



## **CESSNA O-1 BIRD-DOG (Bunny II)**

Scavenging the twisted remains of a dumped airframe that the Americans considered unrepairable, Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) craftsmen restored this Cessna 0-1 Bird Dog to flying condition. The aim was to send the aircraft to Australia as a tow plane for the Gliding Club at Amberley. They commenced work in August 1970, using sections of three separate airframes to make up the fuselage. They found there were few parts that couldn't be acquired with the right mix of boots, slouch hats, and cartons of Victoria Bitter. However, the procurement of an engine proved a more difficult challenge.

One of the RAAF HR Holden staff cars was subsequently 'acquired' for exchange with a US Army unit down in the Delta. Some weeks later, while the Americans beach bashed their new car, a brand new engine surplus to requirements mysteriously arrived at Nui Dat for fitment to the 'Bunny II'. The aircraft was test flown on 9 May 1971 by a US Army pilot, who reported that he had "never flown a better aircraft." A few months later it was dismantled and placed on a ship bound for Australia marked as 'spare parts'.

Australian Army Aviation's association with the 0- Bird Dog blossomed with 161 Independent Reconnaissance Flight while located at Nui Dat in South Vietnam (SVN) between 1968 and 1971. The Americans had large numbers of Bird Dogs in SVN and one was on loan to 161 during that period. RAAF Forward Air Controllers also flew the aircraft. The Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) craftsmen of 161 rebuilt the aircraft on display.

As well as the United States armed forces several South East Asian and South American countries also operated this type. These days it is a popular aircraft with the war bird fraternity. Several Bird Dogs are listed and flying on the Australian register.

## **History**

The Bird Dog history covers 47 years of reliable service, through two major US war efforts, countless hours of training and a variety of civilian flying. While in some cases it was not the most desirable aircraft for the mission, there were few missions that it could not complete.