

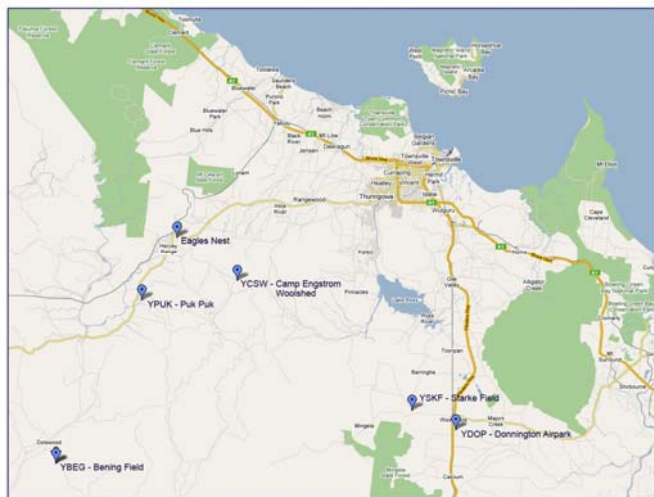
TOWNSVILLE SMALL AIRSTRIPS

A developers perspective

What is it about flight simulation that fires up peoples' imaginations? For every sim nut out there, I suspect, there is a different answer. Many like flying the tubeliners, learning about systems and integrating that

to Caboolture; in the days when such a flight meant sudden frame rate death. They were great little fields.

I remember when I first saw Mark Lees early Aratula and my pulse started racing



Townsville small airstrips regional map

knowledge into a successful flight, others like the speed and raw power of military aviation—be it modern or prop era it doesn't matter.

I, myself, like the simplicity of single engine, low and scenic. For me, it is the environment that counts; I like to see the rolling hills, patch worked pastures and tree filled valleys passing under the nose of my aircraft. I like my aircraft to be responsive and have some aerobatic capability. I like smooth gauges that don't detract from my aviating with jerky needles and the ability to smoothly and easily capture a trim for straight and level flight. Finally, I like somewhere interesting to fly to and land these aircraft.

I am trying to remember back to what inspired me to pick up the easel of flight simulator design. I remember always flying out of Steve James's Redcliffe and meandering my way out to Watts Bridge, or up

when I tried to land on those bumpy, unflattened strips, dodging the fences, the cattle, the 'roos and the powerlines! I remember telling myself that this was what bush flying should be all about.

This was the beginning of a love affair with little known, un-facaded strips. This was a whole new dimension in flying. No longer could you just dial up your GPS and see exactly where you needed to point the nose, suddenly wind and visibility became so much more of a problem, suddenly your mark one instrumentation (eyeballs) gained a focus that had slowly been lost amidst the sea of NDB's, VOR's, GPS, and DME.

Mark rapidly increased the colour of our VFR landscape with such gems as Landsborough, Canungra, Tyagarah, Dunwich and various strips around Noosa. He changed the country we flew over with additions such as Dreamworld, Seaworld, powersta-

tions, shopping centres, comms and water towers. What more could a VFR addict want?

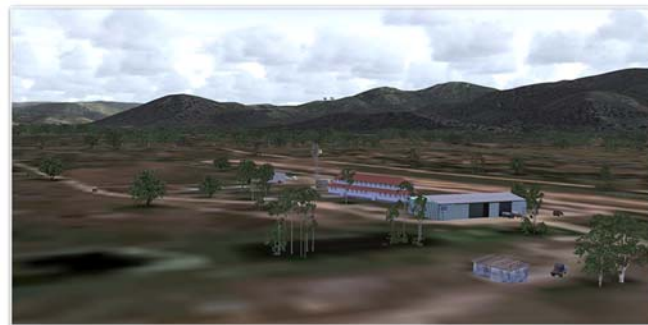
It was then I had the fortune to meet Matthew Tomkins and his wonderful extras; altered landclasses, highly detailed and accurate surrounds for Archerfield, new streams, dams. Seat of the pants flying was here and it was good. Don't stay absorbed in those instruments, look out the window and be amazed.

The only problem with all this goodness lay in the fact it was restricted (generally) to south-east Queensland and northern NSW. I was inspired by Mark and Matt to try my hand and dabble in this colourful, consuming art scape that is scenery creation. I started off with EZ-Landclass and Matt's Custom Landclass textures to see if it was possible for someone with no prior skills to increase the realism of the area north of Brisbane, around Burpengary and Narangba. Well what a sucker I was, I became absorbed with Matts CLC textures, I could see vast possibilities way beyond my capabilities. But I played and tinkered, modded and prodded, and eventually figured out how to make the textures dry and brown.

Backtracking for just a moment, here's a question to you. How many have been awestruck by that flight out of Kempsey to Tony's shack and the hospitality of Mr Morse. What a fantastic little strip lies there at the foot of Andersons Sugarloaf. It's a challenge to get in and out of, plus it lies in a remote(ish) and beautiful place. Surely I could find something like that.

I don't know what initially made me fly around Townsville, but when I started flying there I noticed this marvellous escarpment to the west. There were two little pointy hills enroute that you could fly between, as if you were flying into the jaws of the devil. I thought it would be great for a VFR nav, you know, just head into the devils mouth and then land on top of the hill. That is where I found my first little strip—the purely fictitious Eagles Nest. There was a crop texture that looked like a runway strip right on the edge of the cliff. So with a little EZ-Scenery manipulation I had my first field.

Then during a quite period at work, I examined some charts, and found numerous little military strips—all hidden away in Restricted Areas so that mere mortal



Starke Homestead

Now I was in trouble, the bug was biting and I needed more than just coarse landclass adjustment to appease that particularly troublesome beast.

pilots couldn't aviate there. I googled these locations and was lucky enough to find some images that would provide the basis for some texture reworking and

suddenly the Townsville Small Airstrips package was born.

The adventure since then has not been short of frustrations. Time consuming texture alterations and back and forth between FS9 and photoshop has absorbed countless hours, possibly better to think of it as days. Laboriously calculating coordinates and crafting the field in its correct geographic position turns into an exercise in temper control when FS9 draws a road or a power line straight through the middle of your

what you needed to achieve in the first place. Little things, perfected by Mark Lee, a broken down barbed wire fence, an old dilapidated building, a rusty old landrover coming along a dusty track to meet you. There is such scope here to paint our rural landscape, but we must also maintain its diversity.

It would be silly having six different strips that all looked identical. The same hangar, the same aircraft parked on the apron, the same vehicle parked beside the same watertank.



Arriving at Pukpuk on sunset

hard work. Shutdown flight simulator, reload the scenery design program, nudge and tweak, don't forget to move the underlying flattens and excludes, then recompile, start-up flight simulator, view the field—damn now it's half in that creek; and the process repeats itself ad-nauseum.

Finally you get the field situated perfectly and then it is time to try and blend those textures into the default landclass so that the field doesn't stand out like old Johnny Howard at a Rave party. Another session of stop/start, recompile, swear, repeal, repeat.

Then, at last, when that process is complete, it is time to start introducing some vegetation, and one or two items just to add life to the strip. Here is where you find that artists palette again. But just like a good artist you don't want to make your work look too busy, that can detract from

You get the idea. I decided early on that I wanted each of my strips to exhibit a different flavour. In some respects I have been lucky with my choice of fields, you see, they are mainly little military strips that are shut away from the masses and seen by only a few. So to open these up to us flight simmers, who navigate our simulated world without the restrictions of lines on the map, I decided to assign different uses to each field.

Bening Field, the furthest from Townsville, is a small, joint user military strip that is shared with a local mining community. In real life Bening Field services the Australian Army field training area which was previously Dotswood cattle station. There is a significant deposit of uranium in the nearby Ben Lomond area, so a fly-in mining operation could be feasible in the future, if heavens forbid, uranium mining is ever allowed there.

Camp Engstrom Woolshed has been designed as a military strip for the fly-in/fly-out of troops. Indeed there is a company in bivouac to the immediate west of the strip.

Donnington airpark was designed to service the small township of Woodstock, due south of Townsville. It is an old strip that doesn't see much traffic, nor indeed much maintenance.

Eagles Nest is an extremely challenging (read highly dangerous) strip that services a couple of homesteads belong to BaPCo, a pastoral company with extensive leases throughout the area.

Pukpuk is a general aviation strip that services local mining and cattle operations in the Paluma Range country lying to the west of Townsville.

Starke Field (pronounced starky) is a private airstrip belonging to the successful (and wealthy) Starke family. It services the main homestead which forms the centrepiece of the Starke Livestock Company.

So, in summary, it is my hope that you enjoyed reading this article, and I thank Garry for allowing me to contribute it to our new VOZ Powered News. If you would like to experience these strips for yourself, I encourage you to navigate to the FS9\VOZ\Extras folder and print out the TLsma.pdf file. There you will find a useful little guide with maps and notes to ensure you get the best from these fields.