with is to find a source image for your airstrip. In the first picture below we have discovered a farmers strip lying in a paddock near Allora on the Darling Downs.

You can utilise this image as the basis for your texture, the problem being if you just cut it out as a rectangular object and plonk it straight into the scenery it won't work. This is because your eye will be distracted by the harsh, straight lines of the texture and more than likely the colours will not blend into the surrounding landscape.



*Raw texture in google-earth*



*Modified texture in DXTBmp*

The fulfilling part of the whole exercise is pulling your image into photoshop and playing around with it until you get something that will work. In the bottom image below left, you can see the final texture after it has been alpha-masked and recoloured. Straight lines have been restricted to paddock fences and roads, with curves defined by the meandering creek as well as some dirt tracks. If you look at the in-flight image above, you can see how these modifications allow the texture to blend into the landclass background in a relatively natural and seamless fashion.

So that is how some of these small strips in VOZ are created. When you next visit Flight Simulator, why don't you grab a Cessna 172 out of the hangar and try a low and slow scenic flight. As a challenge, try to find some of these little VOZ1.5 airfields that don't appear within your "GOTO Airport" menu. Fly to some little bush strips that will require you to keep a sharp lookout and utilise some very basic navigational skills. Indeed it is a good idea to grab a road map and use that as a visual aid.

I'll give you a little help to get you underway. Let's start with an easy strip to find – Helidon. This is another one of Marks beaut little fields which lies at the foot of the Great Divide in the shadow of Toowoomba. As Helidon doesn't have an AFCAD (therefore no entry in the FS9 Airports database), we need to start our flight at Toowoomba (YTWB). Depart off RWY29 and commence a left hand turn to track east. Find where the Warrego High-

way drops off the top of the range and follow this for a short distance til you locate Helidon airstrip to the south of the road. If you need more help you can always grab the fore-mentioned road map.

Now we are really flying visually, referencing the ground and topographical features as we fly to our destination. Isn't this so much better than being cooped up in a tubeliner at the mercy of your FMS.

If you do find Helidon then I have something trickier for you. Continue eastbound along the Warrego Highway and you will come to Matt Tomkins neat little Gatton Campus strip. This field is actually located in your GPS, but using that is cheating. The scenery is accurate enough to use the old Mark I eyeball. Gatton Campus (YGAT) is located off the highway; southeast of the Lockyer Valley township of Gatton and you are going to overfly it as you attempt to locate another hidden gem called Glenore Grove.

Glenore Grove is located roughly two or three kilometres east of Gatton Campus. This little strip is very difficult to see when you are using the dry custom landclass files. If you are not using those textures you will be missing out on some amazing scenery and this strip will stand out like the proverbial dogs balls. The strip itself is located in the middle of a dusty paddock and you will see three aircraft already on the ground there. Don't worry though, there is plenty of room for parking.

Now we will trek down onto the mid north coast of New South Wales. Hands up those of you who have not yet been to Tony's Shack? Well you guys are in for a treat. This area of Australia is incredibly spectacular. From the low, flat croplands alongside the Macleay River to the timbered hillsides that supplied red cedar and rosewood to the loggers of the 1800's. We can proceed northwest into the rugged mountains of New England National Park and pass the venerable Andersons Sugarloaf for a landing at Tonys Shack.

Thanks to "SOS", one of our local pilots, here are the directions to Tony's Shack – "Depart Kempsey (YKMP) and head northwest looking for a pointy mountain, this is Andersons Sugarloaf. When you see the mountain head towards it and fly around to its northern side. Continue flying around Andersons Sugarloaf in an anti-clockwise direction until you are heading around the back of the mountain. You should find yourself heading towards the shack in a southwest direction and you will be lined up on finals for the strip."

If you can dissuade your host from filling you up with too much "brew" you may still

be able to fly over to the next valley west and locate the Five Mile. Five Mile is another strip located in a paddock, this one lies alongside Five Day Creek. If you manage to find Tony's place you just need to continue in a north-westerly direction into the next valley and you should be able to see the Five Mile directly below you.

Our final flight will be to the tiny strip of Somersby, located near Gosford, north of Sydney. Depart Aeropelican (YPEC) and follow the Pacific Highway south to the southern end of Lake MacQuarrie, turn west to follow the Motorway Link across to the Sydney Newcastle Freeway. Continue south passing abeam Wyong and travel down the Sydney Newcastle Freeway to where it turns from west to south at Peats Ridge Road. There you will find Somersby strip located off the western side of the freeway.

I hope you were able to find some of those little bush strips and enjoyed the experience of flying into them using nothing more than some general directions, your eyes and perhaps a road map. If you didn't manage to find some of those strips with my

(purposely) vague directions :) you can find more detailed information in the VOZ1.5 user guide.

The direction information is encoded using a standard notation of LLLDDNNN. Where LLLL is a known airfield, DDD is a three figure direction in degrees magnetic and NNN is of course a three figure distance in nautical miles.

You can also find similar small fields around northern Queensland. Located in your FS9/VOZ/Extras folder you will find a pdf called TLsma (Townsville small airports). This is a guide containing information on six strips within forty miles of the north Queensland city of Townsville.

Finally, as a teaser, Mark Lee has been working on more strips which will be released with VOZ1.6. Keep that Mark I eyeball trained on the VOZ Beta Preview Screenshot forum for sneak peaks of Toumbaal Plains House strip in northern NSW and Pittsworth Ag strip, another field located on the Darling Downs southwest of Toowoomba.



*Somersby airstrip—New South Wales*