



SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

'Purple Heart'-Type Award for Australia – RECOMMENDED

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In January 2021, then Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester directed Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal to consider recognition for members of the ADF who are injured, wounded or killed in or as a result of their service. One year later, in January last year, a comprehensive report was published – recommending that suitable recognition should be instituted. The report recommend the institution of the following new forms of medallic and emblematic recognition:

Recommendation 1

a) a **Memorial Clasp** – to be posthumously awarded to a member of the ADF or a veteran who dies in or as a result of service. The Clasp is to be attached to the Australian campaign or service medal most relevant to the circumstances in which the death occurred and bearing, at the discretion of the veteran's family:

the date of death; or the date of the incident leading to death; or no date;

b) a **Gratitude Clasp** – to be awarded to a member of the ADF or veteran who is seriously wounded, seriously injured or suffers a serious injury in or as a result of service.

The Clasp is to be attached to the Australian campaign or service medal most relevant to the circumstances in which wounding or injury occurred and bearing, at the discretion of the veteran (or family where posthumous recognition is sought):



the date of wounding or injury; or where multiple dates of wounds or injuries have been recognised, the number of such events recognised; or no date;

c) a **Memorial Star** – A full size brooch-like emblem of a uniquely Australian design that recognises the sacrifice of the family of a member of the ADF or veteran who dies in service or whose death is service related;

d) a **Gratitude Star** – A full size brooch-like emblem of uniquely Australian design to recognise the sacrifice of the family of the member or veteran who has suffered a serious wound, serious injury or serious disease in or as a result of service; and

e) for veterans awarded the Gratitude Clasp, a lapel pin of separate and appropriate design for everyday wear at the discretion of the veteran.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Memorial Clasp, the Gratitude Clasp, the Memorial Star and the Gratitude Star be accompanied by a scroll, issued under the authority of the Governor General, to commemorate the sacrifice of the member, veteran or the family, as applicable.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the proposed new forms of recognition be available retrospectively, to recognise death, serious wounding, serious injury or serious disease that is or was brought about in or as a result of service after 2 September 1945.

In transmitting the report and recommendations to government, the report's authors said Australia, through the Order of Australia and the Australian Defence honours and awards system, already recognises the service of members of the Australian Defence Force.

"Additionally, as detailed in this report, Australia acknowledges the wounding, injury or death of such members in a variety of essential ways – for example, through health care, income support, compensation, family support, Service bereavement pins, and memorials. "But none of these consequences of service are reflected in the present medallic forms of recognition, none expressly convey the gratitude of the nation for individual sacrifice, and none provide a suitably solemn and individual emblem of that gratitude. "We have concluded that it is timely, if not incumbent, for Australia to initiate such an expression of its gratitude to members and their families. "In the attached report we detail our proposal for what we believe to be a principled scheme for providing that recognition for service-related death and serious wounding, injury or disease. "We believe it would provide a tangible and readily recognisable expression of national gratitude for the sacrifice of ADF members killed or suffering a serious wound, injury or disease in or as a result of their service and, quite separately, that of their families, and would do so in a way that allows existing defence honours and awards to better "tell the story" of that service. "While this scheme may be unprecedented in some respects, we believe it to be justifiable and achievable. "We thus commend it to you and, through you, to the Government."

Two years after the inquiry was launched and a full year after the report was handed to the government, there is no further word on the status of the recommendations.

CONTACT EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Department of Veterans' Affairs was among those who objected to the proposed recognitions. While others who were negative to the whole idea, mainly on grounds of preserving the integrity of the Australian Honours and Awards System – DVA objected out of consideration of cost for DVA "if veterans, in order to gain eligibility for a clasp, were motivated to seek acceptance of a disability where they would not otherwise do so and are not current clients or, if they were current clients with a disability assessed at less than 30 impairment points/30% WPI, were motivated to apply for reassessment where they would not otherwise do so in order to have that assessment raised to the qualifying level. The Department also suggested that there may be impacts for it if veterans had their discharge reclassified as due to medical reasons for the purpose of gaining recognition, and then sought collateral entitlements from DVA".*





Jack Garland - A Shire Pow In Germany

From John Campbell, the Shire Military History Club, written by Colin Burgess

Almost inevitably, Flight Sergeant Jack Douglas Garland, RAAF, was saddled with the nickname "Judy" by his squadron mates, and it would stick with him for life. Born in Cootamundra, New South Wales on 6 May 1920, he lived the latter part of his life with his wife Mildred (who preferred to be called Joan) in Jannali.

He enlisted in the RAAF in Sydney on 11 December 1940. Early the following year, with the service number of 403186, he was shipped over to Canada for training as a gunner in the RAAF's Empire Air Training Scheme, sailing out of Sydney in April 1941 aboard the SS Aorangi. Following an intense and extensive training course he was designated a gunner on bombers, shipped across to England, and was eventually assigned to No 97 Squadron (RCAF), that had converted to Lancaster bombers in January 1942.

In May that year, he joined a crew under the command of Flight Sergeant Gerald L. McKenna, RCAF, on Lancaster W4139, OF-V, based at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire. He then served as mid-upper gunner as they carried out bombing and target spotting raids on Cologne and Essen. On the evening of Thursday, 27 August 1942, McKenna's crew attended a briefing on a raid targeting the German industrial city of Kassel. The city was a high profile target for RAF Bomber Command as it housed several vital industrial targets, including the Fieseler aircraft plant, where the Messerschmidt Bf109 and Focke-Wulf Fw190 were built. Because of its location in central Germany it was also an important interchange for railways and roads. Eight Lancasters from 97 Squadron were scheduled to take part in the raid, although two became unserviceable shortly before take-off.



Jack as an LAC, 1941

McKenna's crew took off at 2115 and reached Germany, but their Lancaster was hit by ack-ack ground fire over Duisburg in the heavily defended Ruhr Valley, west of the target. Garland and Flight Engineer Fred Ambrose, an Australian serving in the RAF, were the only survivors from their crew. After receiving medical attention in a hospital at Duisberg for a broken femur and shrapnel wounds sustained in getting out of the doomed aircraft, Garland was transferred to a hospital at Dulag Luft. There he was interrogated in his bed and later taken to Obermassfeld hospital, which was attached to the prisoner-of-war camp of Stalag IXC in Bad Sulza. This hospital was staffed by British personnel, which would remain the situation until the end of the war.

After recovering from his wounds, Garland was transported under guard to the nearby work camp, Arbeitskommando 865, which was one of several work camps attached to Stalag IXC, and situated two kilometres east of the village of Molsdorf. Garland later discovered that an escape tunnel was being dug by a group of British engineers who had been captured at Dunkirk and St Valery. After he made some cautious enquiries he was invited to join the effort and was paired with his escape partner, a sailor from Bristol named Jack Lawrence. In fact, Jack Garland was the only Australian involved in the escape attempt. The tunnel took about six weeks to construct, with the planned exit halfway up the side of a stormwater canal to the west of the camp, about two metres above sea level.

On the night of 25 March 1943, those involved in the escape made their way to the barracks in which Garland and the tunnel crew were housed. At the appointed hour, a bunk which covered the tunnel shaft was shoved aside and the hole exposed. Two engineers then made their way into the tunnel and started work on clearing the final breach into the stormwater channel. Being the



senior NCO in the camp, Garland was asked to go first, along with Lawrence. He told me that he always felt it was a bit of a con job: "I think the English fellows had worked it out beforehand that if there was to be any sort of trouble on exiting the camp the Australian could carry the can! The idea was for us to go out in parties of twelve. It was pitch black in the tunnel, and there was no moon as we emerged into the fresh air. We more or less fell into the canal before moving off, but had only gone a few metres when one of the tower guards swung his searchlight down the canal, bathing us in the harsh light. It was as well we had been hugging the sides of the rough-hewn ditch as we all emerged and he was unable to see us. Luckily nothing happened, the light moved on, and we scrambled to the far end of the camp. We peeped over the rim of the canal and could see the patrolling guard disappearing towards the Vorlager (garrison area), so we quickly ran the forty or so metres to the cover of the woods where our hearts resumed their normal rhythm".



A 97SQN Lancaster

Garland and Lawrence quickly made their way through the darkened countryside towards the railhead at Eisenach. As dawn broke, they hid in a ditch behind a small village and covered themselves with straw to await the cover of night. By day, the area was filled with farm workers. That afternoon, a youth aged about eleven came tramping up the ditch on

his way home from school and unsuspectingly trod on Garland's leg. The boy screamed in fright and nearby farm workers rushed over to see what had caused the commotion. The two escapers reluctantly stood up and were quickly surrounded. They were soon in the hands of a fat policeman brandishing an outsized revolver. Pleased with his capture of the escapees, the policemen marched the two men into the village and locked them in the only secure place in town – the wine cellar of the local Gasthaus (hotel). It proved to be a huge mistake on his part, for when he returned the next morning to pick them up, both men had been liberally sampling the stored wines, and were in an extremely happy and uncooperative state of mind. The policeman was furious, but managed to march his prisoners all the way back to their work camp.

In all, 52 prisoners escaped through the tunnel, and though most were quickly rounded up, one managed to make his way to Switzerland and eventual freedom. The camp Kommandant and some of his guards were promptly removed from the work camp as a penalty for their laxity, and were presumably sent to do penance on the Eastern Front. Jack Garland and Jack Lawrence were sentenced to three months road labour for their part in the mass escape, a punishment which was actually in contravention of the Geneva Convention regarding recaptured escapees. But Garland said they didn't really mind, "Ten days after the escape I was taken to a small village to do our hard labour," Garland explained. "An old Feldwebel (sergeant) was in charge and he set us to digging up a section of the road. We would just lift the picks and let them drop to the roadway. The Feldwebel did his crumpet, and after screaming 'Nein, Nein, Nein!' lifted a pick and demonstrated the correct method of road digging. He managed to do in five minutes the same amount of work that had taken us all of the morning!"

After Arbeitskommando 865, Garland (now bearing the rank of Warrant Officer) was sent to the large air force camp of Stalag Luft VI in Heydekrug, and saw out the remainder of his days as a



POW in Stalag Luft IV, Gross Tychow, Pomerania (now in Poland). Following his liberation from captivity at the end of the war, Garland returned home and was finally discharged from the RAAF on 26 October 1945 after spending a short period at No 2 Medical Rehabilitation Unit in Jervis Bay.

At the time I interviewed Garland for my 1992 book, Barbed Wire & Bamboo (co-authored with Hugh Clarke), he and his wife Joan were living in Carvers Road, Jannali, just across the road from the Shell service station. He had prepared a manuscript of his adventures as a POW called On Wings Like Eagles, which was never published, but was later donated to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Jack Garland passed away at 80 years of age on 23 January 2001, and his wife Joan nine years later on 6 May 2010. They are both at rest in Woronora Cemetery.



Frank Ellis - Vultee Vengeance Pilot

First Air Cadet to reach an operational squadron

From Gordon French

Frank was born in Longreach QLD in 1924 where he was schooled by a very young Irish Nun. She was about one page ahead of him in his lessons. Frank came to Brisbane as a 17 year old and worked at the QLD Tax Office. He joined the ATC and waited for his enlistment date.

Passing his wings test on 13/3 /43 he was posted to the Vultee Vengeance. The inevitable wait for the delivery of the 400 of this aircraft that were to be delivered to the RAAF created a time at Test and Ferry at Bankstown. Sitting in the crew room there as a sprog pilot, the boss, SQNLDR Wilbur Wackett DFC asked Frank if he was busy. When Frank replied no, Wackett said, 'Come with me!' Off to Mascot in a DH 84 Dragon they go. Arriving there, Frank followed Wackett from the aircraft; 'Where are you going lad?' asked the boss. 'Take this aircraft back to Bankstown.' 'But Sir, I have never flown a twin'. 'No problem, just think of it as two Tiger Moths together'. That advice must have done the trick, as Frank and the Dragon made it back to Bankstown.



DeHavilland DH84 Dragon

While on No 1 Vengeance Course at Williamtown, Frank was not able to be the duty pilot as he had never driven a car and the duty pilot had to drive a jeep. Coming from a

family which still used a buggy, this now 19 year old was learning to fly

the Vengeance which was seven tons and had a 1600 HP engine. Passing out from the Vultee conversion course, Frank was posted to 24 SQN in New Guinea where for six months he operated out of Port Moresby, Nadzab and other PNG locations.



In 1944 a decision was taken to send the Vultees back to Australia where they were then used for target towing. Frank flew them in the Northern Territory and then flew with Doc Fenton's No 6 Communications Flight in the closing months of the war.

Frank went on to have a long post-war career in the ATC, initially at



Innisfail, then Maryborough and in Brisbane while working as a Commonwealth Bank manager. I arranged for Frank to have a ride in an F111C in 1977. When asked how he got a ride, I explained that he had arranged home loans for a number of the 1SQN aircrew and so there was no one more important.



Frank was no hero but served the RAAF well with a lot of youthful exuberance and a little skill. Not a remarkable fellow but he was an inspiration to many ATC cadets with his great stories over many years.



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Hosted by Newcastle Legacy





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WGCDR Fred North-Coombes

Task: RIC~WLM~Mt ISA~DAR (O/N) DAR~RIC, A97-168, 11-12Sep1988

*From Col Coyne, President No 37 Squadron (RAAF) Association
C-130E Loadmaster 1981-1990*

Long story short: WGCDR Fred North-Coombes (FNC), while posted to HQOC (Glenbrook), on occasion still flew the C-130E. Fred and his brother Dominic (LOGO) were born in Mauritius. For all who knew FNC with his Mauritius / South African accent, the exchanges were always amusing.

Friday 10 September 1988, Fred rang his boggy at 37SQN to arrange a LARGE tanker to meet the aircraft on Saturday morning to refuel for the flight Williamtown to Darwin. SMALL tanker turned up; 3000lb short of estimated fuel required to get to Darwin. FNC: "Hey Boggy, I thought I told you to ring WLM and order a BIG tanker!"; Boggy: "I did Sir!" Freight and pax loaded, paperwork signed, ready to go. FNC: "Hey Eng, we can show the boggy how we make fuel on ze way, eh!"



So off we go, climbed out to our first available altitude, crew coffee dispensed. Engineer and Navigator both too busy for coffee, spinning their 'prayer wheels' between surreptitious glances between each other.

Intercom call: "Pilot, Nav";

"Go ahead Nav."

Nav: "Sir, the winds are stronger than predicted, we can't make Darwin if they stay like this!!"

FNC: "Not a problem, we can go back down and make it up".

FNC: "Loadmaster, more coffee!"

So we trundle on, smoke coming off the Eng and Nav's 'prayer wheels'.

Intercom call: "Pilot, Nav"; "Go ahead Nav."

Nav: "Sir, we definitely can't make Darwin, the winds down here are worse, and stronger if we go back up!!! We will have to go into Tindal for fuel."

FNC: "Hey Boggy, get on to AOCC (Air Operations Command Centre), tell them we need to go into Tindal, need Air Movements and fuel." Boggy: "Yes Sir."

FNC: "Loadmaster, more coffee!"

So we trundle on, the Eng and Nav's 'prayer wheels' still smoking. Intercom call: "Pilot, Nav." "Go ahead Nav." The Nav had plucked up the necessary courage to inform FNC we didn't have enough fuel to even get to Tindal, we would have to divert to Mt Isa to 'top 'er up'. FNC was NOT happy; poor young boggy was on the radio to AOCC again; cancel Tindal, going into Mt Isa for fuel.

Getting ready to descend into Mt Isa the "Before Descent Crew Briefing" went something like:

FNC: "Boggy, you got the ES4s for the refueler?" Boggy: "No Sir, I didn't bring any ES4s because we were staying on base and I didn't think we would need any." FNC: "F**k wit, you always bring ES4s just in case, OK!" Boggy: "Yes Sir!"

A few minutes of silence on the aircraft intercom, then, FNC:

"Listen Boggy, when we hit the ground, YOU go out and pump ze fuel in to the aircraft; the Eng can stay up here and watch the gauges." Boggy: "Yes Sir." FNC: "Don't you mention you haven't got any ES4s until AFTER you get that fuel in, OK Boggy?"

Boggy: "Yes Sir." Well, we went into Isa, got our fuel, and departed with plenty to get to Darwin. FNC: "Nav, request direct track from present position to Darwin." Nav: "Roger!" FNC: "Eng, Balls to the wall, ze back bar, its open!" Well, not much was heard from the Boggy, other than his position reports along our direct track to Darwin.

To lighten the atmosphere on the Boggy, FNC was going through the Before Landing Checks, when, in lieu of calling 'Gear Down', FNC told the Boggy to 'Dangle the Dunlops, daddio!' and instead of 'Landing Lights', the Boggy got "Light the Lucas's Louie!" Actually, the FE had to translate for the Boggy; his mind was not in any shape for frivolity by the end of the day. FNC; a real character and good fun to fly with, unless you were the co-pilot transiting any French speaking locale: may he RIP.

Frederick North-Coombes

17 December 1943 - 22 May 2010





“Buster’s” Bomber

From Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton 26Aug21

I have little trust, in fate or superstition
If religion is your soap box, it depends on what rendition
I have witnessed the strangest things, as through life’s twisted web I wander
Some things are, as they seem, but others make me ponder

I was but a youth of seventeen, attending my first Dawn Service
They asked me to read the prayer, so I was somewhat nervous
I stood proud in my air force blues, spit polished shoes and all
When first light bathed the cenotaph, I felt ten feet tall

The bugle’s loud, but haunting notes, pierced the chilly air
The wreaths were laid upon the steps, with respect and utmost care
The anthem played, I made my salute and returned to join the crowd
While the autumn mist, slowly rose, like a lifting shroud

Then I heard it, far, far off from the east,
The sound of aircraft engines, like some struggling beast,
Closer, ever closer, till it was overhead
I gazed up and saw nothing, just fading stars instead

But just as swift, it was gone and I know this sounds absurd
I knew from wartime movies. It was a Lancaster I had heard
A voice then whispered in my ear.” I guess you heard it too
It’s “Busters” ghostly bomber, lost with all her crew”

Buster was my closest mate, we met while still at school
Loved dearly by his parents, he was his mother’s jewel
We looked after each other, of that there’s little doubt
And both joined the air force, when the war broke out

We learned to fly at “Quinty”, not far from Wagga town
In winter it was freezing, in summer, sunburnt brown
After mastering “Aggie” Anson, we set off in great haste
To do our advanced training, in Canada’s frozen waste

We ended up at Waddington, a Lincolnshire bomber base
Where the beer was warm, the weather cold and everything arse about face
We flew near every second night, thirty ops made a tour
Bombing every city, based along the Ruhr

If we didn’t hit the target, we’d have to go back again
After three months operations, we were down to half our men
Replacements, when they arrived, didn’t seem to be afraid
But we lost far too many, on their first “Big City” raid

Stress and strain took their toll, many had the shakes
But we carried on regardless, to prove, we still had what it takes
Our flying suits were heated, but we were always cold
Trapped in between the flak and the night fighters’ fold

I was well and truly time expired, Buster was one trip shy
When they told us we were going home, to teach fledglings how to fly
Aircrew learn the hard way, never tempt your fate
But for poor young Buster, the warning came too late



He'd fly mission number sixty and roll the devil's dice
But for this single act of valour, he would pay the highest price
I farewelled him at dispersals and went to catch my bus
That would take me to the troopship, no dramas and no fuss

I listened till his engines, faded to a hum
Remembering his final words "Give my love to mum"
We'd both catch up in this home town, on next Anzac Day
And remember all the mates who died, in that tragic fray

The loss of your closest friend, in war is nothing new
He disappeared off the Dutch coast, it was just as if he knew
He flies in from eternity, every single year
Knowing that in his soul, he'll find me waiting here

Based on a true story



Veterans' Legislation Reform Consultation Pathway Takes Shape

Media Release - Minister Keogh
Department of Veterans' Affairs
16 February 2023



THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

Today the Albanese Government has taken the next step in responding to the recommendations of the Interim Report by the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide by commencing public consultation on a Pathway to simplify veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation.

In September 2022 the Albanese Government accepted Recommendation 1 of the Interim Report, agreeing there was an urgent need to simplify the existing legislation. The proposed pathway to simplify the Veterans' legislation will be available from today for public consultation. The proposed pathway seeks to reform more than a century of veterans' entitlement legislation, providing veterans the support they not only need, but deserve.

The Pathway for consultation anticipates:

- New claims under existing schemes will cease after a transition period, from which point all new veteran claims will be dealt with under an improved *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* (MRCA) as the sole ongoing Act. The MRCA currently services the majority of claims.
- All benefits under existing schemes will continue unaffected, with only new claims or claims relating to deteriorated conditions to instead be covered by the single ongoing Act.

The consultation process will inform the way forward for government to simplify veterans' legislation. The Albanese Government is committed to a thorough and considered process which will deliver a better future for veterans and their families.



More information on the Pathway, and an opportunity to provide feedback can be found here – www.dva.gov.au/legislationconsultation2023

Note: For veterans and families this day may be an emotional time and lead to feelings of distress. You are encouraged to include the contact information for Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling in your stories. Open Arms is available 24/7 on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046) or visit OpenArms.gov.au

Media contact: media.team@dva.gov.au



Air Force Reduces Initial Training Times



Proud recruits march onto the parade ground at 1 Recruit Training Unit at RAAF Base Wagga Wagga.
Story by Squadron Leader Matt Kelly. Photo by Leading Aircraftwoman Katharine Pearson

Australia's newest aviators will receive a modernised and streamlined introduction to the Royal Australian Air Force starting this year, with both 1 Recruit Training Unit (1RTU) and Officer Training School (OTS) revamping their Initial Military Training (IMT) courses. The 1RTU initial recruit course has been shortened from 11 weeks to nine, and the OTS Initial Officer Course (IOC) has been reduced from 17 to 14 weeks.

Commanding Officer 1RTU, Wing Commander David Borg, applauded his team's efforts and said that while the initial recruit course now had fewer training days, the quality of graduate will not change. "The team has worked tirelessly to produce a new program that achieves the learning outcomes of the previous version and holds 1RTU in good stead to increase training capacity over the coming years in accordance with the Australian government's strategic intent," Wing Commander Borg said. He noted that while the course was shorter overall, some components received greater focus in the new program. "One of the more challenging aspects of the course is meeting RAAF physical-fitness standards," Wing Commander Borg said. "The team recognised this and added more physical training sessions while keeping the summative assessment in the same week as the previous program."

Commanding Officer of OTS, Wing Commander Garth Herriot, also praised the work of his team and highlighted the benefits of the new course. "The revision of the IOC has provided the



opportunity to question how we develop our people, focus on approved learning outcomes and identify efficiencies within the course,” Wing Commander Garth Herriot said. “As an IMT school, our mission is not to produce a complete workforce package, but rather, deliver a solid foundation for resilient, fit-for-purpose war fighters who have the ability and drive to develop further through workplace engagement, specific employment training and the professional military-education framework. “Further, the restructuring of the course reduces the duplication of training for commissioning aviators, minimising their attendance and providing personnel capability back to the Royal Australian Air Force.”

The new versions of the courses will be trialled in the first part of 2023, after which feedback will be invited from key stakeholders before they receive final approval.



Free Book Offer – Escape Survive – or Die

From Bryn Evans

In work on my next book, *Escape, Survive – or Die*, one area of my research is the series of air raids from August 1943 to March 1944 in WWII by RAF Bomber Command on Berlin. It is commonly known as the Battle of Berlin, in which the strategy of RAF Bomber Command was to bomb Berlin to total destruction, and force Hitler to surrender. As with all my previous books on the worldwide air wars in WWII, I am again struck by the prominence of Australian airmen ‘punching above their weight’, in the thick of operations in all main theatres against the Japanese and German regimes.

In the last days of January 1944, the Battle of Berlin was approaching a tipping point, although the bomber crews were unaware of this. On the night of 28/29 January 1944 in a raid on Berlin, Australian Pilot Officer D. Shipley was a tail gunner on a Halifax bomber of No 10 Squadron RAF. The route to Berlin was planned as a long roundabout flight of more than three hours, first over the North Sea, then across Denmark and the Baltic Sea, before turning south east to Berlin.

It was a freezing winter night with heavy cloud and icy conditions. Departure of the main bomber force of 677 aircraft, 432 Lancasters, 241 Halifaxes and 4 Mosquitos, was delayed twice because of the bad weather, until take-off began at midnight. Many crews were already exhausted from flying on a raid to Berlin the previous night. On the outward leg over the North Sea, the atrocious weather contributed to nearly 10% of the bombers being forced to turn back.

However the advance force of Pathfinder Mosquitos arrived over the Berlin target on schedule, and provided concentrated, accurate marking. On the bombing run approach, Pilot Officer Shipley’s Halifax was attacked by an enemy fighter, and he saw one of his aircraft’s engines catch fire immediately. Almost in the same instant Shipley felt the bomber bank violently, like a wounded buffalo veering away from a

hunter’s rifle.

“Our skipper, Flight Lieutenant Kilsby dived and corkscrewed to evade the fighter; he was a beauty, and that put out the flames. He then flew another circuit on three engines to bring us back on to the bombing run again.

Then all of a sudden, there came the same chatter of a fighter’s cannon, which I will never forget till my dying day. He hit us from underneath and ignited the overload tanks carried in a portion of our bomb bays.”



**Halifax LV-833 P-Peter of No 466 Squadron RAF 1944,
and Australian Bomb Aimer Flight Sergeant Keith
Campbell, from Tamworth NSW**



The gunfire almost certainly came from a fighter with the upward firing gun, known by the Luftwaffe as schräge Musik (jazz music). Kilsby at once gave the command to bale out. Shipley knew he had split seconds to save himself.

“I threw myself backwards to get out of this burning hulk. To my horror, I was caught up by my right leg which was trapped in the wall of the turret. This was a terrifying experience to me, because the flames and slipstream were overpowering. Even though I clawed at the sides of the turret, I was unable to free my leg.”

Shipley was facing death.

“I can assure you it is a frightening thing. The last things I can remember are the frantic attempts to free myself...and my despairing appeal to God...my life passed before me; people and events of years gone by were graphically depicted. It was so real. My darling mother, father, fiancé and family, all flashing before me. I knew my number was up.”

Source: Edited summary extract from, The Berlin Raids, Martin Middlebrook, Cassell Military Paperbacks, London, 2000

I am currently researching and working on Escape, Survive – or Die, which is a collection of extraordinary survival experiences by men and women in WWII, from all three Allied services and civilian life. It is planned for publication in early 2024. As in all my books, it has an approach and a focus on personal experiences and eyewitness accounts.

I seek contact with surviving veterans, their family or friends, who have a remarkable survival experience story from WWII, that is unpublished or little known. Documentation by a veteran or a third party is preferred, and photographs from their service will be especially welcomed.

Any story submitted which is considered worthy of inclusion will be eligible for a complimentary signed first edition of my last book, Airmen’s Incredible Escapes, or any of my previous books, and in addition a complimentary signed first edition of Escape, Survive – or Die, on its publication with Pen & Sword Books, UK.

I would be delighted to discuss any aspect of this offer; my contact details are shown below:

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RAAF Operation Westbound

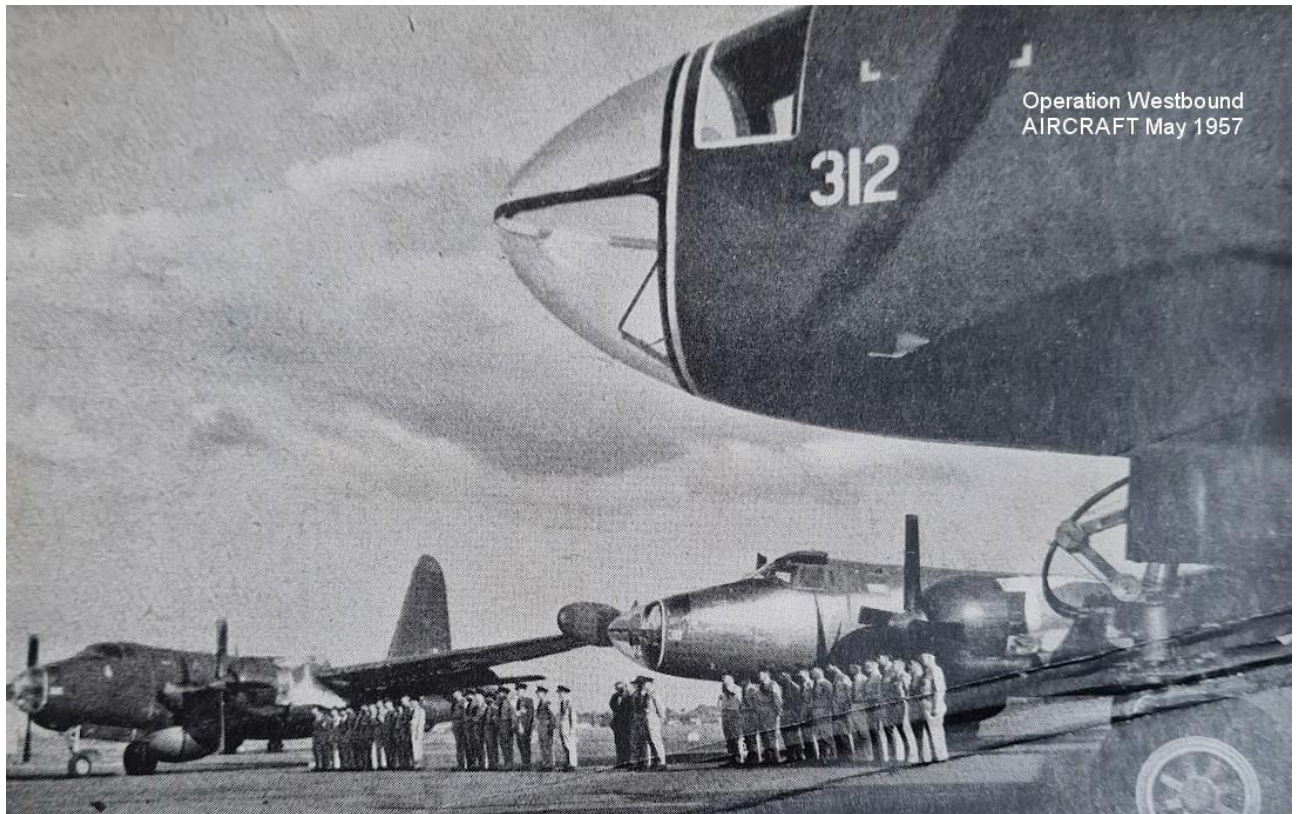
From John Williams

John joined the RAAF Apprentice Scheme RSTT Wagga 1952 aged 16 years; RAAF Instrument Fitter 1954; learnt to fly the Tiger Moth at Wagga Aero Club 1953. He flew aircraft for 45 years, 15 types.

In 1957 I was an Instrument Fitter in the RAAF serving with 11SQN when the Australian Defence Minister was sent to Africa for the Independence Celebrations of Ghana. 11SQN sent three Neptunes; the lead aircraft for weather and drift ahead, the second aircraft carrying the Defence Minister and the third aircraft for search and rescue. We flew across the Atlantic to a British Protectorate called Bermuda Island. We were told that Bermuda was a holiday resort for the rich and famous.



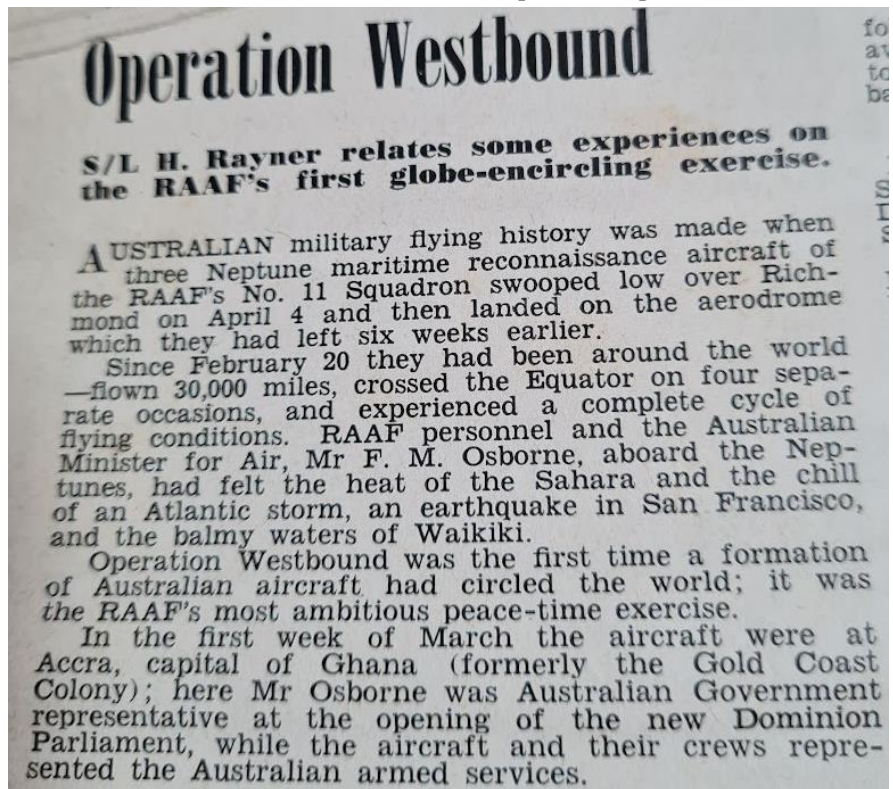
After taxiing into the airport, we were met by an Australian woman who had lived on the Island for ten years. She had organised a female escort for each of our 42 people, matching each of the escorts to our ages.



She had contacted the Australian Embassy in Washington DC and obtained all our details, including the age of each individual. Each of the ladies was briefed to pick us up at our hotels and escort us out to dinner and then on to a night out on the town. The Lady contacted all the hotels, restaurants and nightclubs and advised them of our visit. As a group they all decided to host the Australians; giving really good discounts. What can one say!!

Except like Wow!! Wow!! Everyone had a great time and a lot of partying was done into the wee small hours.

Editor's Note: Op Westbound was covered in Issue 16 (Mar 21) however, this is a completely different perspective.





Some Interesting Statistics

From Veterans Wellbeing Network, Mid North Coast via John King, VP RADAR Branch



E: contact@vcmnc.org.au

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Veteran and Family advocacy sector snapshot

- This is a snapshot into the Military Veterans advocacy sector.

Veterans and Families

The following data has been extracted from the Census 2021:

- 581,139 Australians have reported they have served or are currently serving in the Australian Defence Force (496,276 veterans and 84,865 current serving ADF members).
- 1 in 20 households with at least one person who has served.
- Currently around 247,000 veterans receive support from the DVA. This leaves approximately 334,139 veterans not known to DVA support or they do not require DVA support.
- The largest age group for veterans is 65-74 years of age.
- Veterans are more likely to participate in volunteer work compared to the general population.

Acts governing Veteran benefits

The following are Commonwealth Acts governing the award of benefits to Veterans:

- The Compensation (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1971 (C(CE)),
- The Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA),
- The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-Related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA), and
- The Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)

One or multiple Acts may apply to a Veteran's claim for disability.

Total DVA claims in the backlog

The following data is provided by DVA and is current as at 25 Feb 2023.

Claim type	Number as at 30 Nov 2022	Number as at 31 Dec 2022	Number as at 31 Jan 2023	Change from previous month
Liability (DRCA, MRCA, VEA)	32,323	31,632	29,938	-1,694
Perm. Impairment (DRCA, MRCA)	11,442	12,231	11,980	-251
Incapacity (DRCA, MRCA)	647	754	723	-31
Totals:	44,412	44,617	42,641	-1,976

Total claims in the backlog.

DVA Claims processing times

Types of claims	Average number of days to:		
	Decide a claim	Allocate to a decision maker	Decision to be made
MRCA Initial Liability	413	301	109
DRCA Initial Liability	434	233	183
MRCA Permanent Impairment	254	104	138
DRCA Permanent Impairment	239	79	148
MRCA/DRCA Incapacity Payments	114	21	71
War Widow(er)'s pension	88	Not available	Not available
VEA Disability Compensation Payment	453	226	206



Comparison with Workers’ Compensation NSW

Timeframes for assessing claims under NSW iCare KPIs:

- Within three days of reporting an injury, the claims service provider will have reviewed the information provided and will call the injured person.
- Within seven days a full assessment will have occurred. In most cases, liability will have been determined and the injured person will receive confirmation of the level of support available.

ATDP qualified Advocates

Advocacy on behalf of a Veteran can be provided by:

- The Veteran themselves,
- A family member or friend,
- ATDP (DVA) qualified Advocates¹ (both volunteer and paid²), and
- Advocates who charge Veterans on a fee for service basis (this includes lawyers).

The following data for ATDP qualified Advocates has been provided by DVA and is current as at 31 Jan 2023.

ESO Advocate ATDP qual	Level 1 (Under supervision)	Level 2 (Primary claims and reviews)	Level 3 (VRB)	Level 4 (AAT)	Total
Wellbeing (W) Advocates	42	198	N/A	N/A	240
Compensation (C) Advocates	99	191	47	5	342
Advocates with both W and C qualifications	C1/W1	C2/W1	C3/W1	C4/W1	
	11	11	2	0	24
	C1/W2	C2/W2	C3/W2	C4/W2	
	6	58	21	8	93
Total Advocates:					699

Region 1		Region 2			Region 3			Total
QLD	NT	NSW	ACT	WA	SA	TAS	VIC	
268	5	191	18	28	36	19	134	699

Summary

In summary, there are multiple Acts that govern the decision process before disability entitlements can be awarded. The claims application process is complex for the Veteran who submits their own claims.

As such DVA and the Ex-Service Organisations (ESO) developed a nationally accredited training package to provide Advocates with the knowledge and experience to support Veterans. However, individuals and organisations without ATDP qualifications can also offer a fee for service for Veterans which reduces the Veteran’s entitlement package awarded by DVA.

1. Qualifications are Nationally Accredited with ASQA.
2. The paid Advocates do not charge the Veteran for services.





South Australian Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize

*From Peter Dowling, RAAF Association – Victorian Division, Sunderland Branch
Reprinted with permission from The Sunderlander Newsletter*

Just before Anzac Day, the branch received a request from FLTLT Richard King of 10 Squadron RAAF. He was seeking assistance for a young lady in South Australia who was pursuing information about her great, great uncle, Warrant Officer Joseph Colwyn Kelly, who served as an Air Gunner with 10 Squadron and was lost over the Bay of Biscay in 1943.

Olivia, a year 10 student, was researching for an entry in the South Australian Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize. The prize is an opportunity for all South Australian Year 9 and 10 students to research someone in World War One or World War Two.

After much research, Olivia submitted her comprehensive entry which was shortlisted by a panel consisting of representatives from RSL of South Australia, the Virtual War Memorial Australia and the History Teachers' Association of South Australia. she was interviewed by representatives of the Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize and in November, Olivia was presented with a certificate and medal.

Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize

Congratulations to year 10 student Olivia Brook who has been selected as an awardee for the 2022 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize.

Olivia's submission was considered by a judging panel consisting of representatives from the Returned Services League (RSL) of SA, the Virtual War Memorial Australia and the History Teachers' Association of South Australia. Following the initial judging round, Olivia attended an interview in Adelaide with representatives of the Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize.

Olivia will be presented with a certificate and medal in November, and has been invited to attend a 12-day study seminar in the Northern Territory in 2023 (or potentially to Vietnam, depending on COVID restrictions). Her submission will also be published on the Virtual War Memorial Australia website.

Olivia's submission told the story of her great, great uncle, Colwyn Kelly and his RAAF involvement in the Second World War. Olivia completed independent research, contacting organisations in the UK to develop an engaging and considered reflection on Colwyn's



role in the Australian Armed Forces during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Megan Tucker
Leader of Literacy and HASS



Olivia with CO 10SQN, WgCDR Maz Jovanovich

As part of the award, she will participate in a 12-day study trip to Darwin or possibly Vietnam if COVID settles down. While in Darwin she will potentially speak at the Darwin Anzac Day Ceremony.

Since the announcement of the award, Olivia has visited 10 SQN where she was hosted by the CO, WgCDR Maz Jovanovich. She was briefed on the Squadron and introduced to the AP-C3 flight simulator, successfully landing several times.

Our congratulations are extended to Olivia, a wonderful example of our young people with an appreciation for the

sacrifices of our servicemen and women, in particular our RAAF personnel.





Tribute: 407986 Warrant Officer Joseph Colwyn Kelly (known as Colwyn), 10 Squadron RAAF

*From Peter Dowling, RAAF Association – Victorian Division, Sunderland Branch
Reprinted with permission from The Sunderlander Newsletter*

Born in Maitland NSW, Colwyn grew up in Urania South Australia. On 27 February 1941 in North Adelaide, Colwyn enlisted in the RAAF. He undertook his Initial Training at Pearce in Perth and continued his air gunnery training No1 Wireless Air Gunnery School (1 WAGS) in Ballarat and later at Evans Head in Sydney.

Colwyn joined 10 Squadron RAAF and subsequently, on 30 March 1942, boarded RMS Queen Mary bound for the UK via New Zealand, the Panama Canal and the treacherous Atlantic Ocean crossing, disembarking in Port Glasgow, Scotland on 8 May 1942. He marched into the Squadron at Mount Batten, Plymouth on 16 May 1942. As a qualified Air Gunner (AG), Colwyn was soon on operations.

On 1 January 1943, Sunderland W 4004, captained by Flying Officer Kerv Beeton, and crew including Colwyn, while conducting an antishipping reconnaissance patrol from Mount Batten successfully located a German blockade runner. In response to intelligence reporting, Beeton and his crew had been dispatched in conditions of high winds, low cloud and driving rain to search for the vessel. After more than eight hours searching employing a complicated patrol pattern, the crew located the *Rhakotis* sailing at 10 knots in heavy seas. By the expedient laying of a line of smoke flares the Sunderland guided the cruiser HMS Scylla to the location of the blockade runner, which was subsequently sunk at 1830 hrs.



Sunderland W4004 RB-Z

With the aid of searchlights, as it was too windy to establish a proper flare path, the Sunderland landed at Mount Batten with precious little fuel remaining after 13 and a half hours airborne. The Captain and crew subsequently received “personal congratulations on a fine piece of work” from the Area Officer Commanding-in-Chief.

On 17 May 1943 Sunderland W4004 RB-Z took off at 0517 on an antisubmarine (AS) patrol in the Bay of Biscay. The aircraft and crew were shot down with no survivors.

A quote from the Squadron CO WNG COMD Jeff Hartnell’s diary, states that:

“Mackenzie (pilot of W4004) was shot down by Ju88 in the bay; we think about 8:30 am, we didn’t know about it until he was overdue, because he didn’t send out any messages. Reg Marks (flight commander) went out looking for them at night but didn’t find any trace. The 88s have been a bit active, and Mac was about the 4th or 5th in a couple of days”.

German Luftwaffe records indicate that Sunderland W4004 was officially shot down by HPTM Hans Morr in a JU88 at 8.20am. Together with his crew mates, Colwyn was lost at the age of 26, and like most of the Sunderland squadrons’ casualties, has no known grave.

More information about 1WAGS can be found here: www.1wags.org.au





Almost Missed Australia While Bombing

From Phil Frawley



©GREG ANDREW

The beautiful French lady loaded with four Mk-82 500 pound bombs on RPK-10 fuel tanks

During my time at 77 Squadron flying the Mirage, we spent time at the bare base Learmonth on Australia's North West coast. This was a very good detachment with excellent flying to be had. On one such detachment the Squadron ran a bombing program with a gradual build up to quite complex operational style missions that involved low level high speed ingress and egress into and out of the target area. One of the missions had the aircraft fitted with the dreaded RPK-10 external fuel tank and bomb carrier. Even though I had flown with these tanks before I hadn't dropped bombs from them. The bombing range South of Learmonth was huge and extended all the way to the coastline.

My mission lead was Dave Pietsch, a famous fighter pilot in the RAAF and a legendary operator. The mission brief was extensive, covering most aspects of the execution of how we would complete the task. The briefed attack was to be a 30 degree pull up from a predetermined distance followed by a roll to inverted and pull to 45 degrees nose down attack dive. Release parameters were briefed and I questioned how to identify the target from the 8,000 feet release height. The answer given was that since we were dropping four 500 pound Mark 82 high explosive bombs I could drop on leads bombs that would have impacted as I rolled out on attack heading. For me this was a great relief because any responsibility for the impact position of the weapons lay with Dave Pietsch.

The mission was difficult and I worked hard to meet Dave's expectations concentrating on every detail and ensuring that I flew in the correct formation and adhered to my split sequence and timing as accurately as I possibly could. Into the attack sequence I double checked that all my switches were set to Salvo off the four big bombs. I was very pleased with myself as I executed the 4 'G' pull up and roll to inverted sighting lead's bomb impacts which by this time had turned



into a massive dust cloud. I carefully aimed for the centre of the cloud and waited for the release height. At release height all I had to do was press and hold the bomb release button and it would be done.

As I pressed the bomb release I was startled by two large 'bangs' from either side of the aircraft. I instinctively pulled out of the dive and at the same time I realised it was just the sound of the bomb ejectors going off on the side of the empty fuel tanks which amplified the sound. I then committed a very bad error and repressed the bomb release button releasing the two remaining bombs. Unfortunately, at this time I was almost in level flight and doing about 600 knots (1100 Km/Hr) and heading West towards the coast. I didn't sight the impacts but I informed the Range Safety Officer (RSO) of my mistake.

I can only imagine what poor old Dave Pietsch was thinking as we egressed out of the target area and headed back to Learmonth. The debrief was quite frank and honest and my shortcomings were well explained to me. I subsequently had a 'chat' with the Commanding Officer (CO) and the Executive Officer (XO) of the Squadron who listened to my explanation about not being told that the RPK-10s made a loud bang when they ejected the bombs. The CO then decided that we would wait for the RSO's report on where the bombs impacted before embarking on a plan of action (punishment).



The nervous wait ended when the RSO reported that evening that the bombs had impacted within the confines of the bombing range approximately three miles from the intended target and 50 metres from the coastline, although there was evidence of shrapnel damage to a four wheel drive track right on the edge of the beach. The CO and XO were relieved that a report to higher authority was not required, and the fact that I was the laughing stock of the whole squadron, including the maintenance guys, was punishment enough. I was now infamous for having almost missed Australia while dropping bombs.



So that's what happened to my Xmas present!





RAAF and Evacuations from Vietnam in 1975

This month we commemorate the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) humanitarian efforts in 1975, during the final days of the Vietnam War. Despite the risks, they played a vital role before the fall of Saigon.

Reprinted from Department of Veterans Affairs ANZAC Portal

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2023), RAAF and evacuations from Vietnam in 1975, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 16 March 2023, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/vietnam-war-1962-1975/royal-australian-air-force/raaf-1975>

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) played a significant role in humanitarian efforts during the final days of the Vietnam War in 1975. As the situation in South Vietnam deteriorated rapidly, with the North Vietnamese Army advancing towards Saigon, the RAAF helped evacuate Australian citizens and other foreign nationals from the country.

In particular, the RAAF deployed a fleet of C-130 Hercules transport planes to Saigon, which was used to fly out refugees and evacuees to safety. These planes also transported essential medical supplies, food, and water to those in need. One notable mission carried out by the RAAF was Operation Babylift, which began on 4 April 1975. This was a massive effort to evacuate orphaned Vietnamese children and bring them to safety in Australia and other countries. The RAAF contributed several of its C-130 transport planes to the mission, flying in and out of Saigon under extremely challenging conditions. Despite facing significant risks, the RAAF personnel involved in these humanitarian efforts worked tirelessly to ensure that as many people as possible were evacuated safely. The RAAF's efforts in Vietnam in 1975 have been recognised as an important chapter in the organisation's history, demonstrating the vital role that military forces can play in providing humanitarian assistance during times of crisis.

Planning and first evacuations

In his book *Vietnam*, Paul Ham related the story of Flying Officer Geoff Rose's return to 'routine operations' after a period of heavy work during the post-Cyclone Tracy relief effort. Back at home and expecting visitors for the 1975 Easter long weekend, Rose answered a knock on his door to find instead his squadron's navigator, Peter Gerstle, standing there with urgent news. According to Ham, Gerstle said:



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01973.001

Wearing civilian clothes, Wing Commander John Mitchell briefs Detachment S's Hercules crews in the Embassy Hotel's ground-floor restaurant on 6 April 1975. AWM P01973.001

“Can't tell you where, Geoff ... but pack your bags ... and come to the squadron – ASAP!”

Later that day, Rose was airborne, flying in a Hercules from Richmond at the foot of the Blue Mountains to Butterworth on Malaysia's west coast. The story of how Rose and his fellow airmen found themselves en-route to Malaya began on 29 March 1975.

Facing a humanitarian crisis and imminent defeat in a war that, in one form or another, had lasted decades, the South Vietnamese Government urgently asked Australia for help. Having taken its combat troops out of Vietnam several years before, Australia responded by despatching



eight Hercules from Richmond and two Dakotas from Butterworth. On the ground at Butterworth, Wing Commander John Mitchell briefed his aircrews, now part of what the Air Force called 'Headquarters Richmond, Detachment S'. The news was grim. A North Vietnamese offensive was making rapid headway. South Vietnam was on the brink.

Over a couple of days, first Da Nang, then Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay fell to the communists.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P05608.005

South Vietnamese refugees crowd the cargo compartment of an RAAF Detachment S Hercules in April 1975. AWM P05608.005

With the ground deteriorating quickly, two RAAF Hercules flew into the chaos at Phan Rang to ferry refugees to Can Tho. On the tarmac, one of the aircraft was mobbed. When a salvo of rockets landed a few hundred metres away, a panicked guard, firing into the air, put his bullets through the Hercules tail. Nevertheless, the Australians evacuated some 1,500 refugees to Can Tho that day.

Operation Babylift

South Vietnam's population was moving all at once. As their forebears had done in times of war, they fled an approaching enemy, seeking safety to the south and hoping for a way out. Thousands of orphans were caught in the mad rush of people vying for a means of escape. The children were far too young to appreciate the gravity of the situation. Some had been chosen for adoption in Australia, while others had homes waiting for them in the United States. In early April 1975, the United States and Australia began evacuating the Vietnamese children in a series of flights known as Operation Babylift.

On 4 April, two days after the United States announced Babylift, two Australian Hercules crews stood on the tarmac of Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport chatting with the crew of a giant American Galaxy. After all their passengers were on board, the Americans took off, followed by the first Hercules. On the Australian plane, loaded with babies – the older ones five to a litter and the smallest infants in cardboard boxes on the floor, all with water bottles between their lips to ease the pain of changing air pressure – all went well, and they headed west to Bangkok. But on the Galaxy, disaster struck. With 243 children, their escorts, medical staff and aircrew on board, the



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P01973.002

RAAF aircrew comfort some of the babies with bottles before take-off during the second airlift of orphans from Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport. AWM P01973.002



plane's cargo door blew off soon after take-off. The pilots tried to return to the runway, but two kilometres from the airport, the stricken aircraft hit the ground, bounced over the Saigon River and exploded. There were few survivors. The dead included 143 babies and two Adelaide women, Lee Makk and Margaret Moses, who had volunteered to help with the children.

A few hours later, the two Hercules landed at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport and disembarked 194 children and the three doctors and 20 nurses who had tended the infants. Other RAAF Hercules brought some 80 Australian civilians, mostly embassy officials and their families, out of Saigon.

Life in a dangerous city

In the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon, 100 or so RAAF personnel of Detachment S lived in the relative haven of the Embassy Hotel, just 150m from the Presidential Palace.

Around them, social order was collapsing. On 8 April, an Australian crew waiting to land at Tan



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P01973.005

The Embassy Hotel in Saigon where Detachment S was quartered before the encroaching enemy forced their departure for safer quarters in Bangkok. South Vietnam's Presidential Palace was located further along the same street. AWM P01973.005

Son Nhut noticed a South Vietnamese F-5 flying low over Saigon and wondered what the pilot was doing. At the same time, on the ground, the RAAF contingent's senior officer, Group Captain Lyall Klaffer, was walking between the Embassy Hotel and the Caravelle Hotel, which was home to the Australian Embassy, when he heard machine guns and the roar of a low flying jet. He looked up in time to see two high explosive bombs dropping from the aircraft onto the Presidential Palace. At the Embassy Hotel, broken glass showered Australian aircrew as they were eating breakfast. The jet's pilot is believed to have landed his plane on a North Vietnamese airfield. At around the same time, some of the RAAF personnel were threatened at gunpoint by a South Vietnamese officer who made it clear that if he couldn't get out of Vietnam, neither could anyone else.

The risk of sabotage seemed all too real, and in any case, the enemy was drawing nearer. On 14 April, shells ignited the Bien Hoa airbase's bomb storage area in a massive explosion just 30km from Saigon. No longer safe in South Vietnam's capital, the Australians decamped for Bangkok, where they took up residence in the Sheraton and Montien hotels, flying into Tan Son Nhut each day to carry out operations and returning to Bangkok in the evening.

The end in Vietnam

More orphans were flown out on 17 April, ending that part of the operation. But the Australian airmen remained to carry out airlifts coordinated by the United States Aid Organisation. The Australians were joined by a detachment of Royal New Zealand Air Force personnel flying Bristol Freighters and later C-130s. Together, as they flew emergency food, medical and other relief supplies to some 40,000 refugees now crowded into a former POW camp at An Thoi on Phu Quoc island, they witnessed the Vietnam War's dying days in all its bloody confusion. Rockets hit the



airfield, and some RAAF personnel saw 30 mutinous South Vietnamese marines executed. Don Muang Airport, a combined civilian-military airport to the north of Bangkok, was a hive of activity as humanitarian agencies stockpiled relief supplies for transport to Saigon.

Working on the civilian side of the airport in the stifling Bangkok heat, in the sweltering cargo bays of their aircraft, the Australian crews started exhibiting signs of heat exhaustion. Soon they were moved to the military side of the airport, where better facilities eased their task a little.

On Anzac Day 1975, the last three RAAF flights landed in Saigon. The war was entering its final days. Just before 7 o'clock that evening, the Australian Ambassador Geoffrey Price and the last 10 of his Australian staff members were brought out of South Vietnam, along with 15 Vietnamese refugees and nine Australian journalists. Earlier flights carried out a small group of orphans and 34 Vietnamese nuns. Left behind were some 130 Vietnamese who had the approval to be flown out, along with another 30 former employees of the Australian Embassy. Loyal staff who had served Australia for years were left to their fate.

Last to leave

The last Australian military personnel to leave Vietnam, 13 years after the first had arrived, were four Air Defence Guards: Sergeant John Hansen, Corporal Ian Dainer, Leading Aircraftman Trevor Nye and Leading Aircraftman Mick Sheean. Left behind when the last evacuation aircraft took off from Tan Son Nhut, they had neither support, supplies nor means of communication. Carrying a pistol and four rounds of ammunition each, they had no idea how long it might be before rescue came. Meanwhile, the din of gunfire and rocket explosions around the airport grew louder, and the North Vietnamese drew nearer. Of more immediate concern, perhaps, was the threat from South Vietnamese personnel facing imminent defeat and a deeply uncertain future. None of the four RAAF personnel could be sure that these soldiers, feeling deserted by their allies, nearly all of whom had now fled the communist onslaught, would not turn on them in these final desperate hours. Fortunately, a Hercules had been detailed to circle off South Vietnam's coast to collect anyone who had been left behind. The relief felt by the four Australians when the RAAF transport came into view can only be imagined.

More than 200 people – air and ground crew, equipment and administration personnel, nurses and other medical staff – flew on operations during the RAAF's final involvement in the Vietnam War.

Some flew into the Laotian capital, Vientiane. Like Cambodia, Laos had been dragged into the war only to share in a crushing defeat.

By the end of April 1975, the three countries which had compromised the territory of the former French Indochina – Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia – were under communist control.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P01973.003

An Thoi on Phu Quoc Island. The runway, made of perforated steel matting, was narrow, slippery and short, particularly for a heavily laden Hercules. RAAF evacuation pilots who served in South Vietnam in 1975 recalled that the shock wave caused by an aircraft landing on the matting would travel its length before snapping back towards the plane in what the Official Historian called a 'disconcerting manner'. AWM P01973.003





Roy Riddel, RAAF - Part one: To War

From Peter Roberts and Judy Riddel

Roy Gordon Riddel was born in Brisbane on 9 June 1919 to Morningside Shire clerk John Riddel and his wife Gertrude. He found a love of flying in 1931 when his father took him to Mascot for a flight in a Genairco. In his youth he also enjoyed swimming, tennis and football, and in his final years at school at the Church of England Grammar School played inside centre for the first XV. Education was followed by employment as a Bank Clerk with the Commonwealth Bank in 1937, and commerce studies at Queensland University. In July 1939, not long after his 20th birthday, and with war clouds gathering, Roy enlisted in the Australian Military Forces. He joined the 9/49 Battalion on the 13 July, Service number 404215. There after followed endless route marches and parades. By April the following year he had had enough. Roy and others decided that if they were going to go to war, it would be sitting down! Half way through one of these marches, Roy and his fellow conspirators marched off to the local railway station, dumped their equipment and went away to join the RAAF. On the 16 August 1940 he became an Aircraftman 2nd Class, RAAF, Service number 404355.

Roy began his Air Force training on Course No. 4 at No. 2 Initial Training School Bradfield Park two days later, then further training at No. 2 Elementary Flying Training School at Archerfield with the new rank of Leading Aircraftman. On 16 December 1940, he began his final training on Course No. 5 at No. 3 Service Flying Training School in Amberley, passing out on 6 April 1941 with his wings, an assessment of 'Above Average', a promotion to Sergeant, and a posting to the RAF in England. He embarked for England on the *SS Sarpendon* in late May.

There was more training for Roy in England. On 5 September he went to 57 Operational Training Unit (OTU) based at Hawarden, flying war-weary Spitfires. This was where he had his first flight in a Spitfire. Roy recalled that 'you just sat in the cockpit and learned the layout. Then they put a blindfold on you, and you put your hand on the instruments as the instructor called them out.' If you passed, you were allowed to fly the plane. His second flight in a Spitfire, a Mark I (XO-A), was a formation flying exercise, to be followed by camera gunnery with another Spitfire. As he was orbiting the base at 2,000 feet, setting up for the gunnery exercise, the engine began to shudder. Choosing discretion over valour, he broke off and decided to land. Unfortunately, the engine had developed a glycol leak and stopped altogether on his downwind approach, issuing clouds of white smoke. He quickly changed his approach to crosswind. The undercarriage was down and being of the early, pump operated variety, Roy decided not to retract it. While attempting to clear the wires



Roy Riddel, RAAF, Service no. 404355
(Courtesy Riddel Family Collection)

next to the railway line, the Spitfire decided it had had enough and stalled from about 40 feet, crash landing near 48 Maintenance Unit. Roy suffered a cracked coccyx and injured toe. The Spitfire had the starboard undercarriage leg push up through the wing, while the port leg made a large dent in the other wing. When he saw Flight Lieutenant James 'Ginger' Lacey, one of his instructors, approaching, Roy was sure he'd be scrubbed from the course. "You okay?" Lacey



inquired laconically. Although he must have been in pain, Roy was able to assure him he was. "That's good, I'm glad to hear you're alright" said Lacey and nodded at the wrecked Spitfire "This thing has been nothing but trouble. It's about time it stopped for keeps."

The pump action undercarriage retraction of the early Spitfires was a real trial for novice and experienced pilots alike. Typically, the planes would 'porpoise' through the air after take-off, pitching up and down as the pilot pumped the lever vigorously to retract the undercarriage, inevitably taking skin off the pilots knuckles. On one such occasion, while taking off in formation with an instructor, Roy also inadvertently slid sideways and bumped the instructors wingtip. The instructors voice came calmly through his headphones. "I don't mind flying with you Riddel, but please don't hit me again."

Having completed his training at 57 OTU, Roy was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Pilot. On 21 October he was posted to 66 Squadron, RAF, operating out of Perranporth in Cornwall, the ORB noting his arrival three days later. One of the first things Roy did was to purchase a bicycle but this was soon upgraded to an MG sportscar, for the grand sum of 25 pounds.

66 Squadron had the distinction of being the first RAF Squadron to undertake an offensive daylight sortie by Fighter Command aircraft since Dunkirk. Some six months earlier, with a mixture of Mk I and Mk II Spitfires, the Squadron had taken off from Biggin Hill and ranged through France from Dieppe to beyond Paris, shooting at targets of opportunity. When Roy joined them the Commanding Officer was Squadron Leader Hubert 'Dizzy' Allen, and the Squadron was operating long-range Spitfire Mk II's. Roy also met then Flight Lieutenant Percy 'Laddie' Lucas, a fellow Squadron pilot also fresh out of OTU training, with whom he established a friendship that would last beyond the war.

The long range Spitfire Mk II's were not popular with the pilots. The Spitfire had originally been developed as a defensive fighter, to intercept aircraft over Britain, so consequently range was not a priority. At the conclusion of the Battle of Britain, this became a problem as the RAF went on the offensive in 1941. In an attempt to rectify the problem, the Spitfire Mk II Long Range (LR) was created by attaching a fixed fuel tank of approximately 40 gallons capacity to the port wing.



Roy Riddel with Spitfire Mk II LR, P8131, 'LUTON II', 66 Squadron, England
(photo courtesy of Riddel Family Collection)

These aircraft were allocated to 66, 118 and 152 Squadrons but were not popular. It extended the time to climb to 15,000 feet by almost 2 minutes and the maximum speed was reported to have been reduced by 13 mph. Roy recalled that the extra tank 'caused the aircraft to swing like blazes on take-off and slowed us dreadfully'.

By now much of 66 Squadron operations concerned convoy and interception patrols with the occasional bomber escort duty. On 1 and 25 November the Squadron flew escort to Blenheims attacking Morlaix, though Roy wasn't rostered to fly on either of these sorties. On 28 November Roy and 'Laddie' Lucas provided an escort for the C-in-C when he travelled to Fairwood and two days later he flew his first operational sortie, a convoy patrol, also with Lucas. 66 Squadron moved to Portreath in mid-December. For Roy, most of December was fairly mundane, mainly flying convoy



patrols, though these patrols weren't always mundane. It may well have been on the 17 December, when Roy was flying a convoy patrol with Captain Claisse, that he had reason to be thankful for the extra range from the additional fuel tank on his Spitfire Mk II LR. He had just finished a long patrol from Plymouth to the Scilly Isles and was about to return to base from the western end of the run. For some reason, he set 'red on black' (meaning he was flying on the opposite compass course to the one intended) and started to head further west out into the Atlantic, bound for America. He only became aware of what he had done when he realised that the Operations Controllers voice had faded out. The adrenalin began to pump when he also realised he barely had enough fuel to get back. The fuel gauges were close to zero as he landed and the engine stopped as he taxied to dispersals. The tanks were dry.

On the 18 December the Squadron again provided bomber escort, this time for an attack on the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen berthed in Brest, France, but again Roy missed out on participating in this action. Two Messerschmitts were seen but they didn't interfere. The following day he flew two uneventful interception patrols. Roy got his opportunity for action on the 30 December when the Squadron was detailed to escort bombers for another attack on the German ships in Brest. The Squadron ORB doesn't record details but Roy recalled squirting at a couple of 109's, then on the return journey his engine was hit by ground fire. He managed to limp back to Portreath with a badly overheating engine. He considered landing on the nearby beach but at the last moment decided he would be able to make it back to the airfield. It was a fortuitous choice in more ways than one; the tortured engine finally stopped as he was landing. That night in the pub a soldier asked who the lucky Spitfire pilot was that landed with a stopped engine. Roy piped up "Oh, that was me". "You must have been a bit worried?" came the reply. "Not really" said Roy, "I was going to land it on the beach if I had to". "Just as well you didn't" said the soldier, "We've just mined it."

Life off operations provided time to relax a little and the local pubs received regular visits from the Base personnel. After a night out at one of the pubs, trying to impress one of the WAAF's, Roy managed to drive his MG into a pond. The car wouldn't start so he trekked back to the pub for help. Early the next morning the Base sentries were greeted with the unusual sight of seven people, three WAAFs and four pilots, pushing a soggy MG on to the base while another WAAF steered!

On the last day of December, Roy flew escort to Hudsons, looking for a dinghy, and the routine of convoy patrols continued into January 1942, with the usual interruptions from bad weather and lack of aircraft. On the 9 January Roy flew an interception patrol with Pilot Officer Daddo-Langlois but nothing was seen. The main excitement came towards the end of the month when a Squadron patrol intercepted a Ju 88 but it escaped into cloud.

At this time 66 Squadron came off operations as it embarked on training which continued into February. This included aircraft inspection, formation flying, and gunnery; Roy found he was one of the better shots in the Squadron. Poor weather continued to hamper flying and contributed to an accident by Roy on 6 February. After flying over the weather at 30,000 feet in Spitfire II LR (P8097), according to the Squadron ORB, Roy forgot to lower the flaps when landing due to persistent haziness and overshot. Roy recalled a slightly different scenario. The exercise was to facilitate a radar check by flying back and forth across Plymouth. When his main fuel tanks began to run low he attempted to switch across to the extra tank but it refused to feed. With no choice but to land, he descended through the cloud and found himself surrounded by Tiger Moths, and with the sudden strain of having to negotiate a path through the trainers forgot to lower his flaps, ending up nose first in a stone wall.

On 12 February life was rudely interrupted by the Luftwaffe when a Dornier bombed and strafed the airfield. This would later be identified as a diversionary attack to cover the escape of the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen which had left Brest the day before. Roy was standing



with fellow Australian, Sergeant Bill Norman, as the Dornier attacked. He watched with fascination as the Base defences went into action while Bill dived for cover into a nearby ditch, emerging after the attack covered in mud.

Bill was one of several Australian pilots serving with 66 Squadron who Roy grew close to. He had trained with Roy at 57 OTU and was posted to 66 Squadron at the same time. Roy recalled that on one occasion when they were flying together Bill managed to accidentally jettison his canopy. He asked Roy to fly up alongside to see if there was any damage to the tail of his plane. It was fine but Roy couldn't help chiding him. "You're a silly bugger!" That night they took some WAAFs to a local pub and one recognised them. "Oh, did you hear about the little problem?" "Yes" she said, "I'm a controller and overheard the lot, and the Sector Controller heard you both too. It was the only time during the whole shift that we saw him smile."

Later that day, the 12 February, the Squadron was ordered to Warmwell to again escort bombers for another attack on Brest. Unfortunately they arrived too late to participate in the mission but the following day they covered destroyers undertaking torpedo attacks off the Dutch coast, 'A' and 'B' Flights alternating cover without incident. Training continued at Warmwell and on 21 February the Squadron returned to Portreath, becoming operational again on 23 February.

66 Squadron began to receive new Spitfire Vcs in early March to replace their Mark II LR Spitfires. While the Mark Vc was considered satisfactory, initial opinion was that it was slower at low level but had a better rate of climb. Some of the training at this stage included night flying and on 4 March, Roy flew a night reconnaissance with Flight Lieutenant Friendship. Scrambles on 8 and 9 March were without result. Poor weather and a lack of aircraft continued to hamper operations, but an 'inspection' of the local brewery, Redruth Brewery Ltd, on 16 March helped to alleviate the inaction. The Squadron ORB recorded that 'a good time was had by all'; apparently assisted by sampling of the produce. The ORB also records that towards the end of March opinion had changed on the new Spitfire Vc; it had much better performance at height, climbed well and gained speed quickly in a dive, but the engine was difficult to cut 'when shoving the nose down.' For Roy, March was spent on more routine convoy patrols and interception patrols; eleven of the former, five of the latter, with three of the convoy patrols in the last week of March in the new Spitfire Vc.

With the Japanese advancing on Australia, the RAAF was in desperate need of experienced pilots and Roy was one of several Australian pilots ordered home. Sadly, one of the last things Roy did in England was to attend the funeral of his good mate Bill Norman on 30 March at Illogan Church. Six days earlier, as part of their training, Bill had been practising dusk landings and night flying with the CO, Squadron Leader Cremin. It is believed they collided and crashed at about 22:05 near St. Erth. They were both killed.

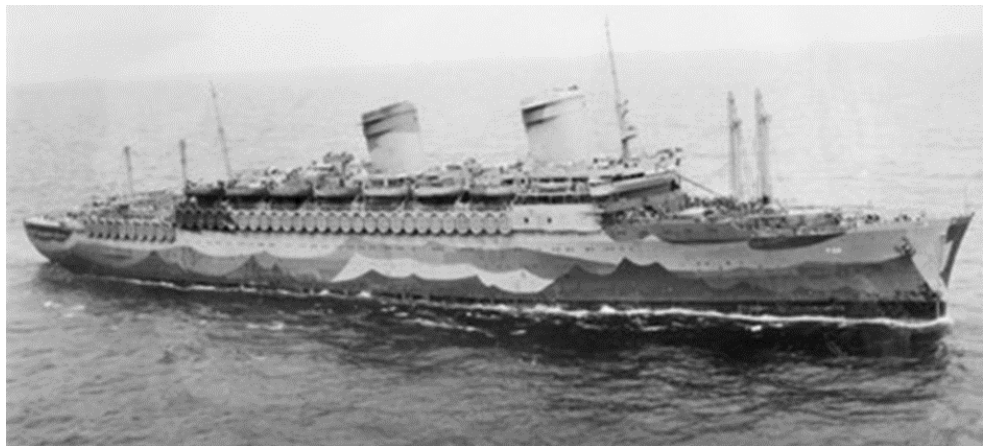
Officially repatriated on 7 April 1942, Roy embarked on the *SS Letitia* at Glasgow for the journey home. Other Australian pilots joining him included sergeants Frank Shelley, Keith Gamble, Ian Loudon and Jeff Wilkinson, and officers Dick Holt, Mark Sheldon and Raife Cowan. The sergeants were soon reminded of their place in service life. While they waited for their accommodation, a large group of German navy POWs, with their guard, were led up the gangplank and sent to cabin accommodation, followed by a contingent of Canadian Army Warrant Officers and then the Australian pilot officers. The sergeant pilots were last on board and ordered down into the hold where they were to rig their own hammocks. The hold turned out to be dark and damp with no amenities or ablutions, and it leaked during the voyage, forcing them to stow their kit in their hammocks. A solitary corvette made up their escort; they hoped the U-boats had been ordered away because of the German POWs on board! The only cigarettes were 'Cape to Cairo', which someone dubbed as 'the scrapings from Cape to Cairo', and the food was no better, but there was beer.



Disembarking at Halifax, they were put on a train to Montreal. The officers were sent to the sleepers, while the sergeants were directed to the last 'Third Class' carriage. With a six hundred mile trip ahead of them, they found it full of native Indian families and hard wooden seats. Complaints to the Transport Officer were met with the threat of a charge, until Dick Holt came to their rescue. Through Dick's persuasion, an additional carriage was added to the train which at least had comfortable seats that could also be used as beds. They were billeted in Montreal for three weeks, officers to a hotel and sergeants to cold huts at the Dorval ferry pool. Life improved somewhat a few days later when they left the huts for lodgings in a hotel.

The overland journey to San Francisco was more comfortable for the sergeants with reasonable billets and when they embarked on the USS West Point (AP23) for the final leg home via Wellington New Zealand, all men were accommodated in cabins. They sailed into Port Phillip Bay on 4 June 1942 to the welcome sight of Melbourne, Australia. One can only imagine their feelings

as they steamed into port, home at last to do their bit defending their homeland from the threat of an advancing enemy. They were a bit puzzled though by the lack of tugs coming out to meet them. The American crew were left to deftly bring the ship up to the wharf in Port Melbourne. As they watched the crew descending ladders to moor the ship, they spied a group of wharfies sitting around on the docks and yelled at them to "give the Yanks a hand", only to be met with a cranky reply, "We're on strike!"



The transport ship USS WEST POINT (AP23) which brought Roy and several other Australian pilots back to Australia in 1942 to fight the approaching Japanese.

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Welcome home chaps!

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Similarities of Flying and Mining

From Ian McDonnell

For as long as I can remember, all I wanted to do was fly aircraft. This started as a four year old when I flew in a Butler DC-3 from Parkes to Sydney, was spoiled rotten by two lovely hostesses, and was allowed to stand on the co-pilot's seat and "fly the plane". Yes – like a lot of you – hooked 100%.

I was fortunate to win a RAAF flying scholarship with the Air Force cadets in 1965, and gained my Private Pilots Licence early in 1966, having to wait until I turned 17. I have continued flying since, currently in part ownership of an Aeroprakt A32 Vixxen, (a Ukrainian two-seat, high-wing, tricycle gear ultralight aircraft).



Aeroprakt A32 Vixxen

However, financial realities and lack of adequate talent forced me to find a different career path – and as far away from flying as it is possible to get – an underground coal miner! What has this got to do with *SITREP* – very simply about hazards in the workplace. I have found that flying and mining have a lot of similarities when it comes to what can kill you. Mother nature is the biggest threat in my opinion, but how so?

Mother nature plays games with all of us, and in relation to flying and underground mining there are a few standouts, and a few that are almost opposites:

1. Gravity – we all know gravity sucks, and it does not matter a lot whether it is sucking a plane to the ground unexpectedly or pulling a mine roof down on your head - it is all about how you react and your timing.
2. Hidden hazards – like mountains inside clouds and correspondingly, hazards inside the coal strata like gases, structural defects etc. Both are similar in that if you must go there, then you need to be able to predict and prevent.
3. Disguised hazards – black ice on a tarred runway, invisible explosive gas at a mine face – I'm sure you get the idea.
4. Mother nature gives you feelings that you should trust, but for whatever reason sometimes do not. This is my main point here – humans are given a special skill of apprehension – and it is mostly very accurate. We can take in signs from around us that are so subtle that they do not fully register as anything except a feeling of "something is not right".

From my own mining career and flying time, I have many times reacted to that uneasiness by stepping back and asking what is wrong here; I can honestly say it has saved my life on more than one occasion, be it from strata failure in a mine, to a near miss in the air. I can also say that the times when I have not reacted to those feelings, I have had incidents that I would rather have avoided.

My suggestion is that if it does not feel right – do not do it - do not continue doing it – back off – assess – ask for help – whatever it takes to avoid an unwanted event. It is better to feel a bit silly for overreacting than be dead.





Farewell to 'Gentleman Jake'

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Air Force or Army? It was a tough decision faced by a 20-year-old John 'Jake' Newham in 1951. Offered a place at both Duntroon and in the Air Force's pilot training program, Jake chose the Air Force. It was perhaps an example of the imminent good sense for which Air Marshal Newham was to become known.

Over the next 39 years, Air Marshal Newham saw operational service in the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency. He deployed to Malta as part of the Air Force contribution to NATO and rose to the rank of Air Marshal, leading the RAAF as the Chief of the Air Staff from May 1985 to July 1987.

Sadly, on December 27, 2022, the man known by many as 'Gentleman Jake' passed away after a protracted illness.

Air Marshal Newham once said that he was a great believer in Voltaire's philosophy of optimism, in that 'all are for the best in the best of possible worlds'. It was a philosophy that shaped his career, actions, belief in people and in the opportunities that could arise from difficult challenges.

The first impact Air Marshal Newham made was in the skies over wartime Korea in 1953 with 77 Squadron. From March 13, 1953 until the end of the war he flew and fought with great distinction. Once when speaking of some of the finest examples of leadership he had experienced, Air Marshal Newham harked back to his experience in the Korean War. The mentoring and trust he saw from the senior pilots and flight commanders inspired the up and coming pilots while developing their natural abilities. It was a lesson that shaped his own leadership and command approach. Air Marshall Newham liked to believe in people. He liked to build them up and give them a chance to excel.

After the Korean War, Air Marshall Newham was only back in Australia for a few short weeks before being deployed to 78 Wing flying Vampires based out of Malta. It was a period where his qualities as a leader, officer and tactician emerged and grew. In the following years, 1955 to 1967, he was to fly on more combat operations in the Malay Emergency and to later qualify as a flying instructor as well as a fighter combat instructor.

Air Marshall Newham also became pivotal to the early success of two Air Force capabilities of the era. He reformed 3 Squadron with the Air Force's first ground attack capable Mirage fighters and led the squadron on its relocation to Malaysia as part of Australia's commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements. The second moment came in 1973. The then-Group Captain Newham led the effort in bringing the F-111 aircraft to Australia and in the development of its operational plans and concepts.

At the time the F-111 had a tarnished reputation. Air Marshal Newham though was a believer in the aircraft. He not only appreciated the strategic influence and capability of the F-111 but also recognised its potential for future upgrades. His farsighted appreciation of the F-111 contributed



Then Group Captain Jake Newham in 1973 talks to the waiting media after leading the ferry flight of six A8 F111s from Fort Worth, Texas, to Amberley, Australia.

Story by RAAF Historian Martin James.



to its long and valuable service to Australia.

Through 1975 to 1976 as the senior operations officer at Operational Command, Air Marshal Newham managed the air evacuation of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy, the deployment of Air Force on UN peacekeeping missions as well as the evacuation of Australians from Saigon during the fall of South Vietnam.



Arrival of first A8 F111 aircraft at Amberley. A8-125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130 led by GPCAPT Jake Newham.



Air Marshal (Ret'd) Jake Newham speaking at the Commemorative service honouring No. 77 Squadron's Korean War contribution. The ceremony was held at Point Cook to unveil a new plaque which includes the names of all 41 personnel of No. 77 Squadron who lost their lives.
Photo by Sergeant David Grant, October 2010.

Air Marshall Newham himself was always quick to point out that the success of these operations was due to incredibly good Air Force people in the squadrons. Typical of his humility, he did not seek recognition for his own important contributions to these incredibly consequential operations.

Many in the Air Force could see Air Marshal Newham's qualities though. He was sent to the Royal College of Defence Studies in the United Kingdom and later served with great distinction as the Defence attaché in the US. On his return to Australia in 1984 he was appointed as the Deputy Chief and in 1985 promoted to Air Marshal and appointed as the Chief of

the Air Staff.

Today, the legacies of Air Marshal Newham's time as our Chief are still evident. The organisation of the Air Force into Force Element Groups, the establishment of Tindal and the bare bases, Jindalee over the horizon radar, air-to-air refuelling and AEW&C capabilities all found a place in Australia's strategic future through his advocacy while the Air Force's Chief.

In 2012 Air Marshal Newham said that the highlight of his career as a pilot was leading 3 Squadron during its transition to the Mirage aircraft. As an Air Force member though, the greatest highlight was to serve with the people that make Air Force what it is. Many of these people became lifelong friends. These comments encapsulate Air Marshal Newham's philosophy: seek out where we might add enduring value, look for the good in people and treasure the friendships we make along the way.



Australia's First MQ-4C Triton Officially Unveiled

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Australia's first MQ-4C Triton unveiled at the Northrop Grumman facility in California.

Northrop Grumman formally unveiled Australia's first MQ-4C Triton autonomous aircraft in Palmdale, California on 16 March 2023 (local time). The event was attended by Australian and US government and Defence officials and marked a "watershed moment in advancement of air power for Australia" according to Head of Air Force Capability, Air Vice Marshall Robert Denney, who represented the RAAF at the rollout. "The significance and importance of Triton to Australia's intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities cannot be overstated," Air Vice Marshall Denney said. "While Triton is primarily designed for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, it will support a broad range of joint effects and fully integrate into our combat architecture. "It will revolutionise the way The Australian Defence Force conducts operations with our partners and allies."

Air Vice Marshall Denney said Australia was a proud partner in the Triton program and our imbedded personnel were already acquiring the knowledge and experience required to bring the aircraft back to Australia. "In working together with our US Navy and industry partners in developing the capability of this aircraft, we are pushing the boundaries of air power and pursuing a truly advanced platform that will provide both a foundation of capability and a growth path for decades."

MQ-4C Triton is a high-altitude long-endurance (HALE) remotely piloted aircraft that will complement the P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft acquired under Project AIR 7000 as a 'family of systems'. Triton aircraft will be home based at RAAF Base Tindal, with operations headquartered at RAAF Base Edinburgh. 9 Squadron, which was recently re-raised, will operate Triton. Triton will be capable of supporting missions of longer than 24 hours while covering an area of more than one million square nautical miles – an area larger than Western Australia.

In a cooperative program with the United States Navy, Australia was intimately involved in the development, production, and sustainment of the Triton capability. The first Australian MQ-4C, rolled out overnight, will be flown down under mid-next year and is scheduled to reach initial operating capability in 2025-26. The Australian government has approved the acquisition of three Triton aircraft and supporting systems, with the acquisition of further aircraft subject to future government consideration – however, the RAAF has long had plans to acquire seven of the aircraft, a point reiterated by Air Vice Marshall Denney during the ceremony.





Air Force Justice - Defending The Indefensible

SKYLARKS - THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE IN THE RAAF IN WORLD WAR II

Eric Brown, Air Power Studies Centre, 1998

Just when one of the biggest battles of all time was at its height, about 200 miles away an RAAF pilot was being disciplined for unauthorised low flying. Syd Johnson from Trigg, Western Australia, relates this story.

His name was Johnny Bateman (*Flight Sergeant John Carter Bateman, RAAF, 421308, pilot*) and he was a 21-year old pilot of 75 Squadron, a New Zealand squadron based at Mepal, about twenty minutes flying time from Little Staughton. Even in the heat of battle, decorum must be preserved. A Lanc cost about £82,000 and if at that stage of the game, you lost four on ops one night, four more would trundle down the runway next morning as replacements. Nevertheless, bending aircraft for fun was not considered *de rigueur*.



So, Mr Bateman was for the high jump. He enquired at RAAF HQ at Kodak House in London, and was informed that there was a legal practitioner at large on 582 Squadron at Little Staughton, so he presented himself there one day to be royally entertained mostly by my crew who tried to convince him that Perry Mason was a non-event compared with the forensic talent which oozed from yours truly.

It happened to be 4 o'clock on the afternoon of D-Day that Wing Commander Dunicliffe, the Commanding Officer, in the course of a night flying test, flew me over to Mepal, where I was greeted by Johnny Bateman and his fan club. He had among others a mate named Luke, who was not a physician like his biblical namesake but nevertheless had a panacea for all human ills. The prescription was good brown English ale with unlimited repeats. I wanted to do some work on the case and find out something about the Air Force Regulations which covered the matter, and waved away the proffered drinks for a while, but I seemed to be the only one taking the thing at all seriously. Finally, I made the mistake of accepting a drink and then the game was on. It went on into the wee small hours until eventually Luke double-dinked me on a bike which had two flat tyres to a billet somewhere.

In the morning down came all this brass from London to administer justice. They seemed to a man to be a starchy lot, very serious, and even unhappy, in strange contrast to the general attitude prevailing on an operational station. The prosecutor was an unpleasant little man, a Squadron Leader by rank, slightly obese, with a flat hat with the cane still in it, an accoutrement a real airman wouldn't be seen dead in. He was obviously surprised to find I was the defending officer, not the accused. Since my client had come home from his misadventure with a piece of the English countryside embedded in his wing, I saw no prospect of beating the low flying charge, but there was a second count of unlawfully damaging one of His Majesty's aircraft which I didn't like at all, so I suggested to the Prosecutor that if he dropped the second charge we would plead guilty to the first. He would have none of it and regarded me with the gravest suspicion.

However, they agreed to hear the second charge first. I really did think this one a bit rough and submitted that the legislation must have contemplated an element of intent, as in sabotage, and



the last thing my over-worked, over-tired and ops-weary client wanted to do was to touch the ground. The Court agreed and acquitted him, so we then pleaded guilty on the low flying. Actually, it had been carried out in a Low Flying Area, but without permission, and the CO gave evidence that had permission been sought it would have been granted, so all this fuss in the critical period of a world conflict was about the absence of a scrap of paper, said I. Nobody was impressed. I called a string of witnesses in mitigation who were so good Johnny didn't know they were talking about him. The decision as to penalty was reserved, however, and I escaped from Mepal without getting into further trouble. I believe that the Court in the first instance viewed Mr Bateman's indiscretion rather seriously but was overruled by higher authority and nothing serious happened to him. I've never seen Johnny since.

