SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

Williamtown, Pilot's Eye SITREP:-circa 1956-7

from Peter Larard

Note: From uncertain memory which may well invite welcome challenge/correction/further comment.

Pilots selected mainly from 77 and 75 Squadrons were posted to the newly re-forming No 3 Squadron which was being equipped with the new Sabres, with effect January '56. 77SQN pilots were then attached to3SQN for conversion, finishing and getting their Sabres later the same year. Several famous and popular gentlemen were at the sharp end: Group Captain Glen Cooper ran the Wing, the OC Williamtown was Air Commodore Brian Eaton, with SQNLDRs Fred Barnes and Max Holdsworth the squadron COs. Morale was probably as high it gets, and very quickly, basically friendly (I guess), but nevertheless sometimes quite fierce competitions between these two 'hot rock' outfits developed. Not all perhaps was ideally conceived, but nobody was seriously hurt - bodily or morally.

Add the likes of inter-unit basketball which was strongly contested Monday nights in the PTW hangar, boat races at mess dinners, fastest times in factory-new Sabres Essendon Tower to Willy Tower. Claims? Burners ineligible. Air Weapons Competitions were the best of all, with the 1957 winning team (77SQN) pictured.

L to R: ORF Bartrop; Max Wittman; Owen (OG) Worth; Pete Scully; Max Holdsworth(CO) ; Col Ackland; Pete Larard; Jimmy the Tread Treadwell

The squadrons had their sort-of-restored noticeably and suitably painted pre-1930s cars in which the entire squadrons' pilots attempted to embark for travel to 0745 Met Briefing. 3 Sqn's car was Mike Menzies' '23 Alvis. 77's I think was a '27 Chrysler. Record for vehicle load I claim was held by 77 with 12-in-the-CO's Jeep from which only one fell off.

Thunderflashes (very noisy for training grenades) were available from somewhere in the joint-warfare push at Willy. Wild contests and just short of incendiary interferences with single squadron functions sometimes led to extra Orderly Officer duties for some of the less ruly.
Out of all this spirit and noise came criticism from the self-assured-and-judged erudite of the Canberra squadron's navigation fraternity! Dealing with these people took place during many Darwin deployments where we pretended we could air-defend the place! They termed us "knuckleheads". We weren't too sure of this at first. At least they obviously classed us as different, which with itself, we heartily agreed.

But not everyone was pleased. Air Vice Marshal W E Townsend (to some Kodak Bill) who had completed the course at No 2(F)OTU in 1955, so eligible to call the "flash", a highly respected and all-powerful AOC of Operational Command, took exception and issued a written order to Operational Command bases that henceforth fighter pilots were not to be referred to as "Knuckleheads". Happily now, most fighter pilots rejoice at the title so set in concrete!

Citizen Air Force Activity circa September 1956

from George McLean

No 22 City of Sydney (F) Squadron

Due to No 22 Squadron being re-equipped with Mark 8 Meteor aircraft, replacing the Vampire aircraft with which they had been previously operating, the mobility exercise to Darwin was cancelled and the annual camp took the form of a Meteor conversion camp at RAAF Base Richmond. The camp started on 15th September, the station being open to the general public on the Saturday and Sunday for a flying display and Trooping of the Colours, associated with Air Force Week.

RAAF Meteor

Cadet J.S. Pearson and Cadet G.F. McLean who had completed their Wirraway training, were presented with their Wings by GPCAPT J. Alexander, Officer Commanding RAAF Richmond, at a Wings Parade held on Tuesday 25th September.

On the Monday, the Meteor conversions started in earnest and a full programme, including night flying and armament exercises kept everyone fully occupied for the fortnight. The camp finished up with a Squadron navigation exercise, which took the form of a visit to No 23 (City of Brisbane) (F) Squadron at Amberley. On the morning of Friday 28th, seven Meteors and two Vampires took off in formation for Amberley, arriving back at Richmond on Sunday afternoon.

The departure for Amberley was filmed by Cinesound and this film was used to televise the departure on TCN Channel 9, during the news session at 7:30pm on Friday night. The wives of the Citizen Air Force (CAF) pilots were all anxious to know if Patti Page, the singing star of TCN, who appeared on the same programme, went on the navigation exercise, but as this rated "Top Secret", they must be left guessing!

Bomber Command Commemoration Sunday 26 May 2019

Address by GPCAPT Tony Bull, Director Capability & Transitions, Air Mobility Group

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen and, most importantly, Bomber Command Veterans. This morning I wish to emphasise the fundamental importance of air power, the vision, the reality

and its brutal coming of age - but none of it could have happened without those who served.

In 1737 the visionary Cambridge poet Thomas Gray penned:

The time will come, when thou shalt lift thine eyes
To watch a long-drawn battle in the skies;
While aged peasants, too amazed for words,
Stare at the flying fleets of wondrous birds.

165 years later H G Wells wrote: "*Once the command of the air is obtained, the war must become a conflict between the side that can see and the side that is blind*." As aviation became a reality, Orville Wright said: "*When my brother and I built the first flying machine we thought that we were introducing into the world an invention which would make further wars practically impossible*."

Fanciful, maybe, but the importance of remaining at the cutting edge of technology was championed by Winston Churchill as war loomed over Europe. "*Not to have an adequate air force in the present state of the world is to compromise the foundations of national freedom and independence*." That is as true now as it was then.

Bomber Command was part of that cutting edge and heralded the dawning of a new era of warfare which came of age in the frenetic struggles that took place in the skies above us. Had they not fought so bravely, there is no doubt that the world would have been a very different place today. Bomber Command dissuaded Hitler and Nazi tyranny. The battle was won by resilient civilians; by radar; by those who made the aircraft; by the ground crews who serviced them; and by the aircrew who flew them. Australia was among the first to declare war on Germany, and the Royal Australian Air Force is among the world's oldest, on the cusp of our centenary. Many Australians also served in the Royal Air Force. Ten thousand Australians served in Bomber Command, of whom 3,486 were killed - a grievous toll, and amongst the highest casualty rate of any service in the war.

You can't help being shattered by the story of 460 Squadron. The Squadron flew over 6,200 operational sorties during the war, gaining a reputation as one of Bomber Command's best units, but at an appalling price: 188 aircraft destroyed, 1,018 airmen killed, including 589 Australians, a gruesome 37% fatality rate, with a further 201 men taken as prisoners of war. A tour lasted 30 missions, but life expectancy for a crew was just six, and for an aircraft just ten. No wonder G for George was considered lucky after 90 missions. The Squadron suffered the equivalent of being wiped out five times over!

It was the service of many thousands of Australian men and women that helped Britain weather the darkest days of war and kept alive the hope of a brighter future. Their contribution to victory in Europe was invaluable. Young airmen, some still teenagers, risked their lives as part of the Allied Air offensive, striking a powerful and effective blow against the enemy night after night. Churchill's famous speech about The Few also included:

"*We must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aim their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often with serious loss, with deliberate careful discrimination, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power.*"

However, there was an enormous price. One in four aircrew did not come home. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to pay tribute to this group of airmen and recognise their heroism, courage and sacrifice in the most hostile and uncertain of circumstances. So, to the Veterans: What makes your service, and the sacrifice of your friends, all the more remarkable is that you were, for all those years, so far from home. It is understandable that British and European allies, your comrades in arms, saw fit to fight for their very survival and to push back aggression from their hearth and home. But Australia was there through kinship and through principle. A kinship and a principle sustained buy a sense of nationhood and values. Sticking up for your mates! Or, as Churchill put it: "*This is a testament to the*

civilised world and why sometimes governments will send their troops, ships and aircraft very long distances in support of common values rather than chasing value."

Raymond Baxter, an acclaimed BBC commentator, from the cockpit of a Lancaster on an anniversary flypast, composed a remarkable tribute to all Allied airmen and women. He broadcast live, and had less than a minute to do them justice. He used 112 words, set against a background of four growling Merlin engines mixed in with strains of the Air Force March. He said:
If ever there was a flying shrine to courage, you join me here now. In these confined spaces brave men fought and died. The history of the Air Force is punctuated by great names both within and without the Service. Some defied politicians, some defied accepted rules of technology, and some defied the enemy in the face of fearful odds. But the people who made the Air Force what it was and is today are anonymous. They are the men and women who were, and still are, prepared to serve and simply go on doing the job in hand, to the best of their ability whatever the circumstances and however great the cost. Nothing can overshadow their service and sacrifice. They did their duty and made a decisive and lasting contribution to the Allied victory.

Today we live freely, because of you, and all the men and women who have fought for our nation. Bomber Command veterans become more exclusive each year, but like all the brave soldiers, sailors and airmen that we commemorate across all conflicts, friend or foe, they all share the strongest bond forged in conflict. This friendship, companionship and mateship make reconciliation an increasingly powerful part of commemoration.

Bomber Command Veterans: We salute you.

Danger Close - The Battle of Long Tan

from Bob Grandin

The movie on this iconic battle is finally finished and has started to hit the screens. The nationwide release is August 8th 2019 with the DVD to come out in December. While the movie is predominantly about the valour of Delta Company 6 RAR, the involvement of 9 SQN is illustrated with the two helicopters delivering the ammunition. The initial tasking of taking the concert party to Nui Dat and the removal of wounded is also featured.

While it is a movie, not a documentary, there is some Hollywood license on the way in which the helicopters are portrayed. Similarly, there is a sequence involving the dropping of napalm in the rear, which was called for but could not take place because of the poor weather. As one that was there, I felt that the depiction illustrated the fear that I had when Frank Riley took on the task of delivering the ammunition and led to me saying to him that I thought it was a suicide mission, but the rain created a different reality which was not exciting enough for them to use.

Overall the movie is a long overdue illustration of the reality of war in Vietnam for Australians. It is hoped that it will inform the Australian public of what really happened and help with the recognition of Service provided during that time. Many people, including veterans of the battle and of Vietnam in general, have applauded the depiction of conditions in the battle and recommend its viewing. Trailer viewing is available of the web using the movie title.

The movie was inspired by the book The Battle of Long Tan as told by the Commanders to Bob Grandin published by Allen and Unwin in 2004. This covers the life of the seven involved before, during and after the battle. The chapter- The other Battles of Long Tan – covers the ongoing challenge for Major Harry Smith, OC Delta Company, in getting recognition for the valour of his soldiers. After talking to Cliffe Dohle and Bruce Lane in 1996, I wrote the chapter on behalf of Frank Riley, who was no longer with us.

I have also written a book on my day-to-day life as a helicopter pilot, which will be released on the 15th August at Amberley Air Museum. Titled '*Answering the Call – My life as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and Beyond*' it has been taken from my logbook plus historical publications of the various operations and has newspaper cuttings from the time. I have book-ended chapters with my life after Vietnam as I transitioned back into civilian life in a somewhat chaotic manner.

Surviving Flying Training in RAF Bomber Command

from Bryn Evans

Introduction*: Squadron Leader WW 'Bill' McRae, DFC, AFC, Legion of Honour, Croix de Guerre, and Defence Medal UK, passed away on 31 May 2019 in Sydney aged 106. From Koraki, NSW, Bill served in the Royal Air Force from 1939 to 1945, flying Wellington bombers in the Desert Air Force in actions such as Tobruk, El Alamein, Crete, and Italy.*

In the Second World War, flying training at every stage was fraught with accidents, injuries and deaths. In the RAF during aircrew training the overall casualty rate was a shocking 13%. There were also many lucky escapes, some quite bizarre. Then if an air crew made it through, they faced that first acid test, a first operation into enemy skies.

In mid-1942 the challenge of flying new aircraft to RAF squadrons in Malta and Egypt was fraught with risk, and subject to heavy losses from interception by Axis fighters, as well as attrition from mishap en route. Enemy fighters shore-based in Sicily, southern Italy and islands such as Pantelleria, were taking a heavy toll on any Allied aircraft that ventured across the Mediterranean skies. Rather than being sent via the only alternative itinerary, trans-Africa from Takoradi on the African west coast over to the Sudan, then north to Cairo, some aircraft because of priority, were routed through the Mediterranean to Cairo. One such flight was to deliver the latest Wellington Mark VIII torpedo-bomber to Cairo, and bolster the interdiction campaign which was seeking to blockade supplies to Rommel's Axis Army.

Bill McRae DFC, AFC, Legion of Honour, Croix de Guerre, and Defence Medal UK

In the UK in July 1942, an Australian Flight Lieutenant, Bill McRae, had recently completed his final training as a pilot of a Wellington bomber. He and his crew were awaiting a posting to an operational squadron. Without any prior notification and with he and his crew lacking any operational experience, McRae was given an unexpected and critically important mission. We were handed a brand new Wellington Mark VIII, and ordered to fly to Cairo via Gibraltar and Malta. This Wellington was rather a special one – festooned with radar aerials, associated instruments and equipment, and modified to carry torpedoes. It was to be used to locate and attack enemy vessels at night. At the time the equipment was highly secret and we were briefed on how to destroy the

aircraft should we be forced down in enemy territory. I must say the thought occurred to me that my RAF superiors were taking a bit of a risk in entrusting this aircraft to me. A ferry flight they called it! The later part of the flight would be at night into Malta to hopefully avoid enemy fighters, and I confess I was none too confident of my ability to fly in the dark. My night flying training in England had been limited.

Bill McRae was twenty nine years old from Sydney Australia, and at the outbreak of war was working for the Bank of New South Wales in London. He joined the Royal Artillery and, in November 1940, was temporarily attached to the RAF with whom he learned to fly light aircraft for directing artillery. A year later McRae transferred permanently to the RAF, and in April 1942 commenced training as a pilot of Wellington bombers. In July 1942 McRae was being perfectly honest when he said that he was not very confident about flying at night. During training on a night exercise flight in a Wellington he had found himself over Liverpool by mistake, and in the middle of a Luftwaffe raid. Pinpointed by searchlights and anti-aircraft fire, McRae sharply changed course. Luckily he avoided being shot down by 'friendly fire', and headed back to base at Harwell. 'We were diverted with a lot of other aircraft, to another aerodrome in the West of England. After landing safely as I thought, the ground crew told me they found a tree branch stuck in the under-carriage. I must have clipped the top of a tree coming in to land. A few more inches and it would have been a disaster. I did not report this, or even tell my own air crew!'

McRae's lucky escape on landing was typical of near disasters during training. While at RAF Morton-in-Marsh he saw another pilot of a Wellington come in for landing too low, and clip a haystack which ripped away an engine. Despite this he touched down safely, and we stared in astonishment at the gaping hole in the wing, and the hanging cables where the engine had been.
In another training flight incident at RAF Lossiemouth, another pilot in McRae's section, after a night training flight reported engine problems with his aircraft. Inspection by ground crew found that about four inches had been torn off the engines' propeller blades. He had been slow taking off, and not gained enough height to safely clear some hills close to the runway. The propeller blades touched ground, shearing away part of the blades. An inch or so more and it would have been a fatal crash.

Now at 08.00 hours on 29 July 1942, McRae put those training experiences behind him, and lifted the RAF 's latest radar equipped Wellington into the air at Portreath in Cornwall. For McRae and his crew it truly was a flight into the unknown. On the flight out to Gibraltar there were no problems, until I asked my navigator to come up front to see the Rock. Suddenly the airspeed fell away and we began to lose altitude. I opened the throttles fully to try and maintain height. McRae somehow kept calm. Visions swirled in his head of having to ditch in the sea. It could be the end of him and his crew on their first operation. Strong cross winds around the Rock and across the Bay of Algeciras made landings extremely dangerous. After a couple of minutes on full power struggling to maintain height, McRae realized that the flaps were fully down. His navigator had accidentally put his hand on the flap lever, when he was leaning over to get a better view.

Wellington Bomber

McRae put down at 16.00 hours, and after England, Gibraltar was another world, sun, clear blue sky, hot weather, plenty of food and drink. However McRae and his crew got little sleep that night in a hut next to the runway, roused constantly by continuous aircraft landings and take-offs. At 16.00 hours the next day we took off on the 1,000 mile hop to Malta. At the briefing we were told to keep radio

silence, and call up Malta about half an hour before reaching the island. They would come back with a course to steer. We were warned that Malta lay only about eighty miles south of Sicily. An error in navigation could bring them close to Sicily's southern coast, and the marauding night-fighters of the Luftwaffe.

The flight was uneventful until they believed that they were nearing Malta. Although given a course by radio from control in Malta, almost immediately they were enveloped in low cloud, and unable to see the ocean or the horizon. We were at 3,000 feet and although there was a half moon, heavy cloud was blotting out any lights of Valetta town and its airfield. After circling around for ten minutes, we thought we spotted it through the cloud. Keeping in mind we might be over Sicily, and also aware there were hills reaching up to 700 feet in Malta, we carefully descended. Suddenly there was break in the cloud, and we caught sight of the aerodrome flare path. We touched down at 01.00 on 31 July, and my night landing was reasonable. When we reported to the aerodrome control officer, the first thing he said was, 'You seemed to be wandering around a long time. We were beginning to get a bit worried.' I felt like replying, 'So was I'. He told us to taxi the aircraft away into a blast shelter, and be back at daybreak.

We then went into the mess for a cup of tea and ran into a party. The chaps in the mess were a mixed bunch – English, Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders. One of the Canadians was Flight Sergeant Beurling, who was something of a local hero, a Spitfire fighter ace with some 20 victories. They were a happy crowd and morale was high. I could sense the special bond that exists between those who go to battle in the sky. We went back to the aircraft in the blast shelter at the airfield, and tried to sleep. Next morning McRae and his crew took a trip into the main town of Valetta, took a ride in a horse-drawn 'taxi', saw the bomb damage, air raid shelters in the cliffs, the lean and hungry look of the locals, and endured a couple of air raids accompanied by bursts of fighter gunfire.

We reported back to the aerodrome and had a briefing at 17.00 for the flight to Egypt. The main thing was to keep an eye out for the Italian Navy. We were told to taxi out half an hour before darkness and to leave at last light. However, if an air raid began, to get off the ground immediately and fly south at low altitude. We duly taxied to the take-off runway, switched off, disembarked and waited outside in the warm air. About ten minutes before darkness the air raid sirens went and the aerodrome controller started flashing a green light - 'Get going fast!' We scrambled aboard, I hurried the Wellington on to the runway, and pushed the throttles fully open. Unhappily there was a cross wind blowing, and after a couple of hundred yards the aircraft swung off the runway. Fortunately we stopped without bogging down in loose sand. I turned around, taxied back and began again. By the time we took off, searchlights were sweeping around, and guns beginning to flash. Looking back from a couple of miles out to sea the view was spectacular – flares, flashes, heavy flak and searchlights, like a large fireworks display. We were glad that we were not on the receiving end. When we made landfall over the Nile delta, the Pyramids stood out in the now clear morning light. I flew around them and landed at a nearby aerodrome.

I think the most lasting impression of the flight was the meeting with those pilots in Malta. Being my first flight out of training, it was the first time I had mixed with, and been accepted by, operational types. It gave me the feeling of being a member of a select brotherhood. As a crew I think we realized that the long haul of training was behind us, and ahead lay the excitement, as well as unknown dangers.

McRae and his crew now knew that in the operations to come, exhilaration would always be mixed with fear. They had come of age, and the brutal cruelties of war lay in the missions to come.

The above article is drawn from Airmen's Incredible Escapes – Accounts of Survival in the Second World War, by Bryn Evans, which is scheduled for publication by Pen and Sword in early 2020.

From The Flightline: National President's Message

from Carl Schiller, OAM CSM, National President

The *Wings* Winter Edition 2019 was a spectacular achievement for the NSW Division and its publishing arm, RAAFANSW Publications Pty Ltd. It clearly sets the benchmark for future editions. I am aware of the many accolades that flowed following its issue. I received numerous praiseworthy comments direct to my mailbox. On behalf of the AFA Ltd National Board, I congratulate Neil Smith and his Team. The standard of the edition reinforces AFA Ltd's decision to award the publishing contract to RAAFANSW Pubs.

The Productivity Commission recently delivered its Final Report on the Government's Inquiry into Veterans Compensation and Rehabilitation. The Report titled, *A Better Way to Support Veterans*, contains sweeping recommendations to reform the veteran support system. During the Inquiry, the Association provided written submissions to the Commissioners as well as attending several Public Hearings and participating in a video-conferences. The Final Report is 900 plus pages and a challenge to read. However, an 80-page overview version is available at https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/veterans/report. I am sure some of you will find certain recommendations controversial and confronting, although in my opinion many reflect well overdue initiatives. The Commissioners do not recommend any changes to entitlements currently being received by veterans and families.

The Government is not expected to deliver its decision on the Commission's recommendations prior to the end of the year. There will be deliberations on the findings between the major Ex-Service Organisations (ESO) and Government, mainly through the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT) on which I have a seat. Also, these and other veteran support matters are being discussed at Secretary DVA's ESORT telephone conferences that are held every fortnight. Our Association has a pivotal role to play in the reform of the veteran support system.

The AFA Ltd National Board that comprises 11 directors, seven of whom are State/Territory Division Presidents, unanimously agreed to an Association refinement and modernisation program. The initiative is well overdue. Currently, the Association presents as seven disparate organisations each with different fundamental features. Although AFA Ltd and Divisions are autonomous entities, it's essential we have shared aims and objectives; look the same in structure and branding; and have common business processes wherever feasible. The Association's future depends on it presenting as a cohesive, federated, national organisation that can speak with authority because of the strength in unity. Moreover, a cohesive organisation is better positioned to provide veteran support on a national scale.

The AFA Ltd National Board now meets monthly by video conference. It will meet face-to-face only once each year for its Annual General Meeting to conserve funds. Directors are in the process of finalising the refinement process which is expected to commence in early October. Members will receive an Open Letter from me outlining the reasons for the modernisation program and the process. It will be a highly consultative undertaking, which will be funded by AFA Ltd.

The Air Force Association has tremendous potential, but it must look forward. A Division on its own cannot achieve the strength of a national organisation, which is why all Divisions must work collaboratively for the common purpose.

Veteran Treatment Cycle Initiative

The Hon Darren Chester MP Minister for Veterans and Defence Personnel
27 June 2019

The health and wellbeing of veterans and their families is a high priority for the Morrison Government. "We have listened to feedback from health professionals who deliver care to the

veteran community about the need for more support to accompany the changes to allied health referrals, scheduled to start on July 1. The changes will now begin on October 1, 2019 to provide more time for the Department of Veterans' Affairs to meet with stakeholders. "The new treatment cycle will improve the quality of care veterans receive through closer collaboration between a veteran's GP and allied health providers. "DVA has been instructed to work closely with allied health providers, GPs and the veteran community to ensure the new arrangements are properly communicated and implemented in a timely manner."
For more information, visit: https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/medical-services-andconditions/improved-dental-and-allied-health-clients
***Comments attributable to Allied Health Professions Australia Chief Executive Officer, Claire Hewat*:**
"Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) and its members are grateful for the Minister's quick actions to delay the implementation of the new Treatment Cycle Initiative until October. "The allied health sector is supportive of the introduction of the treatment cycle, but have been concerned about ensuring that veterans and the providers that support them are able to transition to the new system properly. "The additional time will allow the sector to work with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to ensure a smooth and safe transition that ensures veterans do not miss out on vital care."
Comments attributable to Australian Medical Association spokesperson:
"The AMA welcomes the changes to the treatment cycle for allied health referrals for veterans. These changes introduced by the DVA promote GP-led team-based care. Planned multidisciplinary team-based care has been demonstrated to improve patient outcomes. The treatment cycle will ensure strong links between GPs and allied health professionals, preventing fragmentation of care and unnecessary duplication of services."
Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling, provides support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Free and confidential help is available 24/7. Phone 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

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Prosperity

This article was written by a college student by the name of Alyssa Ahlgren, who's in grad school for her MBA. It's a short article but definitely worth a read.

My Generation Is Blind to the Prosperity Around Us! I'm sitting in a small coffee shop near Nokomis trying to think of what to write about. I scroll through my newsfeed on my phone looking at the latest headlines of Democratic candidates calling for policies to "fix" the so-called injustices of capitalism. I put my phone down and continue to look around. I see people talking freely, working on their MacBooks, ordering food they get in an instant, seeing cars go by outside, and it dawned on me. We live in the most privileged time in the most prosperous nation and we've become completely blind to it. Vehicles, food, technology, freedom to associate with whom we choose. These things are so ingrained in our American way of life we don't give them a second thought. We are so well off here in the United States that our poverty line begins 31 times above the global average. Thirty. One. Times. Virtually no one in the United States is considered poor by global standards. Yet, in a time where we can order a product off Amazon with one click and have it at our doorstep the next day, we are unappreciative, unsatisfied, and ungrateful.

Our unappreciation is evident as the popularity of socialist policies among my generation continues to grow. Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recently said to Newsweek talking about the millennial generation, "An entire generation, which is now becoming one of the largest electorates in America, came of age and never saw American prosperity." Never saw American prosperity! Let that sink in. When I first read that statement, I thought to myself, that was quite literally the most entitled and factually illiterate thing I've ever heard in my 26 years on this earth.

Many young people agree with her, which is entirely misguided. My generation is being indoctrinated by a mainstream narrative to actually believe we have never seen prosperity. I know this first hand, I went to college, let's just say I didn't have the popular opinion, but I digress.

Why then, with all of the overwhelming evidence around us, evidence that I can even see sitting at a coffee shop, do we not view this as prosperity? We have people who are dying to get into our country. People around the world destitute and truly impoverished. Yet, we have a young generation convinced they've never seen prosperity, and as a result, elect politicians dead set on taking steps towards abolishing capitalism. Why? The answer is this: *my generation has only seen prosperity. We have no contrast. We didn't live in the great depression, or live through two world wars, the Korean War, The Vietnam War or see the rise and fall of socialism and communism. We don't know what it's like to live without the internet, without cars, without smartphones. We don't have a lack of prosperity problem. We have an entitlement problem, an ungratefulness problem, and it's spreading like a plague."*

The Origins of the Callsign "Wallaby"

RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV) 1964
Written by Don Pollock RTFV 1964-65

As the RAAF is planning to demob the Caribous, it is an appropriate time that the origins of "Wallaby" are explained. Like most tales, the origins of the name "Wallaby" Airlines was a combination of different events. To the best of my recollections this is how the name was formed; a name which later became famous in Vietnam amongst many armed services and peoples including US, New Zealand, Thai, Korean and Vietnamese Armed Forces, French plantation operators, the occasional Brit on some civil aid project, and of course, the Australians who served both in the armed forces and the civil assistance programs.

About a year before the formation of RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV), a group of young pilots from 38SQN had formed an association with several Qantas air hostesses who shared a flat in the Sydney eastern suburbs. The association was neither constant nor regular. The girls had irregular schedules in those days and the pilots were pulled at a moment's notice for a medevac (medical evacuation flight), a SAR (Search and Rescue) flight for some lost mariner or bush walker, or the many detachments to other bases. Accordingly, although the relationships were friendly they were infrequent. However occasionally some pilots turned up at the girls' flat and a Chinese meal was shared or we just sat and talked or together we organised a party on the spot. The relevance of this casual relationship and its importance to the "Wallaby" callsign will soon become apparent.

In late 1963 we heard that crews had been picked for the ferry of the Caribous from the de Havilland factory at Downsview, Canada, to RAAF Base Richmond in Australia. Most of the co-pilots on Caribou ferry 1 and 2 were also the "boggies" (Note 1) who formed the nucleus of the association with the air hostesses. The ferry further disrupted any contact with the girls. Both the first and the second Caribou ferry had been completed by June 1964. During the second ferry through RAAF Base Butterworth Malaysia, the pilots on that ferry learned that a flight of Caribou aircraft would be committed to operations in Vietnam. Two pilots heard about it in an unusual manner.

After lunch each day, officers would go into the Officer's Mess lounge room to listen to the world news on the radio. Believe it or not, back then people would sit and look at the radio as intently as people today look at a television. On this occasion l can remember sitting beside John Staal when we heard the announcement that a flight of RAAF Caribous was to be despatched to Vietnam. We looked at one another and bolted for the aircraft lines. Simultaneously, we had guessed that SQNLDR Chris Sugden (Suggy) (Note 2), the leader of our ferry of three aircraft, would be the first CO as he was the most widely experienced officer on our squadron. He was down at the lines inspecting a Caribou and we wanted to be his first volunteers. After about a kilometre run - not a jog - and it was about half a mile then – we both ran up to Suggy absolutely puffed, saluted and gasped out the news and begged to

be allowed to join him if he led the Caribous into Vietnam. Our Caribou ferry had been delayed by suspected sabotage (Note 3) so he had got to know us fairly well. He agreed to recommend us if he was selected to lead the first group. With a bit of luck we were going to war!

Back in Australia a week later, those that were picked for Vietnam were given pre-embarkation leave then briefings and some intensive training. We started to think about what we might take to Vietnam to identify ourselves; slouch hats, flags, koalas? All the suggestions were dismissed as kitchy, too large or too expensive. During this busy period the friendship with the Qantas air hostesses was renewed. At one of the get-togethers a boggie (it may well have been John Staal) saw one of the girls with a Qantas pin; the golden kangaroo. We asked the girls if they could get us some pins. They told us they would try and also that they would organise a send off party for us. The party was a happy affair. I remember three people from that evening.

Mick Gwinn among the loadmasters because he was a big gentle giant and towered over everyone else, John Staal with Geertje arrived late as they had gone to a night club where the leading talent had sung a funny song about Vietnam, and Delas England, a hostie who had a small cardboard box jam-packed with a few hundred kangaroo pins; a great gift from Qantas. Sometime later the pins were given to Suggy, who distributed them amongst all members of the RTFV group who flew from Malaysia into Vietnam. I think each member had about five pins. The aim was to award the pins to those people in Vietnam who gave us a special service.

Wallaby Airlines A4-208

A day or so after arriving in Vietnam, Suggy gave a pin to the Base Commander Vung Tau, Colonel Dillard, US Army, (Note 3). Dillard was a most professional officer who did what he could to get us kitted, billeted and supplied to become an effective unit without delays. Likewise Major Dillard (no relation), US Army, the Executive Officer to the colonel, received a pin. Other people around Vung Tau also received the kangaroo aka Qantas pins. Major Schaumberg, USAF, was our liaison officer and he was most diligent in getting RTFV operational "in-country". RTFV had been integrated as part of the USAF air support services and was tasked by the USAF, but most of the tasks were supporting the US Army and the South Vietnamese Army. Our induction had been completed in record time thanks in a large part to Schaumberg. The only item requiring agreement was a unit callsign which would identify us for all future operations.

So when Suggy gave Schaumberg a Qantas pin as appreciation for his services to us the conversation went something like; "What is this animal called, Chris?" Schaumberg sometimes had a peculiar manner of pronouncing and emphasising each syllable. On this occasion in an almost Southern drawl Schaumberg said "An- I- Mal" although I do not recall Schaumberg being a southerner. Chris replied. "A Kangaroo. That could be a suitable name for our squadron call-sign?" Schaumberg was almost aghast. "A Kan-Ga-Roo? Hell Chris, that's not an easy name to pronounce. The Vietnamese would find it impossible. Are they called something else". Chris replied. "A Wallaby". The name had an instant appeal for Schaumberg. He said it several times. "Wal-La-By" sounded much better to Schaumberg than kangaroo. It was Schaumberg who then said that he would arrange for "Wallaby" to become the identifier for the RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV) which later became 35 SQN. Thus "Wallaby" Airlines was named after a casual relationship with the QANTAS kangaroo.

Note 1: According to the Urban dictionary, “boggie” is a contraction of “bograt”. Used exclusively and often derisively for any RAAF officer having the rank of Officer Cadet, Pilot Officer or Flying Officer. Can anyone assist with the origins of this name? Perhaps it is a development from “bogey”?

Note 2: Squadron Leader Chris Sugden (Suggy) the quintessential quiet achiever. Possibly influenced by the example of his father, who lost an arm at Gallipoli in WWI, Suggy began his military career early as a member of the 10th Light Horse. Later on he avoided RAAF parades, occasionally stating that he was the only officer in the RAAF who had carried a sword as a weapon of war and therefore he was not going to carry one on parade.

He and his wife managed their own nursing home at Windsor while he was a member of the RAAF. After he retired from the RAAF he farmed at Eungai Creek; later on, after lessons on laying bricks, he built his retirement home of double brick at Macksville and named it "Terra Firma" - the more firma the less the terror...it was a very functional house having at least a dozen power points in the kitchen so he would never have to use a double adapter again. He brewed his own beer, played golf and became President of the Nambucca Shire. He was possibly the only RAAF officer who flew in three wars in three different roles; Boston bombers in WWII, Meteor fighter bombers in Korea and Caribou transports in Vietnam.

RTFV crews in Vung Tau, Vietnam

Suggy decided to test the ability of the Caribou to take off on one engine. He did this flight in Malaysia before the Caribous deployed to Vietnam, just in case the situation arose when a single engine take-off would be required. Some months later such a take-off (the only operational one that I know of) was required from an airstrip in the Mekong delta. Daylight was rapidly disappearing and the area was known as unfriendly, where a mortar or two could be expected after nightfall when a friendly forces reaction time would be delayed. The take-off was successful. Fortunately for all concerned Suggy was captain of the aircraft when it had the engine problem. He did not have to make the decision of authorising one of the “boggies” to do it had it happened to them. On the other hand he had been such an inspiration to all, that any boggie crew probably would have flown it out and told him later.

At his 80th birthday party, Mike Lancaster, Suggy's right hand man in Vietnam, sent the message. "What I would really like to place on record is my enormous respect for Chris as a remarkable original thinker and an outstanding leader. The official histories will never be able to reflect how lucky we were in having Chris appointed as the first commander in Vietnam. He had the ability to nut things out from first principles and if the answer didn't agree with the book so much bad luck for the book. Without doubt, he was the strongest and best commander I had during my RAAF career."

Suggy was very proud of his part in RTFV. He was especially pleased that the popular reunions included all ranks and all musterings. Sadly, Suggy died just a week before the US Air Medal was finally presented to all Wallaby Airlines aircrew who had served in Vietnam; 42 years after the original recommendation. His elder son, Peter, said his dad was very happy that the efforts of the loadies (loadmasters) were also recognised in the awards.

Note 3: The day arrived when the first group of RTFV was to fly from Butterworth to Vung Tau. The meteorological forecast report (Wx) had a major storm on our route. The Wx did not deter Suggy so

off he went and I followed with Kev Henderson as the co-pilot. Apparently most of the US Army at Vung Tau said “The Aussies will not make it today.” Apparently Col Dillard disagreed. He said that he had served near Australians in Korea and they always got through. That we did arrive as planned vindicated Gillard's opinion, set the scene for the "Can Do" attitude which was almost the unofficial motto for RFTV (Wallaby Airlines) and caused some amusement to Suggy "that some Yanks thought we would not get through."

Note 4: (a) To extend the range of the Caribou during the ferry, two large fuel bags were placed in each aircraft. Electric pumps were attached to the tanks so fuel could be pumped into the normal fuel system (in the wings) as required during flight. On several occasions these fuel bags burst during flight. An examination of each event indicated a pin had been pushed through the bag. The lamination construction of the bag prevented a leak occurring immediately. Sometimes the damage developed over a month before the bag suddenly burst. When it did burst several hundred litres of highly volatile aviation gasoline sloshing around the cargo hold stung the eyes and increased the heart rate of all on board because of the increased risk of an uncontrollable fire. What to do? Our crew was halfway across the Bay of Bengal between Calcutta and RAAF Butterworth when a bag burst. There was no checklist for this event, so the loadie opened the rear ramp a bit to get rid of the fuel which we hoped would solve the problem. Some minutes later the crew had the dreadful thought that perhaps some of the fuel would get into the anti collision rotating beacon on the underside of the aircraft and thereby cause an explosion. However if the beacon was switched off would that cause an increased chance of an electric arc in the system. We switched off the beacon and flew on, arriving safely at our destination some two hours later.

(b) Many of the clevis pins attaching the engine manifold outlets to the exhaust ring stack had been over-torqued at some stage before the aircraft were handed over to the RAAF. Consequently after long flights in Canada, a small handful of pins would be found in the lower section of the engine covers and some would be missing. The loadmasters/crewchiefs on the second ferry picked up a box each of these pins to last until Australia. However by about Gibraltar, the loadies had had enough and they spent a day replacing all the pins and the problem seemed to be fixed after that.

(c) At Aden a seal to the hydraulic independent propeller governing unit had a leak. When its sump was inspected a quantity of abrasive powder was detected. Only one unit was replaced on that ferry but other units had to be cleaned out in Canada. Obviously someone knew we were off to Vietnam before we did. One does not have an entirely comfortable feeling flying an aircraft when there is a likelihood of sabotage.

Thanks to Ken Howard, Peter Sugden, Kev Henderson and Jeff Pedrina whose worthy book, “Wallaby Airlines,” caused me to finally write down these notes.

Editor's Note:
After reading the article from Don Pollock about RTFV, I found the following information which I 'borrowed' from HARS Branch web site: RAAF Caribou aircraft A4-210 & A4-234 entered RAAF service in late 1964 and 1965 respectively. Both are Vietnam veterans where they were part of RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam. A4-234 was famously the last RAAF aircraft out of Vietnam and flew home to Australia in February 1972. Both aircraft were retired from the RAAF service in late 2009 with ~19,000 flight hours each. They were kept in open air storage at Oakey until 2011 when HARS successfully won the tender for the two aircraft plus spares. Both aircraft are totally airworthy and are in excellent condition. They are a flying memorial to all Australian Service personnel who served in the Vietnam War.

RADAR Branch G.E.S. Stuchbury Award Presentation

from Ian Gibson, Branch Secretary

On the 15th April this year, the annual RADAR Branch Stuchbury Award was presented at a ceremony at 44WG, RAAF Base Williamtown. This year the very deserving recipient was Flight Lieutenant Erin Wheeler.

FLTLT Erin Wheeler receives her award from OC 44WG, GPCAPT Ruth Elsley

The award is named for WGCDR Grant Stuchbury, who passed away very suddenly on 12th December 2011. WGCDR Stuchbury (Stuch) was a veteran of 44WG deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. When 44WG was initially re-formed, Stuch was a member of the 44WG Tactical Operations (TACOPS) team. In this position he was instrumental in formalising the evolving battlefield role of ATC into the new Joint Battlefield Airspace Control (JBAC) concept, a role that endures to this day and stands as part of his considerable legacy within 44WG. Air Commodore (AIRCDRE) Terry Delahunty AM, who was the inaugural Officer Commanding 44WG (OC4WG), said of Stuch "he was a conceptual and strategic thinker who could articulate in writing [and] was a very effective Staff Officer".

As a result of WGCDR Stuchbury's untimely passing, AIRCDRE Delahunty, who was by that time the president of the RADAR Branch, held discussions with the then OC44WG and WGCDR Stuchbury's family. The outcome was to establish an annual award in the memory of an outstanding officer who had contributed so much to the development of 44WG and ATC generally throughout his career. The award is known as the G.E.S. Stuchbury award and the criteria for nomination is:

A No 44 Wing officer of any category who is of Squadron Leader rank or below who has demonstrated outstanding professional mastery through their dedication and performance.

The award recognises the attributes of an outstanding officer who contributed so much to 44WG, and rewards recipients who strive to be the best they can be. The Branch contributes an individual plaque and a selection of military books to the recipient, while a bequest established by WGCDR Stuchbury's family maintains a perpetual trophy.

The Branch is honoured to be associated with 44WG and WGCDR Stuchbury's family in promoting and perpetuating the legacy of professionalism and excellence that has always been a hallmark of the RAAF. Confirming Erin's exceptional professional mastery, she has also been selected for promotion to Squadron Leader.

FLTLT Wheeler receives her Branch award from Secretary, Ian Gibson

Preso's Prattle July 2019

from Ron Glew, State President, NSW Division

Thank you to all the members who attended our AGM at Wests New Lampton in June. From attendees feedback, they thought it was a good meeting with lots of information and discussion about our path back to relevance within the RAAF and ADF community.

The newly elected State Councillors are:

Me	President
Terry Body	Vice President
John Prowse	Vice President
Peter Ring	Secretary
Philip Speet	Treasurer
Ron Haack	
Peter Gustafson	Membership Officer
Andy Schollum	
Bob Redman	
WOFF Ivan Petrovic	WOD Richmond/Glenbrook and Orchard Hills.

Ian Wheatley has stepped down due to his imminent retirement from the RAAF and Ivan Petrovic, his replacement, was nominated for the position. Ian Getley has also stepped down due to ill health and we wish him well in his recovery. Thank you both for your commitment to the Association. Our Rev Geoff Usher also elected to continue as our Events and Commemorations Organiser; thank you Geoff.

The following honours and awards were presented at the AGM:

National President's Commendation

Jennifer Kelloway: Coffs Harbour Branch

Reverend Geoffrey Usher: AIRTC & AAFC Branch

Testimony of Appreciation

Alan Chaperlin: St George Branch

Monica Murrie: Coffs Harbour Branch

William Murrie: Coffs Harbour Branch

Leonie Wain: St George Branch

Crisis Centre and Advocacy Initiative

As all are aware, a purely NSW State Council initiative undertaken by our Secretary, two senior partners of KPMG, John Bale the founder of Soldier On, Richard Kelloway and I, have met multiple times to set up a Crisis Centre response network, and I also committed NSW Division members to progress an advocacy network grouping system in the national arena.

We were meeting on a regular basis and whilst our discussions were being held, the Advocacy Scoping Study and the Productivity Report were made public, and as the reports heavily aligned with our concepts, we have expanded and involved other major ESO's, Government, Defence and DVA in a collaboration session with outstanding results. KPMG are preparing a funding submission for Government and DVA consideration. Last week the Productivity Commission's final report was presented to Government and we are convinced that its findings are commensurate with our initiatives; time will tell.

Beginning next year, there will be significant changes (fully supported by the RSL March Committee and the RSM Ceremonials) for the Anzac Day march in Sydney; ALL RAAF groups will step off as a unified contingent at the same time. That means that WWII veterans and or the Squadron Banners will be behind the Contingent Commander and RAAF Escort, and then post WWII will follow behind. Wherever possible, squadron veterans will march **in front** of the uniformed contingents for each squadron. I will keep members up to date by regular reminders and this will be a trial for the 2021 march when the RAAF lead the parade and we need a great turn out.

Most members will have received our new Wings published under the stewardship of RAAFANSW Publishing, and particularly Neil Smith; it is an absolutely magnificent credit to Neil and his crew for an outstanding publication. You've done us proud crew! Any person or group that wishes to contribute time or provide memoirs or literary contributions or even suggestions for additions or changes, Neil Smith and his crew will be very, very pleased to hear from you.

A Legend Passes

Last Friday I had the sad duty of farewelling Ron Rhode who departed on his final posting. In June 2017, I presented Ron with his RAAFA Life Membership in front of over 400 AAFC Cadets at their annual parade at Richmond. I also had the honour later last year when Ron received the Legion of Honour from the French General of the LdH at the Anzac Memorial in Hyde Park. Clear skies, Sir.

Vale Ron Rhode

from Ron Glew and Mauri Rutherford, FLTLT, AAFC

Ron Rhode was born in Sydney on 16th February 1925. Ron was growing up while the world was involved in a conflict of epic proportions and he joined the Army Cadet Force whilst still at school, but he particularly didn't like crawling around with snakes and spiders, so in 1941, as the Air Training Corps had just been formed, and because he wanted to fly a Spitfire more than anybody else in the world, he joined the fledgling ATC.

As an ATC cadet, he was on duty in Sydney Harbour the night the Japanese midget submarines attacked shipping in the harbour and he was somewhat surprised to say the least, but was too much of a gentleman to fully express his reaction. Nine days after he turned 18, he took the Air Training Corps flash off of his cap and put the RAAF badge on it and he was, in his own words, 'fully booted and spurred', and off he went to England and to war.

Serving as a Wireless Operator/Gunner, he was initially assigned to an AFTU flying in Avro Ansons and then to OTU on Wellington bombers tasked with the Nickel Raids dropping of "WINDOW", which was a method of confusing the enemy radar by scattering aluminium foil. At the completion of this tour he was posted to 158SQN RAF flying Halifax four-engined bombers on both daylight and night raids over enemy territory. Ron modestly stated that he encountered only two types of enemy fighters on these raids; one being an ME163 which went straight up under rocket power then attacked on the way down, and luckily it was on its ascent when it was spotted. The second, his aircraft was fired on by a Junkers 88 which did not inflict any damage on the Halifax which in turn returned fire with no known result. At the conclusion of the war Ron was flying in Liberators. He didn't get to achieve his dream of flying a Spitfire because, as he told it, 'all the clever aircrew were made wireless operators/gunners and the not so smart ones became pilots'. Ron didn't want to be portrayed as a war hero but just a bloke with a job to do like everyone else involved in the war. He was known to say " I was no hero, just a very scared 19 year old that didn't do any heroic acts".

Group photograph of 158 Squadron in front and on top of a Handley Page Halifax Mk. III

After the war he returned to Sydney and continued to serve in the AirTC. Ron was supposed to retire from the AirTC on 16 February 1985 but was requested by the Commanding Officer NSWAirTC to continue as Flight Commander 22 Flight past his age retiring date, until the end of the training year to enable the appointment of a suitably qualified AirTC Officer as Flight Commander 22 Flight. Failure to agree would have resulted in the closure of 22 Flight Marsden High School West Ryde. u He later joined the ATC/AAFC Branch of the NSW Air Force Association, having given so many years of outstanding service to the Cadet community, and was a stalwart of that Branch.

Ronald Stanley Rhode's Service record shows that he served in the RAAF from 25 February 1943 to 04 April 1946. He was awarded the following decorations: 1939/45 Star, France & Germany Star, Defence Medal, Australian War Medal, Australian Service Medal and was awarded the Australian Cadet Forces Service Medal on 24 March 1985.

Grand Old Lady of the Skies

from John C

It groaned, it protested, it rattled, it ran hot, it ran cold, it ran rough, it staggered along on hot days and scared you half to death. Its wings flexed and twisted in a horrifying manner, it sank back to earth with a great sigh of relief. But it flew and it flew and it flew.' This is the memorable description by Captain Len Morgan, a former pilot with Braniff Airways, of the unique challenge of flying a Douglas DC-3.

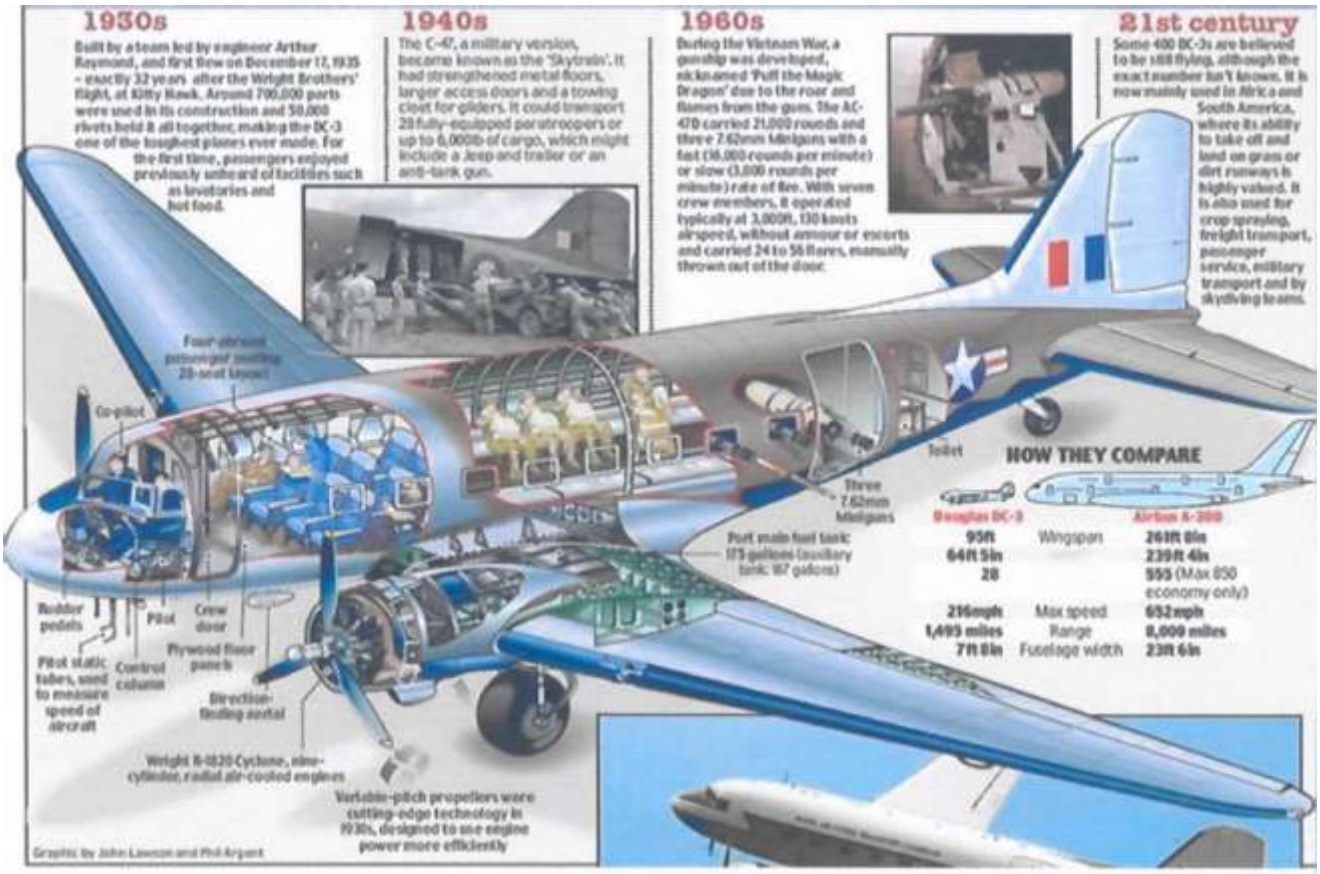
It's carried more passengers than any plane in history, but now the DC-3 has been grounded by EU health and safety rules. The DC-3 served in World War II , Korea and Vietnam, and was a favourite among pilots. For more than 70 years, the aircraft known through a variety of nicknames; the Doug, the Dizzy, Old Methuselah, the Gooney Bird, the Grand Old Lady - but which to most of us is simply the Dakota, has been the workhorse of the skies. With its distinctive nose-up profile when on the ground and extraordinary capabilities in the air, it transformed passenger travel, and served in just about every military conflict from World War II onwards. Now the Douglas DC-3, the most successful plane ever made, which first took to the skies just over 30 years after the Wright Brothers' historic first flight, is to carry passengers in Britain for the last time.

ROMEO ALPHA and *PAPA YANKEE*, the last two passenger-carrying Dakotas in the UK, are being forced into retirement because of - yes, you've guessed it - health and safety rules. Their owner, Coventry-based Air Atlantique, has reluctantly decided it would be too expensive to fit the required emergency escape slides and weather radar systems required by new European rules for their 65-year-old planes, which served with the RAF during the war. Mike Collett, the company's chairman, says: "We're very saddened."

The end of the passenger-carrying British Dakotas is a sad chapter in the story of the most remarkable aircraft ever built, surpassing all others in length of service, dependability and achievement. It has been a luxury airliner, transport plane, bomber, fighter and flying hospital, and introduced millions of people to the concept of air travel. It has flown more miles, broken more records, carried more passengers and cargo, accumulated more flying time and performed more 'impossible' feats than any other plane in history, even in these days of super-jumbos that can circle the world non-stop. Indeed, at one point, 90 percent of the world's air traffic was by DC-3s.

More than 10,500 DC-3s have been built since the prototype was rolled out to astonished onlookers at Douglas's Santa Monica factory in 1935. With its eagle beak, large square windows and sleek metal fuselage, it was luxurious beyond belief, in contrast to the wood-and-canvas bone shakers of the day, where passengers had to huddle under blankets against the cold. Even in the 1930s, the early Dakotas had many of the comforts we take for granted today, like on-board loos and a galley that could prepare hot food. Early menus included wild-rice pancakes with blueberry syrup, served on bone china with silver service.

Decade-By-Decade, How "Old Methuselah" Outlived Every Other Aircraft



For the first time, passengers were able to stand- up and walk around while the plane was airborne. But the design had one vital feature, ordered by pioneering aviator Charles Lindbergh, who was a director

of TWA, which placed the first order for the plane. The DC-3 should always, Lindbergh directed, be able to fly on one- engine.

Pilots have always loved it, not just because of its rugged reliability but because, with no computers on board, it is the epitome of 'flying by the seat of the pants'. One aviator memorably described the Dakota as a 'collection of parts flying in loose formation', and most reckon they can land it pretty well on a postage stamp. Captain Len Morgan says: 'The Dakota could lift virtually any load strapped to its back and carry it anywhere and in any weather safely.'

It is the very human scale of the plane that has so endeared it to successive generations. With no pressurization in the cabin, it flies low and slow. And unlike modern jets, it's still possible to see the world go by from the cabin of a Dakota. (The name, incidentally, is an acronym for Douglas Aircraft Company Transport Aircraft). As a former Pan-Am stewardess puts it: "From the windows, you seldom look upon a flat, hazy, distant surface to the world. "Instead, you see the features of the earth - curves of mountains, colours of lakes, cars moving on roads, ocean waves crashing on shores, and cloud formations as a sea of popcorn and powder puffs.'

But it is for heroic feats in military service that the legendary plane is most distinguished. It played a major role in the invasion of Sicily, the D-Day landings, the Berlin Airlift, and the Korean and Vietnam wars, performing astonishing feats along the way. When General Eisenhower was asked what he believed were the foundation stones for America's success in World War II, he named the bulldozer, the jeep, the half-ton truck, and the Dakota. When the Burma Road was captured by the Japanese, and the only way to send supplies into China was over the mountains at 19,000ft, the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek said: 'Give me 50 DC-3s, and the Japs can have the Burma Road.' In 1945, a Dakota broke the world record for a flight with an engine out of action, travelling for 1,100 miles from Pearl Harbor to San Diego, with just one propeller working. Another in RNZAF service lost a wing after colliding mid-air with a Lockheed bomber. Defying all the rules of aerodynamics, and with only a stub remaining, the plane landed, literally, on a wing and a prayer at Whenuapai Airbase. Once, a Dakota pilot carrying paratroops across the Channel to France heard an enormous bang. He went aft to find that half the plane had been blown away, including part of the rudder. With engines still turning, he managed to skim the wave-tops before finally making it to safety. Another wartime Dakota was rammed by a Japanese fighter that fell to earth, while the American crew returned home in their severely damaged - but still airborne - plane, and were given the distinction of 'downing an enemy aircraft'. Another DC-3 was peppered with 3,000 bullets in the wings and fuselage by Japanese fighters. It made it back to base, was repaired with canvas patches and glue, and then sent back into the air. Another story is the tale of the "DC-2-and-a-Half". After being shot up by Japanese fighters, the damaged wing of a DC-3 was replaced with one from a DC-2. It was then loaded up with refugees, and flown to safety. During the evacuation of Saigon in 1975, a Dakota crew managed to cram aboard 98 Vietnamese orphans, although the plane was supposed to carry no more than 30 passengers.

In addition to its rugged military service, it was the DC-3 which transformed commercial -passenger flying in the post-war years. Easily converted to a passenger plane, it introduced the idea of affordable air travel to a world which had previously seen it as exclusively for the rich. Flights across America could be completed in about 15 hours (with three stops for refuelling), compared with the previous reliance on short hops in commuter aircraft during the day and train travel overnight. It made the world a smaller place, gave people the opportunity for the first time to see previously inaccessible destinations , and became a romantic symbol of travel.

The DC-3's record has not always been perfect. After the war, military-surplus Dakotas were cheap, often poorly maintained, and pushed to the limit by their owners. Accidents were frequent. One of the most tragic happened in 1962, when *ZULU BRAVO*, a Channel Airways flight from Jersey, slammed into a hillside on the Isle of Wight in thick fog. All three crew and nine of the 14 passengers died, but the accident changed the course of aviation history. The local radar, incredibly, had been switched off because it was a Sunday. The national air safety rules were changed to ensure it never happened again.

'The DC-3 was, and is, unique,' wrote the novelist and aviation writer Ernest Gann, 'since no other flying machine has cruised every sky known to mankind, been so admired, cherished, glamorized, known the touch of so many pilots and sparked so many tributes. One, owned by a Houston lumber company, had mink-covered door knobs, while another belonging to a Texas rancher had sofas and reclining chairs upholstered with the skins of unborn calves. In Jaipur, India, a Dakota is licensed for flying wedding ceremonies. Even when they have ended their aerial lives, old Dakotas have become mobile homes, hamburger stands and hen houses. One even serves as a football team changing room. Clark Gable's private DC-3, which once ferried chums such as John and Bobby Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra and Ronald Reagan, is in a theme park in San Marino. But don't assume it won't run again. Some of the oldest hulks have been put back in the skies. The ancient piston engines are replaced by modern turboprops, and many a pilot of a modern jet has been astonished to find a Dakota alongside him on the climb away from the runway.

So what is the enduring secret of the DC-3? David Egerton, professor of the history of science and technology at Imperial College, London, says we should rid our minds of the idea that the most recent inventions are always the best. 'The very fact that the DC-3 is still around and performing a useful role in the world is a powerful reminder that the latest and most expensive technology is not always the one that changes history,' he says. It's long been an aviation axiom that 'the only replacement for the DC-3 is another DC-3'. So it's fortunate that at least one seems likely to be around for a very long time to come. In 1946, a DC-3 on a flight from Vienna to Pisa crashed into the top of the Rosenlaui Glacier in the Swiss Alps. The aircraft was not damaged and all the passengers were rescued, but it quickly began to disappear as a blinding snowstorm raged. Swiss engineers have calculated that it will take 600 years for it to slide down inside the glacier and emerge at the bottom.

"It was without question the most successful aircraft ever built, and even in this jet- age, it seems likely that the surviving DC-3s may fly about their business forever." This may be no exaggeration. Next month, *ROMEO ALPHA* and *PAPA YANKEE* begin a farewell tour of Britain's airports before carrying their final passengers at the International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford on July 16. But after their retirement, there will still be Dakotas flying in the farthest corners of the world, kept going with love, dedication and sheer ingenuity.

Nearly three-quarters of a century after they first entered service, it's still possible to get a Dakota ride somewhere in the world. I recently took a DC-3 into the heart of the Venezuelan jungle; to the "Lost World" made famous in the novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It is one of the most remote regions on the planet - where the venerable old planes have long been used because they can be manoeuvred like birds in the wild terrain. It's a scary experience being strapped into a torn canvas chair, raked back at an alarming angle (walking along the aisle of a stationary Dakota is like climbing a steep hill) as you wait for take-off. The engines spew smoke and oil as they shudder into life with what DC-3 fans describe as 'music', but to me sounded like the hammering of a thousand pneumatic drills. But soon you are skimming the legendary flat-topped mountains protruding from the jungle below, purring over wild rivers and the Angel Falls , the world's highest rapids. Suddenly the ancient plane drops like a stone to a tiny landing strip just visible in the trees. The pilot dodges bits of dismantled DC-3 engines scattered on the ground and avoids a stray dog as he touches down with scarcely a bump. How did he do it without air traffic control and the minimum of navigational aids? "C'est facile - it's easy," he shrugged. Today, many DC-3s live-on throughout the world as crop-sprayers, surveillance patrols, air freighters in forgotten African states, and even luxury executive transports.

Q: What's the difference between a co-pilot and a jet engine?
A: The jet engine stops whining when the plane shuts down.

Air Force Veterans & Supporters Celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Albury-Wodonga Branch

(L-R): Wal Miles, Pat Flynn, Grahame Carroll (Branch President), Margaret Sutherland and Ian Hill with their certificates.

In April 1989, a group of eight ex Air Force men got together over a drink at the SS&A club to discuss reforming the Alb/Wod association. These men were: Neville Bennett, Jack Thomas, Ian Hill, Des Flynn, Allan McInnes, Blue McLean, Noel Kilpatrick and Fietzie. Ian (Hill) is the last surviving foundation member. On 30 April 2019, the local branch of the Air Force Association celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a luncheon at the SS&A Club Albury. Representatives of a number of Albury-Wodonga ex-service organisations were guests at the luncheon.

The Air Force Association welcomes potential members, who have a military aviation connection, and their families through a range of membership levels. Our branch supports veterans, and the local Air Force cadet unit, by focusing on advocacy, lobbying, friendship, flying scholarship sponsorship and commemoration activities.

At the luncheon, 30 Year Certificates were presented to four of our members who were part of the initial membership group in May 1989. They were Wal Miles (Wireless Air Gunner – Albury), Pat Flynn, Margaret Sutherland (RAAF Nursing Officer – Baranduda) and Ian Hill (Airfield Construction Engineer – Howlong).

Place of Trial: First (and last) time I saw Los Negros

from James Oglethorpe, 3SQN Association

The island of Los Negros, in the Admiralty Group, west of New Ireland, possesses some outstanding interest for Australians, and particularly for ex-members of the RAAF.

When it was captured in March, 1944, the invading forces included a number of RAAF parties, including the complete ground staff of a fighter squadron. It was the first time, although by no means the last, in the war in the South-West Pacific, that ground staff had been used as actual combat troops. Here a Warwick man, who was a member of the RAAF fighter squadron, tells the story of the landing.

The first time I saw Los Negros was in the pale light of an early March dawn in 1944. As our LST slid slowly and cautiously through the dark, smooth sea, the distant shore looked like a superior version of

Luna Park. Thousands of lights were dancing and streaking here and there, great sheets of flame were leaping skyward and disappearing. Around us, above us and with us there was a tremendous cacophony of ceaseless thunder. And even above this roar, I could hear a curiously loud, insistent, monotonous thump-thump-thump. This was my introduction to Los Negros. Those little lights were tracer trails, weaving fantastic patterns against the dark background of jungle and hills. The flashes were mortars. The thunder was the roar of our protecting destroyers giving us landing cover. And the thump-thump-thump was my own heart beating, a terrific tattoo against its neighbouring ribs!

77SQN members watching an Army artist at work

Not many hours before, elements of the USA 1st (Cavalry) Division - without their horses - had effected a landing on Los Negros after one of those lucky breaks that convinced you that providence really recognised that you were fighting for a just cause, even though occasionally you might feel providence could be less prodigal with its demonstrations. At the time, southern New Guinea was more or less in the hands of the Allies and the Australians had just taken Finschaven. To the north the D'Encastreaux Islands were in our hands and the Americans had landed at Cape Gloucester, at the western end of New Britain, and were holding a sufficiently wide perimeter to operate a fighter strip. The logical line of advance lay up the coast of New Guinea, where the Japanese had concentrated heavy formations of troops and air power.

General MacArthur, however, decided first to strike north at the Admiralty Islands where, between Manus and Los Negros, lay Seeadler Harbour, one of the finest and largest anchorages in the world. Here air power could be built up to dominate the whole of the Bismarck Sea, neutralise the value of the enemy's strategic perch at Rabaul, help to prevent the reinforcement of northern New Guinea and bring the tremendous Japanese naval base of Truk within American heavy bomber distance. The American 1st Cavalry Division, under General Swift, was assigned the task of subduing the Admiralties, and the Kittyhawks of Nos. 76 and 77 Fighter Squadrons of the RAAF were to provide fighter cover for the islands after capture, while heavy bomber facilities were being installed.

To 77 Squadron fell the honour of providing 250 ground staff to be employed in the capture of whatever strip - Momote or Mockerang on Los Negros, or the small strip on Manus - it was considered most expedient to attack, and there to prepare crew room, operations room, communications etc for the arrival of the Kittyhawks, then based on Goodenough and Kiriwina Islands. And so late February 1944 found us cooling our heels in convoy off Buna, for days on end lifting and falling in the lazy swell of the Pacific, and watching the dank, evil coastline where, a few weeks before, so many precious Australian lives had been lost.

Now the Americans were nothing if not cautious. While our invasion convoy was assembling at Buna and Finschaven, General Swift decided to dispatch a small armed reconnaissance force to confirm what intelligence reports were available about the Admiralties. This was the lucky break. The two destroyers, knowing the entrance to Seeadler Harbour to be heavily fortified, and aware that naval guns and garrisons guarded the few available landing beaches, decided to probe Hyane Harbour, on Los Negros, a land-locked inlet about the size of two Warwick blocks, with an entrance about 150 yards wide, and giving access to the western end of Momote strip - by far the most serviceable strip in the group. A six-inch naval gun guarded the entrance way but before its crew could be alerted, the destroyers, creeping in from the north, had knocked it out.

P-40 Kittyhawk of 77SQN at Momote airfield

Barges were slung over the side and landed a party on the eastern head. Advancing down the beach inside the harbour, the party reached the end of the strip and to their astonishment found it unguarded.
The major in charge made a quick calculation, decided that with luck he could stay there, signalled the destroyers to unload the rest of the party and wirelessed General Swift, at Finschaven to get his invasion force underway.

Just why the Japanese should have left such an exposed spot in their armour is inexplicable. Still more inexplicable is why they permitted the reconnaissance party to remain there. One explanation is that the enemy regarded the landing as a diversionary one, and was disinclined to weaken his main shore defences around Seeadler Harbour, where the main landing was expected. The fact remains that the following day another destroyer landed an additional batch of troops without incident. It was not until the next morning, when our convoy was sighted and it was apparent that Momote was the invasion point, that the enemy's pressure increased. And, by then, it was too late.

The trip from Buna had not been without incident. Our convoy of 12 LSTs and six destroyers was shadowed for most of the time by two enemy submarines which now and then approached and sent the destroyers into a flurry of excited movement. Off Alim Island, when the P-38's (Lightnings) from Finschaven and Cape Gloucester were unable to give us air cover, three Sallies (Japanese medium bombers) attacked, but their bombs were wide. As we approached Hyane Harbour, our destroyers' guns joined in the hell that had broken loose on the shore. In line-ahead formation, the L.S.Ts sailed through the heads, while Japanese guns barked at us from the western shore and batteries of ships' 20mms raked the beach in reply. The harbour was thick with dead fish and debris; here and there floated a human body, bleached and grotesquely distended.

As we landed, American B-25's (Mitchells) were pulverising Japanese positions 200 yards away; while B-24's (Liberators) pattern-bombed gun emplacements on nearby Lombrum plantation. The destroyers were pouring a murderous fire over our heads on the other side of the strip. On the strip itself, Japanese aircraft were twisted masses of wreckage, a tribute to naval gunnery. Everywhere, there was the unforgettable stench of cordite, freshly scarred earth, and of rotting corpses. Outside one fox-hole were the bodies of four women, which we took to be geishas but were more probably nurses. Despite the destroyers' fire, mortars were landing over at us from the other side of the strip.

Fighting had lulled by mid afternoon, but flared up again that night. During daylight little was seen of the enemy, although sniper activity was pronounced. But at night - it was full moon - stealthy groups infiltrated over and around each end of the strip and the whole perimeter dissolved into a series of small pitched battles, fought at a range of a few yards around the revetments we occupied. Japanese bombers came over each night and bombed and strafed our positions, but what we feared most, a naval bombardment - we were then the most northerly of any Allied troops in the Pacific - fortunately never eventuated, although Tokyo radio was constantly promising us the experience.

Strange things happened during these nights; once, a Japanese suicide squad marched up the strip singing "Deep in the Heart of Texas". They passed revetment after revetment, without attracting a shot and were within 50 yards of stockade headquarters before the spell was broken and 0.5's mowed them down. One morning an American major was found outside his foxhole with his head cut off, although neighbouring foxholes had been congratulating themselves on a quiet night.

The climax of these nocturnal clashes came three nights afterwards when the Japanese concentrated a massed attack on a section of the perimeter held by the Seabees (Construction Battalion troops). The Seabees were in theory, non-combatants, and the enemy probably regarded them as the weakest point in our perimeter. But at New Georgia and Cape Gloucester, the Seabees had indicated they were far from being strangers to a gun; and Los Negros enhanced their reputation. As screaming hordes rushed their two revetments, the Seabees poured in a murderous fire. Twice they were forced back by sheer weight of numbers, but crossfire from neighbouring revetments allowed them to regain their positions. For three hours the attack continued, then waned, and then broke, and the few Japanese survivors faded back into the jungle. The Seabees lost two dozen men. How many Nips they killed was never calculated; but it must have been hundreds. Next morning, over an area of about 100 square yards, the ground was littered with dead Japanese. At the bottom of the revetments they were heaped five and six feet high. There were too many to bury in an orthodox manner, and after two days they had become so noisome that the Seabees did a mass job with bulldozers.

That was the turning-point in the battle for Los Negros and the Momote strip. Next morning an RAAF patrol penetrated to North-West Cape without sighting a Japanese, while American patrols quickly cleared the jungle area on the other side of the strip. A day or two later, an American B-25 was able to land on the strip. The following day the Kittyhawks of Nos. 77 and 76 Squadrons flew in. But although Momote was in Allied hands, it was some weeks before the rest of Los Negros was brought under control and troops were able to land on Marius to secure Seeadler Harbour. RAAF aircraft played a vital part in these operations. On many occasions they were bombing and strafing less than two miles from the strip. At one stage they were dropping belly tanks filled with petrol and with fuses attached, in an attempt to burn out parties of Japs entrenched in hillside caves and where the death toll sustained by American troops in trying to dislodge them was enormous.

When we left Los Negros some months afterwards on a somewhat similar mission to Noemfoor (Dutch New Guinea) Los Negros had undergone a tremendous transformation. The Momote strip had been lengthened and a new strip built at Mockerang. Each day 50 to 150 Liberators were taking off, unloading tons of death and destruction on the Japanese navy installations at Truk and Guam, particularly.

77SQN pilots with one of their P-40 Kittyhawks on Momote airfield

In Seeadler Harbour, the United States Seventh Battle Fleet and a British destroyer squadron were riding at anchor, making one of the most impressive sights I have ever seen.

The last time I saw Los Negros was in the pale light of an early July dawn in 1944. The Island still looked like Luna Park. Thousands of lights were dancing and twinkling - the electric lights of one of the greatest Allied air and naval bases in the Pacific. There was a tremendous roar in my ears - the powerful motors of our Douglas transport. And there was a curious, insistent thump-thump-thump which threatened to drown out the noise of the motors. It was that damned heart of mine again. By the way our aircraft left the strip, she seemed badly over-loaded...and 600 miles of ocean lay between us and Noemfoor.

30 Jun 88 - First female pilots for RAAF

This material is compiled from sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and Peter Dunn. The History and Heritage Branch–Air Force is not responsible for pre-1921 items. Whilst every effort is made to confirm the accuracy of the entries, any discrepancies are solely the responsibility of the originator. As I am not a member of History and Heritage Branch-Air Force, all Air Force history or heritage queries should be directed, in the first instance, to airforce.history@defence.gov.au

The graduation of No. 144 Pilots' course of No. 2 Flying Training School at RAAF Pearce saw yet another historic entry in the annals of the Royal Australian Air Force. Among the eighteen proud graduating pilots were Flight Lieutenant Robyn Williams and Officer Cadet Deborah Hicks who became the RAAF's first female pilots to receive their 'wings' in the RAAF's exalted 67 year history.

Officer Cadet Deborah Hicks and Flight Lieutenant Robyn Williams

Hicks did not stay long in the Air Force. Commissioned as a Pilot Officer on graduation, she joined No 34 Squadron at RAAF Fairbairn for conversion flying on Mystere VIP aircraft; promoted to Flying Officer in 1990, she had gone five years later.

Williams, on the other hand, went on to score other notable firsts, qualifying as a flying instructor in 1992 and then undergoing test pilot training in Britain. After serving with the Aircraft Research and Development Unit, she was promoted and posted to the US where for five years she led the resident RAAF project team taking delivery of new C-130J Hercules transports. Promoted to Wing Commander in March 2000, she returned to Australia later that year.

29 March 1970: Only Caribou Lost to Enemy Action in Vietnam

On this day, Caribou A4-193 from No 35 Squadron became the first and only RAAF aircraft of this type lost as a direct result of enemy action. The transport had landed at 9am with the first of five loads of drums of helicopter fuel at That Son, a South Vietnamese Army training base close to the Cambodian border south-west of Saigon, when it came under accurate mortar fire from nearby hills. The aircraft suffered a direct hit on the starboard wing from the second of nine rounds which crashed around it as the crew evacuated and sought cover. None of the crew members was hurt, and during a lull in the attack were flown out to another base. The aircraft left behind sustained further mortar hits when the base came under renewed attack early the next morning; the Caribou was set on fire and completely destroyed.

Friends of Mirage Get Together

from Ian 'Muldy' Muldoon

About 400 “Friends of Mirage” attended the second annual meeting of this august group on Saturday 29th June 2019 at Stockton RSL Club. The event was well organised and was a great opportunity to catch up. The RSL Booze bus was also much appreciated!

A big thankyou to 'Bones' Einam and Al Vincent, who organise the Friends of Mirage Annual gathering.

Barry Keith “Bones” Einam RAAF (29Jan71 - 04Feb91) - AFFITT in 77, 75, 481 squadrons

Phillip Charles Victor “Frawls” Frawley, RAAF 10Jan69 - 1997, GDPLT No 23 Apprentice Intake “Goannas”, No 92 Pilot’s Course, Mirage A3-31 and A3-44, 1FTS Instructor, OCU Hornet transition, last posting, CO 76Sqn

Members pay attention as the raffle is drawn

Branch Profile: Air Training Corps and Australian Air Force Cadets Branch

from Gordon Johnstone OAM, Honorary Secretary

The Air Training Corps and Australian Air Force Cadets Branch (AIRTC and AAFC) was formed in 1985, meeting at the AAFC Headquarters in Newtown. The branch has about 55 members from a high of 65. Unfortunately the branch has lost a number of older members over the past couple of years. The aim of the branch was to provide assistance to the staff and cadets of the Australian Air Force Cadets, mainly by providing financial support for camps and training. The RQAAF suddenly

came to the party and provided monetary and physical assistance to the cadets, so that the branch had to come up with another way to support the cadets.

L to R: Ron Hicks, Branch Treasurer; Carol Moreau, Membership Member; Bill Schuberg, Branch President; Joan Johnstone, Branch Welfare Member; Gordon Johnstone, Branch Secretary

One of the ways the RAAF provided unexpected assistance was in buying quite a number of gliders for all states, something the AAFC Wings did not have financial backing to do. Initially the branch provided flying scholarships in powered aircraft, but this used up the monies available from the branch, so gliding scholarships were then given. These were ceased when it was found that the rules of the eligibility criteria were not being adhered to. Then the No 36 Squadron Association had to be wound up, and their finances were offered to our branch to continue our work for the cadets. This was gratefully received. The branch now gives a particular sum of money to a squadron or flight of No 3 Wing, in conjunction with the Officer Commanding WGCDR (AAFC) Paul Hughes, to assist them in such activities as model aircraft building and flying, replacement of band instruments and regalia, and such like. So far this has proved to be quite successful.
Our members try to support the cadets by giving an annual trophy for the Most Efficient Squadron. The current rules are designed to ensure that the trophy has a chance of being won by any Squadron, big or small.
The support provided by the Federal Government, the Department of Defence and the RAAF generally ensures that the cadets are well provided for. When new proposals for support are submitted to the branch they are evaluated and judged, and as some have been found to be beyond our financial resources, they unfortunately have had to be ruled out.

Currently our branch meets at the Bankstown Sports Club, using their boardroom. We meet in the Bistro for lunch at 1200, and commence our meeting at 1400. Our meetings are held on the last Friday of each even numbered month except December, with an outing for all members on the last Friday of the odd numbered month. Meet us either in the foyer or in the Bistro, you will be most welcome to join our branch.

One of our members, Mr Ron Rhode, who was a Wireless/Air Gunner on the Halifax bomber in Bomber Command during WWII, was awarded the French Legion of Honour in recognition of his involvement in freeing the French nation during those war years. The Honour was presented to him at a ceremony at the Anzac War Memorial by French Army General Benoit Puga, Grand Chancellor of the Legion of Honour and the National Order of Merit, during the General's visit to Sydney. After the war, Ron spent many years as an instructor, then an officer of cadets. Our branch membership is open to all RAAF, AAFC members, and cadets. Come along and join with the others members already enjoying the camaraderie.

Aircrew Behaving Badly - An Occasional Series

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The Wing Commander on 467 Squadron at Waddington was 'Billy' Brill, an Aussie farmer, and he sometimes carried on like one, said Nev Morrison of Glenhaven, NSW. One day he got me to go up in a Lanc with him to air test it, and after putting it through its paces decided to take it down to about fifty feet off the deck and round up a paddock full of sheep - which he did, successfully!

We also had some terrific parties in the Officers' Mess and when there were no ops on, Billy Brill would organise an 'air test' and take a crew to fly to Northern Ireland, to the airfield nearest to the border with (neutral) Southern Ireland. The crew would change into civvies and cross over to the South and buy a load of food and grog with money the Mess had thrown in. In the meantime, Billy Brill would contact Air Vice-Marshal Wrigley, AOC RAAF overseas in London, to inform him there was to be a party at Waddington the next night. He never missed one - neither did Eve, the popular barmaid at the Codgers Hotel off Fleet Street London, well known rendezvous for RAAF on leave.

To liven things up several other little things happened at Waddington from time to time including; two guys having a race down a corridor in the mess - on motor bikes; and the sing-songs we used to have around the piano (Alec Turner, who used to play, would say, 'The piano's dry' and we would pour a pint of beer into it, then lift the piano up and shake it, when Alec would sit down again and say, 'That's better'); or two guys playing 'darts', but using revolvers! This last item is similar to one told by Dave Drury at 7 Squadron, Oakington when he said, 'late in '44 some of the boys, to relax, decided to try out their Smith & Wesson revolvers, so they hung drinking mugs on several sets of antlers on the wall in the mess and used them for target practice!'

A biography of WGCDR William Lloyd Brill, DSO, DFC & Bar - 460SQN pilot, 463SQN Flight Commander and then CO of 467SQN - is here - http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brill-william-lloyd-9582

SR-71's True Top Speed

from The Aviation Geek Club

The SR-71, the most advanced member of the Blackbird family that included the A-12 and YF-12, was designed by a team of Lockheed personnel led by Clarence "Kelly" Johnson, then vice president of Lockheed's Advanced Development Company Projects, commonly known as the "Skunk Works" and now a part of Lockheed Martin Corp. The Blackbirds were designed to cruise at "Mach 3+," just over three times the speed of sound or more than 2,200 miles per hour and at altitudes up to 85,000 feet. Now when talking about SR-71 probably the most frequently asked Blackbird question is- how high and how fast does it really fly? Former SR-71 pilot Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) Gil Bertelson recalls in Richard H. Graham's book SR-71 Blackbird Stories, Tales and Legends:

'When I first joined the SR-71 program there was one permanent operating location for SR-71s at Kadena AB. The unit at Kadena was known as detachment 1 (or Det 1) of the 9th SRW. Habus were deployed to Det 1 for six weeks at a time and each crew made the trip four to six times a year. About twice a year, there was a requirement to temporarily activate an additional Det at RAF Mildenhall in England. Although we'd had two SR-71s permanently stationed at RAF Mildenhall since 1981, it wasn't until 5 April 1984 that Prime Minister Thatcher formally announced SR-71s would be permanently based at Mildenhall. This unit was known as Det 4 of the 9th SRW. There was a significantly different flying environment between the two detachments. The weather was almost at opposite ends of the spectrum. The missions were not quite as "routine" as many of the Okinawa missions. 'Because of the more demanding missions at Mildenhall, each new SR-71crew had to fly its

first operational sorties at Kadena. Every SR crew lobbied long and hard to get on the schedule for Mildenhall. And London was not far away!

'Frank Stampf, my RSO crewmate on the SR-71, and I were fortunate to get on the schedule for Mildenhall after only two trips to Okinawa. For both of us, it was like going home. Just before entering the SR-71 program, Frank had been stationed at RAF Alconbury for about four years as an RF-4 crew dog. And I had been stationed at RAF Lakenheath for a couple of years. As the "crow flies," Alconbury is only 30 miles from Mildenhall and Lakenheath is only 3 miles from Mildenhall. We were both anxious to visit the old flying buddies we had known and worked with in careers before we became Habus.

'On one occasion, I arranged to meet several of my F-111 friends at Lakenheath Officers' Club for dinner. We met in the bar and had a few drinks (as a real, live, dyed-in-the-wool teetotaler, I assume I was drinking grapefruit juice or 7-Up). We shared numerous laughs while trying to outdo each other with tales of unequalled courage and great feats of airmanship. I'm sure our hands were getting a good workout - pilots gesticulate a lot!
'At some point in the evening, the Aardvark (F-111 nickname) guys began to press me, in a good-natured way, for classified information about the SR-71. Probably the most frequently asked Blackbird question is-how high and how fast does it really fly? That question was being actively pursued that night at Lakenheath.

Photo credit: Lockheed Martin and U.S. Air Force

'I need to back up about a year and a half to set the stage as to why they seemed intent on pushing that particular question. In most Air Force buildings, at least the flying squadron buildings I used to frequent, there were numerous locations where the base fire marshal had posted information regarding fire classifications and appropriate reactions upon discovering different types of fires. These posters were displayed in the restrooms, in the halls, near the duty desks, in the crew briefing rooms, and next to all of the fire extinguisher. I can't remember all the specifics other than there was one fire classification identified as a category or type 3.

'At some point in my application for assignment to the SR-71, I was requested to go to Beale for my "tryout" for the Blackbird program. The whole process from departing Lakenheath until returning back to Lakenheath took about two weeks. During the visit to Beale, I heard and read a number of times that the unclassified speed of the SR-71 was listed as Mach 3-plus. A "3+" patch is displayed on flight suits worn by SR-71 squadron crewmembers.

'When I arrived back to Lakenheath, I was really pumped up and excited about the prospects of being selected to fly the SR-71. I didn't want to forget the experiences I had at Beale or to lose sight of my goal. To help me remember and to keep my attention focused on what I wanted to do, I began adding a black grease pencil + sign to all of the 3s on the fire code posters. There were many added + signs

around the base that the very diligent safety officer in 493rd Tactical Fighter Squadron actually called the base fire marshal to get information about this "new classification." When he was told there was no such thing as a code 3+, he finally figured it out and started looking for me. I was given a "cease and desist" order and one by one, he began erasing my "unauthorized" + signs.

'Now back to the "O" Club a year and a half later. My dinner partners remembered the fuss over the posters and figured now was an appropriate time and place to get the real scoop as to how high and how fast the Blackbird really did fly. They were curious as to what kind of speed that little + sign actually equated to. 'I played along for a while, dragging out the inevitable answer of Mach 3-plus, which, when all was said and done, was all I really could tell them anyway. I finally got them leaning in toward me as we sat around the dinner table. I did a pretty good acting job as I began nervously looking around the room be sure no one else was eavesdropping on what they thought would be a classified conversation.

'I have to momentarily divert again. A wonderful aviation poem was written the early days of powered flight. The author is John Gillespie Magee Jr. The poem is entitled "High Flight." Some of you may remember this poem being recited by Orson Wells late in the evening by TV stations that were about to sign off the air for the night. Yes, there actually was a time when television didn't operate 24 hours a day. As Orson Wells recited this poem with his marvellously deep and resonant voice, the final TV pictures for the day were that a T-38 dashing in and out of clouds and doing aileron rolls, etc. It was a combination of sight and sound that stirred the blood and emotions of everyone who had the slightest interest in airplanes and the wonders of flight. The poem is as follows:

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter, silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
Where never lark, or eagle flew.
And while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

'Back to the "O" Club again. With the guys leaning in to hang on every word I was about to speak, I said something like, "You've got to promise not to tell a soul what I am going to tell you now. If you do, I'll deny it till the day I die. I'm sure you know I shouldn't be talking about this at all. You know how high the pile will be that they'll stick me in if you tell anyone else." As they gathered closer to make sure they didn't miss anything, I said, "I can't specific numbers, but I can give you a point of reference you can use to figure it out. You know the part in 'High Flight'—where it talks about putting out your hand to touch the face of God?" Well," I added, "when we're at speed and altitude in the SR, we have to slow down and descend in order to do that." 'So, the word's out. Feel free to share this information with anyone you'd care to tell. You can even use me as the source document. I'm retired now, so who cares?'

Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, and trees. It is much more difficult to fly there.
USN WWII Undergraduate Pilot Training Sign

RAAFA Visit RAAF Williamtown, 5 Jul 19

A group of RAAF Association members, and retired 77SQN members, were invited to the F35 community day. There were three groups allowed to get up-close and personal with this marvellous aircraft which followed the program outlined below. Thanks to AIRCRDE Tony Grady and SADFO GPCAPT Peter Cluff for this well organised event. This was followed by the 77th birthday of 77 SQN. There was a flypast and presentation of awards to Squadron personnel.

77SQN Birthday Flypast

RAAF Base Williamtown was proud to open its gates on Friday, 5 July, as it hosted an F-35A Community Day for invited community members, leaders, organisational representatives and Defence community partners of the Hunter region. Guests were treated to a 'windscreen' familiarisation tour, with Air Force personnel providing commentary and an insight into the Base, its infrastructure and its history. The highlight of the tour program was the F-35A precinct, with the project representing almost $1 billion of investment at RAAF Base Williamtown. Guests were invited to view the facility including state-of-the-art maintenance and training areas developed for the F-35A, which welcomed two aircraft in December 2018 and the third and fourth aircraft in April this year. A static display of an F-35A aircraft formed the centrepiece of the program with operating pilots on hand to answer questions relating to the aircraft and its capability. Senior Australian Defence Force Officer at RAAF Base Williamtown, Group Captain (GPCAPT) Peter Cluff, said the F-35A Community day was an important event that maintains that community connection. "RAAF Williamtown has a long association with the regional community, and our close relationship with community members, organisations and our Defence community partners is something we truly value," GPCAPT Cluff said.

"As proud members of the community, we were pleased to showcase the F-35A aircraft as a fifth-generation aircraft that is at the forefront of air combat technology. "The day also has highlighted the value of the capability in Defence of Australia as well as the economic benefit to the local economy – with up to 1500 additional jobs in the Hunter region created during the peak of the project's construction phase."

L-R: Mike Lavercombe, President FSB, Group Captain Peter Cluff, SADFO Williamtown, Dave Leach, Vice President FSB

GPCAPT Cluff acknowledged the ongoing support of the community that has been instrumental to the successful delivery and sustainment of the project. "The opportunity to provide our friends and neighbours with an insight into the Air Force's newest capability, the F-35A aircraft and its supporting facility, is a great privilege," he said. "While the new aircraft and infrastructure is clearly impressive – more importantly, the F-35A Community Day has allowed guests to meet the highly trained, highly skilled, professional Air Force personnel that maintain and fly the aircraft – without whom, none of this would be possible," GPCAPT Cluff said. The F-35A delivers fifth-generation capability including stealth, advanced sensors, data fusion and the ability to share information with other platforms be they air, land or sea-based.

D-Day 75 years on

from DVA E-News

Veteran of D-Day, Mr Lawrence Woods AM DFC (pictured) attended one of three Last Post ceremonies at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) that commemorated the anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

Mr Woods, 96, still has his Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) uniform, which he wore with pride as he laid a wreath during the Last Post on 5 June. Mr Woods joined the RAAF in 1942, was attached to Bomber Command and rose to the rank of flying officer. He is one of Australia's only four remaining D-Day veterans. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944 (the recommendation is on the 460 Squadron website). In 2015, he was appointed a Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur. Mr Woods also toured the 'D-Day: the Australian Story' exhibition at the AWM.

D-Day was the beginning of the end of the German occupation of north-western Europe. Australia's main contribution to the landings was from the air, with more than 2,000 airmen serving in Royal Air Force and RAAF squadrons. Around 500 Australian sailors served on Royal Navy vessels supporting D-Day, and around a dozen soldiers were attached to British Army units taking part in the landings. Sadly, 14 Australians are known to have been killed on D-Day, and many others died in operations directly related to the invasion of France in the days leading up to and following D-Day.

Where it all began: The AFC in WWI

Source: The Australian War Memorial

Not everyone was suited to this new field of military operations. Light horsemen or "bushmen" were thought to be physically fitter and have quicker reflexes and a better "character" than other men; they were common in No. 1 Squadron. Many of its later recruits came from the ranks of the Light Horse; most of these already had years of active service. The squadron also drew men from other backgrounds: the AFC's only Victoria Cross winner, Captain Frank McNamara, had been a schoolteacher.

Many of those who joined the squadrons on the Western Front also had prior service. The list of candidates for appointment to become flying officers in June 1918, for example, records a mixture of officers and other ranks: some had been gunners, others clerks, drivers, infantrymen, or members of the medical services. One man, a veteran of Gallipoli and the Western Front, had found his way into the 4th Australian Sanitary Section before being accepted into the AFC. Many were recommended for admission by their commanding officers on no other ground than their good record as soldiers in the line.

AFC No.2 Squadron De Havilland DH-5 scout plane 1917

Given the nature of warfare on the Western Front, it is not difficult to imagine why men would seek to transfer into the AFC. Many had experienced the misery and squalor of the trenches. Those who knew they would face danger as long as they were in the AIF, preferred to face it in a corps which offered the promise of independence and glamour, as well as a degree of comfort unknown to the men in the trenches. Those who served in the Middle East, although spared the worst miseries of the Western Front, shared a similar desire to escape their own discomforts: sand, dust, and flies. Men who had already served in the ground forces reasoned that if they survived the day's flying they would at least have the chance to sleep in a comfortable bed.

1 SQN AFC accommodation, Middle East, 1917

After the armistice, No. 4 Squadron became the only Australian unit of the British Army of Occupation, entering Germany on 7 December 1918. Each Australian squadron that had served on the Western Front left Europe for home in early March 1919. During the war, 460 officers and 2,234 men served in the AFC, and 178 were killed. By First World War standards, these casualties were light. The AFC was a pioneering corps that helped to lay the groundwork for the Royal Australian Air Force. Through the efforts of men such as Hudson Fysh and the Smith brothers, the AFC also made a significant contribution to Australian civil aviation.

9 Jul 41 - DFM awarded to 10SQN crewman

This material is compiled from sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and Peter Dunn. The History and Heritage Branch–Air Force is not responsible for pre-1921 items. Whilst every effort is made to confirm the accuracy of the entries, any discrepancies are solely the responsibility of the originator. As I am not a member of History and Heritage Branch-Air Force, all Air Force history or heritage queries should be directed, in the first instance, toairforce.history@defence.gov.au

On this day, No 10 Squadron was formally advised by HQ Coastal Command that flight fitter Leading Aircraftman Milton Thomas Griffin, 34, had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) for '*personal bravery, tenacity of purpose, and devotion to duty which contributed directly to the safe return of aircraft and crew to its base after serious damage to machine by enemy action on June 30th.*' Sunderland P9600 had been attacked by a German FW 200 and suffered serious damage to the port outer engine; Griffin crawled out into the wing, plugged the oil leaks and - during four trips into the wing over two hours ladling oil into the tank using an old peach tin - ensured the aircraft returned safely to Pembroke Dock. A fitter and turner in private life, LAC Griffin joined the Air Force on 22 August 1938 and discharged on 17 April 1947 having reached the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Griffin's citation, published in the London Gazette of 25 July 1941, is here:https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/35228/page/4276/data.pdf

Aircrew Behaving Badly (An Occasional Series) Bailing out at 0 Feet

This story from Lloyd Mortlock of Ocean Shores, NSW.

Lennie was a WAG (Wireless Air Gunner) who had been around a while, a real doer, one of those characters who walked side by side with trouble. One afternoon when flying was suddenly scrubbed on a Lincolnshire station, Lennie took full advantage of the unexpected leave and promptly went down to the Fox and Hounds pub in the village, joining some other off-duty crews there.

Sometime later in the day, after many drinks, he was collected, along with others, from the pub. Back to base; 'ops' were on again - a rush job - into the aircraft and as they taxied out in the dark it was all too much for Lennie who went gently to sleep as soon as he was installed in his position, not bothering to plug in his intercom. The kite however went U/S at the end of the runway, so they taxied back. The crew were then ordered to switch to another aircraft. They started doing this, leaving our hero where he was pleasantly sleeping, and trying not to expose him to the CO who had come down to oversee the switch over.

At this point Lennie awoke and looked around. It was pitch dark; he could not see a soul - no pilot, no nav - no anybody. No sound of motors. He quickly plugged in his intercom and called up the crew. No answer.

A sudden feeling of panic grabbed Lennie, thinking, 'THEY'VE ALL BAILED OUT AND LEFT ME!' Grabbing his 'chute he clipped it on and dived out the front hatch into the black night - pulling the ripcord as he jumped - and landed flat on the tarmac at the feet of the CO.

Dazed and dumbfounded, enmeshed in parachute lines and still on his knees, he was totally unable to answer the CO's very icy, 'Just what do you think you are doing down there, Lennie?'

'Skylarks - The Lighter Side of Life in the RAAF in World War II', J. Eric Brown, Air Power Development Centre, 1997

15 Jul 53: RAAF 78WG in RAF Royal Review

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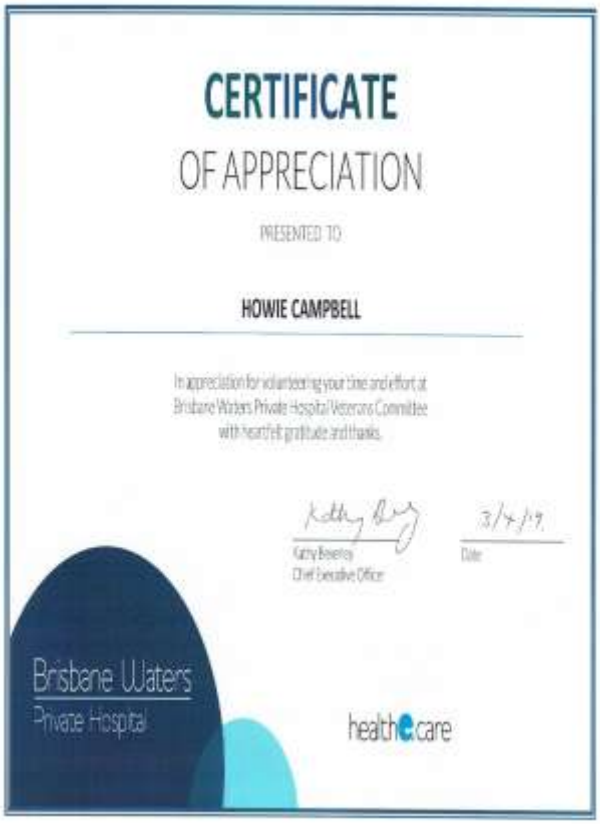
On this day, a detachment of Vampire and Meteor jets of No 78 Wing represented the RAAF during the Royal Review conducted at Odiham, Hampshire, to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II six weeks earlier. In May, the RAAF contingent had flown from Malta, where 78 Wing was stationed, with 12 Vampires and two Meteors. Operating from the RAF station at Horsham St. Faith, near Norwich in Norfolk, where they were visited by Sir Thomas White (Australia's High Commissioner in London), the RAAF detachment had practised formation flying in the lead-up to the grand occasion. The review involved a massed aerial salute to the Queen by 639 aircraft (193 propellor-driven and 446 jet-powered) which took 30 minutes to pass over the Royal Dais, followed by a static aircraft display of 320 aircraft (including 78 Wing's Meteors) which was also inspected by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh.

More on the Review is here: http://www.hampshireairfields.co.uk/nos10.html

RADAR Branch Member Takes Out Two Awards

from Ian Gibson, Branch Secretary

The RADAR Branch's Howard Campbell has been recognised twice during the first half of this year for his unstinting efforts helping veterans, veterans widows and families. Howie's first award was from the State Government during the NSW Seniors Festival for his service to the RADAR Branch, and the second from the Brisbane Waters Private Hospital, where he is a regular visitor to ailing veterans. A resident of the central coast, Howie offers everything from a comforting word to advice about veterans entitlements, or sharing a yarn (and he does love to have a yarn!) over a cuppa, usually to those in his local area, although he maintains contact with others all over the country.



Until late 2017, Howie served as the RADAR Branch Welfare Officer, when ill-health forced his retirement from that role. Of course, you can't keep a good man down, so after a bit of R&R, Howie continued (and continues), 'doing his thing' albeit without the title.

In addition to his unofficial welfare work, Howie is also the Branch Asst Historian, with an amazing recall of events and personnel who have worked in the RADAR field over the decades. Anything he can't quite recall, he'll happily make up something to suit or embellish the hell out of some little known facts! Being over 80 himself, he shows no signs of slowing down, as these two highly deserved awards clearly demonstrate. Well done, Howie!

Flight Simulator Technology Represents New Age for RAAF

from Defence Connect Magazine

The installation of eye and head tracking sensor technologies have been successfully demonstrated in the Hawk-127 lead-in-fighter flight simulators as part of the Jericho Dawn Program, at No. 76 Squadron, RAAF Base Williamtown. The technology allows fighter instructors to monitor a student pilot's point of gaze, dwell time and gaze pattern, which can then be analysed to identify poor scanning technique and student response time, either live or post-operation.

On observing the new technology, Executive Officer of No. 78 Wing, Wing Commander Christopher Plain, said they could ascertain between novice and expert scan patterns with a Crew Training System (CTS). “Using CTS, new Hawk-127 pilots can be coached to better perform certain scans, thereby improving performance in mission achievement, efficiency, time to competency, proficiency and safety,”WGCDR Plain said.

The Jericho Dawn Program has been run by the Air Warfare Centre Innovation Hub since 2017, with the opportunity to work with Seeing Machines' CTS identified and initiated by Mark Corbett from the Royal Australian Air Force Institute of Aviation Medicine (RAAF IAM).

A Defence and industry collaboration was set up with CAE, Seeing Machines and RAAF IAM, AWC Innovation Hub and Air Combat Group to install the technology in under six months. “Our focus is to put future innovative capability into the hands of the user as quickly as possible,” Innovation Hub manager, Squadron Leader Myles Clarke said.

On completion of the demonstration, No. 78 Wing formally supported the installation of the technology to the next phase, which will see the eye and face tracking installed on the Hawk simulators at Nos. 76 and 79 Squadrons until April 2020. Over this time, Seeing Machines, No. 78 Wing and IAM will be analysing the data collected to enable the best use of the technology in the training system, with a goal to progress to full capability by 2020.

23 Jul 25: Floatplane Surprised Visiting US fleet

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On this day, a Fairey IIID floatplane surprised the US Pacific Fleet by sighting it at sea as it approached Australia’s east coast on a good will tour. The fleet of 56 vessels, including 12 battleships, was approaching Gabo Island following a previous visit to New Zealand. Two Fairey IIIDs from Point Cook were instructed by RAAF Headquarters to see if they could detect the approaching force, as a test of early warning. Taking off from Eden, NSW, the aircraft encountered appalling conditions and were soon separated. One of

Fairey IIID A10-3 at Point Cook, Apr 22

the RAAF machines (crewed by Flight Lieutenant Ivor McIntyre, pilot, and Flying Officer William Walne, navigator) flew on, and by good work and good luck succeeded in locating the ships. The weather was so bad that the American admiral had declared a non-flying day within his force. After making radio contact and showing their presence by flying around the US ships, the crew returned to base.

Tower received a call from a crew asking, "What time is it please?"
Tower responded, "Who is calling?"
The crew replied, "What difference does it make?"
Tower replied, "It makes a lot of difference. If it is an American Airlines flight, it is 3 o'clock. If it is an Air Force plane, it is 1500 hours. If it is a Navy aircraft, it is 6 bells. If it is an Army aircraft, the big hand is on the 12 and the little hand is on the 3.

18 Jul 75: Downed 75SQN Sabre recovered at Williamtown

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On this day, a team of three airmen were flown by the Iroquois of SAR Flight Williamtown to investigate some aircraft remains discovered by a fisherman. The remains were identified as those of No 75 Squadron Sabre A94-924 which had crashed on 10 February 1960. The Sabre's engine had failed at a height of 600' and the pilot, Flight Lieutenant R. Allen, was incapacitated by the canopy during the ejection sequence and subsequently killed.

75SQN Sabre

Airmen searching A94-924 crash site

Three Sabres and their pilots were lost during a nine-week period; the loss of A94-924 was followed by two further Sabre losses near Williamtown - No 2 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) Sabres A94-926 on 7 March 1960 and A94-937 on 12 April 1960. In all three crashes, the canopy had been jettisoned but had struck the pilots, incapacitating them. Subsequent modifications to RAAF Sabres involved fitting of spring-loaded bolts to shatter the canopy during ejection sequences.