

Brian's Image on the front page of the Newsletter

Sydney Helicopter Flight

Brian Menzies



Sydney Icons by Brian Menzies

On 3 December last year, Sydney members Brian Menzies and Tony Hilton ARPS joined Dr Peter Walmsley LRPS, Elected Trustee of RPS on a helicopter flight over the city that he organised to happen while he was visiting from the UK.

Brian's article:

Sydney Helicopter Flight

Brian Menzies

On 3 December last year, Dr Peter Walmsley LRPS, Elected Trustee of RPS, was visiting from the UK. He requested via Elaine for others to join him on a helicopter flight when he visited Sydney. Tony Hilton ARPS and I put up our hands, and we shared a chartered, doors-off helicopter flight leaving Mascot out to the eastern beaches, then up to the Harbour entrance, proceeding to the Sydney icons of the CBD, Bridge, Opera House, Barangaroo etc., before reversing the route back to base.



Mossman Bay and Great Sirius Cove by Brian Menzies

The day was fine with a patchy cloud. Take off was 10 am, so by then the light was strong, and with the patchy cloud the city was covered in direct sun or shade. Once we were airborne it quickly became obvious how blessed Sydney is with a full coastline of clean water surf beaches and quieter idyllic bays in the Harbour. A reasonable surf was running, creating a defining white wake along the length of the coastline.



Looking over the Northern Beaches, with the Central Coast in the distance by Brian Menzies

Rugged cliffs run up the Eastern shoreline, with multi-million-dollar homes and apartments lining the edge with parks and cemeteries splitting them up. The Sydney Icon grouping in the city's heart was always obvious in the distance. The quiet bays in the Harbour are also ringed with beautiful homes, with most featuring a scattered vista of moored Cruises and Yachts in the bay.



Ben Buckler Point, North Bondi (left) and Peter taking it all in (right) by Brian Menzies



Sports fields (left) and Golf aerial (right) by Brian Menzies

The new skyscrapers in Sydney have transformed the waterfront and given the CBD a dynamic lift. The new AMP building (centre of image below) won International Skyscraper of the year in 2022. The Barangaroo tower (on the right) elicits strong emotions in many Sydneysiders and is either appreciated or disliked. I admire its sculptured rotating form, and I recommend it be viewed at ground level from the nearby area to appreciate its complete presence.

The only flight path the pilot could obtain, determined by air traffic control, restricted our flying to over the water on the coast and Harbour, and we had to remain east of the Bridge. I was keen to capture the view from the New Sydney Modern extension at the Art gallery over the Botanic gardens to the CBD, Opera House and Bridge, but the flight path restriction didn't allow it.



CBD and Opera House by Brian Menzies

Choppers require very fast shutter speeds, as with doors off and constant strong vibration from the motor and rotor, you're constantly buffeted and juddering. We were allowed one camera and lens, with no loose clothing or items in our pockets. All lens hoods had to be off or taped to the lens. The vertical rotor is immediate to the rear and in line with the door opening, so if anything comes out the door, it can impact the rotor. That can be more than exciting. I chose a 24-70 lens as a wider angle, like 16-30, will generally catch the rotor blades above and landing rails below.



The flight showcased how Sydney is defined by its beautiful harbour, magnificent accessible clean surf beaches and waterways, with the crown jewel the cluster of icons around the city centre.

Point Piper beachfront homes and moorings (above) and Bondi Beach, looking west to the CBD (right) by Brian Menzies

Three lads and a helicopter: Tony, Peter and Brian (below) by our helicopter pilot



I get a great buzz shooting from a chopper, and I've been fortunate to enjoy them in various places in



Australia and overseas. The rush of air, the noise and the aerial perspective of the constantly evolving landscape require a non-stop focus and concentration to zero in on framing your shots. I always try for some straight-down shots that give me a unique composition. You feel you are no sooner airborne than coming into land again; time passes in a blink.