SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

C-130 Interceptor - 22 January 1978

From Wayne Somerfield

Sunday, 22nd January 1978 saw our routine RAAF Base Butterworth, Malaysia to RAAF Darwin, Northern Territory service (BU679) become anything other than routine. The pre-flight weather forecast for Darwin included the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms. The aircraft captain, Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Bob 'Flapless' Hayward decided to take an additional 60 minutes of holding fuel, on top of our original fuel order as a precaution in case the thunderstorms eventuated on our arrival at Darwin. Unfortunately for the crew, this now meant a one hour delay whist trying to locate an aircraft refueller on a Sunday morning at RAAF Base Butterworth.

Our crew consisted of a normal five-man crew plus the addition of a second Flight Engineer, Flight Sergeant Ross 'Swanny' Swanson, who was performing an upgrade check on our Flight Engineer, Sergeant Wayne 'Ruff' Dennis. The other crew members were Navigator, Pilot Officer Mike Roberts; Loadmaster, Flight Sergeant Stew Tarrier and me, Pilot Officer Wayne 'JJ' Somerfield as the Co-pilot.

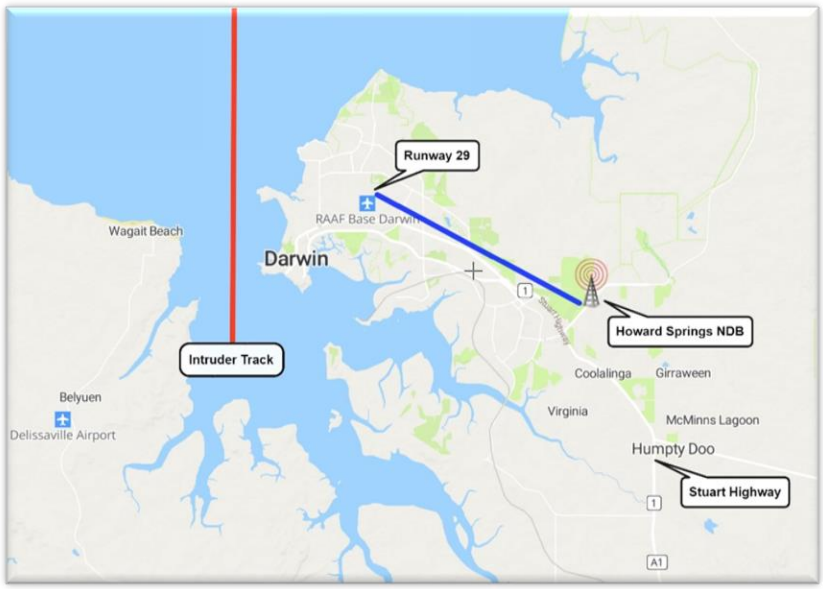
Hercules A97-168 at Perth Airport
Photo Kurt Finger

The flight progressed well and Hercules A97-168 performed better than the figures expected from the official Performance Manual [AAP 7211.012-1-1] or simply the 'Dash 1, Dash 1', in that Hercules 168 had consumed less fuel than expected on this sector. We arrived at Darwin with no sign of the possible thunderstorms. This resulted in us arriving with a lot of spare fuel on that eventful day. FLTLT Hayward therefore decided that he would fly a practice Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach to the main runway at Darwin, runway 29, meaning the landing runway faced 290° magnetic and that we would be approaching the runway from the east. This decision did not go down well with the crew; although unspoken at the time, we all wanted to get off and have a well-earned beer on this pleasant Sunday afternoon, particularly as we were now already over an hour late on our original schedule.

Arriving from over the Timor Sea we crossed the Australian coast north of Darwin and Air Traffic Control cleared us by radio to track towards the Howard Springs Non-Directional Beacon (NDB). This locator beacon is approximately 10nm east of the airport and directly in line with the main landing runway. As was customary practice back then, most ILS approaches started with a locator beacon to confirm the start of the ILS approach. ILS approaches provide guidance to the

pilot to allow them to accurately descend through cloud down to a base of 200' above the ground and/or low visibility down to 800m and then visually land safely. However, today's weather was fine and beaut, requiring nothing more than a look out the window and land visually.

During our positioning to start the ILS approach, Darwin Radar advised us to change radio frequency and contact Darwin Tower prior to passing Howard Springs NDB. Darwin Tower then made an unusual request and asked us for our endurance. The navigator, Mike Roberts, quickly calculated that we had around three hours endurance. This was an unusual and large amount of arrival fuel and proved to be very fortuitous that day. The next question I asked Darwin Tower was why? Their reply was that an unidentified aircraft had been tracked by the new radar heading towards Darwin from the north. The new radar was installed that month to replace the one destroyed by Cyclone Tracy. That devastating cyclone destroyed most of the Darwin infrastructure and 80% of all homes, with 71 deaths on Christmas Day, 1974. All pilots had access to information about the new radar via the Notices to Airman (NOTAMs) that regularly update pilots about changes or unserviceabilities. Seems not everyone reads them, as the unidentified aircraft had been tracked by the radar for many miles, flying low over the ocean and heading towards Darwin. Suddenly all boredom and desire to enjoy those well anticipated beers were forgotten and I replied "Affirmative, we would gladly intercept". Darwin Tower had even spotted the aircraft with their binoculars, about 5nm west of the airfield at 1,500'.



Map showing our track for ILS and the intruder aircraft track

FLTLT Hayward then retracted the wing flaps and prepared the Hercules for the intercept. Suddenly everyone became extremely focused and busy. I was not only watching and checking our configuration, speed, heading and height, but operating the radios. I changed radio frequencies to the Radar Controller, who instructed us over the radio, and provided a radar guided, Ground Controlled Intercept (GCI) towards the intruding aircraft.

Quickly we were on our way and flying GCI intercept headings towards the intruder, who was still heading south at 1,500', just west of Darwin. Our speed difference resulted in us quickly catching the aircraft from his 7 o'clock position. Finally, we spotted the intruder visually. Manoeuvring behind and then to the echelon right position gave FLTLT Hayward the best view from his seat on the left side of the cockpit of the Hercules to manually fly in formation with the Intruder. The intercept was completed far enough away as to not impact the intruding aircraft. At this time, I do not believe that the intruder had seen us.

We visually identified the aircraft as a Rockwell 680E Aero Commander. I had now changed frequencies and was operating both the very long-range High Frequency (HF) radio for the RAAF communications and local short range Very High Frequency (VHF) area radio frequencies for general aviation aircraft at low level in that area. The RAAF asked me via the HF radio to confirm the registration and aircraft details for the intercept report. To achieve this, FLTLT Hayward did some excellent manoeuvring to bring us in an awfully close echelon right formation position to read the registration and callsign of the intruder aircraft. The aircraft had an American

registration that was ridiculously small and difficult to see. We slowly crept closer until we could read the registration as N1935W. Additionally, large markings painted along both sides of the Aero Commander read 'LORAN Research Unit'.

We were familiar with the older long-range LORAN navigation systems, as they were fitted to the RAAF C-130Es, but rarely used in the southern hemisphere. Now that we knew the callsign of the intruder, I attempted radio contact many times on as many different frequencies that I could think of, including the international distress frequency of 121.5MHz, local VHF area frequencies, Darwin Tower, and Brisbane HF radio, however, we never received a reply from the intruder.

Having clearly identified the intruder and established that the pilot on board was not willing or able to communicate via the radios, we prepared to apply the International Rules of the Air for an intercept by a military aircraft. To be doubly sure, I also checked our onboard reference manuals, the Flight Information Publications (FLIP) to ensure that we flew exactly in accordance with the rules. As I had correctly recalled, the rules essentially required us to position in front of the Aero Commander, waggle our wings up and down and then commence a slow turn towards the direction that we wanted the intruder aircraft to go. Upon seeing this, the intercepted aircraft is meant to turn and follow.

While the visual signals are very straight forward, we were concerned that our big aircraft could cause significant wake turbulence to the relatively small Aero Commander, so we took care to position ourselves below when in front of the intruder. The first time we did this, the Aero Commander appeared to start to follow us, but once we had commenced our turn away, the Aero Commander reversed and turned the other direction. By this time the Loadmaster was eagerly looking out the paratroop door windows at the rear of the Hercules to keep visual contact of the Aero Commander. FSGT Swanson was also peering out the cockpit windows, maintaining visual contact. After doing this exercise twice, we decided that the Aero Commander was not going to communicate with us or follow us.

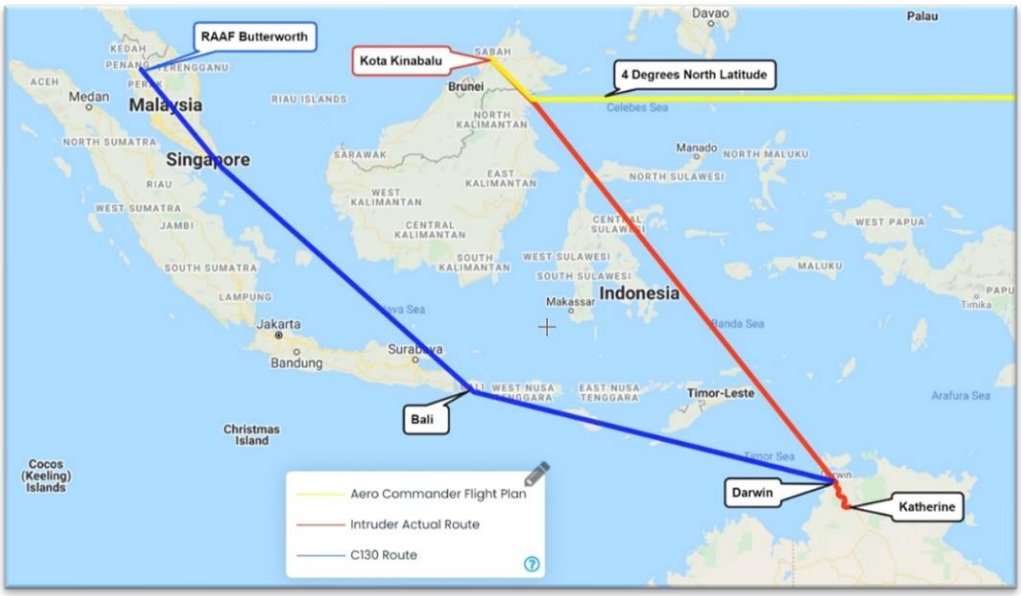
By now, I was sure that the pilot of the Aero Commander had become very annoyed at having been caught and intercepted by this massive RAAF Hercules. RAAF crews fondly call the four engine C-130 cargo aircraft 'Fat Albert', which seemed fitting at the time when so close to the smaller twin engined Aero Commander. I think to annoy us and to try and shake us off, the intruder slowed his aircraft. FLTLT Hayward quickly responded by bringing the Hercules back to the minimum approach speed of 107kts, with full flap and gear. I was busy configuring the aircraft and ensuring that FLTLT Hayward did not inadvertently exceed any limits or go below any minimum speeds. Flying this slow with full landing flap and gear extended made formation flying extremely difficult, something the Hercules was simply not designed to do. SGT Dennis did an excellent job monitoring the engines back at idle power, to ensure that they did not inadvertently go into negative torque, a rare but potentially fatal condition in flight, particularly at such a low altitude.

The afternoon marched on, and thunderstorms and clouds now formed at around 4,000'. As Evening Civil Twilight approached, the Aero Commander often ducked lower and then climbed, trying to shake us off. In the failing light. FLTLT Hayward tried to keep our Hercules below the intruder so that he could keep the white coloured intruder aircraft visible against the dark sky above us. All this time SGT 'Ruff' Dennis kept a close eye on the engines; PLTOFF Mike Roberts, kept a close eye on our 'Bingo' fuel to recover back to Darwin safely; FSGT Ross 'Swanny' Swanson and FSGT 'Stu' Tarrier peered out of every window in the Hercules they could, in order to keep visual sighting of the intruder; and finally me, the Co-Pilot, watching the aircraft speed, height and configuration as well as working three radios.

During the chase I became aware that the Stuart Highway we were loosely following has many abandoned World War II airstrips on either side. Any one of these would offer the perfect opportunity for the intruder to land undetected. As this 'cat and mouse' chase continued with us flying in echelon right, I recall FLTLT Hayward commenting that he hadn't had so much fun since flying Caribous in formation in Vietnam.

One of the radios I operated was to Air Force Darwin, a long-range RAAF High Frequency (HF) ground radio station. The RAAF kept contacting us wanting updates of our status. As our fuel reserves reduced, we confirmed the calculations given by the Nav and gave the RAAF a 'Bingo' time, with plenty of notice. This 'Bingo' time was the latest time we could continue chasing and safely return to Darwin with minimum reserve fuel. It became obvious to us that if we could land at Katherine (now RAAF Base Tindal) and refuel, we could follow the Aero Commander until last light. I requested permission from the RAAF to make a landing at Katherine to refuel and allow us to follow the intruder longer. Unbelievably at the time, we were told that as we were an international flight and that no customs facilities were available at Katherine we could not divert and refuel.

After almost an hour and a half of challenging close formation flying, we reached 'Bingo' fuel. Contacting Darwin ATC, I requested clearance to return to Darwin at Long Range Cruise speed and at 10,000' to try and conserve our remaining fuel. The Nav passed the last known position of the Aero Commander to both the RAAF and Darwin ATC. Heading back to Darwin exhilarated and exhausted, all of us began to contemplate what had happened over the last 90 minutes or so. Then 20 minutes later, Air Force Darwin called by radio and advised that we now had approval to land at Katherine to refuel if needed. "Too late" I replied, we were committed to return to Darwin.



Our extended flight from RAAF Butterworth to RAAF Darwin had taken almost 11 hours instead of the normal eight and a half hours. After parking and shutting down the engines, we were met by the local RAAF ground engineer, as is normal. He advised us that the local evening news had reported an aircraft had crashed north of Katherine. Now, as the shock of what had just happened sunk in, we all started to doubt ourselves, completely ignoring the facts. What if it was a lost farmer who had been inadvertently caught out by a pesky RAAF Hercules? What if the pilot had died from a crash landing? We were all staring to think the worst and could only imagine how the press might construe our interception as reckless or worse. Fortunately, our concerns were soon put to rest during the debrief later that night.

We all enjoyed a well-deserved dinner in the Sergeants Mess. After our meal, we had a formal debrief. The debrief was managed by the RAAF Intelligence Officer and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The AFP were extremely grateful as they were expecting a drug run into either

Darwin or Cairns that week but had no assets to investigate or pursue. They also informed us that they knew it would be the infamous Donald Tait flying the aircraft. Later we discovered that Tait had managed to successfully land in an open paddock, at night with no runway or ground lighting, which was quite a feat. Successfully force landing the Aero Commander, Tait then fired flares into the 270 kg of marijuana to set it on fire, hoping to destroy all the evidence. He then escaped the scene on foot and hid for two days, avoiding police trackers and police dogs. However, after two days he hailed a passing Land Rover, only to discover it was an unmarked police patrol vehicle looking for him. Tait was sentenced to six years and eight months jail for his part. At the time this was the largest drug bust in Australia's history at almost $4,000,000 in value. That night in Katherine, police found and arrested his three accomplices.

The debrief also informed us that the Aero Commander had flight planned to depart Brunei and fly along the 4° north parallel to evaluate the LORAN navigation equipment. I am not sure, but I think the departure airport may have been the Kota Kinabalu airport in Sabah. The 'official' flight plan recorded that the Aero Commander had been modified with the installation of special long-range fuel bladders, enabling a 24-hour endurance. The flight plan advised that the aircraft would fly east for 12 hours and then complete a 180° turn and then fly west to return to the departure airport. In fact, Tait had planned to fly directly south to accomplices waiting south of Darwin. During this flight he would make his routine aviation position reports on long range HF radio every 30 minutes. These fake reports advised ATC he was flying east or returning west on the 4° north line of latitude.

The placard of the Aero Commander I created out of cardboard and stuck to the side of A97-168, Australia's Hercules Interceptor!
Photo Allan Edwards

Upon our arrival back at RAAF Richmond we had become unsuspecting heroes for intercepting the infamous drug runner Donald Tait, who had now become a household name. Cartoons in the newspapers, interviews with the media, including the Australian Reader's Digest which published an excellent article at the time. Probably our proudest moment was when our Commander Officer, Wing Commander 'Mad Mike' Matters, sent a telex to the Commanding Officers of the numbers 3, 75 and 77 Mirage fighter squadrons at RAAF Bases Butterworth and Williamtown. 'Mad Mike' had the distinction of being the first fighter pilot ('knuckle head') to command a transport ('trash hauling') squadron. He took great pride in contacting his old 'knuckle head' friends to offer training for their pilots. To my knowledge, the RAAF Mirage had never had a successful intercept of a real unidentified aircraft! 'Mad Mike' brought a breath of fresh air to our 'trash hauler' world at the time, and was well liked by the 'boggy' (junior) pilots like me.

That was a day none of us will ever forget and especially SGT 'Ruff' Dennis, who passed his Category B upgrade!

Aviator of the Year recognised at birthday bash

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Warrant Officer of the Air Force Ralph Clifton (right) along with the Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Robert Chipman presents the Enlisted Aviator of the Year Award to Corporal Jack Simpson at a reception commemorating the 102nd anniversary of the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force at the Australian War College, Weston, ACT.

Story by Tastri Murdoch. Photo by Flight Sergeant Kev Berriman

Supporting the C-17A Globemaster III fleet at home and during critical Defence missions led to Corporal Jack Simpson being named the Royal Australian Air Force's 2022 Enlisted Aviator of the Year. During Royal Australian Air Force anniversary celebrations in Canberra on March 31, Corporal Simpson was announced as the recipient for his work as an aircraft technician with 36 Squadron.

Specifically, Corporal Simpson was cited for his resilience, adaptability, professionalism and dedication to safe and effective maintenance of the C-17A fleet, both at RAAF Base Amberley and during deployed operations. This included deploying and leading the maintenance team for the C-17A's support to the non-combatant evacuation operation from Kabul in August 2021.

Corporal Simpson's award citation stated:
Having already endured 67 days 'on-mission' and 115 days in pandemic quarantine, Corporal Simpson willingly volunteered, illustrative of his strong-held value of service.
Under extreme pressures and deployed conditions, Corporal Simpson provided unwavering support to deployed commanders, both in his capacity as technical team lead, and also more broadly as a proficient aviator providing accompanied maintenance support on multiple C-17A missions into Kabul while under direct threat from adversary ground fire.
Corporal Simpson consistently performs above his worn rank and is trusted by Command to deliver operational and capability outcomes in the most challenging of circumstances.

Corporal Simpson was also deployed to Europe with the first batch of Bushmasters destined for Ukraine in 2022. His advice contributed to the ongoing safe, efficient, sustainable and repeatable deliveries by the C-17A to Europe. Among other initiatives at RAAF Base Amberley, Corporal Simpson was instrumental in developing a training manual for 36 Squadron for new aviators arriving onto the C-17A.

The award citation read:
Corporal Simpson operates independently, innovatively and takes concerted action to identify and solve emerging problems.
Beyond his core role of training coordination, he conducts trend analysis and regulatory compliance activities to optimise system efficiencies, exemplified in his contributions to 36 Squadron training.

Now posted to RAAF Base Edinburgh with 10 Squadron, Corporal Simpson said the award was a big honour. "For me, it's the recognition of a year's work by me and my workmates and I am proud of the work we have done," he said. Having grown up in Darwin, the opportunity to deploy internationally was one reason Corporal Simpson joined RAAF. "I realised that the Royal Australian Air Force was a career that I could enjoy, and the opportunity to travel was also pretty exciting," he said.

The Hawker Seafury Incident & Becoming Famous

From Phil Frawley

During my time as a display pilot, I met most of the warbird owners in Australia; of these Mr. Guido Zuccoli became a good mate. Guido was living in Darwin in June 1990 when 77 Squadron, of which I was the Executive Officer, arrived for an exercise. During my time off I, of course, went to visit Guido and his lovely wife Lynette. Guido asked me if I would like to have an endorsement on his beautiful Fiat G-59 which is basically an Italian version of the P-51 Mustang, although not quite as good in performance. It is a beautiful aircraft to fly and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. When Guido and I got back from the flight he reached into his bookcase and pulled out a document and gave it to me saying "Read this Phillip and come back tomorrow". It was the flight manual for his Hawker Seafury. I was both stunned and excited to think that Guido would let me fly this magnificent aircraft.

Fiat G-59

The Hawker Seafury was, at the time of its entry into service, the fastest piston powered aircraft in the world. Unbeknownst to me, the flight in the Fiat G-59 was a test to see if I was capable of handling the Seafury. I took the manual back to the barracks and studied it until I knew it like the back of my hand. The next day Guido took me out to the aircraft and ran through some of the idiosyncrasies of the aircraft and also checked my knowledge of its systems. Having completed the preflight requirements, we strapped in; the aircraft had been converted to a two-seater so Guido came along for the ride. Once on the runway and being fully aware of the power this aircraft delivered, I gingerly advanced the power to ensure I coped with the inevitable nose swing that occurs in a tail-dragging aircraft when you raise the tail for take off. At this point, Guido slammed the power up to full, and before I had a chance to raise the tail, the aircraft got airborne in the three-point attitude leaving my scrambled brain back on the runway - in other words, I was now well behind the aircraft.

I quickly regained composure and raised the undercarriage then selected the propeller control to 'Auto' and away we went. I should note that in most propeller-driven aircraft the propeller control needs to be re-adjusted for varying flight events such as climb, cruise, aerobatics, and descent and landing. In the Seafury, after take off you merely select 'Auto' and you don't have to touch it again throughout the flight; absolutely marvellous because you virtually have a throttle, just like a jet, and that's all you have to control. The other feature of the aircraft is that during flight you can select the flaps to "Max Lift' and they will automatically schedule the flaps to suit the speed of the aircraft. In other aircraft, this is also called 'Combat Flap' which means that in a fight or doing aerobatics, the flaps will move up and down so that you can always turn the aircraft as tight as possible for the flight conditions, wonderful.

Hawker Sea Fury

The flight in this amazing aircraft was fantastic; it was so good to fly. On the return to Darwin Airport Guido instructed me to do a 'Beat Up' as everyone enjoyed seeing the aircraft low and fast. I received a clearance from Air Traffic Control to execute the 'Beat Up' and so I set the aircraft up at around 3,000 feet to have some descent potential to get the aircraft up to 400 knots or 740 km/hr. To my surprise, I achieved this speed very quickly before I even set up the descent to the runway. (Note: a "Beat Up' is usually a high speed, very low pass along the intended runway prior to landing; a particular favourite practice for combat pilots.)

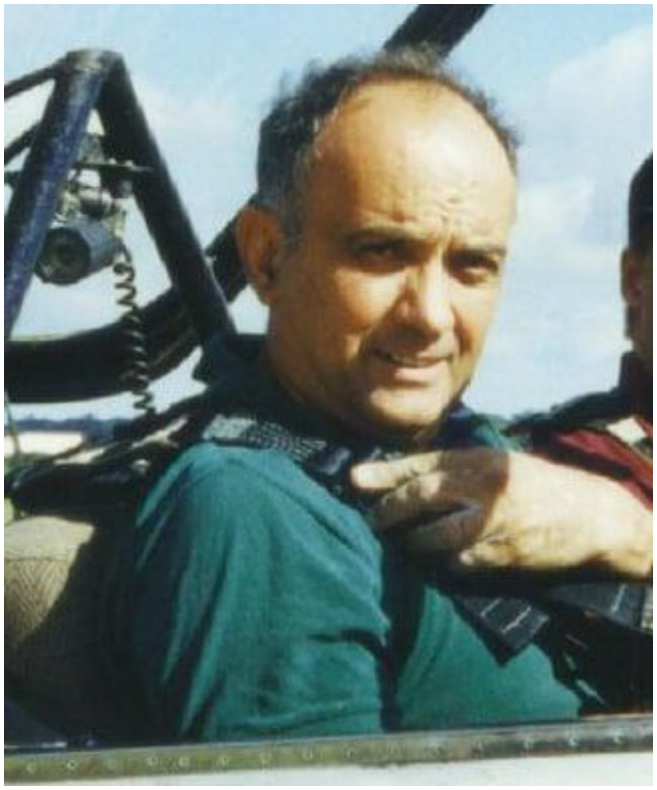
The 'Beat Up went over very well and I proceeded to complete a number of circuits with touch and go landings/take offs. Guido then told me he was satisfied with my ability to handle the aircraft and instructed me to make a full stop landing. He also impressed on me the need to use a 'double braking' technique to slow the aircraft, as the brakes were not very good on these aircraft. 'Now he tells me!'. I landed the aircraft without difficulty and was slowing it gradually as instructed when the nose began to oscillate from side to side, finally departing the runway in an abrupt left turn (a Ground Loop in aviation terms) and heading for a drainage ditch which, thankfully featured very slightly inclined edges on both sides; it was also empty and the whole surface was quite smooth. We exited the drain and were heading for the F/A-18 Hornet flight lines with all the maintenance troops looking very surprised to see us, when I finally managed to bring the aircraft to a stop in a cloud of dust. While this was transpiring Guido was yelling at me to "DOUBLE BRAKE, DOUBLE BRAKE!!" and I informed him reasonably forcefully that I was "Double Braking". Anyhow, we came to a halt in a position that allowed us to taxi back to the hangar.

Air Traffic Control asked us if we needed any assistance from the Fire and Rescue Services and I replied that we would only need a laundry truck. I'm sure that they would have been very amused by this remark. I taxiied the aircraft back to the hangar and got out, finding that my legs were shaking so much I couldn't walk, so I sat on the wing for a few minutes so I could regain my composure. At this point, Guido slapped me on the back and said "Don't worry Phillip, every 20

or 30 landings I do the same thing". 'Oh great, Guido thanks for that, cheers'. Guido then said, "Anyway, no worries, we will refuel the aircraft and you can go solo now, OK". I was amazed that I had 'Ground Looped' his aircraft on landing and he was still prepared to let me loose in it. I did not feel confident or composed enough to take the aircraft flying again, but I felt kind of compelled to accept Guido's offer.

Then one of Guido's maintenance men pointed out that the right main wheel was bent and we shouldn't fly the aircraft. Phew, saved. It turned out the right main wheel stub axle had been bent and the four bolts holding the undercarriage leg had been stretched slightly and had to be replaced. The tyres had also been shredded and had to be replaced. I had no way of repaying Guido and his main maintenance man, Nobby, for the damage I had caused but I was reassured by Nobby that Guido had done much worse and not to worry about it. The maintenance crew was more than satisfied with the two cartons of VB stubbies that I gave them so all was good.

The cause of a Ground Loop on tail dragging aircraft is usually attributed to the interaction of gyroscopics (the rotating propeller), aerodynamics (the tailplane of the aircraft), and any crosswind present. This usually occurs without warning on landing when all of these forces conspire against the pilot. Tail dragger pilots will tell you there are two types of tail dragger pilots, those that have ground looped and those that have yet to experience one which is inevitable. I attempted to work out what I had done wrong to bring about the Ground Loop but I was at a loss to explain it, as was Guido. When we checked the wind conditions at the time of the incident, we discovered that during the time I was doing circuits, the wind had changed from a headwind of sorts to a quartering tailwind and that had caught me out because I was concentrating so much on flying the aircraft that I didn't notice the change in the wind direction. That's aviation for you.



The wonderful Guido Zuccoli, RIP

That is not the end of the story: some months later I was taking part in an airshow at Mangalore in Victoria. All participating aircrew were invited to a function at the nearby pub as a greet and meet affair. At this stage, I was not well known in the warbird community and so I was standing alone in the pub while a circle of warbird pilots and owners had gathered nearby. I was listening to their conversation when the subject of ground loops came up (They were all tail dragger people). A lady by the name of Judy Pay, a famous warbird owner/pilot, remarked "How about that guy who ground looped Guido Zuccoli's Seafury, what a newbie" (or words along those lines). At this point someone else chimed in and said "I think it was a guy named Phil Frawley or something; does anybody know him?" I then reluctantly raised my hand as they all turned around to face me and I revealed "that would be me". A large outbreak of laughter ensued and I was welcomed into the tail dragger community and became a very well known (kind of famous) member of the warbird fraternity, albeit for all the wrong reasons!

41WG Commitment to Middle Eastern Region Operations

From GPCAPT Brett Risstrom, ably assisted by FLGOFF Luke Ferry

Editor's Note: While there's been a lot of (well deserved) coverage of RAAF airborne participation in Middle East Ops (Surveillance aircraft, Air Mobility and Air Combat) over the last couple of decades, less has been published about 41 Wing's ground-based surveillance and battle space management contribution.

The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), through 41WG, has a long, distinguished history supporting operations in the Middle Eastern Region (MER). Through these deployments, 41WG operators supported US Central Command (US CENTCOM) and Australian Defence Force (ADF) strategic objectives from 2007-2022. Throughout this period, Australian operators were deployed with the Belgian Air Component, Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Danish Air Force, Royal Air Force and the United States Air Force.

114MCRU 'TAIPAN'

41WG first deployed operators, maintainers, logistics and administrative support personnel to Kandahar, Afghanistan in 2007 supporting Operation SLIPPER. Through this operation, 41WG supported United States (US) led Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, and NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Task Group 633.12 (callsign 'TAIPAN') provided a 24/7 operational Mobile Control and Reporting Centre (MCRC) and TPS-77 Air Surveillance Radar, critical to supporting Tactical Command and Control (TAC C2) across MER operations.

Total number of rotations: 6
Total number of personnel: 490
Days in control: 850

TAIPAN Operators hard at work

71EACS 'PYRAMID'

In July 2009, 41WG withdrew the MCRC from Kandahar. 41WG members from 3CRU, SACTU and 1RSU were then deployed to the 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron (EACS) at Al Udeid Air Base (AUAB), Qatar (callsign 'PYRAMID'). This deployment continued support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and ISAF, with the addition of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE (OIR) and Combined Defence of the Arabian Peninsula (CDAP).

Techs troubleshooting

Total number of rotations: 16
Total number of personnel: 66
Days in control: 1,825

727EACS 'KINGPIN'

In November 2014, 41WG continued deployments under Operation INHERENT RESOLVE and Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT, moving to 727EACS (callsign 'KINGPIN') at Al Dhafra Air Base (ADAB), UAE. This support continued when 727EACS departed ADAB and moved to Shaw Air Force Base (AFB), USA in May 2021.

Total number of rotations: 16
Total number of personnel: 95
Days in control: 3,105

Withdrawal
At 1143 on 22 June 2022, the Australian National Flag was retired over Shaw AFB. This concluded 15 years of continued, 24/7 support to TAC C2 operations in the MER under multiple US and internationally recognised operations. The time of 1143 significance was drawn from Australia's two operational MCRC and CRC. 114MCRU callsign 'TAIPAN' called Australia 'On Station' in Kandahar in 2007, and Australia declared 'Off Station' under callsign 'KINGPIN' in 2022.
Total number of rotations: 38
Total number of personnel: 650
Days in control: 5,500+

Significance
The deployment of RAAF assets, including 41WG, shows a significant contribution from RAAF towards US CENTCOM TAC C2. It displays a sharing of strategic objectives, and continued Australian support to the region. Throughout their deployments, 41WG personnel were held in the highest regard for their professionalism and work ethic.

Roy Riddel, RAAF - Part Two: Hot Shot

from Peter Roberts

(for Part One see SITREP Issue 24)

In June 1942, after almost six months flying with the RAF in England, Roy Riddel disembarked in Melbourne to fly against the rapidly approaching Japanese. By 8 June he was posted to No. 75 Squadron RAAF, joining the squadron on 21 June. Some of the pilots he'd sailed home with also joined him there, including Jeff Wilkinson, Frank Shelley, Keith Gamble, Dick Holt, Mark Sheldon and Raife Cowan. 75 Squadron had been established in Townsville on 4 March 1942 under the command of Squadron Leader Peter Jeffrey DSO, DFC, equipped with P-40E Kittyhawks. They were soon ordered up to New Guinea. The 'Neverhawks', as they had been christened by the troops in Port Moresby, arrived on 21 March to a hot reception. Believing them to be yet another Japanese attack, the anti-aircraft gunners opened up as the 75 Squadron aircraft came into land and managed to damage several aircraft. Fortunately, no one was hurt and a patrol was mounted that afternoon by Flying Officers Wackett and Cox, who in turn intercepted and shot down an enemy aircraft to register the squadrons first victory.

75 Squadron stayed at Port Morseby for two months before receiving orders to return to Townsville on 7 May. It was during their time in Port Moresby that they discovered their P-40 Kittyhawks were no match for the Japanese Zero in a dogfight. The Zero was too manoeuvrable, but the Kittyhawk was faster, particularly in a dive. The advantage of speed could be used to escape a bounce, or to set up an attack. They did manage to claim 18 enemy aircraft shot down, four more probably destroyed and 36 damaged with a further 33 enemy aircraft either destroyed or damaged on the ground. Against this, the squadron lost 12 pilots, as well as 15 Kittyhawks shot down, two destroyed on the ground and five destroyed in accidents. Roy had joined a seasoned squadron that had acquitted itself well.

During the next two months 75 Squadron took on a large number of new pilots who were all given three hours on Wirraways before converting to the Kittyhawk. In the last week of July, the squadron received orders to move to Fall River, the code name for Milne Bay. Roy's overwhelming memory of Milne Bay was of the dreadful living conditions - mud, rain, and more mud. There were fuel drums everywhere. After the Americans arrived, he recalled seeing 12 of their jeeps bogged. The airstrip was mud with Marsden matting over it, but the matting proved

to be only partially successful; a heavy landing would result in mud oozing up and spraying into wheel wells and onto the undercarriage, flaps and lower wings, giving the ground crew more work.

Milne Bay, September 1942. L to R: PLTOFF Bruce Brown, SQNLDR Les Jackson, 75SQN, FLTLT Vernon Sullivan, 76SQN, FLTLT Lex Winten, SGT Roy Riddel, 75SQN.
(Australian War Memorial) Accession number: 026655

With the mud and the rain came malaria and dysentery. No. 76 Squadron relocated to Milne Bay at around the same time. Their ORB recorded 'the airstrips had not been completed and aircraft could not be dispersed to areas from which they could operate. Owing to high and consistent rainfall and the nature of the soil aircraft were constantly being bogged. The nature of the roads was very poor and the squadron found great difficulty in moving about with its present transport.'

It was in these conditions that they prepared to fight the Japanese. On 4 August, as the Kittyhawk squadrons were establishing themselves, four Zeros flew into Milne Bay on a strafing attack that destroyed a 75 Squadron Kittyhawk, A29-98. Daily defensive patrols were set up over the airfield and surrounds to counter these attacks. Much of Roy's time at Milne Bay was spent on such patrols, many in the early morning, sometimes with other patrols later in the day interspersed with flights to intercept incoming enemy or unidentified aircraft. On 7 August there was a break from routine when he flew out to Goodenough Island with Pilot Officer Whetters to deliver supplies to some stranded 76 Squadron pilots.

Roy flew the early morning patrol on 11 August, then as part of a patrol of sixteen aircraft around midday after reports of an incoming raid. At around 2:30pm, Roy was one of thirteen 75 Squadron Kittyhawks to take off to intercept 'two enemy bombers escorted by three enemy fighters'. This turned out to be an attacking force of thirteen Zeros, intent on drawing allied fighters into battle. 75 Squadron quickly lost two pilots, Flying Officer Mark Sheldon (A29-123, 'U') and Sergeant Francis Shelley (A29-100), before the action degenerated into individual dogfights. The squadron claimed two enemy aircraft probably destroyed and six damaged, but it was a 'shaky do' with several of their own aircraft damaged. Roy (A29-136, 'N', 'Stardust') was credited with a Zero as damaged.

Roy had been close to Sheldon and Shelley. They had joined 75 Squadron at the same time and he felt their loss keenly, but there was no time to mourn. He was back on base patrol in the coming days, usually twice a day, with occasional interception patrols. On 17 August he was one of twelve aircraft that took off to intercept an unknown aircraft heading for Gurney Field, but nothing was seen. Early in the afternoon of 19 August and again around midday on 23 August, he was part of a five-plane formation sent out to intercept in-coming raids but on each occasion, nothing was found.

In the early afternoon of 24 August, the squadron did intercept an enemy raid bound for Milne Bay, officially recorded as air raid #3. A group of fifteen Zeros swept in to attack the airfields. One section of Zeros strafed the airfield but were beaten off by AA fire, while the other section of Zeros covered the attack and engaged the Kittyhawks. Roy recalled that the squadron was bounced as it was climbing for height. He was flying Flight Lieutenant Lex Winten's Kittyhawk

(A29-111, 'W', 'MAALEESH') which he knew to have a vicious swing to the left. He figured Lex must have had a very strong right leg! When a Zero fastened on to his tail, he "did what any law-abiding hero would do in a Kitty – I dived". His speed built up to almost 500 mph and the aircraft continued skidding to the left, registering hits large and small in the starboard wing with the accompanying noise and smell. He later discovered more hits in the tail. Roy put his survival down to the Kittyhawk continually swinging to the left which must have left the Japanese pilot very frustrated. He shook off the Zero and returned to base where Lex met him after he had landed. Roy thought Lex would have been pleased to see him back but all he could say was "Christ Riddel, look what you've done to my plane!" Roy pondered on this encounter later; would the outcome have been different had he been flying his own plane, which dived more or less in a straight line? The Japanese pilots submitted claims for five fighters destroyed. 75 Squadron claimed two damaged Zeros, and 76 Squadron four destroyed, though Japanese records show that all aircraft made it back to base with slight damage to one.

On the night of 25 August, Japanese forces landed near Milne Bay and as they began their march on the garrison at Milne Bay, the Kittyhawk squadrons were given the new task of ground support. Each Kittyhawk could fire up to 1400 rounds, and the next day Roy flew two sorties attacking enemy concentrations and stores around K.B. Mission. Targets were identified by the Army using Verey lights. Results from these attacks were always hard to determine owing to the surrounding jungle, but after one attack ammunition and fuel dumps were observed to be on fire.

On 27 August the squadron put up a patrol of six Kittyhawks following reports of an incoming raid. Roy (A29-127, 'Z') was flying with Sergeant Stu' Munro (A29-108, 'M', 'Schuftie') when the patrol encountered 12 Zeros and eight Type 99 dive bombers attacking Gurney field. The Zeros were from the famed Tainan Kokutai, flown by some of Japan's best fighter pilots. As the Kittyhawks manoeuvred for position, a Zero swept past firing and Roy watched helplessly as Stu's smoking Kittyhawk crashed into the jungle below. Roy believes it was the same Zero that then turned its attention to him and he found himself locked in a series of head on attacks. On the last, the Zero passed a little to his right and Roy took the opportunity to shoot, opening up a hole in the starboard wing root and saw oil leaking out, causing the Zero to roll. They were quite low by this time and as he turned, he saw it crash into the jungle. Alone and at low altitude, he climbed for height and found another Kittyhawk (A29-71), flown by his CO, Squadron Leader Les Jackson. As they continued their patrol, they saw some activity just off the coast and went to investigate.

1Milne Bay, September 1942. L-R: FLGOFF Bruce Watson, SGT Cecil Norman, SGT Roy Riddel, FLTLT Archie Hall and PLTOFF Arthur Gould. The Milne Bay mud and water is evident on each side of the Marsden matting.
(Australian War Memorial) Accession number: 026658

As the Kittyhawks had battled the top cover of Zeros, a second flight of Zeros had strafed Gurney field. Two of the attacking Zeros were hit by ground fire and one, flown by Petty Officer Enji Kakimoto, was eventually forced to ditch just off shore up the coast from Milne Bay, seven miles

east of Dowa Dowa Creek. He managed to swim to the shore and watched as two of his fellow pilots attempted to destroy his ditched plane. Enji identified these planes as being flown by Flyer Kihachi Ninomiya and Petty Officer Sadao Yamashita. It was this activity that Les and Roy had seen. The Kittyhawk pilots dived down to the perfect position to catch the two Zeros as they pulled up from their first pass and coming in fast, fired on the unsuspecting pilots, closing in to a few yards. Roy would later recount that it was just like shooting clay pigeons. Both planes crashed into the sea and Roy couldn't help thumbing the transmit button on his radio and letting out a great yell of delight as the stress of the last few days and minutes erupted. It was "a sort of way of getting it out of your system."

The Tainan Kokutai was the group that had been the nemesis of 75 Squadron when they had been based at Port Morseby earlier in the year. Now, the squadron had evened the score. The Tainan Kokutai had lost five aircraft; this would be the biggest one-day loss in its entire history. Enji Kakimoto was found by friendly natives and later turned over to Australian forces. He was eventually interned at Cowra, and was found hanged on the night of the infamous Cowra breakout. Roy and Les returned to base where they lodged their claims. Roy was only officially credited with one Zero, the one he'd shot down into the sea with Les. To the squadron, he had shot down two in one day and promptly acquired the nickname 'Hot Shot'. But he'd lost another close friend. He'd shared a tent with Stu and he reflected on all the men he'd shared quarters with, had grown close to, and who had died. In England he'd knocked around with Arthur Corser, Bill Norman, Norm Mowatt and Tommy Enright, but within six months they were all dead. Shelley and Sheldon, dead. And now Stu. From that time on Roy vowed he would never share quarters with another pilot.

The following day, 28 August, the squadron again strafed enemy positions around K.B. Mission, but this time flew on to overnight at Port Moresby for 'security reasons', primarily due to the on-going shelling of the base at night by Japanese cruisers. It was dusk when the Kittyhawks approached Port Morseby and the garrison there turned on their searchlights to identify the approaching aircraft. Sadly, Sergeant William Cowe (A29-109, 'K') was dazzled by the light and fatally crashed. It was only later that Roy realised he had picked up Bill's kitbag by mistake, and Bill his, which now lay destroyed in the wreck of his Kittyhawk. With it was Roy's logbook and camera. They returned to Milne Bay the next day and Roy's was one of six Kittyhawks that flew 'diversionary tactics' in support of Hudsons attacking Japanese shipping seen that morning.

Japanese forces had now closed on Milne Bay and snipers had encroached close to the airstrips, so the Kittyhawk pilots were instructed to put a burst of machine gun fire into the surrounding palm trees as they took off. This not only deterred the snipers, it stripped the trees of their foliage and deprived them of any cover. On 4 September, Roy bombed enemy positions then escorted a transport to Port Moresby. The continual air and ground attacks, and destruction of enemy supplies was turning the tide and on 7 September Japanese ground forces began withdrawing, though their air forces were still able to mount a bombing raid on the airfields at Milne Bay on 8 September killing two 75 Squadron guards. Roy returned from Port Moresby on 10 September to join the squadron in ongoing bombing and strafing to repel the Japanese, culminating in a mission to Goodenough Island to strafe retreating Japanese forces on 16 September. Milne Bay had been saved. The Kittyhawk squadrons withdrew in the last week of September, 75 Squadron to Horn Island and 76 Squadron to Darwin.

Roy was very proud to have served at Milne Bay. Despite the atrocious conditions, he was still able to recall lighter moments. There was the time he gave his boots to a local to clean. They were returned spotlessly clean, inside and out. Unfortunately flying boots aren't meant to be cleaned on the inside. Then there was the time when part of the 'go-down', the name for one of the big stores areas, was partially blown up. On 29 August, a group of US soldiers had fired on

some cows approaching a minefield. Those in charge of the canteen and stores, fearing the Japanese had infiltrated, blew up their supplies! On the upside, the Salvation Army took a truck into the area, rescued the unbroken beer bottles and distributed them amongst the men. There was also a good supply of cigarettes for the next few days. Roy loved flying and often did so inverted, sometimes at low level. One day, while flying formation with Pilot Officer Noel Todd, Roy felt the 'call of nature'. Pulling out the relief tube, he began to relieve himself when an aircraft suddenly hurtled across his nose, causing him to spray the cockpit and instruments. It was Noel. Roy called him on the radio and asked, "How did you know?", to which came the reply "I've just taken one myself."

Roy had immense respect and admiration for the ground crew who had to work in all conditions to keep the aircraft flying. When a Kittyhawk needed an engine change, a pair of palm trees was used to winch the old one out and install the new engine, all within 24 hours. Les Spotswood was one of the ground crew who worked on Roy's aircraft and became a lifelong friend. Les went on to train as a pilot and was posted to England to fly bombers but the war finished before he had that chance.

Roy flying P-40E Kittyhawk A29-153, 'O', 'Orace', 75 Squadron, 1942
(Photo courtesy of Riddel Family Collection)

October found 75 Squadron settled on Horn Island. By this time Roy had been promoted to Pilot Officer. Horn Island gave the squadron time to refresh its men and refurbish the aircraft. Roy found it a dreary place. No mud but plenty of dust and desolation, and not much beer. At this time, he took P-40 Kittyhawk A29-153, 'O' as 'his' plane and had the name 'Orace' marked on the cowling, after the name 'Horace' his family had given to his father (this is often mistaken as 'Grace'). On 25 October, after flying an early morning exercise, CO Les Jackson pulled Roy aside and asked him to accompany him to Cairns. They removed the ammunition from the wings of their Kittyhawks and when they arrived at Cairns were able to squeeze 250 bottles of beer into the planes. They returned at 22,000 feet to chill the beer and received a very warm welcome back at Horn Island. While they were congratulated on their very gentle landings, they received 'an irate blast from North Eastern Headquarters RAAF, who in narrow-minded fashion suggested that ammo bins in the wings were for ammunition only'.

The stay at Horn Island was short, and by November the squadron had redeployed to Townsville where there was more formation flying and practice. After reports of a possible Japanese seaplane being seen, Roy (A29-131, 'H', 'Miss K. HAWK III') and Flying Officer George Shiells were sent on a detachment to Bowen on 11 December, carrying out an uneventful sea patrol that evening and two more patrols the following day. They carried out another patrol on the evening of 13 December, returning at dusk. According to the squadron ORB, 'on landing A29-131, PLTOFF Riddel bounced slightly and on touching down again the tail came up high, airscrew touching the ground and the tail continued to rise. Approximately 160 yards after touching down aircraft nosed into runway and crashed on its back. Pilot severely injured and admitted to Bowen Hospital. Aircraft damage extensive.' Roy simply remembered following Shiells down, then the brakes jammed and the Kittyhawk flipped. He was pulled unconscious from the wreck and remained unconscious in hospital for several days. Hemiplegia was diagnosed; a severe or complete loss of strength or paralysis on one side of the body. When he finally regained consciousness he was paralysed, but the paralysis gradually resolved into a weakened left hand

and a numb right leg, conditions that remained with him for the rest of his life. He later found that he could put a lit cigarette against his leg and not feel it. He had come very close to death, and recalled, with some emotion, a lady telling him she had come by his bed every day to pray for him. He was removed from the seriously ill list on 28 December but remained in hospital for three months.

Roy was declared fit enough to fly again by April. On April 1, he was promoted to Flying Officer and on April 27 was posted to No. 3 Air Depot at Amberley for aircraft ferrying duties, then as a test pilot flying a wide variety of aircraft. Amberley had been the site for erecting Airacobra aircraft coming to Australia. When the ground crew found an Airacobra that had been abandoned by the USAAF and managed to get it airworthy, Roy used it as his personal hack, complete with USAAF markings. The ground crew also found a Boomerang for Roy but he wasn't overly impressed with that one. Roy's father was very keen on flying and while he was at Amberley, Roy arranged to fly a Wirraway to Archerfield. He organised to meet his father by the Aero Club, where the fence was quite low and his father would be able to scramble through. Unfortunately, the CO at Archerfield was on to him and came over to find out what was happening. Roy introduced his father, who then rather sheepishly turned about and climbed out again.

Roy's reputation as a skilful and fearless pilot brought him many requests to test aircraft. On one occasion he was asked to test fly a Kittyhawk with a modified carburettor, diving it at 550 mph. During the test the cowl broke away and hit the fin but fortunately he managed to get back safely on the ground. By 1944 he was itching to get back to a squadron, but had to make do with a posting to A Flight, No. 2 OTU, Mildura in March. 2 OTU operated a variety of aircraft, but Roy spent most of his flying time in Kittyhawks, Spitfires and Boomerangs, logging 287 hours there and bringing his total flying time to 1408 hours. On 1 October Roy was promoted to Flight Lieutenant, and in December he finally got his posting to a squadron, No. 84, flying Kittyhawks again.

2P-51 Mustangs of 84 SQN RAAF, Townsville, Queensland July 1945. Pilots and aircraft, front to rear: SQNLDR James Cox, LB-V; FLTLT Roy Riddel, LB-K; FLTLT Don McQueen, LB-W; FLTLT S. E. Armstrong, LB-0.
(Australian War Memorial) Accession no: NEA0698

Roy joined No. 84 Squadron, and CO Squadron Leader James Cox, in Townsville as A Flight commander. The squadron was equipped with P-40Ns and P-40N5 A29-535, 'K', became his regular aircraft. The squadron had been chosen to receive P-51 Mustangs, and was essentially marking time with flying and ground attack practice. On 6 February Roy flew to 1st TAF RAAF HQ with Squadron Leader Cox to gain information on the latest tactics being deployed, returning on 17 February. Roy found himself as acting CO several times while Squadron Leader Cox was on leave. 84 Squadron received its first Mustang, a P-51K A68-506, on 21 May for training purposes and began training up on the new aircraft over the next few months. When Cox was injured in a crash on 7 August, Roy was appointed acting CO. On 10 August when the Duke (Governor General of Australia) and Duchess of Gloucester visited Townsville to inspected No. 84 and No. 86 Squadrons, Roy escorted their plane to Mareeba. The war came to an end in September before the squadron could be deployed and on October 4, Roy handed over command of 84 Squadron to Don McQueen. He was officially discharged from the RAAF on 21 November 1945.

Following the war, Roy joined his wife Joyce whom he had married in 1944. As with most returned servicemen, he struggled to adjust and find his place in civilian life. Sometimes moody, the war had left him with a new view on what was important and he could be quite intolerant of trivial matters. Perhaps at times considered cantankerous, he was actually quite shy and compassionate and could relate well to people. He was also known for his self-deprecating humour and booming laugh. Roy had a variety of odd jobs before deciding to become a dentist. He qualified at the University of Queensland and after briefly practicing in Sydney moved to Coffs Harbour, where he practised for over 30 years. He had four children, John, Susan, Robert and David. Sadly, Joyce passed away in 1971. He later married second wife Judy and both were active members in the Coffs Harbour Aero Club, sharing their passion for flying. After more than sixty years flying, Roy hung up his wings in 2000.

Flight Lieutenant Roy Gordon Riddel, 27 July 1945, Townsville, Queensland
(Australian War Memorial) Accession number: NEA0732

Roy flew back over Milne Bay in 1975 with Judy and son David in their Cessna 172. The palm trees around the old airfields that he had strafed in 1942 were still blackened and dead and he found it an eerie experience. After reading 'Onward Boy Soldiers, the Battle for Milne Bay, 1942' and the story of Enji Kakimoto, he gained a better understanding of the Japanese in WW2, but never really got over the memories of lost friends, nor the men he had killed. Roy later visited Cowra and the Japanese POW cemetery. He found the plaque marking the grave of Enji Kakimoto, and carefully placed a piece of flowering gum next to it. Roy Riddel passed away on 30 March 2008.

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ADF in the King's Coronation Procession

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Royal Australian Air Force Corporal Tegan Ross from Australia's Federation Guard with representatives from Commonwealth countries escort the Gold State Coach during the Procession following the Coronation of King Charles III.

Story by Lieutenant Commander John Thompson and Flight Lieutenant Lily Lancaster.
Photo by Sergeant Andrew Sleeman

The Australian Defence Force took great pride in their place in the Coronation of their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The King and Queen were crowned in a ceremony at Westminster Abbey in front of thousands of guests, including Corporal Daniel Keighran VC and Keith Payne VC who formed part of the Order of Chivalry procession. "It was a huge privilege to have played even a small part in the service, and an absolute honour to be there with Keith representing our brave service men and women past and present," Corporal Keighran said.

Millions watched from the streets of London and from television screens around the world. About 40 Australian soldiers, sailors and aviators formed part of the 600-strong Commonwealth contingent from nearly 40 nations and led the Coronation Procession from Westminster Abbey to Buckingham Palace. Petty Officer William Garlick said the highlight for him was hearing the crowd cheering 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie' as they marched past. "That certainly brought a little bit of home to England," Petty Officer Garlick said. "It is an honour to come back to the United Kingdom after having marched at Her Majesty The Queen's funeral. "The atmosphere this time around was very different – less solemn and more joyous. You could see the pride in the smiles on everyone's faces and you could hear it in the cheers of the crowd. It is definitely something that will stay with me for a long time."

The contingent marched in alphabetical order with Antigua and Australia at the front of the Commonwealth Procession and Zambia bringing up the rear. They were followed by 4000 British troops, with a further 2000 lining the streets between the Abbey and the Palace.

Corporal Tegan Ross and Bombardier Michael Nona marched alongside the King and Queen in the 260-year-old Gold State Coach. “It was everything I thought it would be and more,” Corporal Ross said. “I will cherish this moment for the rest of my life.” “It was pretty exhilarating and pretty surreal,” Bombardier Nona said. “It all came together with the crowds, the atmosphere and the flyover. This experience will be the highlight of my career.”

Corporal Tegan Ross and Bombardier Michael Nona from Australia’s Federation Guard march into position for the Procession.
Photo by Sergeant Andrew Sleeman

Australia’s Federation Guard Officer Commanding, Squadron Leader Mitchell Brown, was pleased that all the training paid off. “I’m so proud of the Federation Guard members here representing all three services,” Squadron Leader Brown said. “They have been training hard since we arrived last Thursday – most from Anzac Day services in Türkiye, France and Belgium. “We have enjoyed marching with our friends from fellow Commonwealth defence forces over the past week, and clocked up about 75 kilometres of training leading up to the big day.”

Australian Defence Force personnel weren’t just on foot. Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Daniel Cochrane, on exchange to the Royal Navy’s 820 Naval Air Squadron, flew as a crew member aboard a Merlin MK2 helicopter. “It was surreal,” Lieutenant Cochrane said. “There were a lot of changes to the plan due to the weather, but we got there in the end.”

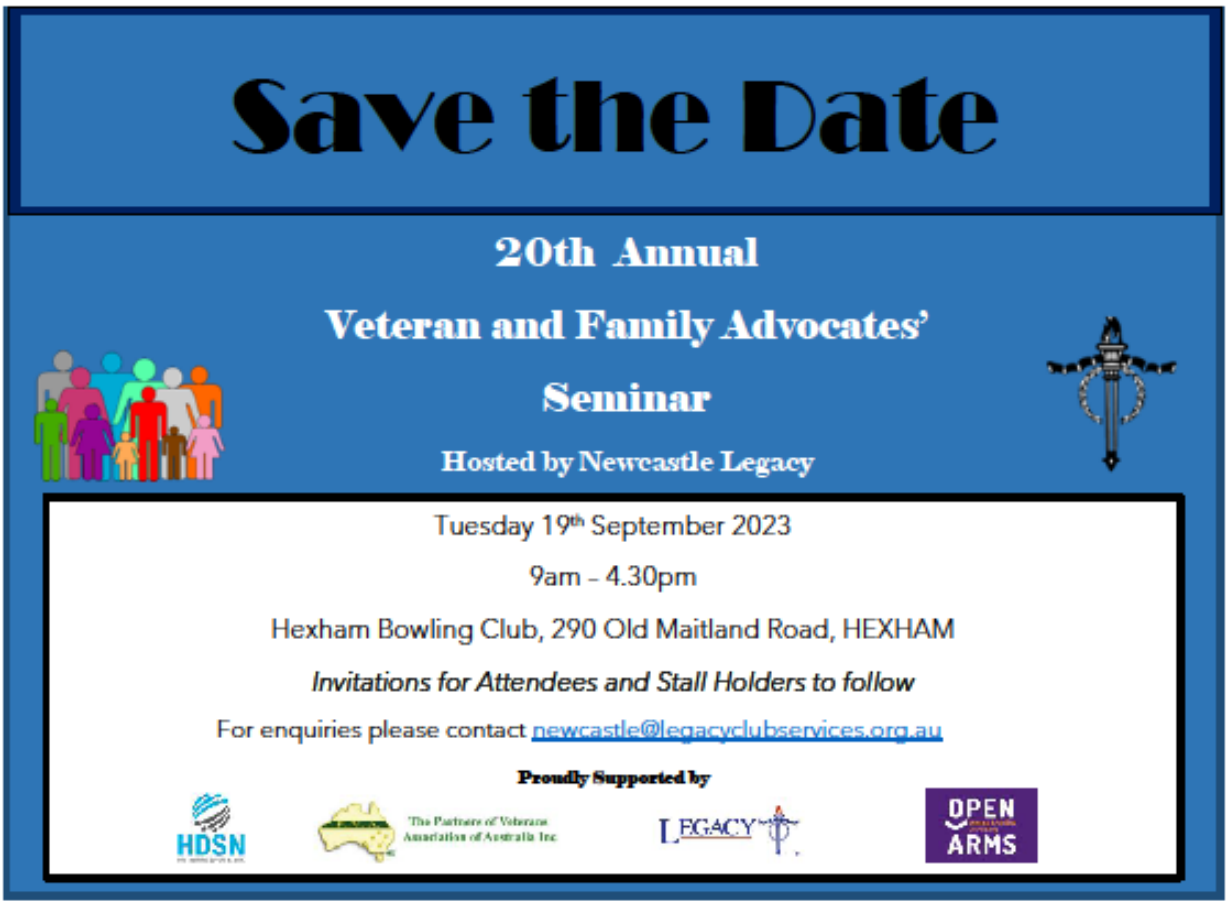
The clouds in the sky did not impact the bright atmosphere as Australian soldiers, sailors and aviators proudly marched into Buckingham Palace gardens to give three cheers to the newly-crowned King and Queen. “It was raining but that did not dampen spirits at all,” Squadron Leader Brown said. “It was just an extraordinary day.”

Australia’s Federation Guard members before the Coronation Procession, at Wellington Barracks.
Photo by Sergeant Andrew Sleeman

37 Squadron Milestone

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

September this year will see 37SQN celebrate its 80th Anniversary since formation, with a planned function being combined with another anniversary; 65 years of Air Force C-130 operations.



Aircraft Ditching - Dakota KN 363

By Richard Handel, 1991: from the author's daughter, through James Milnes

I write this as an addendum to my official report submitted to a RAAF Court of Inquiry on the ditching of RAF Dakota KN363 at 0910 on 4th January 1946. These are, to the best of my recollection, my own thoughts and reactions from the time the first motor cut, until my return to Kai Tak Hong Kong landing strip on 7th January 1946. Loading at Kai Tak was carried out by Japanese prisoners of war, with very little supervision. Planks were placed at the rear door of a DC-3 and cargo to be loaded was carried up the planks by a gang of POWs at a jog trot. Each item was carried up the port side of the fuselage to the fire wall and deposited on the floor under the directions of the loadmaster. It was then progressively placed toward the rear of the aircraft.

RAF Dakota KN 512

It was not until the official investigation of the ditching took place that the possible cause was tabled. The theory was that the overload tanks, situated on each side of the door leading to the crew's quarters, was an ideal setup for sabotage. The theory put forward was this:
As the file of POWs came abreast of the tanks (each tank was fitted with a cap approximately 31/2" to 4" in diameter) the gang, well-schooled beforehand, turned one cap a partial turn; this continued until the cap was loose. The foreign body (whatever it was) was dropped into the tank. Each bod in turn screwed the cap back into place.

A pre-flight check showed no trace of any foreign body on top of the tanks. I personally carried out the pre-flight check and then all hands, including five passengers and four crew boarded the aircraft.

Take off was normal and on reaching 9000', I levelled off on course for Saigon. All went well until my decision to change to overloads. My Co-pilot carried out the change over without incident until the starboard motor cut out. I increased revs on the port motor immediately and called for a reciprocal course to fly back to Hong Kong.

We were then 200 miles from departure point and maintaining height on the port motor. The starboard motor was windmilling on completion of the 180° turn. As the aircraft straightened up on course, the starboard motor fired again. I breathed a sigh of relief and asked myself, 'should I turn again on to course for Saigon or return to Kai Tax?'

The decision was taken out of my hands when the port motor cut out. It then became a throttle battle. As the port motor cut, the starboard motor fired again. I adjusted revs and we were now on course with the port motor windmilling. That was of course, producing no power. Within 15 - 20 seconds the port motor fired and the starboard cut. At 8000' we entered solid cloud cover and continued to fly blind to 1000'. With both engines alternately cutting and firing, it took 25 minutes to reach 1000', at which moment we broke cloud. From 1000' the sea was pure white. It was nothing like any crew member had ever seen before; frankly, I was at a loss.

I continued descent (having no other option) with motors alternately firing and cutting out. The view of the 'drink' was staggering. As far as the eye could see, giant waves followed each other

with vast valleys in between. No one realised that we had come down in the middle of a typhoon, hence the complete white surface of the sea.

Since turning on to the reciprocal course, my wireless operator had been frantically trying to contact Hong Kong, without success. Interference from fighter aircraft in the area kept his signals at bay. At 50' above the 'white hills' the wireless operator grabbed my right shoulder as the Co-pilot jettisoned the hatch cover above our heads. With his mouth about one inch from my ear he shouted, "I got through to HMS *Tenacious* in Hong Kong harbour". These are the last words I ever heard him utter. His face was literally streaming with perspiration. He was in real trouble.

I said, "Thanks, back to the wall." He returned to his ditching station while I selected a wave and gave all my attention to guiding the aircraft to the crest. I felt the tail wheel hit the water with the main landing wheels still up. I held onto the crest of the wave I had selected and the 'old bus' settled into the wave. Speed had dropped to 70 knots as she nosed in. The time was 0910. I have no knowledge of the next 40 - 50 seconds; my head had hit something on impact. What it was I don't know. I recovered to find my Co-pilot slapping my face and I heard him say, "Come on Skipper, come on Skipper". He had undone my lap strap and we were waist deep in petrol and salt water. The overload tanks had apparently burst on impact. I must have regained my senses fairly quickly, because I realised we were alone and there was a hole above our heads where we could get out. I remember saying to him, "Out! for Christ's sake get out, out!"

At this point, I realised in a flash just what KN565 had meant to my Co-pilot. He had lovingly cared for the cockpit; it really sparkled. He had spent every spare moment polishing the bloody thing and I always admired my office and never forgot to tell him how much I appreciated his dedication. It was only when I yelled "get out" that he attempted to abandon the aircraft. He put his right foot on his own seat, grabbed the open hatch above his head and his left foot waved in the air above the console. It was painfully obvious to me that he was wondering where he could put his foot on the console without damaging the throttle and pitch controls. I grabbed his foot and jammed it down onto the console and he went out through the hatch. I followed him onto the port mainplane. It was only then that I realised the height of the seas. As can be seen from the official report, the *Tenacious* navigator assessed the height at 30'.

Four dinghies had been launched by the crew, from the rear door. One was fully inflated, two were partially inflated and one was flat. The wireless operator and navigator were in the fully inflated dinghy, a partially inflated one floated toward our position on the port mainplane. The Co-pilot and myself boarded this partially inflated dinghy which the Co-pilot immediately commenced inflating with hand pump. Two passengers boarded the third dinghy. The remaining three passengers stood in the doorway, the senior officer in front. As our dinghy was swept toward the tailplane, I managed to grab the door opening with my right hand. I screamed to the three in the doorway to jump into the water, but there is no way they would have heard me as the shattering noise of wind and wave drowned my voice as it left my mouth. By this time the aircraft was nose down at about a 40° angle. She rose on the next wave and the tail came down into the centre of the three dinghies and they disappeared from sight.

As the aircraft went nose down over the crest the tailplane skyrocketed, tearing my grip from the door frame. This wave carried the three dinghies fifty yards astern and the remaining three passengers still stood in the doorway. As the dinghies rose on the next crest, with the gap increased to approximately 100 yards, we saw all three jump into the water. The condition of the dinghies was such that to get back to them was impossible. The high wind hit the dinghies like a battering ram, rapidly increasing the distance between them and the aircraft. As the dinghies rose again, we saw the tailplane slip out of sight, just one and a half minutes after impact.

The survivors laboured with the hand pumps and after approximately 30 minutes, all three dinghies were inflated. By this time there was no sign of the missing men. The fourth dinghy had a slash about 18" long in its belly and could not be used. All three dinghies were tied together by their nose tabs; we had no wish to be separated. Wave crests fell on us with monotonous regularity, filling the dinghies to the brim. They stayed that way until we abandoned them.

We now had two men to each dingy and used the fourth dingy as a sea anchor. At approximately 1600 the weather worsened. The wind increased and the crests came at us horizontally like water from a fireman's hose. All hands held safety lines to save being swept overboard. Speech had been impossible from the start; communication was by sign only. The wireless operator had brought a hand operated radio with him which required an aerial attached to a balloon. The balloon never left the surface of the sea, the aerial remaining horizontal. We had no success in that direction. All hands had taken a pounding for approximately nine hours when darkness fell. I motioned to the survivors and we each in turn shook hands. I issued 'hard tack' from a survival kit and night fell on us like a black blanket. It was so dark it was almost impossible to distinguish a face from a distance of four feet. As the Captain of the aircraft, I had a Very pistol on a lanyard hanging around my neck, a pack of waterproof cartridges from the slashed dinghy and another pack secured to the dinghy floor.

At about 2000 a wave lifted me bodily out of the dinghy and dropped me in the 'drink'. As I went over, I remembered the life line on the outer edge of the dinghy and dragged my fingers over the rounded surface. The Good Lord was with me that night. I felt the rope loop and hung on. I hadn't sufficient strength to heave myself back into the dinghy and remember thinking, "what do I do now"? My Co-pilot was not aware that I had departed in the dark, so after about a minute, giving thanks, I went hand over hand until I felt his left arm. He told me later he almost passed out when he realised the hand that was clutching his flying suit, was coming from the sea. He reached over, grabbed the seat of my pants and hauled me back into the dinghy. In those terrifying minutes I had become a true 'Dunkee' (Goldfish Club's name for its members).

Note: The Goldfish Club is one of the most exclusive clubs in the world and is only open to individuals who have qualified by "escaping death by the use of an emergency dinghy or life jacket while on operations".

The battering continued until I was aroused (yes, I was exhausted) by a frantic Co-pilot at about 2045. He had reached over, grabbed my head and putting his mouth against my ear yelled, "A search light, a search light"! Turning around there, sure enough, was a search light. How far away? How was I to know? I knew then what the word panic really meant. I jammed a cartridge into the Very pistol and fired. It was a wonderful sight to see the ball of fire as the rocket exploded high above us. The base of the distant light was very wide and I realised afterwards, the ship must have been well down below the horizon at this point in time. There was no response - we had not been seen. Another cartridge quickly - we waited, still no response.

Few folk could ever imagine the feelings of those aboard the dinghies, lost in a world of darkness. Reason returned and with it the realisation that the ship under that broad beam of light could be 25 miles away. With the return of clear thinking, I watched avidly to determine whether the base of the beam was getting larger or smaller. If smaller, it would be coming towards us; if larger, the opposite would be the case. I imagined the effect on the survivors when the beam narrowed ever so slowly. At a point half its original width, I sent another flare aloft. Surely, they must see it. Still no response, but the base of the beam was still narrowing. I checked and only three cartridges remained in the pack. I remember saying to myself "For God's sake Dick, be patient". The worsening weather continued to swamp the dinghies with every wave. In the darkness it was impossible to distinguish the condition of the party.

I am not a religious man, but I believe we had help that night. Time wore on; every minute an hour. I don't think, as my navigator said a few days later, that any of us blinked after the search light was first sighted. Then came the greatest moment of all. The light itself, sat on the horizon. Now there would be no problem, they must see a flare. With a glorious burst of light above us, another flare exploded. The search light went absolutely berserk. Up and down, right and left, for 10 - 15 seconds, then pointed directly at our position. I checked; we had two flares left. *Tenacious* came slowly towards us from perhaps 6 - 8 miles away. The light went out and the blackness, I'm sure, could have been cut with a knife.

Coming on again, the light wavered, seemingly unsure of our position. (*Tenacious* navigator later told us that the dinghies were not actually sighted until within 2 - 300 yards of the ship). Then came the most terrifying experience of the whole ghastly episode: as the ship came (as we thought) all too slowly towards us, the search light showed through the waves. *Tenacious* appeared to heave-to at a guess about a mile away. The second last flare brought an instant response. She came on again at about a 45° angle to the waves, the Skipper obviously intending to use the ship to give us some cover from the breaking the wave crests. We had still not been seen. Again, at a guess, 3 - 400 yards separated us when I used the last flare. The light stopped on our position and our 'landing platform' slowly narrowed the gap. It was then that we realised, for the first time, the enormous wall of water which rolled over us with every wave. As the actual light disappeared behind each crest, it shone through the wave in a giant green ball.

One would have to experience it before one could grasp the feeling of utter desolation that engulfed us. I really knew fear. Within 50 feet of the port side the great grey ghost loomed out of the darkness. All lights aboard *Tenacious* were now on; the whole ship was lit up like a Christmas Tree. Lights above shone on the rescue team, each one of whom was roped to the ship's rail. A rope ladder hanging down the ship's side was thrown about like the pendulum of a clock.

At this point I digress to point out that I was the only survivor wearing a cap pulled down tightly over my ears. Why? Because I had over £100,000 worth of beautiful white diamonds sewn in the top of it. Every penny I owned was sewn in the lining of that headpiece.

Heaving lines shot out over the dinghies and every survivor had one wrapped around his wrist. Slowly we were drawn to the ship's side. As each successive wave raised us to the top of the rail, water engulfed the rescue party waist high. A dozen hands reached out and the first survivor was plucked to safety. The dinghies then fell away to 30' below the deck, to grate on the barnacles far below the waterline. Up in a giant hydraulic lift again and another bod disappeared. The action was repeated until only yours truly was still afloat. The next wave was mine: up, but not quite as high as the first five. Full of apprehension as I realised the hands may not reach me, I grabbed the ladder with my left hand. I felt my wrist gripped and held as the dinghies dropped away. My right hand found the ladder and with my left wrist held securely by one of the party above, I dangled over the drink. I lost my grip with my right hand and at that split second, a hand above knocked the cap from my head and grabbed a handful of hair. I dangled, not on a wing and a prayer, but on a wrist and my hair! The next wave lifted me up and over the rail.

None of the survivors could stand, all hands had to be carried to sick bay where the ship's doctor checked each one, but found no apparent lasting injury. My crew were all in summer dress - as the sick bay boys stripped off our wet clothes, they dried us off and rolled us into blankets. Tablets all round and all six slept until midday the following day. Another medical. No obvious injuries except that three of us had sat on our heels for 12 hours and the action of the sea had worn the knees out of our trousers. All three had similar markings. This was understandable as the floor of the dinghies was rubberised canvas and was not smooth. Areas on the inside of each knee joint as big as the palm of your hand were a bloody mess. I still carry the scars to this day.

Tenacious rode the weather out for two days and nights in a fruitless search to locate the missing men, without success. The search was abandoned and the ship returned to Hong Kong. On my first appearance on the bridge, the afternoon of the second day, I was greeted by the ship's Captain in the following terms: “Good afternoon, just have a look around and see what you did to my bloody ship"!! I was aghast. The funnel was as black as night caused by the heat of a twelve-hour run from Hong Kong at maximum speed. Companion ways were twisted like liquorice due to the force of the waves breaking inboard. He quietened down and we searched the sea together from the bridge until he gave the order to abandon further action. My crew mingled with the ship's crew at various strategic points working in shifts around the clock. Fatigue effected all hands as the storm continued unabated. Though sadly relinquishing their posts, they were close to exhaustion as the ship picked up speed and headed north to a safe harbour. Two days later we took KK153 back to Camden. With the exception of our wireless operator, who unfortunately had a permanent and complete mental breakdown on return to base, we took KN581 back to Hong Kong for the inquiry. On return to Camden, I left the cockpit for the last time and took my discharge from the RAAF.

The whole incident, for me, did not end there. My wife and I opened a dry-cleaning business in Springwood N.S.W. in 1947. Since the moment my grip was torn from the rear doorway of KN363, I had puzzled my brain for an answer to a question constantly on my mind for every waking hour. The question: "What could I have done to save the three who were lost?" "Had I been remiss in some way"? I tortured myself for an answer until December 1949, when the answer, (I thought), hit me like a 20mm cannon shell bursting in the cockpit. The answer: "I could have ordered the crew out of the dinghies into the water to prevent further drift until the remaining three joined us."

I was taking a stain from a pair of trousers on the spotting board at that moment. I straightened up, threw the brush I was using at the wall and ran to my car parked at the rear of the workshop. To my mind, this was my last conscious act for two days. I was found parked in the middle of the highway in the main street of Springwood from where I had been taken to Concord Hospital and placed in what was commonly known as the ‘ta - ta’ ward. Psychiatrists went to work and the whole sorry story had to be repeated over and over again. I was there for three months as the medicos sifted through all the detail now in their possession. They shot my ‘answer’ to ribbons. During the many discussions we had, they pointed out I had repeatedly stated that, just on dusk I had inspected the lashings on the dinghies and all three tabs showed signs of tearing away. They fastened on to this and their conclusion settled my problem once and for all.

During the twelve hours in the drink, the dinghies, lashed together, rose up the face of each wave to its crest. First one would go over and down and two would hang back, resulting in a terrific jerk at the lashing point. This had been the order of the day for approximately nine hours, one over, two back, two over, one back. We had just sat, doing nothing in awe of the forces of nature. Gradually they fed the bits and pieces to me and this was their final summing up. "You had two men in each dingy. Had you picked up the remaining three, the weight in the dinghies would have been increased by 33⅓ %. The additional weight would have torn the tabs out hours before the rescue ship arrived and there would have been NO survivors." Gradually this sunk in and I left the hospital the following week.

Although I was convinced and still am, that their findings were correct, those twelve hours in a maelstrom of white water are as vivid today as they were the minute we broke cloud. Though nightmares trouble me still, the timely arrival of *Tenacious* enabled me to return to my wife and family, help rear the children, see them married and at 80 years of age, I am still happily married myself.

Bluedog in Vietnam

From Rod McKinnon

Around I think late 1967, supporting our men in green, a call came in; a US chopper had gone down and a quick response was needed. Hovering over the site, there was no area to land. The aircraft captain said "Bluedog, you have to go down."

To get into the winch harness, I had to remove my shoulder holster; I got into the harness, dropping down to about skid level. I yelled at Blue (yeah, another one) "Mate, I forgot my gun!"
Blue replied "It's bloody Vietnam - you'll find one!", and yep, I did!

The RAAF's First Peacekeepers

From Graham Raynor

Graham is a retired federal public servant, maintaining an interest in military history. He was the Canberra representative for over a decade on the committee which organised the construction of the national memorial to Australian Peacekeeping in Canberra. He has written a short biography of Commander Henry Chesterman RAN (Australia's first naval peacekeeper) and given lectures to audiences on Australian peacekeeping and other aspects of military history.

In September 1947 Squadron Leader Lou Spence RAAF deployed to Indonesia in support of the United Nations' first international mission involving military officers. They served in a role which today is regarded as peacekeeping. Although Spence was only in country for three weeks (he became seriously ill and was repatriated early, and replaced by Squadron Leader Leslie Kroll), he was followed in February 1948 by a team of four RAAF personnel led by Group Captain Redmond Green; by a third contingent in mid-1948; and two more contingents in 1949.

Wing Commander Lou Spence receiving the US Legion of Merit for service in Korea. He was killed in action one month later.
AWM image 148927

With the departure from Indonesia of Squadron Leader Valentine Roland in September 1950, the RAAF's involvement ended. 25 RAAF officers served the UN in Indonesia, together with 38 from the Australian Army and 2 from the RAN, in what should be regarded as the UN's first peacekeeping operation.

So why were they there?
Two days after the Japanese surrender ending the Second World War, the leader of the Indonesian republican movement, Sukarno, declared an independent Republic of Indonesia. This was met with violence by the Dutch authorities as they tried to re-impose governance of what had been its colony - the Netherlands East Indies. Bloody conflict ensued. In mid-1947 the republicans appealed to the fledgling United Nations for help. Indonesia was not a recognised country nor a member of the UN, and The Netherlands, as a member state objected. However, Australia stepped in to formally recommend that the UN, acting in accordance with the UN Charter, order a ceasefire and find the means to resolve the conflict. The Security Council did so, and immediately established a Consular Commission at Batavia (now Jakarta) to review the security situation

across the islands and report back to the council, and a Committee of Good Offices tasked with trying to help settle the differences and establish peace.

SQNLDR Kroll OBE replaced SQNLDR Spence and served for 10 weeks in Indonesia.

The membership of the Consular Commission included the consuls of each UN member state then represented in the Netherlands East Indies – Australia, USA, UK, France, Belgium and China (the Republic of China). At its first meeting on 1st September 1947 the Consular Commission agreed that each country would send a small team of military officers to help in its appointed task. Australia was the first country to respond and its team of four comprising Brigadier Lewis Dyke, Commander Henry Chesterman, Major David Campbell and Squadron Leader Lou Spence arrived in country on 12th September and deployed into the field almost immediately.

The observers from the six countries were formed into what was called the military observer group, based in Batavia with small teams deployed around the country. Whilst the military observer group was ostensibly attached to the Consular Commission, its value was immediately apparent to the members of the Committee of Good Offices, and the group was thereafter recognised as a part of UNGOC – the unofficial title adopted by the committee: United Nations Good Offices Committee - a variation of its correct title which was the Security Council's Committee of Good Offices. The committee membership was of three eminent people, one each from Australia, Belgium and the US. Across Indonesia it was referred to as KTN – Komisi Tiga Negara – 'committee of three states'. KTN was printed on armbands worn by the observers and painted on vehicles used by the military observer teams together with 'UNITED NATIONS'.

Squadron Leader Spence (leaning forward) briefing the Consular Commission at Batavia, late Sep 1947

The Work of the Military Observer Group

The initial work was centred on the main islands of Java, Sumatra and Madura, with short visits to the provinces of Kalimantan and Sulawesi, to assess the security situation and the effects on the population. The military observer group's observations and opinions were incorporated into both an interim and final report of the Consular Commission submitted to the Security Council of the UN during October 1947. The military observer group helped UNGOC broker its first ceasefire agreement known as the Renville Agreement. The name simply derived from the fact that the negotiations were held onboard the USS *Renville* in Batavia Harbour after both sides had disagreed on a land-based venue. The agreement ordered the armed forces of The Netherlands and the Indonesian Republic to stop fighting and stay within agreed areas. The geographical demarcation between the forces was known as the Status Quo Line. Thereafter the military observer group was deployed to monitor the conditions of the ceasefire, monitor movement of the population over the Status Quo Line and monitor how the population was being policed. The group also investigated breaches of the agreement, especially incidents of violence, and there were many. The number of military observers in country at any time varied, but they were split into ten teams of two to four observers in each, spread over Java and Sumatra, with a few

remaining in the headquarters in Batavia. The work of the observer group was not without risk. Over 50,000 Indonesians, Dutch, British, Indians and Chinese were killed in the conflict and this presented an atmosphere of constant tension for the observers. UNGOC continued to negotiate towards a lasting solution, relying upon the observer group to not only provide independent monitoring of agreement conditions but to provide a constant flow of intelligence to assist in its work. The final negotiated settlement, signed in The Hague on 1st November 1949, led to the transfer of sovereignty of the previous Netherlands East Indies to the Republic of Indonesia on 27th December 1949. As part of the Hague Agreement, The Netherlands agreed to repatriate all members of its armed forces who had been deployed to the East Indies (about 60,000), and to disband the Netherlands East Indies Army (about 50,000). The UN's military observer group remained in Indonesia to monitor their repatriation or disbandment. The last Australian observer to depart was LTCOL Edward Aitken who headed home on 20th March 1951.

Squadron Leader Hackshall RAAF with Indonesian military, standing next to his UN observer group's jeep on the Status Quo Line in central Sumatra.

Recognition of the Service of the Military Observers

Australia ended up sending 65 officers to Indonesia, and together with the US (which sent 60-80) provided the majority of observers attached to UNGOC and the Consular Commission. The UK deployed about 30 officers to Indonesia, France about 20, Belgium 10 and China 5.

There was no immediate recognition of Australian military officers' service in Indonesia, either by Australia or the UN. Eventually, on 22 February 1995, after Australia had participated in other peacekeeping missions, the Australian government created the Australian Service Medal 1945-75 for peacekeeping and non-war-like circumstances. Service supporting the UN in Indonesia was deemed to be peacekeeping and attracted the award of the ASM with a clasp 'Indonesia': nearly 50 years after the service!

The UN however, has never formally recognised the service of the military observers in Indonesia. In 1959 the UN created the UN Medal for service by military personnel to the UN and identified several UN missions prior to that year as warranting the award of the medal, but not Indonesia. This is believed to have been an anomaly and a formal approach to the UN for its correction is currently being made during the 75th anniversary of the UN's involvement in Indonesia. Australia is leading the campaign and is seeking the support of the other countries which deployed military observers. If the UN promulgates the award of the UN Medal to the military observers of the Consular Commission at Batavia and the Committee of Good Offices, then the Australian government, following previous practice, will probably issue the medal to the observers or their closest relatives on behalf of the UN.

Do you know any of the following RAAF personnel or their families?

As most, if not all, of the ADF observers will have died by now, it will be important for their families to be aware of their potential eligibility and entitlement if the UN promulgates the award. To that end, the readers of SITREP are asked that if they know or knew any of the observers and/or their families to make contact with Graham Rayner at:

service.UN1947to51@gmail.com

As well as maintaining an avenue to alert the families of the UN Medal (if the UN approves), the families might share an image of their veterans, any images of their time in Indonesia, and a

paragraph or two about them. The Australian War Memorial will be improving its exhibition of the history of Australia's involvement in peacekeeping when the new exhibition building is opened. It is believed that the Indonesian mission, our first, will feature prominently and it is hoped that the display will include the images and stories that the families of the veterans might provide.

RAAF personnel posted to Indonesia in the service of UN 1947 – 1951

		Rank*	Service No.**	Death
Addison	Warwick	SQNLDR	405707	
Addison	D.S.	SQNLDR	1210, 03188	
Arnold	C.L.	SQNLDR	415107	
Burdeu	Burdeu Percival Curtis ('Perce')	SQNLDR	452, 0386	2 Jun 1999
Crowther	James Russell ('Jungle Jim')	SQNLDR	401323	31 May 2004
DeLacy	R. E. (Robert Edward?)	FLTLT	13065	
Emslie	Alexander Ronald	WGCDR	548, 0395	14 Nov 1993
Fairbank	Royston James	SQNLDR	4120	3 Jul 1974
Fenton	R. B.	SQNLDR	423694	
Green	Redmond Forrest Michael	GPCAPT	146, 0349	22 Oct 1999
Hackshall	Reginald	FLTLT	3481, 03485	13 Aug 2003
Ker	A. I.	SQNLDR	419185, 033152(?)	
Knights	A. E.	SQNLDR	2965	
Kroll	Leslie Norman	SQNLDR	404615, 011334	26 Jun 1980
Mann	Kenneth Alan Seymour	FLTLT	402377	2 Jul 2006
McCormack	Alan Ower	WGCDR	375	
Medley	S.C.	SQNLDR	4640	
Milburn	A.J.	SQNLDR	4248, 1992, 03564	
Nichol	Stanley James	SQNLDR	3485	
Norris	Patrick Stanislaus	SQNLDR	2940	2 Aug 1982
Page	Ernest Goldsmith	SQNLDR	407623	28 May 1985
Roland	Valentine Vasey	SQNLDR	6986 (RAN), 1026, 03199(?)	23 Sep 1968
Sharpley	Thomas John ('Jack')	SQNLDR	1872, 03320	30 Sep 1968
Spence	Louis Thomas	SQNLDR	839, 270839, 011315	KIA Korea 9 Sep 1950
Sugden	Christopher John ('Suggy')	SQNLDR	406887, 05813	28 Mar 2008

*Rank given was the rank held while posted to Indonesia. For some officers this was a temporary promotion and they reverted to normal rank on return.

**Service numbers include pre-war, WW2 and the 'Interim Air Force' which was in existence at the time of the Indonesian mission and which later converted to the RAAF of today.

In yellow = in contact with living descendants.

We are reaching the age where "life sentence" is less of a threat.

The Rise and Demise of RAAF C-130A Hercules A97-214.

By Col Coyne, President, 37SQN (RAAF) Association

After the cessation of WWII No. 36 Squadron, based at Richmond in NSW, was flying the defence force workhorse, the C-47 Dakota. In 1958 36SQN began re-equipping with the then new C-130 Hercules airlifter becoming the first operator outside the USA to be granted approval by US Congress to purchase the Hercules.

The C-130A was powered by four Allison T56-A-11 turboprop engines, driving three bladed propeller units, a range of just under 4,000 kilometres, at a cruising speed of 290 knots (593kph), maximum take-off weight of 56,450 kgs, payload of 15,900kgs and could carry 92 passengers, 72 combat troops, 64 paratroopers, or 74 litters (medical stretchers). The twelve RAAF C-130As were the last of that model off the Lockheed Marietta production line with the C-130B then coming in to production.

A97-214 was the second last of the twelve Australian C-130A Hercules airframes, arriving at RAAF Richmond in March 1959. 36SQN once again became involved with war and war-like operations in the SE Asia region when "Konfrontasi" (confrontation) erupted between Malaya and Indonesia, brought about by a territorial dispute with the Malaysian federation in the 1962/66 period.

The Australian Vietnam War commitment between 1963 and 1975 saw heavy involvement for the C-130A fleet transporting troops and equipment to Vietnam and returning injured troops, KIA caskets and culminating in refugee humanitarian support. During the Konfrontasi period, in conjunction with the regular Vietnam War couriers to Butterworth and Vietnam, three 36 Sqn C-130As were based in Darwin between April and June 1967, undertaking 'Operation Winter Grip' moving two replacement battalions directly to Vung Tau and returning the troops from the two battalions having completed their 12-month tours. The Hercs carried 65 troops on 37 flights, transferring 2,400 personnel over the period of the operation.

Due to Konfrontasi, with Australia supporting the British ruled Malaysian Federation at the time, Indonesia refused to allow Australian military aircraft to overfly Indonesian territories. That required the Hercules to transit to Malaya and ultimately Vietnam via Cocos Island where they refuelled while transiting in both directions. Flights in to and from Vietnam were routed via the air base at Butterworth, near Penang in Malaysia. Medical evacuation patients were brought back to RAAF Base, Laverton in Victoria where they were dispersed to specialist hospitals or military hospitals, depending on injury status.

The former 36SQN C-130A, A97-214, was located at the RAAF Museum Point Cook, Victoria, where it was unceremoniously demolished in March 2022 due to structural corrosion making the airframe uneconomical to restore to display standard.

The flight deck forward of FS245 was allocated to the Vietnam Veterans Museum at Philip Island, where refurbishment has commenced. Upon refurbishment

completion it will proudly display 36SQN history in relation to transport of troops to Vietnam, resupply and medical/KIA evacuation.

Photo by Col Coyne

The RAAFs C-130As accumulated a total of 148,063.6 airframe hours during their 20 years' service, replaced by the later model C-130H in 1978.

And Another Herc in Action

From Peter Beath

I was with 9 SQN early April 1968 till end March 1969. This is a RAAF Medivac departing Vung Tau, not sure of the date.

I told my wife I wanted to be cremated. She made me an appointment for Tuesday.

RAAF RADAR Interpretive Exhibition– Dedication Ceremony 13RS Cape Otway

From Chris Harnath, President RAAF RADAR Branch, AFA Victoria

Following three postponed attempts due to the COVID pandemic, the Dedication Ceremony for the WWII RAAF Radar Interpretive Exhibition at 13RS Cape Otway was successfully celebrated at the Doover building on 19 February 2022. The WWII 13RS Doover building now houses the only existing Interpretive Exhibition of WWII RAAF Radar in that remote/isolated Cape Otway Lightstation precinct. The long-awaited Dedication Ceremony took place in excellent weather conditions, with around 30 participants witnessing the significant celebration of what has been the 'secret story' of WWII RAAF Radar and those who served.

RAAF Radar Exhibition-13RS Cape Otway (Current status)

RAAF Radar Branch President, Chris Harnath, hosted the WWII RAAF Radar Interpretive Exhibition Dedication Ceremony

Ballarat Branch President, Noel Hutchins delivered the Exhibition's Dedication as RAAF Radar Branch President, Chris Harnath looks on.

WWII Radar Mechanic, David Westwood pays tribute to those who served in RAAF Radar

The dedicated audience comprised three WWII Vets (Radar Operators George Runting – who served at 13RS – and Terry McMahon, and Radar Mechanic, David Westwood) and their family members together with other RAAF Radar Branch Members, and with the support of an AFAV Ballarat Branch delegation, led by Branch President, Noel Hutchins. RAAF Radar Branch President, Chris Harnath, hosted the Dedication Ceremony, with contributions from our three Vet RAAF Radar Members; Alex Parry, Cape Otway Lightstation Operations Coordinator; and Association/Branch Secretary, Kath Cooney.

In the absence of AFA National President, Carl Schiller, AFA Ballarat Branch President, Noel Hutchins delivered the following words of dedication:

> *"This RAAF Radar Interpretive Exhibition is dedicated to those who died during World War II while serving in RAAF Radar and those who have subsequently died because of their service in Radar and those members of both RAAF and WAAAFA who served on Radar establishments."*

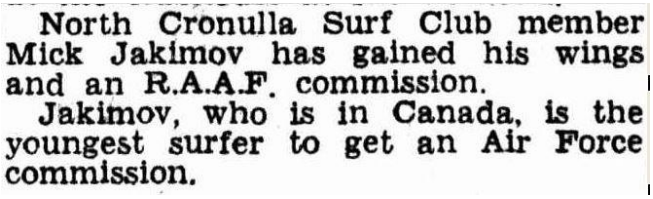
(Adapted from: Radar Yarns Aug/Sept 91, More Radar Yarns Nov 92 – Ed Simmonds and Norm Smith)

AFA and VRAAFRA Members and their families have ongoing access to the Cape Otway precinct, including the RAAF Radar Interpretive Exhibition at a 50% entrance fee reduction. Members are encouraged to visit this special, if little understood story now contained in the Interpretive Exhibition at 13RS Cape Otway. For further information contact President, Chris Harnath via harnathc@bigpond.com

Surfer Sinks Submarine

From John Campbell–Shire Military History Club, via Clive Baker

Gregory 'Mick' Jakimov was a member of North Cronulla SLS Club when WW2 began. On 25 May 1941, at 19, he joined the RAAF (411787). He went to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme and gained his pilots wings. Then to the UK, where he was posted to No 500 RAF 'County of Kent' Squadron – part of Coastal Command. During his time in England he represented the RAF in Rugby Union, having had experience as a member of the Canterbury-Bankstown team.

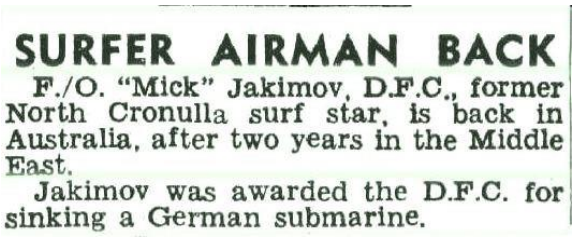


North Cronulla Surf Club member Mick Jakimov has gained his wings and an R.A.A.F. commission.

Jakimov, who is in Canada, is the youngest surfer to get an Air Force commission.

From The Daily Telegraph, Sat. 7 March 1942. P6

The Squadron moved to Algeria in November 1942, flying Hudson aircraft to create a maritime protective screen during the North African invasion by the Allies. On 4 March 1943 Jakimov and his crew sank the German U-Boat U-83 near Cartagena, Spain. Until then, the U-boat had been very successful in sinking quite a number of Allied ships. Jakimov's bombs missed on the first pass over the Germans and the submarine crew then manned the AA gun before the second attack, but had little effect on the Hudson. The depth charges and strafing sank the sub on the second attempt and Jakimov reported some 20 Germans in the water (but records show it sank with all hands).



SURFER AIRMAN BACK

F./O. "Mick" Jakimov, D.F.C., former North Cronulla surf star, is back in Australia, after two years in the Middle East.

Jakimov was awarded the D.F.C. for sinking a German submarine.

From The Daily Telegraph, Thurs. 6 July 1944. P16

After his return to Australia, Jakimov was recorded as flying Mosquitos in the Pacific War. By 1945 he was instructing with 5 Operational Training Unit at Williamtown NSW showing the 'youngsters' how to fire rockets at targets from aircraft. He was discharged in September 1945 but nothing of his later life has yet been uncovered.

His DFC citation is at –AWM: https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/R1560218

Sources:
1] The Australasian, Sat. 30 May 1942, p10
2] The Daily Telegraph, Sat. 7 March 1942. P6
3] http://www.historyofwar.org/air/units/RAF/500_wwII.html
4] Guinea Gold, Thurs. 27 May 1943, p2
5] The Daily Telegraph, Thurs. 6 July 1944. P16
6] The Newcastle Sun, Sat. 5 May 1945, p5

Bluedog in Vietnam

From Rod McKinnon

Somewhere in the Vietnamese jungle above a hacked-out helo pad. I'm a gunner on my first job; head swinging left and right, M-60s loaded with full phosphorus - rounds pouring out. I was determined to take everything out, when Davo (Peter Davidson ex-CO 33Sqn) looks over his left shoulder and says "for f**** sake Bluedog, point those f****** things somewhere else!"

My head was going left and right, but every phosphorus round was going about six inches from Davo's head. Guns on full right travel. Good man Davo; he was 21 and I was 18.

Dodging a Court Martial – just!

Reprinted with permission from CONTACT magazine, from Arthur 'Gus' Comer

In 1962 I was a warrant officer, Radio Tech Air, teaching at the RAAF School of Radio, Laverton.

One feature of Laverton at that time, was it was the only RAAF base where warrant officers were given a rostered duty, called, in this case, Security Warrant Officer. It involved, overnight, wandering around the base, checking on the security of buildings, a job also being done by the roving picket, with the orderly sergeant also charged with the same task.

On this particular morning, around 0200, I was cycling around a unit called Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU). I had checked a few doors and windows – no result. But parked on the tarmac outside the main ARDU hangar was a Canberra bomber, to me one of the prettiest aircraft in our arsenal. Out of idle curiosity, I went to the aircraft and pressed the door button. To my amazement, it popped – the aircraft was unlocked! I was astounded. I'd been checking buildings with little of value in them, yet here was an aircraft worth two million pounds not secured. Apart from logging the incident, there was little I could do at that stage.

Just adjacent to the aircraft was the Flight Records Room, where the maintenance record of every aircraft at the unit was stored; RAAF Form E/E 77. In the book (of which there were two copies) everything to do with the servicing, fault-finding, and general regular maintenance of the aircraft was detailed. Priceless records. Again, out of curiosity, I checked the window of the Records Room and found it wasn't locked! Horror of horrors! A devilish plan came to me.
I went and removed the DME (distance measuring equipment), a valuable piece of electronic equipment, from the unlocked aircraft, climbed into the Records Room and located the E/E 77 for the Canberra. I then wrote into it that the aircraft was unserviceable, thus – 'DME removed and locked in guardroom'! Then, securing the Records Room, I picked up the DME and cycled back to the guardroom, locking it away, and returned to my cot.

In the morning, pandemonium! Corporal Radio Tech came screaming down from ARDU. "Give us back our DME!" he screamed. I could have had him arrested for insubordination, but simply handed over the DME, finished my shift and returned to my section.

A couple of hours later, the request came – "Wing Commander MacCaloney (the ARDU Chief Technical Officer) wishes to see Warrant Officer Comer!" A little nervously, I walked over and stood outside the CTO's office, notifying an underling that I was there. As I stood outside the door, I heard the phone ring. Loud angry words being spoken – a bit scary to me. The words gradually softening, then a clerk came to the door and said "Wing Commander MacCaloney no longer wishes to speak to Warrant Officer Comer." Phew!

It appeared that the Base Commander (also a wing commander) who was responsible for, among other things, base security had read my log and had told the ARDU CTO in no uncertain terms that he was the one at fault! But the real joke was yet to come. The Canberra had been brought to Laverton because the Air Officer Commanding Southern Area had asked to be taken for a joy-ride over Melbourne. You can bet he was never told why his flight was delayed by half an hour.

9 Squadron Reformed as MQ-4C Triton Operator

Reprinted with permission from CONTACT magazine

The Royal Australian Air Force's 9 Squadron reformed on 11 June 2023 to prepare for the delivery of the Northrop Grumman MQ-4C Triton remotely piloted aircraft system.

The display of a replica of the RAAF's MQ-4C Triton remotely piloted aircraft at this year's Avalon International Airshow. Photo by Corporal David Cotton

Initially formed in 1939, 9 Squadron saw active service during World War 2 in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, receiving 12 battle honours. Following initial disbandment in 1944, 9 Squadron reformed 61 years ago on 11 June 1962 as a helicopter squadron undertaking active service in the Vietnam War. The squadron was then disbanded again in 1989. 9 Squadron reformed in 92 Wing Surveillance and Response Group and its

headquarters will be located at RAAF Base Edinburgh – but most Triton operations will be based out of RAAF Base Tindal.

Triton will form part of Australia's maritime intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability, complementing the Royal Australian Air Force's P-8A Poseidon. The two aircraft systems will provide a leading-edge maritime patrol and response capability for Australia. Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Rob Chipman, said the re-establishment of 9 Squadron marked the beginning of a new era in the squadron's distinguished history. "9 Squadron has played an incredibly important role in Air Force, serving during critical times for Australia's security." "I'm proud to see the squadron return to service in 2023."

Officer Commanding 92 Wing, Group Captain Paul Carpenter, said that as RAAF entered its second century, the MQ-4C Triton represented a fundamental change in the use of airpower. "Uncrewed aerial systems offer enormous potential to capitalise on the opportunities provided by modern payloads and increased endurance," Group Captain Carpenter said. "This will deliver unprecedented persistence and awareness over the maritime domain in support of the integrated force."

The reformation of 9 Squadron was announced by Defence Minister Richard Marles during the 2023 Australian International Airshow. Defence expects the delivery of its first Triton, including the relevant ground and support systems, next year.

National Vietnam Veterans Museum Phillip Island

Reprinted from Hunter Veterans News

THE National Vietnam Veterans Museum is an independent Australian museum dedicated to the heritage and legacy of Vietnam Veterans. We seek to remember, interpret and understand the experience of the veterans of Australia's longest war and the enduring impact of the war on society.

Our vast collection of artefacts, from planes to name tags is interpreted with information boards supplemented by audio description InfoWand devices and touch screens to keep you, your family and friends engaged for the length of your visit. Endlessly fascinating and absorbing, no matter what age group.

Start your tour with the holographic light and sound show to help you understand the significance of Australian military involvement in the conflict. At the museum you will see the "birthday ballot" barrel used to select men to be conscripted into the Australian army. You will see the iconic Huey helicopter, an American jeep and a centurion tank affectionately known as "the widow maker".

Relax in the Nui Dat Café, open 7 days a week from 10 am – 3 pm. The café offers tea and coffee, cakes and slices, or stay for lunch with soup, toasted sandwiches and sausages rolls all homemade on site. All visitors are able to view the exhibits with wheelchair access and disabled facilities available. Wheelchairs and walkers are also available on site.

Guided tours for groups and schools can be arranged. Please contact the museum directly to organise. The exhibitions and displays change throughout the year and the museum holds a variety of events. To keep up to date with what is happening, visit the website www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org or follow us on Facebook.