SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

Vampire Crash At Williamtown: 03 May 1955

A79-217 from No.2 (F) OTU

Compiled by Jim Hall from a dusty 'Crash Comic' found amongst old paperwork.

Extract from Crash Report from SUMMARY OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS APR-JUL 1955.

Approximately two minutes after take-off as No. 2 in a pairs formation, the pilot heard a strange noise and the Fire Warning Light came on. He immediately turned back towards the aerodrome, sent out a "MAYDAY" call and carried out fire drill. The No. 1 informed him that flames were visible at his starboard wing root.

The approach to the airfield was high so "S" turns were carried out and the undercarriage selected down. The aircraft came over the end of the strip at 1000 feet and so the pilot carried out a 360 degree turn to port. The flaps would not go down nor would the starboard wheel extend, so the pilot selected wheels up. Approaching the end of the runway the turn was steepened whereupon the aircraft stalled. The port wing stuck the ground and the aircraft cart-wheeled, finally coming to rest 200 yards from the point of impact.

The pilot walked away from this crash...the safety harness had been fastened correctly.

<u>Cause and Comments</u>

Although the aircraft was severely damaged, the pilot escaped with minor injuries. (See photographs in the supplement to the Summary). This is an excellent example of a correctly fastened safety harness saving the pilot from serious or fatal injuries.

The cause of the forced landing was fire in the air. The accident resulted when the aircraft stalled at about 25 feet during the pilot's efforts to carry out the forced landing on the runway. The fire started in the starboard flap well. It was apparently caused by an electrical short between the lead or leads running from the fuse to the generator cut-out and part of the flap (as the flaps operated, the electrical leads in this area were rubbed both on the way up and down).

It appeared the tank immediately in front of these had leaked fuel to dampen the wires, or area around the wires, where the short had taken place. The fire spread to fuel which had entered the starboard boom. The pilot, in his natural anxiety to get the aircraft on the ground, tightened up the final turn to such an extent that the aircraft stalled. His actions were probably influenced by a Vampire fire the previous week when only a speedy return to the base avoided serious

consequences. The unsatisfactory feature of the flaps rubbing the electrical leads has resulted in an improved inspection being introduced at the manufacturers.

This entry in the Squadron Operations Record Book states the bare details.
CATEGORY: Miscellaneous- faulty aircraft construction (outside of Service).
A79-217 4068 FB.31 served with 2 OTU. Crashed RAAF Williamtown 03/05/55. Pilot: PLTOFF M K Lyons. Approval given 13/07/55 for conversion to components.

A79-217 looking a bit worse for wear.

The single seat Vampire (Mk 30) first flew in 1949 and followed the Meteor as the second British jet built, and did not have the luxury of an ejection seat. This picture surely has to be the best advertisement for the value of wearing a seat belt. For those who never flew or worked on the Vampire, the fuselage was built mainly of wood, which indicates wartime metal shortages. Probably fortunate for the pilot, this took the impact and then tore away.

The pilot was Michael Kevin Lyons, who unfortunately passed away on Bribie Island in Queensland in 2006. He had many friends and was much admired by all who knew him, reflected in the response I received from the greater RAAF fellowship when I asked if anyone knew him. I have received so much information, some factual, some saying what a great bloke he was to know and fly with, that I have been able to expand on Michael's (fondly known as Mick) life. If nothing else, this adds to the human side of these sort of events which is normally missing. He retired as an Air Commodore in 1982.

GROUP CAPTAIN MICHAEL KEVIN LYONS (1932-2006)
Please note that I have tried, where possible, to reproduce the letters I received in their original form. Readers will note some discrepancies, as the letters were produced from old memories and handed-on stories. In my mind, this only adds to the human story behind dry events. Special thanks to James Oglethorpe, Ted Mildren, Peter Larard, Peter May, Peter Ring, Nev Williams, Ross Mathieson and George Franklin, linesmen and ball boys.
Jim Hall: 3 Sqn RAAF Association Qld.
Mick's home was Mt. Larcom in Queensland, where his father was the railway Station Master. Mick attended Nudgee College and was an excellent Rugby Union player. From there he went to the RAAF College, graduating in 1954. He played Rugby for Victoria against Fiji in 1954. Probably born in 1932.
From the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin Newspaper (1949):
Michael Kevin Lyons, winner in the Central and Northern Divisions of the Thallon Memorial Medal in the recent Junior Public examination. He attended Mt Larcom State School, Christian Brothers' College, Rockhampton, and St Joseph's College, Nudgee. Three medals are allotted each year in the Southern Division and one medal in the Central and Northern Divisions to the children of Queensland railway employees who secure the highest percentage of marks in the examination.

Ex Navigator Wing Commander Peter May (Ret'd) recalls Mick saying of the crash: "As the aircraft slid down the runway on its belly, the tarmac appeared under my feet as it wore the cockpit away." He lifted his legs far enough to avoid injury and was able to clear the aircraft after it came to a stop. Peter says: "In my 30 years in the RAAF, I never knew a finer man, leader and true friend."

An anecdote from Nev Williams who knew Mick from 1960 until his death:

I knew Mick from 1960 until his death. There was a gap for some years, but he lived near me and we played a lot golf over the years. Hope this is of some use. This is what I can remember of what he related to me of the accident:

Mick and Don Woodman, as wingman, were taking off at Williamtown. After wheels up, Don reported to Mick that he had flames out of the tailpipe. Emergency declared. Ejection seats not fitted at that time. Managed to get around the circuit, but did dead-stick, wheels up landing. Mick's face hit the gunsight; facial damage and lost a couple of teeth. Exited the aircraft, ran about 100 metres and collapsed. Later found two broken ankles. All repaired. After that Mick acquired his stutter. From memory the control stick had a bend in it and hung on the wall at OCS. From memory there was similar incident a few days earlier.

While at the Academy, Mick, a notable rugby player, was selected to tour England. The powers that be told Mick he could go and he would be back-coursed with no penalty. Mick declined the offer of selection and to his last day claimed it was the worst decision he had made, as he would have been known forever as a Wallaby, instead of a stuttering pilot.

He was a golfer with a low single figure handicap. I played a lot with Mick and he witnessed my two holes in one (not on the same day but a year apart). As an aside, Mick had an exchange with the RAF at a Shackleton squadron. They travelled by liner to the UK first class. Mick and wife Margaret received a "huge" allowance for cold weather clothes and evening wear. In those days first class passengers were expected to dress for dinner. Mick had to get two sets of dinner suits. While at Kinross, much to the disgust of other pilots, Mick was selected to lead a flight of Shackletons on an around the world, show the flag flight.

From Peter Larard:

I was taxying another Vampire for take-off at Williamtown, so was a fairly close-up visual witness of the closing stages of the crash, and was also listening to radio communications on Williamtown Tower frequency for several minutes before the crash. Firstly, the pilot's name was Michael Kevin LYONS. He and I were No 4 Course mates at the RAAF College, 1951-54. At the time of the accident, we were both course members at No 2 (F) Operational Training Unit at Williamtown. We were also close friends and had remained so until Mick died, I think of cancer. He and second wife, I think Pauline, were resident on Bribie Island; she moved not long after Mick died, all the actual dates of which are vague in memory for me!

I think Mick had shut down the single-seat Vampire MK 30 engine following illumination of a fire warning light, and was following the well-practiced forced landing pattern at Williamtown. This involved aiming the aircraft through two "key" positions which were reported to the tower for air traffic control purposes as "high key, and "low key". Mick had passed correctly through both key positions and had his aircraft in a position ready to lower full flap and confidently expect to make a safe touchdown without power on Runway 12. I (think) the undercarriage had lowered, BUT, the hydraulic system failed to lower ANY flap as Mick was turning the Vampire onto a very high final approach. The Vampire had very effective 80 degrees of flap, the failure of which left the pilot severely in a gross overshoot position. This Vampire had no ejection seat, he had no option but to try a 360 degree turn which he nearly achieved, both in height remaining and close to completion of the turn. The left wing impacted ground off the runway with the aircraft still in about 60 degrees of bank and appeared to cartwheel several times. I could see no sign of the pilot as I passed the site on the right during my take off. Quite remarkably, he was able to hobble clear with a severely damaged foot! My opinion is that Mick was able to walk clear as the

Vampire's four 20 mm Hispano guns running underneath the cockpit had helped the structure absorb the impact damage, saving the wooden cockpit area from being torn apart!
There are many stories featuring Mick Lyons during his days at the RAAF College. He was a very popular man, being captain for three years of the first fifteen. This accident remains very clear in my mind, quite contrary to many other, indeed most, other aspects of my life!

Magnetic Island from Ross (Bags) Mathieson
On several occasions in 1976 I was deployed to Townsville. On this particular occasion, with Iroquois A2-773, to provide SAR support for the Mirage squadron while they practiced bombing Rattlesnake Island. I have always been blessed with good luck, and an amazing example of this occurred during the SAR standby operation. The day started as usual with transporting the range safety officers out to their bunker on Rattlesnake Island, from the safety of which they could observe the bombing runs. As usual, we flew via a low-level lap of Magnetic Island, to take in any sights of interest, such as wildlife or nude sunbathers. On this morning, I noticed that we had passed directly over what looked like some sort of open air church service, and as we were only 100 feet AGL, the noise would have been very loud in the morning air. I thought trouble could ensue from this incident.
Sure enough, next morning I was summoned to the office of the Officer Commanding, RAAF Base Townsville; I think the OC at the time was Group Captain Lyons. As I stood at attention in front of his desk, he said that he wanted to read a letter to me that he had received from the Magnetic Island branch of the RSL. The letter was thanking him for providing a flypast for their commemoration service on the 11th of November, and asking him to praise the pilot for his skill in timing the pass to take place at exactly 11 minutes past the hour of 11 o'clock, right in the middle of the two minutes silence.
I hadn't even realised what date it was. The OC finished reading the letter and then said; "You got away with it – this time! Dismissed."

As a squadron leader at 10 Squadron, Mick was awarded the Air Force Cross on 10th June 1967 for his part in rescuing people from a sinking ship. Mick resigned on 14th September 1982 as an Air Commodore and retired to Bribie Island. He passed away on 8th May 2006 from cancer.

Explosive Bolts

From Geoff Raebel

It's strange being a collector of stories: a week ago I went to the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) Museum at Shellharbour airport and got to crawl through a Lockheed Neptune for the first time; it brought back a lot of memories. My last close-up encounter with a Neptune was on the apron between the main hangars at the De Havilland factory at Bankstown in 1968. It was a sight to make anyone cry.

A young airframe fitter with a coarse carpenters saw, was hacking off the nose of a Neptune. Going through one of HARS' Neptunes brought back another story. I had a friend in the NSW Railways (who learned his trade at RAAF Richmond as an aircraft electrical technician) and I supplied him with old PCs to run data-logging on all the standard gauge track between Sydney and Fremantle with a special train he was largely responsible for fitting out, under a strong guiding engineering manager – a credit to his RAAF skills training.

Back to Neptunes: while he was an electrical tech working on Neptunes at RAAF Richmond, they got one in for heavy maintenance. It was on stands, so the techs could cycle and check the undercarriage retraction. An elec tech was in the cockpit working his way around and pressed the jettison-tip-tanks button. Normally, the squat-switch picked up that they were on the ground and locked out the tip tank jettison. No such luck this day, the tanks were attached with explosive

bolts to immediately get rid of them. The bolts worked as designed and both drop tanks fell to the floor – smashing the searchlight glass dome on one. Spares were unavailable – worldwide. So every-time a Neptune came into Richmond for maintenance, the first job was to remove the searchlight tank off the incoming aircraft and fit it to the outgoing aircraft.

Death of WGCDR (Ret'd) Tony Fookes

WGDCR A.J. [Tony] Fookes MVO DFC died on Monday, 10 January 2022, at Legacy House, Coffs Harbour, NSW.

Tony was born in Camberwell, VIC and joined the RAAF in 1944. He graduated from Pilot Training in Canada as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme in 1945 before returning to Australia. Post WWII, he undertook ATC duties initially, including command of a radar installation in SW Honshu as part of the RAAF element within the British Commonwealth Occupation Force, Japan. Subsequently he flew the Dakota aircraft in RAAF service, including operating the world's longest two engine courier service from Schofields, NSW to Iwakuni Air Base in Japan and Dakota transport operations in the Korean Peninsula during the Korean War. Following the Korean War, he was a QFI on the CAC Wirraway aircraft at RAAF Base Urinquinty, NSW.

WGCDR Fookes served as CO 35 SQN in Vietnam between February 1967 and February 1968 and was awarded the DFC. He was created a Member of the Royal Victorian Order [MVO] following duties associated with the Royal Tour of Australia between 30 March and 3 May 1970. Tony served as CO Base Squadron, RAAF Base Point Cook, VIC and in Air Force Headquarters, planning the introduction of the Boeing 707 VIP and AAR aircraft to RAAF service before retiring to Coffs Harbour, NSW, where he was very active in Legacy and other community activities. He is survived by his three children, Andrew, Jo-Ann and John and numerous grand-children and great grand-children.

UK Civil Servants humour

Lt. Colonel Robert Maclaren retired from the British Army in 2001 after a long fulfilling career. On the day that he retired he received a letter from the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Defence setting out details of his pension and, in particular, the tax-free 'lump sum' award, (based upon completed years of service), that he would receive in addition to his monthly pension.

The letter read:

"Dear Lt. Colonel Maclaren,
We write to confirm that you retired from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards on 1st March 2001 at the rank of Lt Colonel, having been commissioned into the British Army at Edinburgh Castle as a 2nd Lieutenant on 1st February 1366. Accordingly, your lump sum payment, based on years served, has been calculated as £68,500. You will receive a cheque for this amount in due course.
Yours sincerely,
Army Paymaster

Col Maclaren replied:

Dear Paymaster,
Thank you for your recent letter confirming that I served as an officer in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards between 1st February 1366 and 1st March 2001 – a total period of 635 years

and 1 month. I note however that you have calculated my lump sum to be £68,500, which seems to be considerably less than it should be bearing in mind my length of service since I received my commission from King Edward III.

By my calculation, allowing for interest payments and currency fluctuations, my lump sum should actually be £6,427,586,619.47p.

I look forward to receiving a cheque for this amount in due course.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Maclaren (Lt Col Retd)

A month passed by and then in early April, a stout manilla envelope from the Ministry of Defence in Edinburgh dropped through Col Maclaren's letter box; it read:

Dear Lt Colonel Maclaren,
We have reviewed the circumstances of your case as outlined in your recent letter to us dated 8th March inst. We do indeed confirm that you were commissioned into the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards by King Edward III at Edinburgh Castle on 1st February 1366, and that you served continuously for the following 635 years and 1 month. We have re-calculated your pension and have pleasure in confirming that the lump sum payment due to you is indeed £6,427,586,619.47p.

However,
We also note that according to our records you are the only surviving officer who had command responsibility during the following campaigns and battles; the Wars of the Roses 1455 -1485 (including the battles of Bosworth Field, Barnet and Towton), the Civil War 1642 -1651 (including the battles Edge Hill, Naseby and the conquest of Ireland), the Napoleonic War 1803 – 1815 (including the battle of Waterloo and the Peninsular War), the Crimean War (1853 – 1856) (including the battle of Sevastopol and the Charge of the Light Brigade), the Boer War (1899 - 1902).

We would therefore wish to know what happened to the following, which do not appear to have been returned to Stores by you on completion of operations:

9765 Cannon
26,785 Swords
12,889 Pikes
127,345 Rifles (with bayonets)
28,987 horses (fully kitted)
Plus, three complete marching bands with instruments and banners.

We have calculated the total cost of these items and they amount to £6,427,518.119.47p. We have therefore subtracted this sum from your lump sum, leaving a residual amount of £68,500, for which you will receive a cheque in due course.

Yours sincerely
Army Paymaster

Just before the funeral service, the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow and asked, 'How old was your husband?'
'98,' she replied....'two years older than me'.
'So, you're 96,' the undertaker commented.
She responded, 'Hardly worth going home, is it?

Serial No. 1381, Bowen

From Mark Clayton

The Australian Government had little expertise or interest in radar technology at the start of the Second World War. By 1942 however, the continent's coastline was dotted with scores of radar stations operated by locally-trained technicians using, in many instances, Australian-designed and built radar equipment. This is the story of one such unit – **Bowen's No.55 Radar Station (RAAF)**. Built in anticipation of a possible Japanese aerial attack against Australian mainland targets, approval for development of the Bowen radar station (costing £9,700) was granted in early November 1942. Land and buildings necessary for the development were then requisitioned via the National Security (General) Regulations). The site selected for the installation was an elevated sandstone plateau at Cape Edgecumbe, two miles north-east of the port.

Construction of the Bowen radar installation was difficult, every component having to be carried along a narrow track which wound almost half a mile to a plateau, almost 200 feet above sea level (Bowen Historical Society & Museum). These developments came seven months after a Japanese invasion force had been defeated north-east of Queensland in an engagement subsequently referred to as the Battle of the Coral Sea.

Considered an "A1 priority" vital for the defence of Australia, the radar site development was initially, "for purposes of security," only ever referred to as "R.A.A.F. serial No.1381, Bowen Queensland." Bowen was one of twenty-three such AW. Mk.3 COL (Chain Overseas Low) installations nationally, ten of which were erected along Queensland's eastern coastline. These were export versions of a British pre-war design modified for detecting low-flying aircraft (instead of coastal shipping). Similar installations (codenamed Chain Home) had earlier been used throughout Britain to form the world's first early warning radar network – also the first military radar system to reach operational status.

Originally designated No.42 Radio Station, the unit is thought to have formed in 1942 with Merinda (west of Bowen) shown as its initial location. The following year however it was redesignated No.55 Radio Station, retaining this title until September 1943 when all British forces (Australia included) adopted the American term 'radar'. From then on, it was known as No.55 Radar Station. As Australia was then fighting a defensive war the emphasis was on ground air warning (AW) radar installations. Only later in 1943, when the allies went on the offensive and the frontline moved to the islands north and west of the continent, did the emphasis shift to transportable or mobile stations such as the low-cost Australia-made Light Weight Air Warning (LW/AW) system.

Although operated by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), final site layout details were determined in conjunction with a "pre-planner" from the Camouflage Section of the Department of Home Security with a view to "maximum concealment from the air."

A few steel fittings and rudimentary stone enclosures are all that now remain at the Cape Edgecumbe site which, unlike the Charlies Hill site to the north, affords commanding views in all directions.

A few steel fittings and rudimentary stone enclosures are all that now remain at the Cape Edgecumbe site which, unlike the Charlies Hill site to the north, affords commanding views in all directions.

Concealment was an overriding objective…"access ways necessary for carrying out the works should be so arranged that they can be obliterated on completion – they should not be formed in any way…on no account must gravel surfacing be used. In general the greatest possible care is to be taken to preserve all natural features to avoid all earth scarring. All windows and external doors are to be provided with blackout screens… Avoid as far as possible removal, lopping off or damage to trees or shrubs and the disturbance of natural conditions."

Stations like Bowen were initially staffed exclusively by men, each location typically having a complement of thirty personnel. Drawing on the British experience, the Air Force recommended in April 1942 that women be used to replace men as radar operators. This suggestion however was fiercely resisted by the Minister for Air Arthur Drakeford who contended that the employment of WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) personnel in isolated places was immoral. Another year would pass before the Minister reached a compromise agreement with the RAAF, conceding that WAAF personnel could serve with No.55 Radio Station at Bowen. As a consequence, the Air Board in March 1943 approved the expenditure of another £2,200 for separate accommodation, recreation, laundry, latrine and ablution facilities.

A multigraph operator prior to enlisting, Radar Operator Betty Juleff, was posted to No.55 Radar Station Bowen in March 1944. In July the following year she and the station's OIC (Officer in Charge), Flight Lieutenant O'Donnell were married.

Tropical radar operations would have been difficult, each six hour shift spent in a dimly lit windowless cabin peering at a cathode-ray screen. With the Queensland coast heavily trafficked by allied aircraft, and with two seaplane squadrons operating from the nearby town, staff at No.55 Radar Station would nonetheless have been kept very busy tracking and reporting.

By mid-1944 the threat of enemy attack had diminished such that the station was operational only four hours each day, twice that month becoming operational for emergency reasons at the request of Townsville's No.103 Fighter Control. Commanding the unit at that time was thirty-one year old Flight Lieutenant William Henry

O'Donnell, formerly an electrical engineer with the Sydney City Council. Educated at Sydney Grammar School, O'Donnell had previously commanded similar stations at Bombi Point, N.S.W (No.19), Dunk Island (No.27) and Mitchell River (No.320) also in Queensland. Arriving at Bowen in early May 1944, he remained in command there until January the following year, his departure coinciding with a downgrade in the station's operational status.

Also in his early twenties, Robert (Phil) Loh of Sydney remembers being posted there in late September 1943, spending his first days fighting a bushfire which had come up from the town swamp right to the unit's boundary…"The doover [radar] was on top of a nearby hill disguised to look like the rock that topped the next hill It was an exhausting climb from the beach up past the power igloo from whence phone messages emanated, warning operators to don blouses before the OIC arrived at the doover."

To help pass the time, unit personnel were assisting Red Cross personnel on a daily basis. Although full time (i.e. 24 hour) operations had been discontinued some months earlier, a visiting inspector reported in August that "morale and esprit-de-corps on this unit exceeded that of any other unit in the area." It was later acknowledged that this was due in large part to the "swimming facilities afforded by the Unit's [Horseshoe Bay] location." Catalina crews from the resident flying boat base would periodically visit the station for briefings, which included radar jamming demonstrations.

Professional entertainers would occasionally visit Bowen, station personnel having "much enjoyed" a performance – in September 1944 – by well-known Australian pianist Philip Hargreaves. The following month station personnel were tormented for three days by a plague of sand flies, some WAAF members suffering severely from the effects of bites. Fires of gum leaves were kept burning, delivering some relief.

The station's personnel strength had steadily diminished then, such that by year's end the unit could only manage two operational shifts. Despite this reduction, and the almost total absence of green vegetables, health and morale within the unit remained high, or at least that's how the station's commanding officer (C.O.) described the situation in his monthly report. The Bowen installation however may not have always been blessed with good leadership, one official assessment finding – in relation to one of the station's former C.O.'s – that he displayed little interest and that "he would be very satisfactory if employed in something more suitable to his temperament." At least four commanding officers are known to have commanded No.55 Radar Station with O'Donnell's six month posting being the longest in that role.

On 8 January 1945 the station finally ceased maintaining its operational watch, reverting to a care and maintenance status although this in no way diminished the endless routine of military fatigues. Most station personnel were posted out the following month leaving behind only a skeleton crew (sans the cook). Allied commanders fully expected the war would continue through to 1946 and yet, in February 1945 the station's four remaining personnel received instructions to return all their weaponry to the town's other lodger unit, No.1 FBMU (Flying Boat Maintenance Unit). Like dozens of other radar and radio stations it was being mothballed, and remained so until late that same year. Whereas most other Australian radar stations were disbanded (or disbanding) in 1945, No.55 for reasons unknown, was instead selected for reactivation; Pilot Officer W. G. Tyrrell assuming command in October.

A commercial traveller before the war, twenty-nine year old Pilot Officer William George Tyrrell was assigned the daunting task of re-commissioning the Bowen radar station after many months of dormancy. Arriving in early October 1945, he had previously served at the Home Hill radar station (No.211) 93 kilometres north-west of Bowen – the former having disbanded a month earlier. Exactly why the station at Home Hill continued operating fully eight months after the Bowen radar station first disbanded is puzzling given that there were no military air bases at or

near that small sugar cane township. Bowen on the other hand was both an important port and base for allied seaplane operations. This could have reflected the Commonwealth's greater investment at the northern (i.e. Burdekin) station where twin 125′ high wooden antenna towers also had to be built.

The antenna and its tower, built by the NSW Government railways in Sydney, comprised one common transmit and receive aerial that was made up of a 5-bay, 4 stacked dipole array mounted in front of a reflecting screen. The array could be rotated at 1, 1.5, 2 or 3.33 rpm (Bowen Historical Society & Museum).

With Tyrrell's arrival the unit resumed a busy daily schedule, this being reflected in the monthly reports which now ran to a few pages (rather than a few paragraphs). Much of the initial effort was directed towards refurbishing and repairing temperamental electronic equipment which had been stored for months in harsh tropical conditions… "The technical troubles of the unit were numerous during the month due to condensation setting in on various parts of the equipment. The C.O.L. Mk V equipment received a thorough overhaul and many alterations and replacements were necessary before it was 100% operational again. Continual breakdowns occurred after the overhaul as condensers and potentiometer broke down under continual use after such a long period of inactivity…The W/T [AT5/AR8] equipment also required complete overhaul and some minor troubles were overcome. A Counter-poise aerial system was erected and on the first test with A.D.H.Q. Townsville, excellent results were obtained…So far the unit has not been working operationally but all operators have been in action on the equipment to familiarise themselves with the local conditions. Operations cannot be commenced at present due to a lack of telephone services." The station eventually resumed operations on a one-watch (six-hour) basis on November 20th by which time, its routine was also well established.

Early in the new year No.55 Radar Station was also given responsibility for the FBMU's ASV (Air-to-Surface Vessel) radar, the latter's beacon being housed in a steel hut nearby the C.O.L. installation atop Cape Edgecumbe. Severe tropical weather caused a reduction in traffic during this period, only 125 aircraft tracks and 608 plots being recorded during February 1946. The region was struck by a cyclone in early March; gale force winds and the heaviest rains ever recorded in North Queensland causing extensive property damage and service disruption, land-line communications with the unit being disrupted from March 2nd to 19th. Although radar services were otherwise unaffected this proved to be No.55 Radar Station's final trial, an order to disband being received soon thereafter – on April Fool's Day.

As it happened this was to prove an eventful time for the whole town with several BOAC flying boats (carrying British dignitaries) stopping over on goodwill visits. An S.O.S. distress message was also picked up from Middle Molle Island on March 19th however, this later proved to be a hoax perpetrated by schoolboys. Later that same month a Catalina seaplane called at Bowen

offering joy flights for those residents who had contributed to the Commonwealth's Security Loan appeal.

It was all downhill from there, the first weeks of April spent packing and storing the unit's equipment with remaining personnel leaving for Townsville on 24th April 1946. Within a matter of weeks, the Station's final Commanding Officer, thirty-eight year old Flight Lieutenant Leonard F. Sawford, had also been discharged by the Air Force.

A caretaker (A. J. Weeks) had arrived earlier in the month, occupying the Mess Hut until the Commonwealth Disposals Commission finished its disposal work sometime later. The nearby FBMU was also disbanded at the same time, Qantas then having decided against using Bowen as a base for commercial flying boat operations. By early the following year responsibility for some of the former Air Force buildings along the foreshore had begun transferring to the Department of Civil Aviation.

The Bowen Station and dozens of similar installations strung out along the eastern seaboard never did detect any incoming enemy aircraft (or vessels), simply because there never were any – at least not after July 1942. Allied commanders couldn't have foreseen this and indeed, Japanese military commanders might have felt more emboldened had these early warning stations not existed. Although the threat diminished with each passing year, Australia's civilian and military populations continued benefitting psychologically from the knowledge that our most populated coast remained guarded by this long-range protective veil. Moreover, the RAAF's wartime radar programme helped fast-track the development of domestic research, manufacturing and operating capabilities that were to serve Australia well long after the war.

The Blue Riband of the Air, by Flying Officer W E JOHNS

from Christopher Beazley

Story extracted from "The Modern Boy's Book OF Aircraft" 1930 Edition

The world's most famous air contest - a thrilling exhibition of the very highest speed that man has ever achieved in the air, on land, or in the water - the tussle for the Schneider Trophy! The contest for the Schneider Trophy has become one of the greatest sporting events in the history of the world. Not only is it a struggle between nations, but a demonstration of what is perhaps the greatest achievement of modern science. The most outstanding points to remember in connection with the contest are these: It is an exhibition of the very highest speed that man has yet achieved in the air, on land or on water; it is a demonstration of the most brilliant

piloting the nations of the world are able to produce; it shows the extraordinary advances made in aircraft engineering through the comparatively few years the great contest has been held.

Originally the contest was a quite small affair in which the competitors were private individuals, or firms who realised the importance of the race. In recent years it has become an international event of great importance. Its practical advantage is apparent when one sees a modern fighting aeroplane and the speed of the Schneider entrant is the speed of the Service fighter a few years later. Precluding the 1931 contest, the number of wins by countries are: Great Britain (holders), four times - 1914,1922, 1927, 1929 (and 1931). Italy had three wins in 1920, 1921 and 1926. America had two wins in 1923 and 1925. France has only won once, in 1913. The trophy originated after the Gordon Bennett Race in France in December 1912, when M. Jacques Schneider, a well-known aviator and sportsman, offered a prize of £1,000 for an international aviation competition.

Certain rules were laid down:

- All machines must be marine craft. All entrants have to pass the Seaworthiness Trials, and the object of these is to ensure that the seaplanes are not mere racing freaks, but reasonably seaworthy craft capable of being used in all normal weather conditions.
- Each competitor must taxi his machine over the starting line and then take off and fly around a course of between five and ten nautical miles. Before finishing this course, he must alight twice and taxi on the water for at least half a mile at a speed of not less than twelve knots. On completing the course, he must taxi over the finishing line and then proceed to his appointed buoy, to which the machine must remain moored for at least six hours with no one on board. During this time, no repairs may be carried out, and if the machine fails to remain afloat, it is disqualified.
- The course to be flown must not be less than 217 miles over several circuits and the object of making competitors fly around a course several times is to afford a test of manoeuvrability and the skill of the pilot. Naturally, whatever average speed is recorded for a machine over such a course could be increased if it flew in a straight line.
- The contest is not a race in the sense that the competitors race each other to see which is first past the post. Such a race would be a fine thing to watch, but the risk of collision while negotiating the turns at tremendous speed would be very serious. Therefore, competitors start separately and race against time.
- The Trophy is awarded to the competitor who flies around the course in the fastest time. No country may enter more than three machines. The country which wins the Trophy three times in three consecutive contests retains it forever.

The first race was held at Monaco in April 1913 between France and America. The course was over 150 miles and was won by M. Prevost on a French Deperdussin monoplane with a 160HP Gnome engine, and the officially recorded speed was 45 mph. In 1914, France, having won the first time, were responsible for organising the next contest (this is a condition of the race) and it was again held at Monaco over the same course. Five countries were represented this time: Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland and America. It was won for Great Britain by Mr Howard Pixton on a small Sopwith twin-float tractor biplane, with a 100hp Mono-Gnome engine. He did the course in two hours, at an average speed of 86mph. This tremendously improved speed caused great excitement, and the popularity of the race was assured.

The Great War prevented any further contests until 1919, when it was Great Britain's turn to arrange it, as she had won on the last occasion. It was held at Bournemouth during September. Three countries entered: Great Britain, France, and Italy. Our machines were an Avro seaplane, a Fairey, a Sopwith and a Supermarine Sea Lion flying-boat, one of these four machines being a reserve. The contest was held in bad weather with a thick haze which was so bad that only one machine finished the course, and as this one had not been observed at one of the turning points,

it was disqualified and the race declared void. The machine which finished the course was an Italian Savoia. As a compliment to its fine effort, it was decided to hold the 1920 contest in Italy which turned out to be a failure. There were no British entries, the French withdrew, and the only Italian entry had simply to fly over the course to win. This it did; the aircraft being a Savoia S 12 flying-boat at a speed of 107 mph.

In 1921 there was again no British entry, and only one French, a Nieuport which crashed before the contest, leaving only the Italian machines. Only one finished the course, at an average speed of 111 mph. In 1922, Italy was still holding the trophy, so the contest was again held in that country. It was a much more interesting event, as Italy had now won the Trophy twice in succession, and had only to win it on this occasion to retain it forever. The probability that Italy would win it outright began to increase. There was but one British entry, a specially built Supermarine flying-boat, which won the contest held at Naples at an average speed of 145mph, although two Italian machines were close behind. We must therefore thank the famous Supermarine firm for its sporting enterprise and for keeping the race alive.

The seventh contest held in 1923 took place in England, the course being at Cowes. Great Britain entered a Supermarine Sea Lion and a Blackburn 'Pellet'. France entered three machines and America caused a sensation and stole a march on Europe by turning up with a state-aided team of machines and pilots against which individual enterprise could not hope to compete. The machines were the results of extensive experimental work in government laboratories, and the pilots were specially trained men from the US Naval Air Service. The result, which did not surprise anyone, was a win for America in a Curtiss Navy CR3. The pilot was Rittenhouse and his time of 177 mph showed a remarkable increase over the preceding year. The 1924 contest was held in America, and the challenger was a Gloster seaplane. This was disastrously damaged on trial, but America very generously annulled the contest instead of claiming a win.

In 1925 America won again. Seven machines were entered: Great Britain sent two, Italy two, and America had three to defend with. Our machines were a Supermarine S4 monoplane and a Gloster III biplane. The winning pilot was Lieut Doolittle in a Curtiss Racer, at an average speed of 232 mph. It was an excellent example of organised research work, and America had only to win once more to secure the trophy forever. For the 1926 contest, it seemed impossible that any nation could catch up in research work in a single year to beat America, but Italy gallantly entered to attempt the impossible. They won: Major Bernardi was the winning pilot in an Italian Macchi monoplane at 246 mph. There was a general feeling at the time that Italy caught America napping, for there is no doubt that America was so confident of winning that she had made little progress since the previous contest.

England now realised that only a great concerted effort could regain the laurels, and the British Air Ministry set to work to make that effort. A team of highly specialised pilots were put on high-speed work, and the best qualified firms were given orders for the preparation of high-speed aircraft and engines. So, it came about that Great Britain was able to enter the arena at Venice the following year with a fine team of men and machines. This was the tenth contest. Only Great Britain and Italy took part, and we built seven machines: three Supermarine Napiers, three Gloster Napiers, and a Short-Bristol Crusader. The result was a splendid win for Great Britain, the first and second machines being Supermarine Napiers. The winning pilot was Flight Lieut Webster, and his official speed was 281 mph. It was then decided to hold the contest every two years instead of every year, in order to give everyone a chance to proceed with the designing and testing of new machines.

The eleventh contest was held in September 1929, off the Isle of Wight. We succeeded in producing aircraft which for sheer beauty of appearance and brilliance of performance were triumphs for their makers. Flying Officer Waghorn won on the Supermarine Rolls-Royce S6, at

the astounding speed of 328 mph! A day or two later, the winning machine broke the world's speed record at 357 mph, when twenty-five years previously, 60 mph was regarded as about the limit the human frame could stand! And what of the pilots who participated in this hair-raising rush through space? The machines are designed to withstand the terrific strain of the frightful speed they travel and the pilot must be almost part of his machine to control it.
Centrifugal force on a sharp turn tends temporarily to overcome the force which pumps blood into the pilot's brain, just as it tends to interfere with the flow of petrol to the carburettor of the engine. When the blood pressure of the pilot is interfered with he may lose consciousness - at any rate, everything will go black before his eyes. You will now understand how vitally important it is that the pilot should keep absolutely fit. The average fellow who does fifty miles to the gallon of petrol on his motorbike might be startled to know that the Supermarine S6 consumes two gallons of petrol per minute.

One of the greatest difficulties which has to be overcome is that of keeping the engines cool, and cooling the oil which lubricates them in order that it does not lose its 'oily' properties. The cooling of the water in the engine jacket is difficult enough, but oil is much harder to cool than water. In the Supermarine S6 for example, the lubricating oil is actually pumped from the engine in the nose to the hollow fin in the tail, where it is sprayed against the thin metal surface to reduce its temperature. The Gloster VI uses not only the metal skin of the fuselage as a cooling surface, but the float struts and even the skin of the floats themselves. That alone will give you an idea of the intricate mechanism of these wonderful machines.

The engines are works of art, and are far too complicated to describe here. They are, of course, supercharged, which means that the explosive petrol mixture is blown into the cylinders instead of being simply drawn in at atmospheric pressure. The water around the water-cooled engines, in spite of the rush of air caused by the airscrews, boils in less than one minute when run at full throttle on the ground!

Shortly after this story appears in print, the 1931 Schneider Trophy contest will be decided.

Postscript
The Schneider Trophy is a sculpture of silver and bronze set on a marble base. It depicts a zephyr skimming the waves, and a nude, winged figure is seen kissing a zephyr recumbent on a breaking wave. The heads of two other zephyrs and of Neptune, the god of the sea, can be seen surrounded by octopus and crabs. The symbolism represents speed conquering the elements of sea and air.

The event was set up by Jacques Schneider, initially to encourage technical advances in civil aviation. It was a speed competition for seaplanes and flying-boats and was contested between 1913 and 1931. The 1931 Schneider Trophy was to be contested between Great Britain, Italy and France on the shores of Southampton Water, and it was estimated that some 500,000 people watched the event. A

Schneider Trophy on its pedestal at the Science Museum London

brilliant French participation was expected, with Bernard HV.40, HV.42, HV.220, Dewoitine and Nieuport-Delage planes specially designed for the race. Unfortunately, they cancelled due to engine perfection problems. Italy also withdrew because the team could not be ready on time. The French and Italians requested that the race be rescheduled. The British Royal Aero Club refused. Owing to political and economic problems, Great-Britain was only able to organise the race thanks to a gift of £100,000 from Lady Houston.

1931 winner, Supermarine S.6B seaplane, original image

The race was scheduled for Saturday the 12th September. The weather was bad with rain concealing the horizon, and the race was postponed until the next day. The British team consisted of Flt Lt John Boothman, Flt Lt Freddy Long and Flg Off Leonard Snaith. On Sunday, the sea was calm and visibility excellent for the race. Boothman, flying a Supermarine S.6B, lapped the triangular course seven times, and broke the 1929 record with an average speed of 340.08 mph. Uncontested, they captured the third victory for Great Britain. Later Flt Lt Stainforth, in a sister plane, established a new three kilometre record at an average of 386 mph.
The Supermarine S.6B was designed by R.J. Mitchell, who went on to build the World War II Spitfire fighter.

RAAF Williamtown Expedition 6/7 February 1999

From Geoff Raebel

Geoff, you still with us? That's an interesting call on the Area Frequency from Ian in Lightwing 25-158 I thought, not knowing he and Deb had just collided with the roof of their aircraft as it went down and they went up. "Affirmative": not admitting to anything, flying in 25-081 I had just run into the nearest thing to Clear Air Turbulence, our two Lightwings were abeam of Gosford homeward bound from RAAF Williamtown via the Lane of Entry.

It had been a terrific weekend. It was a slow start with Ian, Deb and Charles arriving five minutes after ETD from The Oaks, but we got it all together and were away by about 1000 Saturday. Charles was in the command seat as we tracked via the brickworks for Parramatta. He guided me through the landmarks and strobes of the Sydney Light Aircraft Lane until Patonga was visible in the far distance. The mobile phone rang but why bother trying to shout over a two stroke Rotax! Flying along we heard Deb and a lot of other traffic coming up behind us while we each planned where to go in the event of engine failure. Ditching next to a house or boat was really the best prospect. I am reminded of the question 'What is the propeller on an ultralight for?' To keep the pilots cool: they get hot and sweaty when it stops!

Tracking east of Ettalong we passed Terrigal and Toukley while we heard Deb overhead Warnervale. It was a beautiful coastline, Swansea was great, so was AeroPelican's field. By this time, I was flying and being out of practice in the right seat, mentally made a note to let Charles do the landing. We could hear Deb and a helicopter coming up slowly astern. Changing to Williamtown frequency we found it busy. Everyone reports everything. We were now at 500' over Nobby's beach with the *Signa* wreck on the next beach firmly in sight. The *Signa* was our inbound reporting and turning point. Climbing to 1000' we could see the Base: 'piece of cake', only gliders, a tug and RPT (Regular Public Transport) in the circuit. Chugging up the dead side of the airfield close in at 65 knots took some time - all 2,400 feet of it. Making a call to turn crosswind, suddenly I had an upset RPT announce he was at 1,500' feet crosswind and I was No2. "Oh" he said, "I've been calling you for 20 minutes, have you heard any of my calls?" "Negative" to that barney, this seems like a private airfield and we got permission from the wrong owner.

The RPT came in sight over our wing at 200 knots, letting down to circuit height in a wide curving circuit that took him halfway to Newcastle. We joined down wind and Charles said, "If you make a nice tight landing, we should be able to get off at the first taxiway". That's a challenge; I must have forgotten about being in the right seat, as I set up for a powered approach onto bitumen - it looked a lot different from The Oaks. Later we found there are lots of local rules, some in conflict, but one that later made sense. Light aircraft should use the arrester wire as the displaced threshold because if Base power fails it comes up automatically. Ignorant of this, I made my nice tight landing and roll out, then had to "hover taxi" the quarter mile or so to clear the runway.

We were welcomed by the RAAF Flying Club CFI, taken to the Gatehouse to complete the 1993 Security details, then after tying down our aircraft, we went on to camp at Nelson Bay overnight. The next day we arrived back at the Base to collect the aircraft and I found my pilot had driven home to Sydney, leaving me as a low-time pilot to get home on my own. No big deal these days but back then...

With so much runway and the Control Tower not staffed, I made my calls and rolled out onto the runway following our newer Lightwing and departed on a left crosswind, then tracked for Brooklyn roadbridge behind the other aircraft. Suddenly I hit a speedbump; a predicted clear air front passed through and we lost sight of each other; "Geoff are you okay"? "Affirm – where are you?" We never saw each other again and I carefully followed the chart and picking up the strobes of the Light Aircraft lane southward always looking for landing places, there were none! The inner part of my right knee began to burn, investigating I found it was wet, smelling it, told me it was petrol! What to – I had lots of fuel, time to transfer the reserve up to the main tanks. I pushed the 2-Stroke Lightwing up to 85 knots hoping to reduce the fuel load if it burned!

It seemed to take forever and at five miles I made an Inbound call and joined Downwind, landing long, to stop, clear the runway, taxi up to the Clubhouse; shutdown; and in front of curious onlookers, de-plane and RUN for the tap to wash off the petrol that was eating my leg!

What a great weekend and experience, and thanks to the RAAF Flying Club CFI for looking after us.

Annual Bomber Command Commemorative Wreath Laying Ceremony

From Greg Mebberson, Secretary, Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation

The Annual Bomber Command Commemorative Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial pays tribute to all those who gave their lives and served in RAF Bomber Command in World War II.

The Ceremony will commence at **11 am Sunday 5th June at the Bomber Command Memorial in the Sculpture Garden of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra**. The Ceremony is open to all who wish to attend, however please note that due to COVID restrictions, seating may be limited and may require registering for a free ticket to reserve your seat.

On Saturday 4th June, the Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial will share the story behind a Bomber Command airman on the Roll of Honour. This event commences at 4.45pm and is open to all who apply through the Australian War Memorial. You must have a ticket to attend the daily Last Post Ceremony. Entry is free. For more information go to the AWM website at www.awm.gov.au> Commemorate > Last Post Ceremony.

In addition to the remembrance ceremonies, there will be an informal dinner on Saturday night and an informal lunch following the ceremony on Sunday. Tickets for these will be available for purchase through the Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation website at bccdf.org.au closer to the date.

The history of the service of air and ground crews in Bomber Command has provided many examples of courage and sacrifice for others and, at times, extraordinary stories of survival. However, the odds of surviving were poor. A recent issue of the AWM magazine, "Wartime", noted that for the estimated 10,000 RAAF aircrew who served in Bomber Command, losses were more than one in three, resulting in more than 4,100 killed. Commemorative ceremonies such as the annual Commemorative Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial help ensure that the service and sacrifice of the people in Bomber Command is not forgotten. Please check the Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation website at bccdf.org.au for the latest information. If you are not already on our mailing list, please email events@bccdf.org.au to receive updates.

Why I Like Retirement!

Question: How many days in a week?
Answer: 6 Saturdays, 1 Sunday

Question: When is a retiree's bedtime?
Answer: Two hours after falling asleep on the couch.

Question: How many retirees does it take to change a light bulb?
Answer: Only one, but it might take all day.

Question: What's the biggest gripe of retirees?
Answer: There is not enough time to get everything done.

RAAF Canberra Bomber

From Chris Beazley

The Canberra's first public flying display was at Farnborough in September 1949 and it stole the show. The aircraft met with immediate success and about 1400 were built in UK, USA and Australia.

The Canberra set many speed and performance records throughout the world, and has proven itself in many conflicts. With its low wing loading and power, the aircraft could outperform many of the jet fighters of the time. The RAAF operated 52 Canberras – bombers and trainers in Nos 1, 2 and 6 Squadrons. Early versions of the B2 variant (called the Mk 20 and Mk 21 in the RAAF) had Rolls Royce Avon Mk1 engines, while later versions had the more powerful Mk109 engine. The bomb load was significant for its day – the Canberra could carry 6 x 1000lb (455kg) bombs at speeds up to 450KTAS (840kmh) at low and high altitudes. It had a ferry range in excess of 2500 nautical miles (4600km).

Canberra A84-235 at Phan Rang in June 1970

Following re-equipment, No 2 Squadron deployed to Butterworth, Malaysia, in July 1958, serving with the Far East Air Force, Royal Air Force. The squadron deployed to Phan Rang, Republic of South Vietnam, in April 1967, serving with the USAF 35th Tactical Fighter Wing until 1971. After 15 years in RAAF service, the Canberra reached the peak of its service life during operations in South Vietnam. It was a very accurate low level tactical bomber, had a large bomb load and could remain airborne for three to four hours. While flying 5% of the 35TFW sorties, it was credited with 16% of the Wing's bomb damage assessment. It filled a gap in the USAF capability inventory.

The Canberra was retired from service in Nos 1 and 6 Squadrons in 1971, when the F-4E Phantom was introduced, and finally from No 2 Squadron in 1982. It was the "Queen of the Skies" during its service in the RAAF.

Panther Squadron

From Thomas (Paddy) Hamilton, Battle for Australia, Sydney Cenotaph 1996

When I was a child, I listened in awe
To the tales of bravery, of our heroes of yore
When Turnbull and Truscott, took on the great foe
As they rose from those flames, of that hell years ago
When war clouds were darkest, these men saved the day
And they buried their comrades, in the mud of Milne Bay
Then pushed back the tyrant, to the ocean's far rim
Where rank is forgotten and legends begin
Inspired by such heroes, I answered the call
In warriors robes, I stood proud and tall
I watched from their lair, as the Panthers took flight
And heard the loud roar, as their fire lit the night
In the last glow of sunset, I remember the time
When our squadron's young men, were cut down in their prime
From the blood of our martyrs, one lesson I'd learn
When the threat fell upon us, I knew we'd stand firm
But now as I stand here, my aging eyes cast
On weary faces, of those men of the past
And as spaces appear as the ranks slowly thin
Those places are taken , by a young one's proud grin
When we march every April, I remember with pride
The price that was paid, by those who have died
To the pages of history, these brave men have gone
But through the youth of today, their spirit lives on
And the noon chimes rang out, high overhead
As we stood there in silence and remembered our dead
And the bugle sounded, the Last Post's l loud air
While the people walked by us, as if we weren't

I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, fought prostate cancer and diabetes.
I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts.
I have bouts with dementia.
I have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore, can't remember if I'm 85 or 92.
I've lost all my friends.
But, thank goodness, I still have my driver's license.

Through Adversity to the Stars; Women and Aviation in Australia

Reprinted from Anzac Memorial Newsletter #4 | Autumn 2022

Betty Mullins, an office worker from Burwood, was the driving force behind the creation of a women's air club in 1938. On 19 June she publicly announced her bold plan in the *Sunday Sun*. The article, 'Women as War Birds if Wanted' informed readers that the Australian Women's Flying Corps was to be established as a voluntary force to give women a similar opportunity to learn to fly as that available to men. Members would study how to service their own planes, and nursing and first aid would also be taught. It was to be a civilian rather than a military organisation, however, as the article title suggested and as Betty herself explained, 'in the event of trouble threatening Australia's shores, we shall be available to the authorities if needed.'

Miss Mullins hoped to gain support for her scheme from the then Minister for Defence, Harold Thorby. However, the honourable member for Calare held the rather traditional view that women belonged firmly grounded in the domestic sphere. He scoffed at Mullins' idea in the Sydney newspapers on the following day: I do not consider commercial or defence flying a suitable sphere for their [women's] activities. We don't have women as railway engineers or tram drivers, and we don't want them as pilots. As far as defence is concerned women will receive no encouragement from the Government at all. Asked in the House of Representatives if he endorsed Mr Thorby's statement that women were unsuitable for the Air Force, Prime Minister Joseph Lyons replied that he had 'no views on the matter'.

Notwithstanding Thorby's disapproval and Lyons' apathy however, women's fascination for aviation had soared in the interwar years. Despite its dangers, many women saw little difference between driving a motor car and flying a plane. In 1927 Millicent Maude Bryant became the first Australian woman to gain a pilot's licence from the Ministry of Defence. By 1938 many more air minded women had become accomplished pilots and had already won their place in civil aviation. Barbara Hitchins, labelled 'the Australian girl aviator' by the press had recently flown 6000 miles from Sydney to New Guinea and back in her Gypsy Moth, Felicity.

The Royal Aero Club was established at Mascot aerodrome in 1926 as a social flying school and club. It mainly comprised of well-to-do ex-Australian Flying Corps pilots from the Great War, although women like Bryant were admitted as highly esteemed lady members. Peggy McKillop and Phyllis Arnott (of the famous biscuit family) both flew for fun and regarded flying as a thrilling and glamourous new hobby.

Mascot, NSW in June 1930.
Photo courtesy of Qantas Heritage Collection

Others participated in air pageants and some found new employment opportunities after gaining a B licence (commercial pilot licence). The famous aviatrix Nancy Bird Walton started operating her own joy flight service in a salvaged Gypsy Moth aeroplane in 1935. Later she upgraded to a Leopard Moth and used her flying skills in aerial ambulance work across remote stretches of NSW and Queensland. For this vital and pioneering work, she was known as the 'Angel of the Outback'. Betty Mullins' idea for an Australian Women's Flying Corps in 1938 thus appealed to a

wide audience of women and, regardless of what the men thought, plans for the scheme continued apace.

Early meetings and organisation

On 6 July 1938, the inaugural meeting of the Australian Women's Flying Corps was held at the Feminist Club of New South Wales at 77 King Street, Sydney. There were eighty women in attendance. More than two hundred showed up to the first General Meeting on 23 August 1938 by which time a further 500 women had applied for membership and the decision had been taken to change the name to the Australian Women's Flying Club. The first Committee members elected included a number of remarkable women. Twenty-two-year-old aviatrix and A class pilot Margaret Adams from Turramurra, was proclaimed President, with the redoubtable Barbara Hitchens serving as her Vice President. Betty Mullins was appointed Secretary and Florence Violet Mackenzie was made Treasurer.

AWFC metal badge with gilded outspread wings which doubled as a hat badge for the forage cap and as pilot's wings worn above the left breast pocket.

McKenzie had become Australia's first qualified female electrical engineer in 1923. In 1939 she established another voluntary organisation, the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps. More than 3,000 women passed through her signal instruction school at 10 Clarence Street, Sydney where her students acquired essential skills in visual signalling and Morse and international code. Later she campaigned successfully to have some of her female trainees accepted into the all-male Navy, thereby creating the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service – the WRANS.

Other prominent women among the founding members of the AWFC were Nancy Bird Walton and Gwen Stark. Stark or "Starkie" as she was known, was a leading member of the Girl Guide movement and an aviation enthusiast who received her pilots license in 1939. She became a Squadron Commander in the AWFC and fervently hoped that the club would one day be recognised as an Australian Air Force Auxiliary. Later, she joined the WAAAF, and became one of the few women who attained the rank of Wing Officer.

To 'encourage unity of purpose and to aid discipline' it was decided that members of the AWFC would wear a uniform, purchased at their own expense. It consisted of an electric blue serge tunic and skirt with a forage cap, pale blue shirt and dark tie, gloves and shoes. The annual subscription for the AWFC was 10 shillings and six pence, plus a shilling for attendance at the weekly meetings. Members were divided into Squadrons, each under a Squadron Commander. The twelve-month course included lessons from university lecturers and trained engineers on aeronautics and aerodynamics, navigation and meteorology. It also included physical training, first aid and home nursing. After a short time operating out of the Feminist Club, the AWFC established their own rooms at 8 Young Street and additional rooms were later acquired at 9 Clarence Street, Sydney. The Fort Street Girls High School grounds was used for parade drill and the school hall was used for instructional classes. In 1939, as the danger of another world war threatened, membership of the club increased again, and the training program was extended to include motor mechanics, gas and air raid precautions and camping techniques.

Women's Air Training Corps

It was the menace of war that saw the emergence of another voluntary female aviation organisation – the Women's Air Training Corps. The WATC was formed in Brisbane in April 1939 as a voluntary auxiliary service for women interested in supporting the RAAF. State divisions of the WATC were quickly established across the country. Tasmanian born pilot and the first

woman to qualify as a ground engineer, Flying Officer Mary Bell was elected Commanding Officer. Members were trained in communications, transport and clerical work as well as aircraft maintenance. The main objective was for women to be qualified to work in the hangars and aircraft factories so that if the need arose, men could be released for operational duties in the air and for service overseas. It was to be a very prescient development, both for Australian women and indeed for the nation.

NSW, c. 1940. Members of the Women's Air Training Corps (WATC) working on the engine of a Morris-Commercial truck. The women were trained in a variety of skills including aircraft engine maintenance, ambulance first aid, signalling and driving and *maintenance of cars and trucks.*
(AWM P02777.001)

Both the Australian Women's Flying Club and the Women's Air Training Corps were volunteer, civilian organisations. Many women were trained and instructed under their tutelage, becoming accomplished pilots and highly skilled aviation workers. And so, when Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced on 3 September 1939 that Australia was again at war, many of these air-minded volunteers immediately offered their services. Membership of both organisations increased dramatically, as did lobbying for official recognition. Yet despite the fact that they were more than equipped to join up, women's enthusiasm to help out was initially received with sneers of scornful derision. The general view that war was a man's job was both deeply entrenched and fiercely defended. There was also a fear that 'a woman in uniform or a pair of overalls, working in the company of men would create all sorts of unmentionable difficulties.' It took considerable pleading, much parliamentary debate and over a year of war before the RAAF received the official nod to go ahead and create a women's air force auxiliary.

<u>The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force 1941–1946</u>

In the end, it was expediency rather than equality which led to the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF). By October 1940, there was an acute manpower shortage in the signals section of the RAAF. It took eight months to train a wireless operator and expenses amounted to about 175 pounds a man. It was both costly and timely and there were simply not enough trained men to complete the manning of all aircraft of service units in Australia, let alone the ground stations. And yet there were countless skilled women who had been trained by the pre-war volunteer civilian organisations (at their own expense no less) who could immediately fill the vacancies, or at the very least undertake a short conversion course for ground duty.

The RAAF submitted a proposal to establish the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force that would allow women to fill positions where trained men were unavailable. The proposal was emphatically rejected by the War Cabinet who insisted that extensive publicity should be employed to recruit more men and that the air force should see if it could speed up the training of recruits. The then Minister for Air, John McEwen, was also deeply opposed to the recruitment of women. Undeterred, efforts to enrol women persisted and finally, on 12 December 1940, the War Cabinet made a temporary concession. It conceded that until more men became available, the recruitment of women, for now at least, would go ahead. It was to be strictly temporary and it was to be made quite clear to the enlistees that they would not necessarily be engaged for the

duration of the war. The Advisory War Council agreed that women should be enlisted but only 'to the minimum number, for a minimum period.'

A plan was drawn up for the formation of the WAAAF with an estimated strength of three hundred and twenty female recruits to work as wireless telegraph operators. A training depot and separate accommodation were to be provided at Air Force stations. It received the approval of the War Cabinet on 4 February 1941, followed by the reluctant acceptance of the Advisory War Council on the following day. It was also decided that women of the WAAAF were to be paid two-thirds the rates of corresponding ranks of airmen in the RAAF. This was in fact an improvement on the practice commonly followed in industrial awards at the time. However, when McEwen made a ministerial statement before federal Parliament announcing the formation of the WAAAF, ALP member Norman John Oswald Makin voiced his stringent objection. On the surface, his oratory expressed a deep concern over the issue of unequal pay. However, this was little more than disingenuous politicking - for his real protestation was to the spectre of women performing jobs which Makin quite clearly viewed as male occupations and which belonged to them alone. As he stated:
there can be no justification for the employment of women on duties similar to those carried out by men if equal payment be not made for equal service…In our view, all of our resources of man-power suitable for work of this kind should be exhausted before the employment of women is permitted. We recognise that many women earnestly desire to serve their country, but we believe that they could be well employed in other and more suitable avenues… We ask the Government to give further consideration to this matter in order to see that full justice is done to the men of Australia who are prepared to serve their country in these callings. If an earnest appeal were made to our youth, we are confident that they would offer their services as trainees for this work and there would be no shortage of men.

Makin's objections went unheeded however and 'with a marked lack of enthusiasm on the part of some male officers', recruiting had in fact already commenced ten days previously on 15 March 1941. By the end of the year over 1500 women had joined the WAAAF. The first Commander appointed was Acting Flight Officer Mary Bell, however she was replaced by Squadron Officer Clare Stephenson in May 1941. Rising to Wing and then to Group Officer, Stephenson, who was affectionally known as 'Stevie', stayed in the role until March 1946. Lady Zara Gowrie, wife of the Governor-General, became the First Honorary Air Commandant and was later succeeded by H.R.H. the Duchess of Gloucester.

Women were initially enrolled temporarily as auxiliaries for 12 months rather than enlisted. However, this changed in 1943 when the WAAAF was legally constituted as a part of the RAAF and women were enlisted for the duration of the war plus a period of 12 months. At first, and as promised, they worked only as wireless telegraphists. However, after Imperial Japan entered the war in December 1941, it became imperative that the maximum use should be made of all available women. With the country now committed to go "All IN" on the home front, together with increasing manpower shortages and the need to release male personnel serving in Australia for overseas service, women began to take on a much broader range of roles.

Eventually, WAAAF members served in more than 70 musterings, some of which were highly skilled and technical. Aircraftwomen served as ground staff, electricians, flight mechanics, drivers and meteorological assistants. Many others worked in clerical, transport, catering, signal and radar fields of employment. Women worked with machine guns and ammunition, in repair shops, in mess rooms, in hospitals and in parachute sections. They worked wherever they were needed. Some jobs were dirty and physically demanding, others were in intelligence and performed under conditions of strict secrecy. A few roles, such as cleaning and catering were merely an extension of traditional female duties, albeit very vital ones. Yet for all, the hours were long, the living quarters were often basic and the deportment, dress code and behaviour of the

WAAAF was at all times firmly governed. But there was an upside to this too. In her memoirs, E. M. Robertson recalled:

… with food, all clothing and housing, medical and dental attention, half fares on public transport, free travel on duty and recreation leave, there were not many expenses, other than small personal items, and it was possible to save money.'

WAAAF recruiting poster. 'Keep them flying! There's a job for you in the WAAAF. Apply at RAAF Recruiting Centre or Committee in Your District.' This poster was created by Walter Lacy Jardine who was commissioned to produce posters for the Department of Defence during the Second World War.
(AWM ARTV01114)

By 1943 the WAAAF were serving at Air Force Headquarters and in almost 200 Air Force stations throughout Australia, although the government refused permission for them to be sent overseas or to advanced areas in the north-western area - notwithstanding shortages in the ranks of the RAAF here. None served further north than Cairns and Charters Towers. When General Douglas MacArthur requested WAAAFs move with him and Allied General Head Quarters to the Philippines, the government refused to budge their stance and MacArthur had to request American servicewomen be sent in place of Australian women. Unlike their British counterparts serving as civilian pilots with the Air Transport Auxiliary, and their American sisters in the Women Airforce Service Pilots organisation, members of the WAAAF were not permitted to pilot an aircraft even for non-combat reasons such as ferrying planes from station to station.

Despite these limitations however, and the rigorous discipline that was stringently enforced in their daily lives, many women found their experience with the WAAAF as one 'characterised by

independence, camaraderie with other women and gender equality.' It was a momentous and adventurous period of their lives and most took immense pride in their wartime work. After the war, a number of women wrote books based on their time in the WAAAF and many told personal tales of a very positive experience. Demobilisation commenced in October 1945 and the WAAAF was all but disbanded by 1947. Some women encountered difficulties on leaving the WAAAF, with the pressure to settle down and raise a family. Others returned to civilian life and fully embraced domesticity, later remembering their war time service as merely something they 'just did' during the war. A few remained single and looked forward to the annual WAAAF reunion which was an important commemorative acknowledgment of their work during the war, the experience of which, for many, would remain integral to their sense of identity in the post war world.

WAAAFs at Mascot in July 1944.
Photo courtesy of the State Library of NSW (FL9558130).

The WAAAF was the first and largest of the three women's services formed during the Second World War. At its peak in October 1944, it consisted of 18,664 women or 12 percent of RAAF personnel. In aircraft depots and radar stations, on RAAF bases and at Operational Units throughout Australia, women made a vital contribution to the air force during the war. According to E. M. Robertson, 'the Chief of the Air Staff was known to have said that the RAAF could not have functioned as it did without the WAAAF.' In essence, they more than fulfilled the exhortation of the recruitment posters to 'keep them flying'. By the end of the war, approximately 27,000 women had served with the WAAAF, proving that women could fulfil tasks and roles previously undertaken solely by men. They worked long and difficult hours yet the value of their work and skills encouraged the formation of the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) in 1950. The women's service was finally fully integrated into the RAAF in the early 1980s and since 1987 women have been eligible for flying roles in the RAAF. In 1995 the last remaining restrictions were lifted, permitting women to train as fighter pilots.

Today women in the RAAF can look back on a proud and long history of female pioneers; from the civil aviation enthusiasts of the 1920s, to the air-minded volunteers of the 1930s and to the thousands of women who enrolled and later enlisted with the WAAAF during the Second World War. All of them and in myriad ways very much embody the motto of the RAAF; through adversity to the stars.

And to prove that their legacy continues…

All Female Crew Fly Into History Books

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Corporal Tiana Heap enjoys the views of northern NSW during the first all-female crewed C-27J Spartan aircraft from No. 35 Squadron, based at RAAF Base Amberley. Story by Flight Lieutenant Tanya Carter.
Photo by Leading Aircraftwoman Kate Czerny

An all-female crew has flown a C-27J Spartan transport aircraft into the history books at the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 35 Squadron. The training flight from RAAF Base Amberley on January 24 was the first time No. 35 Squadron had dispatched an all-female crew in the unit's 80-year history. The aircraft also carried non-aircrew women from No. 35 Squadron, essential to keeping the unit's fleet of 10 C-27Js ready to support operations. The flight provided flying currency for the C-27J aircrew, and ensured readiness to fly tactical airlift support to Defence wherever it's needed.

Corporal Tiana Heap, the primary loadmaster on the historic flight, opted for the 'try before you buy' one-year commitment, joining the Air Force Gap Year Program fresh out of high school. Airbase Protection and Security was her stepping-stone to a successful re-muster to loadmaster, the career in aviation she had always dreamed of. "I never really thought an all-female flight would ever happen at the squadron; it was really cool to be a part of," Corporal Heap said.

For the pilot, Flight Lieutenant Thea Margalit, the mission was a proud accomplishment. "We were really excited about this opportunity, showcasing not only females in aviation in Air Force, but also the women who work in support of ensuring the success of our tasks every day," Flight Lieutenant Margalit said. "Being the first of anything comes with great pride and I am privileged to have flown (the) mission alongside Flight Lieutenant Emily Renshaw. "Em and I met at the Australian Defence Force Academy in 2014 where we were teammates on the soccer field. "We went on to complete the pilot's course together, were posted to No. 35 Squadron together, and today we are flying the plane together."

Air Force has previously flown all-female crew missions with aircraft such as the C-17A Globemaster III, KC-30A multi-role tanker transport, F/A-18F Super Hornet, and the King Air 350.

L to R: Flying Officer Lauren Townsend, co-pilot; Flight Lieutenant Thea Margalit, aircraft captain; Corporal Joanna Fletcher, loadmaster; Corporal Antonia Guterres, loadmaster; Corporal Tiana Heap, loadmaster; Flight Lieutenant Emily Renshaw, aircraft captain; and Flight Lieutenant Katherine Mitchell, aircraft captain.

No. 35 Squadron – known colloquially as 'Wallaby Airlines' – was established in March 1942, and has a record of providing tactical airlift during wartime operations in New Guinea and Vietnam. Equipped with the C-27J Spartan in 2015, the squadron has recently been heavily involved with delivering critical food supplies to Coober Pedy after the region was cut-off by floodwaters caused by significant rainfall.

Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal (DHAAT)

From Peter Johnson,
Warrant Officer (Engineer) retired, former helicopter crewman with No's 5, 9 and 12 SQNs

Late in 1972 when I was a helicopter crewman, my then CO at 5 SQN recommended me for an Air Force Medal (AFM). The recommendation was strongly supported by the Base Commandant and was recommended by the then AOC; then things just stopped. Gough Whitlam had become Prime Minister and cancelled all awards for service personnel in December 1972. I did not know of the recommendation until I obtained a copy of my service documents after discharge in 1986, when I found a copy of the recommendation. This was a huge surprise. The recommendation covered issues of flood relief work, recovery of three unserviceable

9SQN in action, Vietnam

helicopters from PNG central highlands and the search and rescue of bushwalkers. All of these events took place in 1972 and began only a few months after my return from Vietnam, where I had served as a helicopter crewman with No 9SQN.

Some years later the DHAAT was established, so I decided 'nothing ventured, nothing gained' and approached the Tribunal with copies of the recommendation. The response from the Tribunal was that I had to gain approval or otherwise from Air Force as to whether the award could go ahead. The reply from Air Force took a very long time to eventuate and the reply was 'negative' on the award, partly as the AFM was no longer on the Australian Honours and Awards list as it was an Imperial Award. I had to send the reply from Air Force to the Tribunal to allow determinations to proceed.

After much correspondence with the Tribunal, I was called to Canberra for an interview two days after ANZAC Day in 2018. The interview lasted about two hours. In September 2018, a letter arrived from the Tribunal, advising that they had recommended to the Minister for Veteran Affairs, that I should be awarded a Conspicuous Service Medal (CSM). The Minister agreed and forwarded the recommendation to the Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, who also agreed and signed it off.

I was finally presented with my CSM in October 2019, by the Governor of Queensland. The Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal worked for me and I remain a very proud recipient of a Conspicuous Service Medal.

Electric Car - Fail!

From John Clarkson

Brad lives in Melbourne. He was sick of the World, of COVID-19, Chinese belligerence, global warming, species extinction, racial tension and all the rest of the disturbing stories that occupy the media headlines. Brad drove his car into his garage at home, carefully sealed up around the windows and doorways of his garage, selected his favourite radio station and left his car at a slow idle.

Two days later, his neighbour, realising she had seen no sign of Brad for a while, peered thru the garage window to see Brad at the wheel of his car. Immediately she phoned emergency services. Police, Fire and Rescue, and the ambulance arrived promptly. After pulling Brad from his car and giving him a sip of water, he seemed as good as gold. Brad drives a Tesla. It now has a flat battery. He also votes Green.

THE SENILITY PRAYER

Grant me the senility to forget the people
I never liked anyway, the good fortune
to run into the ones I do, and the
eyesight to tell the difference.

Don't Forget Me Cobber

From Thomas 'Paddy' Hamilton

"Don't forget me cobber," the cry rang out from hell
That was Fromelles bloody battlefield, where five thousand diggers fell
The soldier froze in his retreat, then turned to face that voice
And ran back to save his wounded friend, for he knew he had no choice

That plea made so long ago, has echoed down through time
It's a comfort when someone is there, when your life is on the line
Though they may pay the highest price, in answer to that call
To lay down your life for your fellow man, is the greatest gift of all

Those who wore the uniform and safely returned
Bore within their selfless souls, the ANZAC torch that burned
For there were other wars to fight, against man and nature's threat
Now their own descendants, stand firm without regret

When bushfire's flames devour the sky, as Hades scorched the earth
These volunteers in harm's way, truly proved their worth
Before the cyclone's howling scythe, or surging flooding tide
Those who rise for no reward, fill our hearts with pride

You may call me jingoistic, but when word is matched by deed
That rescue on the fields of France, sowed the bravest seed
When deadly threats confront us, there is something you will find
When an Aussie is in danger, you don't leave your mates behind

My memory's not as sharp as it used to be.
Also, my memory's not as sharp as it used to be.

Welcome to No 1 Recruit Training Unit (1RTU)

From Henry Whittaker

After 22 hours on that wretched coach we alighted at Adelaide Railway Station. We boarded an RAAF coach to Edinburgh RAAF base to commence Recruits, or rookies as it is known in the RAAF.

We arrived at 1RTU, unloaded our bags and stood milling around waiting for something to happen. In the distance we see this guy in jungle greens and floppy green hat walking towards us doing a very peculiar walk. I stared at him as he approached. I wondered if this is some peculiar and unusual punishment and what on earth did he do to warrant such a thing? Was someone taking the piss after seeing the Monty Python "Department of Funny Walks" routine?

He finally arrived and gave us a spiel about what the next couple of days were going to be like. I asked him what the go was with his funny walk, and to my horror there was nothing funny about it! A second later a very short, red-faced fellow advanced from another direction yelling orders, screaming expletives and giving directions seemingly at random. He seemed very angry with us. What had we done? As it turned out, nothing; it was just that we were there, and he didn't like it or us or anything else. He formed us up into three ranks. He demonstrated how we were to walk (that was the silly walk) from now on, and told us that we will be very good at this before we left this place. He marched us over to the mess for our very first meal in the RAAF; the food was very good.

The first business day after arriving we were sorted into our respective flights, assigned a course instructor (another angry little man) and allocated barracks. Kitting included a large steel trunk, socks, jocks, towels, singlets, Jungle Greens, boots, sewing kit, shaving kit, ridiculous (giggle) hat - everything. Once we were fully kitted our training began. First was how to lay out our living space. Our wardrobe layout was precise and our beds and bed rolls had to be made in an exact manner. Cupboard drawers had to be lined with newspaper which had to be changed every Saturday, the day and date to be displayed in the bottom left corner so the instructors could check that we had changed the paper. During the first few weeks, daily stand-by bed inspections was the go until we were assessed as being up to standard. From that point inspections were weekly…except for the occasional walk-through that resulted in the inevitable trashing of our quarters.

On inspection morning EVERYTHING was measured by the instructor. If it was not right, your entire layout was scattered across the room and down the corridor for good measure. Toilets were of particular fascination to the instructors, so the convention amongst recruits was NO pissing in the trough and only a couple of the cubicles could be used; thus keeping the amount of work down. Every now and then there would be some recruit who repeatedly didn't cut it come inspection, and would face punishment. The punishment often involved having the offender relocate the entire contents of his living space to the path outside the Duty Instructors office. The wardrobe, bed and locker was set out precisely as they would be in his barrack room. Everything including the bedroll, the whole dammed lot; with the recruit standing by his bed - out in the open for everyone to see. The Duty CPL would come out of his office and open the imaginary door to the recruit's 'dorm'. The recruit would stand to attention and the inspection would commence. If the recruit failed the inspection, he would have to take the whole lot back to his barracks and return at an appointed time for another go. This went on until the Duty CPL was

satisfied the errant recruit had learned his lesson. So why didn't the Duty CPL simply walk down to the barracks, you may ask? Well, why should he get off his arse on account of some hapless recruit who couldn't manage to keep his room tidy?

For me, adjusting to becoming a recruit was difficult - from my previous luxurious life as a loafer, to getting up at 0400 every morning to prepare for inspection, parading, drill, screaming and shouting from the instructor was both very stressful and draining. Being one of the new courses, we were at the back of the meal queue come meal parades, which meant we quite literally had just seconds to scoff down our food. This continued until we progressed up the seniority chain as senior courses graduated and moved out.

My very first parade was a shocker. I hadn't got the hang of military ironing and was in the process of 'taming' my Jungle Greens with 'starch'. Starch as we called it, was a mixture of wood glue and water. My instructor took one look at me and commented: "ACR, you look like a bag of shit tied in the middle!" I had also neglected to shave and must have looked atrocious. The instructor then looked at my face and asked me if I had shaved that morning with a blunt Mars bar. He ordered me off the parade ground to find a sharper Mars bar and come back cleanly shaven. I was in a bit of a panic and bolted back to the barracks, grabbed my cheap disposable razor and dry-shaved. The result was it looked like I'd been attacked by a great white and narrowly escaped with my life. When I returned the instructor was aghast.

Instructor: "Jesus Christ !!! Who attacked you????".
Me: "Dry shave CPL".
CPL:"F***!! If you do that again ACR, I'll charge you with self-inflicted injury!"
Me: "Yes Corporal".

Recruit school was designed to be stressful. It was about turning ordinary people into airmen. To do as you were told under stress, not to question orders and in many ways, you had to suppress your own character to fit into an organisation that wasn't interested. You had to be able to run towards danger when the normal thing to do was run away. Conditioning and indoctrination are reasonable terms. Despite all attempts, it did not crush my individuality; I just had to survive this. For the first half of the course, each day would finish with the decision as to whether I would continue. Each day started with me deciding I would give it just one more day. Either I eventually got the measure of it, or I became indoctrinated, because life slowly improved.

What really helped me through was that my recruit course was interrupted by Christmas. 1RTU was given two weeks leave. For me this was heaven-sent. It allowed me to get some 'fresh air' and think about things and whether I wanted to keep going. One morning I was having a sleep-in when my father thought he would 'have a joke' and walked into my room and woke me up with the words, "wake up, the WGCDR is here". Well for a recruit in a deep sleep, that was almost heart attack worthy. My father was genuinely shocked at my reaction and state of mind to what he thought was innocuous. He showed genuine concern at the state of mind in which recruit course had put me. On my return to 1RTU, life was a lot easier as I could adapt better. It was a tough transition. The RAAF by now had bussed me to and from Adelaide to Sydney three times.

The only relief during the day was lectures, during which everyone fell asleep - except for one occasion. The lecture was on Esprit de Corps and was conducted by FSGT Maher, a very excitable Irishman who clearly loved his job. The whole class was struggling to stay awake - one or two were snoring, so FSGT Maher fixed us good and proper. Here's how it went:
FSGT: "Seeing you lot are struggling to stay awake you better listen to this. The last recruit to stand on my command WILL do 100 chin-ups from the branch of that tree outside that window, two hundred push-ups and three hundred sit-ups. (Well, that got everyone's attention.). Maher continued, the last person on his feet when I call the order will be…the sound of chairs scraping the floor as every recruit was suddenly tuned in and not wanting to be that poor bastard. The

FSGT yelled - NOT YET!!!!" Everyone leapt to their feet and there was a collective sigh of relief. The lecture continued, with everyone transfixed upon FSGT Maher's every word.

After a short time, I finally managed to tame my jungle greens with copious amounts of wood glue. One inspection morning the drill instructors passed through the barracks and my instructor takes a look at my uniform and says, "Congratulations ACR, you've just graduated from bag of shit." He then turned around to inspect the room-mate opposite and cries out, "DO WE KEEP PETS ACR". My room-mates turned around to see the instructor pointing at the ACR's sand shoe to see that a cockroach had taken up residence in it. "WHAT'S THAT?" the drill instructor cries. "A cockroach" the ACR replies feebly. "GET RID OF IT! bellows the instructor and carries on with the inspection. This fellow looks at me as to what to do and I shrug my shoulders; I don't know. So, he stuffs this squirming thing in his pocket. The rest of us are struggling not laugh. The problem for this poor bastard is, he cannot squash it as it makes a mess and that's a 'no-no' on inspection day. Nor can he leave his post, and nor can he just put it in the bin because, if this thing escapes and is seen scuttling down the corridor by the instructors, they will go utterly berserk. Once the instructors are out of the room, he takes the roach out of his pocket looking for a place to put it. There's nowhere to hide this thing so, he lifts up his arm, throws the roach full-pelt at the ground. From the impact the roach gets sprawled out like it was hit by a train. With wings, legs, antennae sprawled out, one antenna and a leg or two barely twitching like a boxer being KO'd on the canvas. Well, that was it for the rest of us; we couldn't make a sound so that made it even worse. We lost our shit laughing in silence, doubled up in foetal position, eye watering. That's the effect stress has on you I guess, the silly things that will make you laugh.

I've been told I do not have a 'poker face', so when I'm unimpressed it clearly shows. That is not helpful when one is a recruit. Could you imagine from the perspective of a 'short-arsed' drill instructor, screaming and shouting at someone he is trying to intimidate and in return that same person is nearly two feet taller, literally looking down his nose with a look of utter contempt on his face? This does not make for good rapport, so the angry little man tried to get me booted from course, to no avail. The Officer in Charge (OIC) interviewed me and found in my favour. Apart from the look on my face, I had no idea what that 'vertically-challenged' corporal had against me, as I fulfilled everything that was demanded. We did find out later that this fellow was going through a divorce, so by my reasoning he was just working off his hate - on me. Or maybe it really WAS the look on my face.

At this point in time RAAF recruit instructors were drawn from the Airfield Defence Guard mustering (ADG). Why they had to do it I had no idea, but I'm sure many of them didn't like the job. Why would you? Courses were 12 weeks long; they spent their days teaching people how to march, yelling all the time and, from what I could discern from my own drill instructor, just being continually angry and bitter. But that's the way it was in the day of the 'old school' ADGies. They cultivated the image of a rough and tough, boots'n'all RAAF special squadron. I did not know it at the time, but many of those instructors were at or near the pinnacle of their careers. They made it clear they didn't like Techo's; the technicians and tradesmen who worked on aircraft. Maybe because we were paid more or maybe they thought all Techo's were smart-arses; both of which turned out to be true.

After a suitable time of adjustment to the routine we were allowed weekends off and permitted weekends off base. Late one Saturday night on the way back to barracks, myself and a couple of mates were waiting at a cab rank at Salisbury station. I did not drink alcohol at this time in my life; the other guys had had a couple, but were orderly and well-behaved. Some very drunken

local walked up to us wielding a claw hammer and accused us of trying to steal his car. Being the only sober one there, I stepped back to look around to see if this lunatic had back-up, only to see that this blokes 'mates' were cowering around the corner at the nearest pub pissing themselves with laughter. After a few minutes the idiot walked off, then returned a little later and singled me out (not unexpectedly) and accused me. I immediately went into "bamboozle mode"; (something I learnt at Bankstown Boys) and told him his car was a shit-box that no self-respecting thief would touch. Then I told him his car was illegally parked and the coppers will be here soon to book him, so he should move his heap of shit now before the cops catch him. Well, this completely derailed the idiot's attack and he started complaining that his car was in fact lawfully parked; I maintained that it wasn't and his car was still a shit-box. The distraction kept him occupied just long enough for our taxi to arrive, and we all hurriedly piled in and were off!

At last, graduation day. My parents made the journey across to see the passing out parade. They were proud. The first couple of hurdles had been successfully jumped, though I came rather close to stumbling early on at 1RTU. The next phase was employment training which turned out to be a completely different environment to that into which we had just been indoctrinated.

Defence Space Command Officially Launched

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As Defence enters into a new space era with the establishment of Defence Space Command, the release of the Defence Space Strategy sets a vector to assure Australia's access to space for civilian and military uses. Chief of the Defence Force General Angus Campbell said space was critical to ADF warfighting effectiveness, situational awareness, and the delivery of real-time communications in the current geostrategic environment. "We must be able to generate space power across the Defence portfolio, supporting the joint force, whole of government, allies and international partners. We must also protect billions of dollars' worth of commercial and military assets against space debris, collisions and destructive acts," General Campbell said. "The decision to create a single organisation to coordinate and manage Defence's endeavours in space is significant. Defence Space Command brings members of Navy, Army, Air Force, the Australian Public Service and contractors together under an integrated headquarters reporting to the Chief of Air Force as the Space Domain Lead."

Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld said Defence had the responsibility of assuring Australia's access to space for civilian and military users in a safe and sustainable space environment. "Advancing Australia's space power requires a shift in thinking that recognises and supports space as a contested operational domain rather than simply being an enabler to other domains," Air Marshal Hupfeld said. "The Government has committed to significantly increasing investment in Defence's space capabilities by investing around $7 billion this decade to assure our access to space, space services and geospatial information. "While technologies and systems are important, they are only part of what enables the delivery of space power. Our people and partners will bring the curiosity, creativity and collaborative spirit required to conceive the space power required to meet our future challenges."

Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, centre right, and Minister for Defence Peter Dutton discuss Australian space capability with Army Lieutenant Colonel Clifford White during the 2022 Air and Space Power Conference.
Photo by Leading Aircraftman Sam Price

Led by Defence Space Commander, Air Vice-Marshal Cath Roberts, Defence Space Command was established to assure Australia's access to space to defend Australia, our national interests, and promote global security and stability. "Space is the ultimate high ground. What we see from space gives us an unsurpassed advantage in surveillance and intelligence. It is central to how we will fight and win in the future across multi-domain operations, using advanced hypersonics, precision strike missiles and guided weapons," Air Vice-Marshal Roberts said. "We are enhancing our sovereign capabilities so Australia can be self-reliant in the detection of threats and collection of information for the defence of our nation. This is crucial to gaining timely, accurate information for the safety and capability of our forces. "This evolution of our operational capability will see us become an active contributor in space and ensure we can efficiently and effectively respond to space incidents when required."

"The newly released Defence Space Strategy sets the trajectory for Defence to assure Australia's access to space. The immediate priority for Defence is to better integrate the many diverse elements of space capability". "We will look at innovative ways to expand our space capability to meet unique Australian requirements and develop our partnerships with industry and academia. "Australia's geographical location and vast open land in the southern hemisphere helps us see things that others can't. We will continue to work closely with our allies and international partners to mutually assure the responsible use of the space domain. "Together we will reach for the stars to protect Australia – our freedom, our values and our way of life."

Question: Why are retirees so slow to clean out the basement, attic or garage?
Answer: They know that as soon as they do, one of their adult kids will want to store stuff there.

Women's Seminar on Marriage Enrichment

From John Clarkson

A group of women were at a seminar on how to live in a loving relationship with their husbands. The women were asked, "How many of you love your husband?"

All the women raised their hands.

Then they were asked, "When was the last time you told your husband you loved him?"

Some women answered today, a few yesterday, and some couldn't remember.

The women were then told to take out their mobile phones and text their husband the following:

"I love you, sweetheart".

Next, the women were instructed to exchange their phones with another woman and read aloud the text message each phone received in response to the message. Below are 10 of the replies. If you have been married for quite a while, you may understand that these replies are actually a sign of love – who else would reply in such a succinct and honest way?

Who is this?

Hey, mother of my children, are you sick?

Yeah, and I love you too. What's wrong?

What now? Did you smash the car?

I don't understand – what do you mean?

What did you do now?

Don't beat about the bush; just tell me how much you need?

Am I dreaming?

If you don't tell me who this message is actually for, someone may die.

Your mother is coming to stay with us, isn't she?