SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

Helicopters at War

from Ross 'Bags' Mathieson

The 135th Assault Helicopter Company (135th AHC) was a unit comprised of US Army and RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam (RANHFV) personnel. Their callsigns were Emu white 1 to 5 and Emu yellow 1 to 5, plus some Emu gunships. I once heard someone ask over the radio: 'Say guy, what's an Emoo?' The answer he was given was: 'Ah dunno, but ah is one!'. I only recently learnt that it actually stood for Experimental Military Unit. The home base of the 135th was called Blackhorse which was to the North of Phuoc Tuy province, but they ranged over a wide area, including down into the Delta region. They quite frequently took hits from enemy fire, and occasionally lost an aircraft and crew.

Sub Lieutenant Charles Robert Richmond (Charlie) Rex, RANHFV (right) and Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) Bob Merkley, Pilot, 135th AHC (second from left, facing camera), who had been shot down on three separate occasions. The other servicemen are unidentified.

Short exchange postings were often arranged between 9 SQN pilots and pilots from the 135th. This was to hone our formation flying skills, as they were specialists in that area. In exchange, their pilots got to carry out tasks which were not normally available to them, such as carrying sling loads, winching and instrument flying. The basic formation they flew was a V shape of five aircraft using a 45 degree echelon, followed by a second V of five. For narrower landing areas, they would change to a staggered trail right or staggered trail left formation, and for landing on roads they would fly in trail. In trail you fly slightly above the helicopter in front of you, whereas the fixed-wing equivalent is called line astern, and is flown just below the aircraft in front. Their formations were rather cumbersome, and couldn't turn if low level because in a right turn, for instance, the aircraft on the right side would be lower than the leader. Consequently their approaches would be long and straight, and generally at 80 knots, which made me feel fairly vulnerable. If necessary, during late final and touchdown, an aircraft could move forward to abeam the one it was formating on. The door gunners on the outsides of the formation could strafe the tree line during the approach.

The Australians did not like this technique, and changed to a "finger four" formation. This consisted of a pair using a 30 degree echelon right, closely followed by a pair offset to the left using echelon left. This formation could fly at low level and make hard turns, as each aircraft could slide into trail in the turns and remain at the same height as the leader.

I spent a week or so with the 135th in February 1968, and was there for my 23rd birthday. That night there was an attack on the wire and I spent the evening sitting in a trench with a couple of cans of beer for company. Conveniently, the VC used a different colour tracer than the allies. A few green tracers would fly into the base, and then a storm of red tracer would fly out into the darkness. All would be quiet for a while, and then the cycle would repeat.

One day we carried out a combat assault onto the Cholon racecourse in Saigon itself. Another day, arriving at the hover on a narrow road through some rice paddies, I had got uncomfortably close to the aircraft in front. I instinctively started to move back a bit when the American captain batted the cyclic and growled;"Never back up in trail, boy".

I also remember being shut down at Dong Tam in the Delta, on a large base where there were at least half a dozen other cavalry units like the 135th. Helicopters everywhere! The 155 artillery pieces were firing, and there seemed to be explosions just above them. I remarked to a Negro soldier crouching in a nearby slit trench that they seemed to be fused incorrectly, as they were going off just above the base. He put me straight with:"They's incoming man". I joined him in the trench!

On the 18th of February I experienced my closest brush with death. After dropping troops on the ground from a combat approach, the ten slicks fanned out in different directions while picking up speed, then climbed to 1500 feet and rejoined into formation. We had just levelled out after the climb when our starboard gunner opened fire. We looked to the right to see an aircraft in a 40 degree bank towards us, with its rotor maybe thirty feet from the edge of ours. Luckily my captain, an American named "Bear" Riley, whose hobby was weight-lifting, and who had the controls at the time, had quick reflexes. He slammed on 60 degrees of bank and pulled about four G. The two aircraft must have been tucked in like spoons. I never did find out whether the gunner couldn't get his voice to work and was trying to attract our attention or was shooting across the nose of the other aircraft to warn it, or was trying to shoot it down.

February 22nd was a sad day. I was flying in Emu yellow 4, and the formation was being led by LCDR Pat Vickers in Emu white 1. We were carrying RVNM soldiers on a "search and destroy" combat assault. We had just commenced the descent and were about 1000 feet when the lead aircraft was hit by ground fire. The bullets must have been almost at the top of their trajectory. Pat was hit in the head and killed. He was the first Australian pilot to be killed in Vietnam. His copilot was hit in the leg quite seriously, but managed to fly back to Blackhorse. The remainder of us aborted the mission.

Another Australian, LT Tony Casadio, was killed while flying for the 135th a few months later. Tony was flying a heavily laden gunship at low level when his engine failed. The aircraft reached a clearing but crashed at speed into a bomb crater, killing the crew of four. Prior to his death, I was told that Tony

had carried out a particularly courageous action. While supporting troops on the ground his aircraft had been hit by ground fire and the fuel control unit was damaged. He entered autorotation, selected manual fuel and recovered to level flight, then continued to support the troops while manually controlling the throttle. However the fuel was leaking and the engine flamed out, necessitating another autorotation, this time to a landing near the tree line from where the enemy fire had come. Tony and his crew grabbed the small arms carried by the aircraft for personal use and held off a charge by the enemy, until his wing man landed, took them on board, and flew them to safety.

Editor's Note: From the Australian War Memorial: The 135th AHC lost 13 members killed in action, 22 wounded in action and 25 aircraft destroyed from 1968 to 1969. Aircraft numbers were reduced from 31 to 17 with 15 having to be supplied for combat every day. Instead of flying 1500 hours per month which was planned, the unit regularly flew 3600 to 4100 hours per month and the resupply of stores could not keep pace. Pilots flew around 150 hours per month and their total hours of over 1200 were far above the 200 to 250 per year in peace time back home. Throughout their service in Vietnam members of RANHFV provided tactical airlift and gunship support for Australian and allied ground forces.

6 SQN F-111C Crashed at Evans Head

29 September 1977

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

On this day, No 6 Squadron F-111C A8-133 crashed south of the Evans Head Air Weapons range killing Squadron Leader John Holt and Flight Lieutenant Phil Noordink. The crew had successfully completed two runs on the range and had started a third when the aircraft's canopy was struck by three large birds, possibly pelicans. The crew initiated ejection well outside of the safety envelope and the ejection module struck the ground killing both crew. On 29 September 2006, two cairn dedication ceremonies were held; one at the crash site and the other in the RAAF section of the Evans Head cemetery.

Subsequent to the Above Crash

from John Clarkson

I was at 1CAMD at Kingswood at the time of the crash of the F111 at Evans Head, where even though the ejection sequence was initiated, both flight crew were killed. The unit was instructed to examine the ejection sequence of the module and see if we could work out what went wrong. As the article above stated, they believe the aircraft suffered a bird strike with a large bird, (probably a

pelican) whilst it was flying at high speed at low altitude. Two projects were initiated from this event – one to make the windscreen much stronger, and one to evaluate the ejection sequence of the module.

When they examined, in slow motion, the actual attitude of the aircraft immediately after contact with the large bird, it was revealed that one of the aircrew was killed on impact when the large bird came through the windscreen, as the ground speed of the aircraft at the time was quite significant. Then as the remaining member of the aircrew pulled the ejection handle, the aircraft rolled quite rapidly to the right. By the time the module rocket motor was initiated, the aircraft was almost at 90º to horizontal, and sadly the module was propelled at great speed along the beach. This finding explained why the investigators found numerous pieces of unburnt cordite along the beach. Initially, when these pieces of cordite were found, some thought that the rocket motor had failed and began to break up, instead of burning as designed. It was established that with the aircraft attitude almost 90º to horizontal and the module smashing along the beach at high speed, the rocket motor began to break up. Therefore, there was no defect report required for the rocket motor.

Secondly, the project to strengthen the windscreen was handled by another unit – possibly ARDU I think. We saw some of the film clips of this trial. At one of the aircraft trials units in the USA, they assembled the basic shell of the F111 module on to a high speed rail sled. This sled would be propelled at high speed along the rails and a large bird would be dangled from a frame so that it would contact directly with the windscreen. With the standard windscreen, this bird would come straight through the windscreen and be splattered on the rear wall of the module. We all said, "Don't show this to the Greenies!"

F111 Crew Escape Module

Eventually, a highly modified windscreen was developed and similar tests were carried out and the high speed collision with a similar bird simply caused the windscreen to curve inwards a little then recover its original shape – success! During the trials, there was one event, which sounds silly, but I believe it happened. In one of the early trials, with the bird suspended from a frame at the correct height to contact the

windscreen, not only did the bird come through the screen, but the screen shattered into pieces and the bird dented the back wall of the module. The result was that one of the maintenance fitters in the trial spoke to the scientist in a very angry tone. He said, "When you select a large bird for the trials, make sure it is not a frozen bird!"

Editor's Note: The F-111 was fitted with a crew escape module instead of ejection seats. In an emergency, either crew member would pull the ejection handle and the module would separate from the aircraft and descend to earth by parachute. The module consisted of the entire cockpit section, canopy and the forward part of the fuselage/wing fairing. This module concept was a major design innovation for the 1960s.

F-111 Crew Successfully Ejected in NZ after in-flight Emergency

25 October 1978

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On this day, No 6 Squadron F-111 A8-141 (Wing Dave Rogers (pilot) and Flight Lieutenant Pete Growder (navigator)) crashed in the Hauraki Gulf, northeast of Waiheke Island near Auckland, NZ, after the aircraft caught fire. The crew successfully ejected in the ejection module at a height of 2,700 feet and escaped with only minor injuries. The RAAF was participating in the New Zealand-sponsored Exercise LONGEX 78. The Ejection Module was subsequently used as a trainer on every conversion course until the aircraft ceased operations in December 2010; it was modified, along with the aircraft, to allow aircrew students to become familiar with switches, checklists and emergency drills to relieve the load on the simulator. The Module also featured in air shows across Australia.

Air Vice Marshal the Hon R.A.Cochrane

from Geoff Raebel

It was a particularly bitter night in the winter of 1944 as the Warrant Officer made a last check of the dispersals of his Flight at 463 Squadron Waddington. Snow swirled around him as he trudged from pan to pan, it was not a night to be out. Under the wing of a Lancaster something moved, instantly alert the W/O cautiously approached a man. To put the other off-guard he bellowed at him "Who the bloody hell are you?"

The man pulled back one shoulder of his greatcoat to reveal his shoulder flashes "Cochrane, AVM." The W/O snapped to attention while doing a double-take and simultaneously threw up a salute "Sir" It was the Commanding Officer of 5 Group Bomber Command. "Who are you?" Cochrane asked, and

the W/O identified himself then Cochrane continued "I was just visiting your CO and decided to take a tour on the way out. Bloody driver bogged the Hillman over there" he pointed into the night. "He went off to find the guardhouse a half hour ago to rouse the Officer of the Day" The W/O took it all in as Cochrane continued "Is there any shelter about?"

"Come this way sir" he beckoned "The Erks have a humpy, it's only a couple of minutes"
The W/O pushed open the door of the shelter made of canvas and scrap timber, surprising the fitters inside and called "Ten – shnn!" The Australians smirked until they saw the officer behind the W/O and they jumped to their feet. "Gentlemen, Air Vice Marshal Cochrane" the W/O introduced.

Lancaster ED606, JO-E of No. 463 Squadron RAAF in the snow of RAF Waddington

"As you were" said Cochrane. The men, open-mouthed, thought they rarely see Rollo (Kingsford-Smith) except when on Squadron Parade; where on earth did their Group Commander drop from? Relaxing, one of the men offered Cochrane a box to sit on while another plied him with a hot cup of tea in an old chipped tin mug from the iron stove.

When he had almost finished the door burst open again letting in a shower of snow. A Pilot Officer stuck his head in "Right you lot, on the double outside, we have an officer lost nearby!" Nobody moved, the Pilot Officer began to puff up in the face of the usual insubordination where popular pilots were known by their nicknames, then his eyes landed on Cochrane. He snapped to attention crashing his head into the door lintel before he could salute. A fitter caught him and put him on a box beside Cochrane. Other startled members of the search party crowded into the humpy saluting Cochrane as they came in.

"Well Pilot Officer" Cochrane started "I'll bet you're glad you found me. Now have you got any transport, I should be getting back to Group Headquarters". "Sir, yes we can lend your driver a car and swap them tomorrow" the Pilot Officer replied. Cochrane looked around the crowded humpy "Excellent, thank you gentlemen for your hospitality on a cold night, it has been most instructive. Pilot Officer, my compliments to your Commanding Officer and I must be on my way."

The Erks sat in awe as they watched the humpy empty; a brush with fame.

As I watch this genaration try to rewrite our history one thing Im sure of it will be mispelled gramaticaly incorect and hav no punchewation

1 RAR Soldier's Modern Perspective

from Tony Horsington

After hearing of another young man take his life yesterday, for some unknown reason, and having a very meaningful conversation with a long time mate, I have to tell you all this. I want you all to listen. Please just listen.

For those of you who leave the military, particularly after many years' service, who struggle to find your place, to feel complete, and for those of you who are worried about leaving, because it's 'who you are', I give you this thought. The military is, by its very nature, designed to replace you in a heartbeat. You will leave today, and tomorrow, it will be like you were never there. You will be replaced. They will get the job done without you. That's the nature of the job. While you no doubt make a difference, and your service is vitally important to this nation, you will soon be forgotten and no longer needed. You can and will be replaced.

But do you know who cannot replace you? Your family. Your wife. Your sons and daughters. Your brothers and sisters. Your mother and father. Your FAMILY. To them, you cannot be replaced. There is no substitute for you as a father, a mother, a brother or sister, a daughter or son. If you are struggling after leaving the military, or struggling with the decision to leave, think about what really matters. Your family, and how much you mean to them. And how much they mean to you.

And for those who think or feel they lose their identity when they leave the military, I can tell you now, you're wrong. You will always be a soldier, a sailor or an airman/woman. No one can take that away from you. But that's not who you really are. Who you are is an essential part of a family; that is loved, and cherished, and cannot be replaced, by anyone, EVER. That is far more important than your military service.

So if you're struggling and need help, please reach out. Please talk to someone. Talk to your family and tell them how you feel. Please ask for help. I don't want to see another family lose someone they cannot replace.

Whoever Said History was Boring?

from John Clarkson

A friend of mine collected these stories and put them together into an interesting group. How times have changed. Thank goodness. It is interesting to know where some of the old sayings came from. Many of these sayings came from practices in the 19th century or for some – much earlier.

They used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to all pee in a pot. Once a day the pot was taken and the contents sold to the tannery. If a family had to do this to survive, the family was "**piss poor**".

Many people were married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and they still smelled reasonably well by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a large tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons, then the women, and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, '**Don't throw the baby out with the bath water**!'

Many houses had thatched roofs with thick straw-piled high and no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, "**It's raining cats and dogs**." There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the term, '**dirt poor'.** The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entrance-way. Hence, "**a thresh hold**".

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day, they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme, "**Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old**." Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "**bring home the bacon**". They would cut off a little to share with guests, and would all sit around and "**chew the fat**".

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food, causing a lead poisoning death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next several centuries, tomatoes were considered poisonous. Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the **"upper crust"**.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they were really dead or would wake up. Hence the custom of **"holding a wake"**.

In some of the old, small villages, local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a bone-house, and reuse the grave. When reopening

these coffins, they found that about 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside, and then they realized they had been burying some people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night, hence "**the graveyard shift**", to listen for the bell. Thus, someone could be "**saved by the bell**", or was considered a "**dead ringer**".

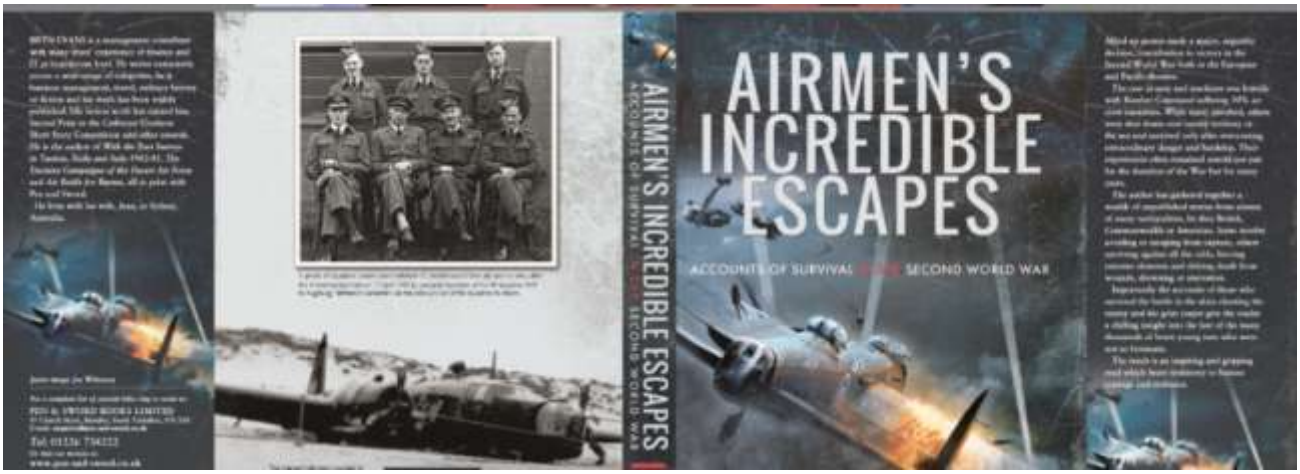
Whilst many of these stories are more than a century or two old, these incredible stories remind us about "the way things were" and are a great reminder to respect our rich history the way it was, and not try to rewrite it, as many try to do today. There are at least two stories here: whilst we must be thankful for our modern living conditions of today, we must also be respectful for those who really did it tough.

Airmen's Incredible Escapes

Veterans' accounts of survival in the Second World War

from Bryn Evans, 1 September 2020

Airmen's Incredible Escapes, tells of survival in the Second World War against the odds and all probability. It shows the amazing resilience of the human spirit. The war in the air was largely unseen except by individual airmen. Death in the sky or in an aircraft crashing to the ground could come suddenly and in terrifying ways. It was the first ever major war, where the conflict in the air had a decisive influence on the battles on land and sea. Allied air forces' aircraft and their crews in all theatres were lost in innumerable encounters and circumstances, and in numbers never seen before or since. Those airmen who did survive being shot down, and tried to evade capture were sometimes murdered by enemy forces or civilians. Death occurred in all kinds of ways, yet some airmen endured the most hostile circumstances; some with help from selfless strangers evaded capture to journey back to their base over several months. Accounts of such extraordinary survival were often not made known until after the end of the war. Many are known only by veterans and their families, and have never been recorded or published.



In *Airmen's Incredible Escapes*, eye-witness accounts paint a vivid picture of those surreal battles in the air, and how some airmen found a way to stay alive. First-hand accounts by survivors tell us what they endured in both accident prone training and operations against the enemy. The stories reveal the accumulating fear, terror and stress endured by airmen. Being shot down, making a crash landing, ditching in water, or baling out, was often only the beginning of an unknown ordeal to come. Evading capture by the enemy, staying alive in an inhospitable terrain, in the sea or inland water, enduring the worsening pain from horrendous injuries or wounds, exhaustion, thirst, hunger, followed by the deprivations and cruelties of enemy interrogation and POW camps; these were the nefarious companions for airmen trying to stay alive. Fate, fortune, good or bad luck, were seemingly random,

and ever present. Flying on operations in the Second World War was, as one veteran described it, '…dicing with death'.

While the air wars against Nazi Germany and its Axis allies in Europe, and the militaristic regime in Japan, comprise the predominant context of these accounts of survival, there was another foe that airmen had to fight and keep at bay. Aircrew, particularly those based in Britain, experienced a unique double life, very different to servicemen in frontline units of the army and navy. When not on duty airmen were free to socialise in the community near to their base, often in the UK with family and close friends. Yet they were continually leaving that normality of civilian life, to fight to the death against an enemy in the sky. For aircrew, two personalities fought for dominance of their psyche and in varying degrees it brought about split personalities. Many airmen who did survive the war carried chronic physical injuries into their subsequent lives. Perhaps even more suffered long term psychological conditions, once termed war neuroses, which today are diagnosed as Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD). In many cases such psychological effects were undiagnosed, or just not spoken of, but in these veterans' accounts some such consequences are recognised.

Each one of the stories in this book of *Airmen's Incredible Escapes*, in many different ways, is astounding. Perhaps the most remarkable and wonderful aspect is that so many airmen owed their survival to the help and kindness of perfect strangers, many who gave their help knew that if found out, it would bring death to themselves, their friends and families. In countless cases it did result in capture, torture and execution. The 'Helpers' in all countries knew the risks they were taking. Like the airmen, they too were hostage to fortune, and their courage was just as incredible.

The author has gathered together a wealth of unpublished stories from airmen of many nationalities, be they British, Commonwealth or American. Some involve avoiding or escaping from capture, others surviving against all the odds, braving extreme elements and defying death from wounds, drowning or starvation. Importantly the accounts of those who survived the battle in the skies cheating the enemy and the grim reaper give the reader a chilling insight into the fate of the many thousands of brave young men who were not so fortunate. The result is an inspiring and gripping read which bears testimony to human courage and resilience. Following an article in the SMH a couple of years ago, seeking contributions from veterans and their families, the author received an overwhelming response of over 100 stories of miraculous survival accounts. So Australian airmen are very well represented in *Airmen's Incredible Escapes*.

Note from the author: I still have a number of signed first editions in hardback of *The Decisive Campaigns of the Desert Air Force 1942-1945* from 2014, which was reissued in paperback in July, and I am selling for $30 (incl postage within Australia). *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* and my other books in signed first editions in hardback are similarly priced at $30 inclusive of postage within Australia. If interested, I can be contacted at:

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New Alumni Network For Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust

from the Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT 10 November 2020

Descendants of Australian veterans are set to benefit from a new Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust (AVCAT) Alumni Network launched today. AVCAT administers a range of tertiary education scholarships and bursaries for the children and grandchildren of Australian veterans, assisting them to achieve academic and personal goals. Launching the Alumni Network today, Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said the AVCAT Alumni Network would create a valuable support system for past and present AVCAT students. "A recent survey of past AVCAT students suggested an Alumni support network would foster a sense of belonging and allow

participants to reconnect, maintain relationships and establish a mentorship program for future AVCAT scholarship recipients," Mr Chester said. "AVCAT Alumni are working in a wide range of careers and giving back to the community, including as a CEO, a nuclear medical scientist, a high school teacher, a paramedic, a nurse manager, a partner in a major law firm, and an opera singer."

The AVCAT Alumni Network will include recipients from a range of scholarships, including the Long Tan Bursary, funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Veterans' Affairs. "The Long Tan Bursary provides funding to help the children and grandchildren of Vietnam War veterans meet the cost of education after finishing high-school, supporting them to obtain formal qualifications and skills needed to pursue their chosen career" Mr Chester said. "This year the Australian Government funded 50 bursaries, each worth up to $12,000 over three years of continuous full-time study. Supporting the children and grandchildren of Vietnam War veterans to gain a tertiary education is just one of the ways the Australian Government continues to honour their service. We know that the bursaries and scholarships AVCAT manage have a very positive impact on the lives of recipients and their families. The launch of the AVCAT Alumni Network will only enhance this into the future."

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RAAF Took Delivery of First Aermacchi MB 326H

2 October 1967

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

The Aermacchi MB 326H 'Macchi' was ordered by the RAAF in August 1965 after it was decided there was a need for high-performance jet training to prepare pilots for the Dassault Mirage then entering service. On this day, A7-001 - the first Macchi received by the RAAF which had first flown in Italy on 14 April 1967 before being shipped to Melbourne later that year - was handed over to the RAAF. The aircraft first served with Central Flying School (CFS) familiarising instructors on the new type. Of a total of 97 Macchis operated by the RAAF, the first 20 were assembled in Australia from Italian production, with the remainder produced by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) and Hawker de Havilland with an increasing level of local components. By aircraft A7-031, production aircraft contained approximately 85% local content. In addition, CAC also built the Macchi's Rolls Royce Viper turbojet engine under licence.

76 SQN Macchi trainer

The Macchis main operator was No 2 Flying Training School (No 2 FTS), operating the type from 1970 until the final course on the type in 1991. The aircraft was also operated by the Central Flying School (CFS) to train RAAF flying instructors and also in the lead-in fighter role by No 2 Operational Conversion Unit, No 5 Operational Training Unit, and Nos 25, 76, 77 and 79 Squadrons. The aircraft was replaced in this role by the British Aerospace Hawk from 2001. The Macchi was also flown by the RAAF's aerobatic team, the Roulettes, whose pilots and aircraft were drawn from CFS at RAAF Base East Sale.

Macchi Memoirs

from John Clarkson

The above history article brought back memories of my time at ARDU, at Laverton. I was posted from 77SQN in Butterworth to ARDU – Laverton, arriving in October 1968. Then in 1969, the Macchi trials began. The 'powers that be' wanted the Macchi not only to be a pilot training aircraft, but also to train pilots in the art of ground attack and strike methods and pilot skills connected with each of those procedures. These trials were divided into three parts. The first was a simple one – to ascertain the amount of movement of the control column, in any direction to achieve a certain amount of aircraft movement. I'm not sure where this trial began, perhaps they were experiencing some flight control problems. The second and third trials were eventually blended into one larger trial, by developing an appropriate weapons platform for the Macchi. The 'bomb/rocket dispenser as used on the Mirage, became the most controversial. The third trial was to introduce the minigun pod for use by the Macchi, by installing the pod to an underwing hard point and modifying the electrical circuit to operate the minigun. So, here are some descriptions of what I saw. The following has been extracted from my book.

Macchi Aircraft - Measurement of Control Column deflection vs amount of roll or bank or lift. Quite a simple idea - two small tape measures, sometimes seen used on the bowling green, about 9mm wide each, were used to measure the amount the control column had been moved to achieve a predetermined flight path. One tape was fastened to the instrument panel immediately in front of the column, and another fastened to the right hand console exactly at right angles to the column when in a neutral position. The head of a large pop rivet was fastened to the top of the control column and the tip of each tape measure was simply clipped on to the rivet.

Macchi Weapons Platform Project. Development of the use of the Minigun Pod and other Ordnance systems for Pilot Training. My first observation of this trial happened on the flight line when a senior test pilot was commissioned to test fly a Macchi aircraft with a practice bomb and rocket dispenser, (as used on the Mirage) loaded under each wing. The RAAF had been informed that the Italian Air Force had been using a Macchi aircraft similar to ours as genuine ground attack aircraft, in training as well as in operations. This dispenser was commonly used on the Mirage aircraft to carry and release practice bombs at high speed as a part of pilot training. No ordnance was fitted to the dispensers, as this was simply a flight trial for the dispenser under the Macchi. The test flight was to include a number of 'dummy' passes in a ground attack style over the local practice bombing range.

On his return from the test flight, the pilot angrily stormed from the aircraft complaining about the piddling little engine in the Macchi. During this flight, he had placed the aircraft into a 45^{o} dive with full power from about 12000 feet. He then pulled out of the dive at about 2500 feet at the remarkable speed of just 275 knots. Apparently the drag of the dispensers was simply too much for the little Rolls Royce Viper engine. During subsequent investigation, the RAAF was to discover that on initial purchase of the aircraft, three different size engines were offered. The Department of Defence members of the purchasing team had decided to only purchase the smallest engine - "because it was only a trainer, and we don't want our pilots to get into difficulty with a powerful engine". Such was the mentality of some of the government teams.

We were also to learn that the Government had chosen the Macchi Aircraft over its competitors to satisfy a wheat debt Italy had with Australia at the time. Nevertheless, the project continued with an emphasis on the use of the Minigun Pod, and not the dispenser. This gun pod used the same 7.62mm electrically driven machine gun with a rotating group of six barrels as was fitted to the famous Iroquois gunship. The ammunition was held in container within the rear of the pod. We ground-tested the gun pod for accuracy at the nearby small arms firing range.

As we now know, the Macchi aircraft became a very successful pilot trainer for both initial training and for operational training. There were also several air-to-air gunnery programmes at Williamtown using the Macchi armed with minigun pods and the banner being towed by a 2SQN Canberra.

Recollections from my time at Singer-Link in Binghamton NY with the Initial C-130H Flight Simulator

from Bob Weight

Squadron Leader Weight joined the RAAF in January 1964 as an apprentice instrument fitter. Commissioned as an ENGINST in 1974, he went on to work in the RAAF's initial simulation project office within the then Air Force Materiel Division. He left the RAAF in 1984.

As we were finalising the testing of the simulator, things were slowing down a lot with the company as we had cost them a lot of their profit. The RAAF C130H OFT (Operational Fight Trainer) was part of a much larger USAF C-10 OFT project (of 10 OFTs). We were originally scheduled to be No 4 in the production schedule (after the USAF Prototype (no 1), then a USAF C-130E then a USAF C-130H and then the RAAF C-130H). As it turned out, we were No 2 out of the factory.

At the time we fought very hard to have their top field technician assigned to us and to come to Richmond as part of the installation and set to work team. We asked him "Do you want to go to Australia?" to which he said "Are you kidding me? Of course I want to go to Australia!": he was a young, single bloke who loved having a good time. Our instructions to him were simple; "Just get this thing tested and out the door." He would meet us after every test program each day and say to us "Write that one up, don't write that one up, I can fix that" for each fault we found. It became quite funny if we had a cockpit instrument malfunction or failure and we would not write it up, but come to work the next day and it would be working fine. But we could hear the USAF test crew in the adjoining offices saying things like "Hell, I don't know! It was working fine when we left here last night!" about the same instrument in their simulator which was being tested beside ours. Our field rep was going back in late at night and swapping our unserviceable unit for one of the USAF's serviceable ones. We got the OFT out the door...

I had been posted back to Canberra before the simulator was finished testing and one morning I got a phone call from the Singer Link project manager who asked me if I was sitting down as he had some bad news for me. I immediately thought that the bloke who was to be the OIC at Richmond (and who had just finished the training program and was driving his old Cadillac from NY to California) had been in an accident. But no, he told me they had dropped the simulator into the hold of the ship: as it was being lowered into the ship a cable broke and the simulator swung and smashed the audio cabinet against a ladder, then went upside down into the hold. Some 10 months later we were back re-testing it all over again.

We had determined that as I had in my possession the master computer discs, then we were looking at a mostly hardware testing regime as the software had not been corrupted. So we did everything we could to the physical extremes to see if we could 'break it'. One test we did was to do some manual load drops at very low altitude; I was flying the OFT with the pilot (FLTLT Bruce Fulton) checking what was happening at the on-board Instructor Station. Every time I would go through the sequence to

drop the max load of pallets out the back, we would crash. After two or three goes, Bruce made some comment about engineers abilities to fly an aircraft, so he took over and promptly crashed.

What we determined after much fault finding, was that during the original test program we had done the load shift malfunction where the full load of pallets was to shift back to the ramp. When we did the test originally, the load just kept going out the back and taking the aircraft C-of-G with it until the C-130 would just crash. They simulated each 16,000 kg pallet load going out the back, but just simulated the entire load as one mass. When they 'fixed' the malfunction at the time, they stopped the load on the ramp, but as we found out during the subsequent testing (after they dropped it) the software switch stopped the max load at the mid-point of the total mass – so when we did the low level extractions, half the total was going out the back but the earlier software 'fix' stopped the other half of the total mass on the end of the ramp. This caused massive C-of-G issues, and as we were flying very low level had no time to recover.

C-130H Operational Flight Trainer

It took their top software engineers and top aerodynamic simulation engineers almost a week to fix the problem such that we could still have a load shift malfunction that stops the load at the ramp, but also allowed us to extract the full load when we wanted to do that. I did ask Singer Link if we had not found the problem until we got to Richmond, would they have sent their top engineers down to sort it out. "Don't be stupid Bob! " was the very quick response, "Of course we would not have done that".

The USAF C-130 OFT PM was a Major out of Wright Patterson AFB who would fly into Binghamton on a regular basis. We would always catch up for a beer or twelve. One day he tapped on my office window as he walked past into the high-bay testing area, just to let me know he was in town. Not long after, he came into the office complaining bitterly about Singer Link and their inability to do things right. They were there to do a "maintainability test" where the company had to prove that the average USAF techo could find and correct various faults within a set time period. For one particular test the USAF technician simply could not fix it.

So the way it worked was that the Major could not do anything on the spot with the company, but would immediately quarantine the simulator and then go back to Wright Patterson, submit a report to the Pentagon who would formally write to the company and arrange a meeting. Some three months later they were back and, I kid you not, they we all lined up around the simulator; all the top brass from the Pentagon, Wright Patterson and the company. The company PM asked the Singer Link technician to explain what had been done. He simply walked over to the computer, unscrewed the fuse cover, took the main power fuse out of his top pocket, put it in and suddenly all the lights on the computer started blinking again!! The Major was telling us all this over many beers later that afternoon.

From the National President's Desk

Carl Schiller, OAM, CSM National President

It would be safe to say that most people would view 2020 as a very uncomfortable year, especially those who had to endure strict lockdowns and of course any who lost a loved one to COVID. On top of the pandemic, we now must deal with the Inspector-General ADF's report and the inquiry by Major General Paul Brereton (NSW Supreme Court Judge) into alleged breaches of the law of armed conflict. However, it's important to focus on the positives (yes, there are some) and to get matters into perspective.

Despite the tragedy surrounding COVID, Australia has fared well in managing the pandemic. Given the international situation, we should be proud and thankful we live in this country. 2021 will predictably be a sunshine year. In the last SITREP, I mentioned the Association's advocacy to get ADF Fire fighters' exposure to harmful substances accepted by government. Those affected are mostly former serving members who were trained at the former RAAF Fire School at Point Cook. Forensic examination of the ground soil at the former fire training site identified 163 chemicals of which a dozen or so were known to cause very serious health and often fatal conditions. Fire fighter is recognised, nationally and internationally, as a hazardous occupation, and today ADF Fire fighters and their civilian equivalent are covered by presumptive legislation, ie legislation which presumes if you are or were employed as a fire fighter and you contracted one of a dozen or so stipulated cancers it occurred because of your employment as a fire fighter. The burden of proof is on the employer and not the employee to say otherwise. However, this presumptive legislation is relatively new and does not 'look backward' to cover our fire fighters who unknowingly burnt dangerous chemical substances in 'hot fire' training that have had disastrous health effects on many.

Sharon Bown (National Vice-President) and I have been lobbying DVA and the Government to obtain recognition of the exposure and approval for health support and compensation to those affected. As expected, there was considerable resistance. Former Air Force Fire fighters had been arguing the case with DVA and previous Ministers for Veteran Affairs for over a decade. DVA commissioned several very expensive forensic studies that confirmed the danger to health from burning such materials, especially without appropriate personal protection equipment. However, the lack of legislative cover and the strict rule of evidence required under the Veterans Entitlements Act weighed against these veterans precluding them from the support they deserved. I am pleased to advise that following recent discussions with Minister for Veterans Affairs Darren Chester MP, he has directed DVA to design a package of support for these veterans. The Association has provided input to the package that is very likely to be endorsed by the Parliament before mid-2021. The outcome is testimony of the Association's influence at the highest levels. Although it is relatively small in comparison to several other ex-service organisations, our Association has an enviable reputation for providing well-balanced arguments to support a range of veteran support matters. DVA policy staff described the decision to support the fire fighters as a significant win.

Recently, I attended a DVA hosted Round Table of Ex-Service Organisations (ESORT). Three strategic matters that affect veteran support were discussed: the current state of Advocacy, veterans support legislation, and the National Consultative Framework. The general opinion is that the Advocacy Training Development Program (ATDP) needs review, the major concern being the lack of flexibility in training and assessment strategies. The veterans support legislation, you'll all agree, is a difficult suite of legislation to navigate for many advocates and individuals alike. Most of us would like to see a single Act rather than the existing three. However, although it is possible to have one Act, it could mean diminished benefits for many veterans. This is a careful road we need to travel. The National Consultative Framework comprises several forums with the principal purpose of providing intelligence on veteran and family support needs to DVA and Defence. A recent survey indicated there was dissatisfaction in the way some were operating. Secretary, DVA agreed to establish working groups for each of the three areas of concern to examine and provide recommendations for changes. I

will represent our Association in the working group dealing with the National Consultative Framework.

Not surprisingly, the Afghanistan alleged war crimes inquiry was a major discussion at ESORT. Many ESO representatives reported considerable displeasure at the displayed lack of presumption of innocence and the withdrawal of the unit citation that is likely to affect some 3,000 former members, including the families of soldiers killed in Afghanistan. Further concern is the likelihood that the AFP investigation and any subsequent legal proceedings will take years. The strain on families directly affected will be tremendous as it will be on many others. Anyone who is suffering from the impact of the inquiry should contact one of the Division's State Councillors or call Open Arms on 1800 011 046.

Last SITREP I advised the Association's National Board agreed in principle with the establishment of a benevolent foundation designed to support veterans and families. The name of the entity has been registered as Air Force Association Foundation. Work will commence early in 2021 to determine the nature of vital work it needs to undertake or support. Connected to this initiative is the Board's decision to establish a sub-committee led by Director Peter McDermott to draft a new AFA Ltd Constitution. The sub-committee expects to develop the first draft very early next year. Also, I have a meeting with Chief of Air Force in February to discuss these and other initiatives that the Board expects will further help maintain our close connection with Air Force.

The Festive Season is a special time when we enjoy the close comfort of our family and friends. I am sure we are thankful that as a community we have got COVID-19 under control. Stay well and safe. I look forward to sharing 2021 with you.

Escape and Evasion: An Occasional Series

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

Sergeant Edwin Coates, a RAAF pilot serving with the RAF's No 115 Squadron, bailed out of his stricken Wellington aircraft BJ 842 near Laon, France, on the evening of 22 November 1942. Moving at first only by night, Coates became bolder as the general friendliness of the farmers (once they were convinced he was not a German agent) ensured him food and sometimes shelter along his route. Early in December 1942 he had reached Nogent, where a pro-British farmer gave him a ramshackle bicycle, which was repaired by a friendly mechanic, and allowed him to make greater speed southwards. A month later he crossed the line of demarcation and, though stopped by French and German policemen, successfully pretended to be a Pole. Deep snow soon made travelling very difficult, so Coates sold the bicycle to a friendly farmer, who bought for him a train ticket to Carcassonne. Coates then began walking among the frontier villages until he found a guide willing to accompany him across the Pyrenees, which at that time of the year entailed three days travelling. Finally, on 15th January Coates was safely in Spain, and soon found British authorities who arranged his movement back to the UK, arriving there on 18 February 1943.

RAF 115SQN Wellington, RAF Marham, Norfolk, Jun 42

Generally, for every 12 RAAF aircrew lost over enemy territory, eight were killed, one would evade capture and three would become prisoners of war. Of the 1,476 Australians who were captured, the majority were seized very soon after landing, but some evaded for months before ill-chance, over-confidence or betrayal led to their discovery.

No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit (MCRU) disbanded at Butterworth

31 October 1966

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No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit (MCRU) was formed during WW II and in March 1944 was renamed No 114 Mobile Fighter Control Unit. After being disbanded, reformed and then renamed No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit in March 1956, the unit was then established at Butterworth on 19 Aug 1958, and was on the air to provide surveillance for the arrival, from Australia, of the first No 78 Wing Sabres (No 3 Squadron). The unit became fully operational on 1 December 1958, assuming area control and reporting responsibility. Throughout the next eight years, No 114 MCRU played an important role in the operational life of the Butterworth area, controlling RAAF Sabres and Canberras engaged in "Firedog" operations against communist terrorists during the closing stages of the Malaysian Emergency. The unit "stood to" again throughout the period of the 'Confrontation' with Indonesia, and maintained continuous operations from 19 Aug 58 to 20 Oct 66. During this period, a detachment of 114 maintained a 'Gap Filler' radar at Kampong Chang Kat (south of Butterworth). With Confrontation being declared over in August 1966, No. 114 MCRU transferred its responsibilities to RAF Western Hill on 22 September, and disbanded at Butterworth on this day.

Editor's note: Since the disbandment mentioned above, 114MCRU was reactivated again at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland, on 1 April 1968. 114 MCRU then transferred to RAAF Base Tindal, Northern Territory in May–June 1997 to occupy the newly completed Northern Region Operations Centre (NORTHROC). The unit again relocated to RAAF Base Darwin in December 1999. In May 2007, 114 MCRU deployed for active service to Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan, to coordinate coalition combat air operations, returning to Australia in August 2009. 114 MCRU celebrated its 75th anniversary at Darwin on 23 May 2018.

No. 114 MCRU – Radar Memorial Unveiling

By Flying Officer Jess Hogan, through CO 114 MCRU

Air Force personnel from Number 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit joined with Air Force Association members and veterans to unveil a memorial plaque at RAAF Base Darwin on Remembrance Day 2020 - commemorating 'RAAF Radar personnel in the North'. The memorial acknowledges the service contribution of the men and women maintaining the security and defence of our designated airspaces with the inscription:

"In memory of those that came before, through courage, hardship and sacrifice. World War II – South West Pacific Area, 1943-1945. Malaya – Butterworth, 1958-1966. And all other RAAF RADAR stations through the top end and S.W.P.A, 1942-1945. Dedicated 2020 75th TARAKAN Commemorative Year.
Lest We Forget."

No. 114MCRU (callsign 'TAIPAN') has a long and illustrious battle history resting on the shoulders of the women and men maintaining, deploying and operating the Radar, and Control and Surveillance systems necessary to ensure the sovereignty of the airspace within which Australia, and its allies operate. Since 1943, TAIPAN has been the only ground-based Command and Control Unit that has been awarded battle honours – Pacific (1943-44), New Britain (1943), New Guinea (1943-44), Borneo (1945), Malaysia (1963-66). Post World War II, 114MCRU has provided deployable Air Surveillance and Air Battle Management in the Malayan Emergency, Konfrontasi, as well as Operation Slipper, Afghanistan. Not to mention numerous domestic Homeland Defence Operations, including Papua New Guinea in 2018 in support of the APEC Summit.

At the special Remembrance Day commemoration and memorial unveiling, a Flight of No. 114MCRU personnel were positioned between the two Bloodhound missile gate 'guards' at RAAF DAR, with the Unit Colour on display. In attendance, Senior Australian Defence Force Officer RAAF DAR - Wing Commander Andrew Anthony, Base Manager RAAF DAR - Mr John Cox, Commanding Officer No. 452 Squadron - Wing Commander Andy Hoare, and friend of the RAAF Radar Association - Ms Leslie Stowers.

No. 114 MCRU Tactical Air Defence Radar convoy drives past the memorial unveiling ceremony at RAAF Base Darwin

Commanding Officer No. 114MCRU - Wing Commander Sean Gell and representative from the Radar Association - Mr Kevin Funnell addressed the socially distanced gathering, speaking of the significance of the memorial.

The ceremony coincided with the No. 114MCRU's Tactical Air Defence Radar System convoy departing for an upcoming exercise; passing by the parade at the precise time of the Ode and minutes silence - symbolic of the continued efforts by Radar personnel today. 'The perfectly timed RAAF Radar drive-by sent tingles down the spines of those present.' 'It was a privilege to honour the Radar men and women of the North with this ceremony and plaque - as an enduring reminder of their important service contribution,' said Wing Commander Gell.

L-R: CO 114MCRU, WGCDR Sean Gell; ex-WOFF Kevin Funnell; Senior ADF Officer RAAF DAR WGCDR Andrew Anthony

War Widows' Guild Celebrates 75 Years of Support

from the office of Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT
Monday, 23 November 2020

The War Widows' Guild this week celebrates 75 years of supporting war widows and widowers around Australia. Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said after the Second World War ended nearly 10,000 women were widowed, many were left on payments that were less than the lowest Army pay. "The War Widows' Guild, now known simply as Australian War Widows, was founded by Mrs Jessie Vasey following the death of her husband, Major-General George Vasey, to support these women," Mr Chester said. "The first War Widows' Guild meeting was held in Melbourne and marked the beginning of an organisation that is now an integral part of Australia's veteran support framework.

"It is not just our service men and women who serve our nation in times of conflict, their families make sacrifices as well and organisations like Australian War Widows are so important in recognising and supporting those left behind. "Today Australian War Widows has chapters in almost every state and territory and supports more than 50,000 war widows across Australia. "I commend and thank them for their service to Australia's widows and widowers. "Australia owes a debt of gratitude to the Guild and I know it will continue to provide integral support to Australian war widows, their families and our veteran community well into the future."

To find out more about your local chapter of Australian War Widows, or to make a donation to support their critical work, visit: warwidowsnsw.com.au

Media Contacts: Minister Chester, Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820
DVA Media: 02 6289 6466.

Final Caribou Flight

27 November 2009

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

A4-140 touching down at Fairbairn ACT

On this day, the RAAF flew its last operation involving the DHC-4 Caribou light transport aircraft, 45 years after this type first entered service in Australia. The final flight was carried out by Caribou A4-140 from Richmond into Canberra, where the aircraft was handed over to the Australian War Memorial for preservation. The previous day, another Caribou, A4-152, was similarly handed over to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, Victoria. A4-140 was the oldest surviving airframe of this type operated by the RAAF, having been one of the first three to arrive in Australia in 1964. It had served in Vietnam, supported United Nations efforts in Kashmir, and seen extensive service in South East Asia and across the South Pacific, logging a total of 20,040 flying hours. It was also the aircraft hijacked in East Timor by armed soldiers fleeing that country's civil war in 1975.

Battle of the Coral Sea Ceremony

from Bob Weight

Some years ago on behalf of the RAAF Association I attended the ceremony to remember the Battle of the Coral Sea held at Blamey Square Russell Offices. For those who do not know that area – it is where "bugs bunny" or more correctly the US/Australian memorial (the huge eagle of the large column) is located in the centre of the Russell Offices complex.

Australia's first female Governor General, Dame Quentin Bryce AD (Dame in the Order of Australia), CVO (Commander of the Royal Victorian Order)

I was seated in the 2nd row immediately behind two RAN veterans from that Battle. Dame Quentin Bryce was the Governor General at the time and at the end of the ceremony when we all had to stand for her departure she did not move to her car but instead walked down the stairs to these two wonderful old gentlemen. I am not sure if I am allowed to repeat what I heard, but it is such a wonderful moment I have shared it with many.

She bent down to these two veterans and said "I am so proud to have met you two men today" as she shook their hands. She then said "Do you mind if I give you a kiss"? Both men immediately said "Oh, yes please" and she kissed them both on the cheeks. It was wonderful.

I did meet these two veterans after all the hullaballoo sorted itself out and thanked them sincerely for their part in the Battle, saying to them that I believed my father's time in PNG with the 2/42 Bn would have been much different had they not won that battle.

The Tears at Christmas

from Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton

Having exceeded my allocated three score years and ten, like many seniors I seem to spend a lot of my time reflecting on songs and events of the past.

When we first came to Richmond, we befriended a woman who had difficulty listening to the Christmas carol, “Silent Night”. She had been preparing the evening meal when looking out her kitchen window she noticed a column of smoke rising above the lowlands.

It was the 20th December 1944; a Hudson aircraft, preparing to land at RAAF Richmond suffered a catastrophic engine failure on final approach. Too low and too slow, the occupants stood no chance as the aircraft stalled and crashed on 'Ice works hill' (now known as the dip on Dight St). All eight on board perished in the accident, including ACW Nancy Ralph, a member of the WAAAF.

Fifty years later, I approached the RAAF about having a memorial placed in the base chapels gardens. The RAAF was only too happy to help; they would host the event and give me every assistance in organising the service. I was given a copy of the enlistment papers of the victims. There was also the enlistment papers of a victim of an air crash at Plumpton three weeks later. It turned out five airmen perished in this crash. As they were also buried in the Richmond War Cemetery, I notified the RAAF and they agreed to unveil plaques to honour the victims of both accidents in the memorial gardens on Sunday 18 December 1994.This was the closest weekend date to the anniversary and the weekend the RAAF began its period of reduced activity

By this time I had managed to track down a representative for every one of the twelve victims of both crashes and they attended the service. The ceremony was conducted by the RAAF Richmond Chaplains. The service was also attended by ex-service organisations and local dignitaries. At the conclusion, refreshments were served in the Airmen’s Mess.

Two of those attending were the sons of Jack Broderick, the wireless operator on the Hudson. They accompanied me to the crash site and the cemetery. Both these locations and the RAAF Base are located within 200 metres of each other. They thanked me for finally giving them the opportunity to attend what was to them, their father’s funeral. One of the sons, Robin (the name of the other is lost in the maze of my senility) gave me a copy of the relevant pages of his mother’s diary. She had planned to come to Sydney to spend Christmas with her husband Jack, instead she attended his funeral and returned to Albury on the night train. The ink on the page for the 20th December is stained with her tears. The tears at Christmas. As a sad finale both Robin and his brother were fostered out.

As this year marks the 75th anniversary of the tragedy and so many locals are unaware of the event, I decided to enshrine it in verse. As in past years my wife and I will make a private pilgrimage and lay some flowers by the graveside

The Tears at Christmas

from Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton, 12 Jun 19

It was the festive season, so many years ago
When a tale of happiness, would suddenly turn to woe
They were so excited, as they climbed aboard
A joyflight 'round the Hawkesbury, seemed a kind reward

As they prepared for landing, an engine was heard to fail
At that very instant, their haven became a gaol
It is still a mystery, the reasons I haven't found
Why the pilot could not put it down, on the lowlands open ground

The aircrew knew that they were doomed as they sought to return and land
But with his fatal cards of death, the devil showed his hand
The Hudson stalled and fell to earth, there was no chance of hope
Trapped in their fiery coffin, upon the iceworks slope

Their bodies sadly laid to rest, with little time to grieve
The tale of those young victims, too tragic to believe
A long and sombre funeral, such a pitiful sight
While from a far off radio, the carol Silent Night

A mother wrote her diary, when the cruel news broke
Her tears splashed on the pages and ne'er a word was spoke
The war had raged for five long years, another eight lives lost
A row in a Richmond graveyard, a reminder of the cost

Those who knew and loved them, heartbroken at the scene
They were left to ponder, just what might have been
Each year I stand in silence and recall their souls and pray
For the stains of the tears at Christmas, can still be seen today

I'll Look After You Little Guy...

from Peter Beath

I was with 5 and 9 squadrons (and others) a long time age. A memory came out of the blue recently; I think the mention of the USAF C141 on the tarmac at Fairbairn in 1966 ignited some long forgotten grey matter. There was a Tiger Moth in the 9 SQN hangar at the time; it was wheeled out and parked between the fuselage and inboard engine of the Starlifter.I recall there was a photo in either The Post or Pix magazine, (not sure which).
(Editor's note: Thanks to the www, here's the photo to which Peter refers!)

On 15 March 1966, Lockheed C-141A StarLifter 64-0628 visited RAAF Base Fairbairn. A Tiger Moth has been posed with the StarLifter for this RAAF publicity photograph.

How many takes at being a CO?

from WGCDR Ian Gibson (the other one...not your editor!)

Looking for something else, and found a listing of COs 79SQN back in the 1960s. If you look at the tenures of the COs, DPO-AF obviously wanted to get as many as possible to have command experience, but it was during their time OSEA I guess. Most of them were CO for three months. I wonder how that would fly today?

28 January 1965	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
24 March 1965	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
20 May 1965	—Squadron Leader R.E. Frost
16 July 1965	—Squadron Leader J.C. Kitchenside
9 September 1965	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
4 November 1965	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
1 January 1966	—Squadron Leader R.G. Funnell
24 February 1966	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
24 April 1966	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
19 May 1966	—Squadron Leader J.S. Puleston-Jones
14 July 1966	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
11 August 1966	—Squadron Leader P.G. Larard
22 September 1966	—Squadron Leader R.G. Funnell
19 October 1966	—Squadron Leader L.B. Weymouth
12 January 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
9 February 1967	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
20 April 1967	—Squadron Leader H. Roser
15 June 1967	—Squadron Leader L.B. Weymouth
9 August 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
5 October 1967	—Squadron Leader K.H. Foster
4 December 1967	—Squadron Leader D.G. Stenhouse
22 December 1967	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
31 December 1967	—Squadron Leader D.G Stenhouse
23 January 1968	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
22 March 1968	—Squadron Leader H.F. Freeman
1 May 1968	—Squadron Leader D.G. Stenhouse
3 July 1968	—Squadron Leader W.G.M. Richardson
1 April 1986	—Wing Commander B.R. Wood
22 July 1986	—Wing Commander W.G.A. Fitz Henry

Editor's (cheeky) comment: It seems that 'back in the day', some officers had trouble learning how to be a CO, so as you can see from the list above, many were given several attempts to get it right. It must have worked: several ended up at Air rank, with at least one, R.G. Funnell, becoming Chief of Air Staff from 1987 until 1992.

Supporting the Wellbeing of Veterans and Their Families

from the Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT, 12 November 2020

Support for veterans and their families was enhanced today with the passage of the Veterans' Affairs Legislation Amendment (Supporting the Wellbeing of Veterans and their Families) Bill 2020 through Parliament. Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said the legislation implemented three changes to ensure policy was meeting the needs of veterans - recognising in legislation the Veteran Family Advocate, changes to better support transition from the Australian

Defence Force (ADF) to civilian employment, and ensuring all Gold Card holders are treated equally in terms of their benefits. “This legislation provides for the Veteran Family Advocate, Ms Gwen Cherne, to be appointed as a Commissioner on the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, as well as the Repatriation Commission. This will put the Veteran Family Advocate at the heart of policy in the Department of Veterans’ Affairs,” Mr Chester said.

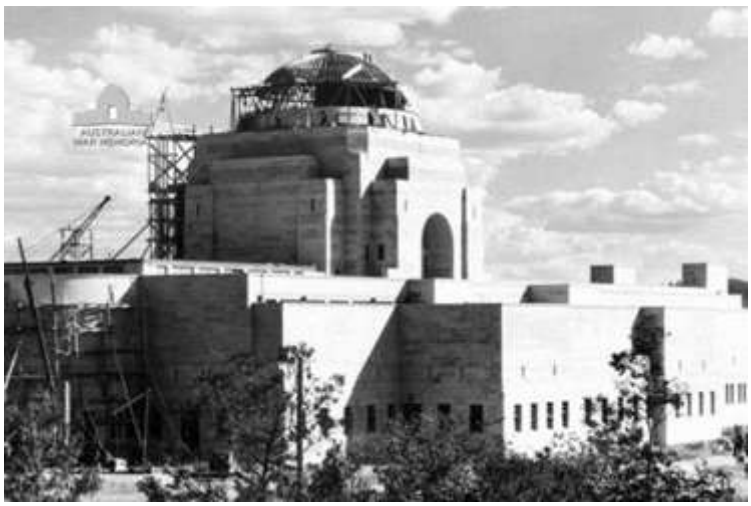
“Ms Cherne will directly engage with the families of veterans of all generations and draw on their advice to help shape programs, policy and services, with a focus on building on our understanding of the factors that can enhance or detract from the mental health of veterans and their families, particularly during a veteran’s transition from service.” The legislation also facilitates flexible programs designed to assist the transition of former ADF members to the civilian workforce. This includes establishing new programs, such as the Support for Employment Program, through the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Regulations 2020. The Regulations will contain the details of the employment assistance or benefits, as well as who they will be provided to and in what circumstances they can be provided. “The final part of this legislation fixes an unintended omission that has meant that some Gold Card holders have not been eligible for the Energy Supplement because they are covered under different legislation,” Mr Chester said. “It extends the provision of the Energy Supplement to Australian participants in the British Nuclear Tests and British Commonwealth Occupation Force, and Australian residents who worked as part of Australian surgical-medical teams in Vietnam. This ensures all Gold Card holders are treated equally.”

Media Contacts: Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820
DVA Media: 02 6289 6466

Australian War Memorial Opened

11 November 1941

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



Charles E.W. Bean, Australia's official WW I historian, began thinking about commemorating the sacrifice of Australians while he was serving at Gallipoli in 1915. Bean's idea was to set aside a place in Australia where families and friends could grieve for those buried in places far away and difficult to visit. The Australian Government agreed to Bean's proposal and in 1917 - while the war continued in Europe - announced that it would create a national war memorial.

The foundation stone was laid on Anzac Day 1919. The Depression and WW II delayed work, however, and it was not opened until this day. Ironically, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor only weeks away on 7 December 1941, the ceremony was attended by the Japanese Minister, His Excellency Tatsuo Kawai.

The Greatest Military Joke Ever Told

from Pieter La'Brooy

A RAAF Group Captain was about to start the morning briefing to his staff. While waiting for the coffee machine to finish brewing, the Group Captain decided to pose a question to all assembled. He explained that his wife had been a bit frisky the night before and he failed to get his usual amount of sound sleep. He posed the question of just how much of sex was considered 'work' and how much of it was 'fun?'

A wing commander chimed in with 75%-25% in favour of work.

A squadron leader said it was 50%-50%.

A flight lieutenant responded with 25%-75% in favour of fun, depending upon his state of inebriation at the time.

There being no consensus, the Group Captain turned to the Leading Aircraftsman who was in charge of making the coffee and asked for his opinion.

Without any hesitation, the young LAC responded, “Sir, it has to be 100% fun.” The Group Captain was surprised and as you might guess, asked why?

“Well, sir, if there was any work involved, the officers would have me doing it for them.”
The room fell silent.

Reflecting On Indigenous Military Service During NAIDOC Week

from the Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT

During NAIDOC Week, from 8-15 November, we should all pause and remember the legacy and valuable contribution of Australia’s First Nations’ service men and women. NAIDOC Week celebrates the history, cultures, and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and is observed each year by Australians from all walks of life. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel Darren Chester said this year’s theme ‘Always Was, Always Will Be’ was a recognition that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for thousands of years.

“The contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to our modern military history dates back to the Boer War, over 120 years ago,” Mr Chester said. “Many Indigenous defence personnel have served with distinction, such as Torres Strait Islander, Kapiu Masi Gagai, who was renowned as a skilled boatman and fearless soldier. “In late 1943 he was seconded to the 11th Infantry Brigade and took part in a hazardous expedition led by Donald Finlay Fergusson Thomson in Netherlands New Guinea, where he was twice placed in charge of an outpost at Caledon Bay and promoted to acting sergeant. “Sergeant Gagai became an expert Vickers gunner and was praised by Thomson for his sense of responsibility, devotion to duty, leadership, loyalty, selflessness and setting an example to others.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a proud history of participation in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) that continues today. This year we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, in which it is estimated as many as 6,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people served. In 2019-20 almost 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have participated in Indigenous ADF pre-recruit and development programs. "During NAIDOC Week we recognise those Indigenous Australians who have donned the uniform and celebrate their achievements, culture, and history," Mr Chester said. “This NAIDOC week I encourage all Australians to acknowledge, remember and thank our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defence personnel and veterans for their service.”

Media Contacts: Minister Chester, Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820
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RAAF's First Indigenous fighter pilot

14 November 1944

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After joining the RAAF in August 1942 and serving as an aircraft mechanic, Len Waters applied for pilot training. Among the top five in his course at No 5 Service Flying Training School at Uranquinty, NSW, he graduated as a sergeant pilot. He completed an operational conversion course on the P-40 Kittyhawk with No 2 Operational Training Unit at Mildura, Victoria, at the end of which he was posted to No 78 Squadron on this day. Waters thus became Australia's first (and only) Aboriginal fighter pilot.

Len Waters at the controls of his 'Black Magic' Kittyhawk fighter

While serving with No 78 Squadron at Noemfoor (West New Guinea), Morotai (Netherlands East Indies) and Tarakan (Borneo), he flew 95 sorties; as the Japanese had few aircraft in these areas by this stage, his missions did not entail air combat. Promoted to Flight Sergeant in January 1945, he became a Warrant Officer 17 days before discharge in January 1946. Len Waters died on 24 August 1993, at Cunnamulla, Queensland. His war service has been commemorated with the issue of both a stamp and an aerogramme in Australia Post's 'Australia Remembers' series produced in 1995.

Mustangs Attacked Chinese Convoys Moving into Korea

10 November 1950

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On this day, a flight of four Mustangs from No 77 Squadron scored a notable success against Chinese army convoys moving south from the Manchurian border in support of their communist North Korean allies. Operating from Pohang, RAAF aircraft had begun engaging Chinese forces on 5 November, and in succeeding days several times attacked masses of transport on roads below the Yalu River. On this occasion, 43 trucks were picked up near the border town of Sakchu. These were crudely disguised as haystacks, but were too large and square to fool the pilots. Twenty of the vehicles

were set on fire and destroyed and the rest were damaged. The Mustangs landed at Pyongyang airfield to rearm and refuel, then headed for Kojang where another 17 'haystacks' were found in fields off the sides of the roads. These, too, were rocketed and strafed, with 11 set on fire and still more damaged.

Old Pilot Flying Quotations

from Pieter La'Brooy

Helicopter pilots are different from airplane pilots. Airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts. Helicopter pilots are brooders, introspective anticipators of trouble. They know if something bad has not happened, it is about to.

Death is God's way of telling pilots to watch their airspeed on final.

Pilots have to be brave so they don't get scared when they can't see at night, or inside of clouds, or when an engine or wing falls off.

What is the worst thing that can happen when you are flying? - running out of airspeed, altitude and ideas all at the same time.

Beer was invented to make pilot stories more interesting.

"Roger" - a term used by pilots when they can't figure out what else to say.

Last 5FLT Heron RPV Mission in the Middle East

30 November 2014

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On this day, Kandahar-based No 5 Flight's Heron Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPVs) flew the last Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance (ISR) mission in support of Australian and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) coalition in southern Afghanistan.

Heron RPV ready for takeoff

The Flight completed more than 27,000 hours during the unit's Operation SLIPPER deployment between January 2010 and November 2014.

No 5 Flight was awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation for service in warlike operations through the provision of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability on Operation Slipper and the Citation was presented by the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK, MC (Retd), during an investiture ceremony at RAAF Base Amberley on 12 April 2016.

From the Cockpit: de Havilland DHC-4 Caribou

from Chris Jaensch

The following text is expanded from an article I wrote for a small aviation magazine in 2017 and includes photos I have taken. To the aviation enthusiast/pilot I hope it gives an interesting insight into what it was like to operate the Caribou from a piloting perspective.

I joined the RAAF as a pilot in 2002 and flew the Caribou between 2005 and 2009. During my 12 years in the RAAF, I also captained the CT4, PC9, Hawk Jet and the C130J Hercules - including flying on overseas operational deployments. The Caribou would however remain my favourite type due to the hands-on flying it involved. Without an autopilot or weather radar, you were always kept busy going from A to B. Another advantage of flying an unpressurised aircraft was the ability to fly at low level along some tropical beach with a window open and an arm hanging out imitating superman! I hope the following gives some idea of what it was like to operate the mighty 'Bou' or 'Gravel Truck' as we affectionately called it.

A typical Caribou crew consisted of a Captain, Co-pilot and Flight Engineer, who doubled as the Loadmaster and Aircraft Technician. Every Flight Engineer had to have previous experience as a technician on the aircraft. Excellent visibility is available to both pilots, and the engine controls are located in the overhead console. Flying around with your hands hanging from the throttles sounds strange but is more comfortable and intuitive than one may think. Mounting the engine controls on the overhead console requires less complex rigging in a high wing aircraft for cables to go to the engines and it frees up space between the pilots, which in the case of the Caribou is utilised for a slide out 'radio boat' (console). This console houses the two VHF, one HF and one UHF radios and navigation receivers (ILS, VOR, TACAN, NDB and DME). A basic GPS was also fitted in the 90s. To the left of the captain's leg on the sidewall is a vertically mounted hydraulic nose wheel steering tiller/wheel which is used for taxiing and steering on take-off and landing until the rudder becomes effective above 40 knots.

Engine start switches are located in front of the captain's left knee and the Caribou has the advantage of having a starter motor that is designed to slip if any resistance is incurred in the event of a hydraulic lock, so there is no need to pull the blades through by hand prior to engine start. The right engine is

started first and a couple of minutes later hopefully both the Pratt and Whitney R2000s will be purring away happily with the temperatures in the green ready for engine run-ups.

After engine run-ups the aircraft can get airborne at well below 60 knots, but 63 knots is usual. The take-off roll only takes around eight seconds, so this is one phase of flight that one needs to be thoroughly prepared for. Noise levels are understandably high, calling for a good quality helmet. Acceleration is brisk and nose wheel steering is used until the rudder becomes effective at around 40 knots. Once airborne, the captain selects the gear up using a lever just to the left of the throttles (funnily enough, once again on the overhead console!). All primary flight controls utilise cables and the flaps are powered by a single hydraulic jack. Elevator forces and rudder forces are quite light at all air speeds and remain very effective at low air speeds.

Typical cruise altitude is 9000-10000 ft, usually around 1900 RPM. Indicated cruise speed is around 120 KIAS (Indicated Airspeed) or 140 KTAS (True Airspeed) using 600 lbs/hour of decomposed dinosaurs. This gives good endurance with a max fuel capacity of just over 4800 lbs but you are not going anywhere too fast. The good news is there is a spacious area down the back to lie down and a "relief tube" at the back of the aircraft for one to empty their bladder. This goes straight overboard via a drain pipe and Flight Engineers were known to use a dirty tactic of relieving their bladder when flying in formation directly in front of the following aircraft! The Flight Engineers always tried to stay one step ahead of the pilots and often succeeded!

The Caribou is a very manoeuvrable aircraft, given its vast size. When flying into narrow valleys in Papua New Guinea a 'precautionary' configuration of flap 15 could be used, which at around 80 knots enabled better visibility with a slightly nose down attitude and tighter turn radius to exit the valley if bad weather lay ahead. Large wing overs could also be flown which were not only fun but also an effective means of losing altitude after dispatching paratroopers from the rear ramp. Cargo packages ranging from light cardboard 'heliboxes' to 'A22' loads up to 2200 lb in weight could be airdropped from various altitudes.

LAPES run at RAAF Richmond with the parachute about to extract the load

After being pushed off on temporary rollers attached to the floor, their parachutes would be pulled open with cables attached to the roof. LAPES (low altitude parachute extraction system), could deliver loads up to 4000 lbs, flying at a height of three to six feet off the ground with the landing gear extended. (A quick web search will find good videos on this.) This tactic was developed by the U.S. for Vietnam where the aircraft could fly accurately into a cleared area and accurately deliver the load extracted with a parachute. This meant the aircraft didn't have to expose itself to ground fire by stopping on landing. One of the risks of this was that the load could get stuck in the cargo bay with the parachute still attached and creating a huge amount of drag. Apparently full power and an airspeed of 74 knots would allow the aircraft to fly away but I am glad I never had to try out this theory!

On approach, the circuit is joined at 1000 ft and on downwind the landing gear is extended below its limit speed of 120 knots followed by flap 15 selected below 105 knots. Rolling on to finals for a STOL

landing should occur at 500-600 ft AGL on a slope considered much steeper than what most aircraft would fly. The speed is allowed to slow to maintain a threshold speed of 66 knots at typical weights. Aileron authority on finals at such a slow speed is quite poor and requires quite large manipulations of the controls in turbulent conditions leading to the expression of the pilots looking like they are "wrestling a gorilla". With so much extra drag from the flaps, large power changes are required to fix airspeed errors quickly. A few knots too fast over the fence on a 350 metre strip in a 12 tonne aeroplane can spoil your day quite quickly!

Tep Tep airfield, PNG. 6969ft above sea level and 10% slope. Not for the faint hearted!

Once the nose wheel is on the runway both throttles are pushed up into the roof to engage reverse pitch. At 30 knots, reverse thrust is cancelled to avoid ingesting too much debris. All this happens pretty quickly and you also need to remember to use the brakes as well to achieve minimum stopping distance.

To fly one of the last radial-engined aircraft in military service was a real adventure and leaves me with some great memories. The biggest highlight for me was conducting Humanitarian Relief missions in Papua New Guinea, flying in to some airstrips as high as 7000 ft above sea level with density altitudes approaching 10000 ft. Other strips were only 350 metres long and often with a 12% slope and perched precariously on the edge of a ridge line. In October 2011 I was lucky enough to Captain the first Caribou (A4-210) acquired by HARS on its flight from Oakey to Wollongong. When I lived in Sydney, I flew regularly with HARS, including conducting displays at the 2013 and 2015 Avalon Air Shows, but sadly I no longer live in the region to fly with them.

The Caribou is an unique aircraft which is adored by those that flew and worked on her. I genuinely hope this iconic aircraft continues to fly with HARS for many years to come and that others out there get the same satisfaction that I do of hearing the roar of the mighty gravel truck at full power, even if we do joke about it being one of the only aircraft that can have a bird strike from behind!

Chris's 60 page hardcover Photobook "**CARIBOU – The Final Years in RAAF Service**" is available for sale and would be a fascinating read! Available for purchase at:

www.cariboubook.ecwid.com
www.facebook.com/cariboubook
dhc4book@gmail.com

$2.00 from every book is donated to Legacy

Also, Chris has available copies of a 2021 calendar dedicated to the venerable Caribou featuring his own photos and text. Get in quick...this offer is not available in shops!

Why the Poppy is so Red

from Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton 27apr13

She stood beside the cenotaph and held the old man's hand
His nightmares from Vietnam, she didn't understand
He pondered at her question and the words that she had said
"Can you tell me Grandad, why the poppy is so red?"

"I've seen some poppies, round your house, in Nannies garden bed
Of every shade and colour, well that is except red
So is there some sad reason, that will not go away
Why the only red ones that I see, are the ones we wear today?"

The aging man made this reply, "If you care to listen please
The red poppies that our family sowed, now flourish overseas
For once there were two brothers, who paid a deadly toll
You'll find their names are listed there, on that honour roll

The first one was my Grandpa Ben, the other one was Jack
Some said my Pop was put on earth, to watch his brother's back
He guarded him from nature's woes, in bushfire, flood and storm
And at night he'd wrap him in his arms, to keep the young one warm

They heard their nation's call to arms, a rally to the cause
In that noble exploit, the war to end all wars
It seemed like an adventure and they thought they'd take a chance
So they both signed up together and went off to the fields of France

The land that did confront them, was not the one they'd seen
On fancy tourist posters, or a travel magazine
The brothers made a fervent vow, if they in battle fell
They would stay together, to the very gates of hell

Jack went on leave, but when he came back, a tragic tale he learned
Ben had gone out on a raid and as yet had not returned
So ,he left the refuge of his trench and into no man's land did roam
The only care in his selfless heart, was to bring poor Benny home

He found his sibling dying, then he too was cut down
By a German sniper's bullet, from a shell pocked Belgium town
They lay entwined together and as their blood did flow
It seeped upon some poppy seeds, that lay buried deep below

The decades passed and I made my way, to where my kin were slain
A place that once reeked misery, of mud and lice and rain
There is hardly a reminder now, of the victory that was won
Just a field of poppies, waving proudly in the sun

So as we gather here in silence, on this Remembrance Day
We recall the flower of our youth, who went off to the fray
We pray for all our heroes and the blood that they have shed
That's why my darling grandchild, THE POPPY IS SO RED ".

Why the RAAF Needed Navigators

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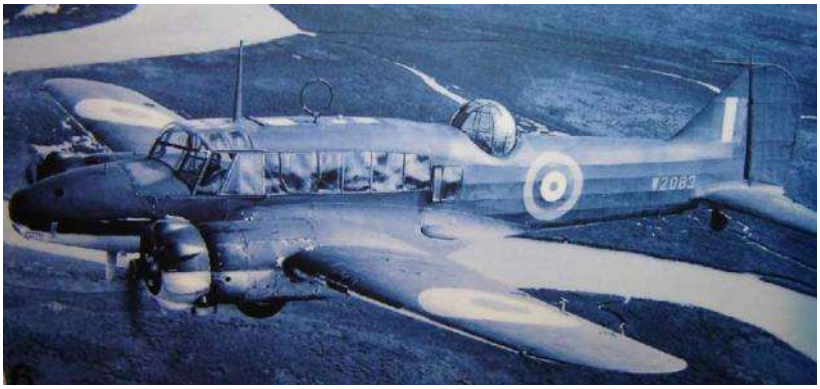

RAAF Avro Anson

On 14 February 1942, an instructor and four pilot trainees from Mallala-based No 6 Service Flying Training School flew an Anson on a night flying exercise. All trainees took their turn at calculating drift caused by wind. When they had finished, the instructor pilot said, 'OK, let's go in. Where are we?' But they had flown a dozen different headings and no one knew where they were. Normally, this would not have been a problem; they would have picked up the lights of towns and quickly decided where they were. But because the Japanese had just landed in New Guinea and were about to bomb Darwin, Australians had pulled their blinds down and switched off their outside lights.

Without radio and unable to pick up landmarks in the brownout, the instructor and trainees eventually thought they had found the distinctive point at the top of Spencer Gulf but by then they did not have enough fuel to get back to Mallala. One trainee volunteered to parachute down and ask someone in Port Augusta to turn on the airfield lights. He jumped into the darkness. Deciding that it was unwise to put all their chances of survival in just one hazardous leap, another trainee also bailed out. But the pilot saw a salt lake and -- fearing that he would run out of fuel before he saw a lighted runway - decided to put down on the white surface. He landed safely and the two men who bailed out were astonished to meet each other in the gloomy main street of Port Augusta.

Source: *Chased by the Sun,* Hank Nelson, ABC Books, 2002, p117.

Black Humour in an RAAF Bomber Squadron

from Maurice Kissane

FSGT (later WOFF then FLGOFF) Jan ‘John’ Goulevitch DFC saw his role as a RAAF Lancaster captain as essentially that of an undertaker. However as to who the deceased would be, is still unknown. Fight Sergeant Goulevitch became one of the Station's personalities and was often seen wearing a funeral director's hat. John had ‘liberated’ his trademark undertakers top hat from his local pub, apparently just before the local undertaker (who drank at the same pub after funerals), lost a similar item of headwear. John considered this top hat to be his lucky charm and always flew with it during combat missions in RAF Bomber Command. He used to take it with him in the aircraft, placed on a shelf between himself and the navigator just behind his shoulder.

While with 100 Squadron (RAF) he once discovered that his top hat was missing from his locker. After the briefing for the next sortie, the Commanding Officer asked, "Are there any questions?". John stood up and said that he was not going on the mission that night. After some initial surprise, the CO asked him why. John told him that "Some Pommy bastard had taken my lucky charm", his funeral director's hat. The CO told him to stay behind for 10 minutes and he would get his hat back. The CO then turned to the rest of the crews and told them "You know what has to be done." and sure enough, he had his hat back within 10 minutes.

FSGT John Goulevitch RAAF briefs his crew

It seems that the hat did the trick: during an attack on Milan his starboard outer engine failed before the Alps were reached. In spite of this and of the loss of altitude, he flew on to the target which he bombed successfully and made a safe return to base. On another occasion over Cologne, the aircraft was damaged by anti-aircraft fire, the port wing tip being shot off, the hydraulic system was punctured and the port engine put out of action. Despite this extensive damage, by very skilful airmanship, a safe landing was made.

John also flew Lancasters in No 460 SQN RAAF. He was one of the pilots who flew Lancaster G for George, now on display at AWM in Canberra. One of John's missions was to bomb Munich. That is where Hitler and his Nazis began their rise. Well done John.

FLGOFF Jan 'John' Goulevitch DFC died in his sleep on Christmas Eve in 1994.
Lest We Forget.

Paratroop Training Unit (PTU) formed at Laverton

3 November 1942

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On this day, Paratroop Training Unit was formed at Laverton, Victoria, before moving by train to Tocumwal on 16 November 1942. Later that month, the unit received 50 statichutes and in mid-December Paratroop Course No 1 commenced. Dummy dropping and cinephotography from an accompanying Wirraway commenced later that month. In February 1943 the first parachute jumps were conducted using single (non-training) type parachutes. April 1943 saw the Unit's move to Richmond where it remained until its disbandment in December 1945. The Unit was also entrusted with training Army personnel.

Training exercises included jungle jumps undertaken at the Jungle Warfare School at Canungra; dummy drops; day, night and water drops; supply dropping; reconnaissance work and experimental work. During the three years the Unit

Flight Officer Joyce Cain (right, at wheel of jeep) and Corporal Gloria Freeman (left, in jeep) on duty with the Landing Control Officer (right) at PTU Richmond on 28 July 1945. During their descent, parachutists receive instructions from the Landing Control Officer through loudspeakers mounted on the jeep.

operated, 19,782 live drops, 3,130 dummy drops and 3,622 supply drops were made. Only one statichute failed to open and the injury rate for live drops was 0.83 per cent.

The current Australian Defence Force Parachuting School (ADFPS) is an Army unit, located at HMAS ALBATROSS under command of Special Operations Command (SOCOMD), responsible for all parachute training in the ADF. The School's main effort is parachute training for ADF Special Forces Units. ADFPS is also the home of the Australian Army Parachute Display Team (The Red Berets).

No 9 Squadron Deaths Aboard HMAS Sydney, 1941

from Maurice Kissane RAAFA WA FSB

The HMAS Sydney had an RAAF crew to maintain and operate the ship's aircraft. The RAAF complement included two aircrew plus four ground crew. The HMAS Sydney had an ex-RN Supermarine Walrus I Amphibious Aircraft. No 9 Squadron RAAF flew the Walrus in the RAN Fleet Cooperation role. This role included reconnaissance, anti-submarine protection and artillery spotting.

HMAS Sydney was sunk by the Kriegsmarine Raider HSK Kormoran in 1941. The epic naval action occurred 150 miles SW from Carnarvon in Western Australia with the wrecks of HMAS Sydney and HSK Kormoran not being found until a 2008 search. Deepwater recovery expert, David Mearns who had found the HMS Hood was commissioned to search for HMAS Sydney, which he found on 16 March 2008, 128 miles from Steep Point in Western Australia at a depth of 2468 meters.

A Walrus being launched by catapult from a WWII RAN carrier

There were no survivors from HMAS Sydney, including her six RAAF KIA. However more that 300 from HSK Kormoran's Kriegsmarine crew survived her sinking. The Australian hospital ship, AHS Centaur towed lifeboats with survivors to Carnarvon. The HSK Kormoran Kriegsmarine crew survivors ended up in a P.O.W. camp. The AHS Centaur was unlawfully sunk by a Japanese submarine off Queensland in 1943. David Mearns found the wreck of the AHS Centaur on 20 December 2009 near Morton Island Qld. The following lists the RAAF members KIA on HMAS Sydney on 19 November 1941. (The date of death for HMAS Sydney KIA was assumed for official purposes at the time, to have occurred the day after the epic battle on 20 November 1941.)

HMAS SYDNEY with Walrus (circled) embarked

407000 F/O Raymond Barrey No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF
3967 SGT Sidney Marley No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF
7143 CPL Arthur Clarke No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF
9347 CPL Roy Foster No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF
15452 LAC Richard Dodds No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF
35338 LAC Keith Homard No 9 (Fleet Cooperation) Sqn RAAF

Etiquette when using a Mobile Phone.

from John Clarkson

Not only is this a lesson in etiquette of the use of a mobile phone, it is also a good lesson in poetic justice.

After a tiring and stressful day, a gentleman walked to the main railway station in the city and caught the train to take him home. He settled into the comfortable seat of the inter-urban train and closed his eyes. As the train rolled out of the station, a young woman sat next to him and pulled out her mobile phone and started talking in a loud voice.

"Hi sweetheart. It's Sue. I'm on the train. Yes, I know it's the six thirty train and not the four thirty train, but I had a long meeting. No, honey, it was not with that Kevin from the accounting office. It was with the boss. No sweetheart, you're the only one in my life. Yes, I'm sure, cross my heart!"

Fifteen minutes later, the young lady was still talking in her loud voice.

When the man sitting next to her, who was tired and stressed, had enough, he leaned over close to the young lady's phone and said very clearly into her phone, "Sue, for heaven's sake, hang up that phone and come back to bed".

Sue doesn't use her mobile phone any more on the train.

Christmas Eve in the Sand Pit

from Tomas Hamilton

She sees the parting transport jet and hears its fading whine
It'll touch down in Australia, in about twelve hours time
She knows she's here to do a job, to serve and not complain
But right now a part of her would rather be on that plane

Her tears that now flow freely keeps the fine sand from her eyes
She can't seem to stem the tide, no matter how she tries
Her mates are all around her and yet she feels so alone
For its Christmas Eve in the Sand pit and she's a million miles from home

It's the second festive season, her family has been apart
And poems and prose cannot explain, the aching in her heart
She recalls this time last year, with a painful tear
When she stayed home with precious ones, while her husband was serving here

From a canvas shelter, drifts a haunting lullaby
The soft and loving music, soothes the child's tired cry
She thinks of the first Christmas and she sees the irony
For wasn't baby Jesus, once a refugee?

Each Christmas sees our heroes, serve in some foreign land
Sometimes it's just to show the flag, sometimes to make a stand
I pray their very presence, may cause all wars to cease
And maybe then one year we'll have, a Christmas that knows peace

Have a very happy and healthy festive season!

(With appropriate social distancing of course!)