SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

The Macchi MB-326H

From Phil Frawley

The Roulettes first air show was at Point Cook in Dec 1970. Their last air show using the Macchi was at Lakes Entrance in June 1989.

The Macchi MB-326H was introduced to the RAAF in the late sixties to replace the two seat Vampire as the RAAF's advanced training aircraft. The RAAF ended up with 97 in all. Powered by a Rolls Royce Viper engine producing 2,400 pounds of thrust, it was one of the few jet aircraft that was fully aerobatic and permitted to do stall turns, tail slides and hammerhead stalls. Many jet aircraft cannot do these manoeuvres because the back pressure on the turbine blades (in the back of the engine) could be enough to stall the engine causing it to flameout. The last flight by a Macchi in the RAAF was in early 2001 after more than 30 years of service. Imagine owning a race car and racing it two to three times per day five days a week, sometimes on weekends, for thirty years. That gives you some idea of the robust design of the aircraft.

Over the years of its service, it came to be known as the 'spaghetti racer' and the 'Macchischmitt' as it was used for dissimilar air combat tactics against the Mirage and Hornet. You might not

think that that was a fair fight, but many overconfident fighter pilots fell victim to the Macchischmitt, not appreciating its ability to turn very tightly. I have my own film of a 'guns kill' on an F/A-18 Hornet that I achieved during one of these missions.

30 Year Anniversary Paintjob

I was an instrument technician in my younger days and I worked on the Macchi; it was a delight to service, with ease of access to all areas requiring attention. Just over halfway through its service life it was decided to complete a life of type extension by refurbishing the wing mounts and re-skinning the wings. This proved to be a disaster, with one aircraft suffering a catastrophic failure of the wing attachment point in mid-air, killing the pilot, FLTLT Russ Page. It was subsequently found that the refurbishing of the wing mounting points was not conducted correctly. Additionally, the wing re-skinning was also unsuccessful, requiring small triangular pieces of metal, called sharks teeth, to be attached to the wing leading edge to ensure proper airflow over the wing surface. Towards the end of the service life of the aircraft it was necessary to continually swap wings and tail sections from all over the fleet to try to keep as many aircraft serviceable as possible so that training of pilots could continue. This was helped by the introduction of the Pilatus PC-9 as the advanced training aircraft for initial pilot training, with the Macchi continuing to be used for introductory fighter training at 25 Squadron RAAF Base Pearce and various units at RAAF Base Williamtown, but eventually 76 Squadron.

The Macchi was a very pleasant aircraft to fly with virtually no real vices; for example, you could stall the wings and apply full power flying away with a climb rate of about 500 feet per minute fully stalled. It would spin if you persisted in holding pro-spin controls and it would recover very quickly with the appropriate recovery technique. It was not very fast, climb speed was 200 knots and cruise was around the 250 knot mark. The 'never exceed speed', Vne, reduced over time as the aircraft aged, eventually ending at 395 knots. There were times when this may have been exceeded by a reasonable margin such as finding oneself over the top of an F-111 cruising unannounced through our airspace just waiting to be attacked. Diving from 10,000 feet at full power while following my flight lead in the attack I noticed that I had already exceeded the Vne by more than a few knots, I also noted that my flight lead was pulling away from me at a fair lick of speed. My attempt to follow him through the turning pursuit curve for the attack proved way too hard as the controls were so heavy, I couldn't budge them. How my flight lead managed to execute the attack and simulated kill I have no idea. With the F-111 dispatched in a simulated kill, the formation climbed back up to 10,000 feet to resume the scheduled mission although they did have to wait for me to catch up to them after I went spearing off into the middle distance in the opposite direction to the fight with, as they say, my 'hair on fire'.

I managed to accrue 1200 hours on the Macchi and I have a lot of great memories of the fun I had flying it. My first adventure that I recall happened on my Introductory Fighter Course while climbing out to the training area in a four-ship formation; I was alerted to the Fire Warning light illuminating on the warning panel. This is probably one of the most frightening warnings that a pilot might be confronted with, as if the fire is confirmed, the usual result is an ejection. I

declared a MAYDAY and departed the formation to track back to Williamtown via a forced landing pattern, all the time being shadowed by an instructor in another Macchi. Having practised the forced landing pattern so many times it was a routine exercise, I completed the landing perfectly shutting down the aircraft on the runway and egressing from the machine, bravely running away waiting for the explosion. Nothing happened, the aircraft sat there all quiet with no smoke, no blistering paint, no crackling of tortured parts, nothing.

The first person to arrive on the scene was the Air Commodore in charge of the base, not the fire-fighters, and he wanted an explanation as to why I had chosen to block his runway with my (actually his) Macchi. I explained to him that I had had a Fire Warning and I had followed the checklist and procedures to the letter. He then quizzed me as to which fire light had illuminated to which I replied 'there is only one, Sir'. He was a Mirage pilot and the Mirage had two fire lights for front and back of the engine. Apparently not believing me, he proceeded to look in the cockpit of the aircraft to see if I was telling the truth. This somewhat frustrated the firies who had finally arrived on the scene looking for some tiny piece of evidence of fire so that they could bring to bear their entire arsenal of fire-fighting weaponry on the hapless Macchi. But all was in vain as it turned out to be a false alarm caused by moisture and dirt ingestion over the years in the fire detection system.

I did have a brief brush with fame and Macchi history as an instructor at 76 Squadron. The aircraft could be fitted with mini guns; these were a Gattling type of weapon with six rotating barrels firing around 2,000 rounds per minute (from memory). The fitment on the Macchi had one on each wing and they carried 200 rounds in each weapon. We would fire the guns at a 20 metre by 20 metre banner strung from two poles and the scoring of hits on the banner was achieved by a microphone at the base of the banner. The microphone registered supersonic bullets in a semi-elliptical area that covered the banner. Ordinarily a score of 60 or 70 out of 400 rounds was considered well above average. On the day in question the weather conditions were perfect with no wind whatsoever. I managed a score of 383 hits, absolutely unheard of and I was considered to be a definite marksman at this skill set. Then, a great mate of mine, one Squadron Leader Bruce Hartwich, proceeded to the range and scored 385 hits, relegating me to second place and a 'has been'. This would be a common occurrence with myself and Bruce, as he and I competed for best weaponry scores in Mirages at 3 Squadron RAAF Base Butterworth Malaysia and he always beat me by quite small margins. Sadly, Bruce is no longer with us, but I was privileged to have had him as a friend, mentor and boss; onya mate!

Formation of No 2 Operational Conversion Unit Macchis

I ended my permanent air force career in 1997 as the Commanding Officer of 76 Squadron flying the Macchi, so it has a special place in my wonderfully rich experiences and memories.

Aermacchi MB-326H [A7]

From The Australian Military Aviation History Association Inc
Mar 7, 2024 Series 3 RAAF Aircraft

In the late 1950s the Aermacchi MB-326 was a new Italian produced military jet trainer which saw a production run of nearly twenty-five years. 776 of the trainers were built, 502 of them under licence, including ones for the Royal Australian Air Force.
Cover photo: Daniel Tanner / Video cover: John Bartels

It was during the 1960s that the RAAF was looking to replace its Vampire and Winjeel trainers for an all-jet pilot training syllabus and the Aermacchi MB-326H (simply known as the Macchi) was selected for this purpose in August 1965. The tandem cockpit proved better for advanced flying training and the layout was considered similar to the Mirage III and Royal Australian Navy's A-4 Skyhawk fighters.

87 of the trainers were ordered, plus ten for the Royal Australian Navy. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation became the prime contractor for local production and built 67 of the aircraft, while 18 were assembled from kits, and 12 came directly from Italy. CAC was also responsible for local production of the Macchi's Rolls-Royce Viper turbojet engine. The first Australian Macchi was handed over in October 1968 and the ninety-seventh and last, was delivered in September 1972.

The Central Flying School at East Sale in Victoria was the first to use the aircraft. It was here that a number of aerobatic teams were formed – the Telstars, then the Roulettes. The Roulettes would go on to be Australia's best known display team, operating the Macchi from 1970 to 1989, when it was replaced by the Pilatus PC-9/A.

Macchis were also delivered to number 2 Flying Training School at Pearce, Western Australia in 1969, where they were used for advanced pilot training. For a short time during the Vietnam war the Macchi was used as an all-through trainer, but this philosophy of 'all-through jet pilot training' lasted for only two courses before reverting to basic training on the piston-engined Winjeel, followed by advanced training on the Macchi.

Several aircraft also went to the Aircraft Research and Development Unit and the ten Navy aircraft were used for A-4 Skyhawk transition training and pilot development. Number 2 Operational Conversion Unit and number 5 Operational Training Unit also operated the Macchi, as well as numbers 25, 76, 77 and 79 squadrons.

The Macchi suffered a number of losses early in its RAAF service, including several fatal accidents and a number of ejections. Some of these accidents were as a result of the aircraft suffering from a fuel leak and engine fire problem. One of the more notable accidents was a mid-air collision in March 1988 when two Roulettes collided during flying display practice for the 1988 Bicentennial Air Show. Twenty six Macchis were lost in just over three decades of service. In 1983, with the demise of

the Royal Australian Navy Fleet Air Arm carrier borne fixed-wing element, the RAAF absorbed their Macchi fleet.

The Life of Type Extension programme by the RAAF and the Defence Science and Technology Organisation in the early 1980s addressed fatigue issues of the airframe. By the early 1990s, the Macchis were limited in number due to fatigue issues and G-limits were imposed on the aircraft, further limiting their usefulness. From 1989, the Pilatus PC-9/A replaced the Macchi in the advanced pilot training role and the BAE Systems Hawk 127, ordered in June 1997, replaced the Macchis for numbers 25, 76 and 79 Squadrons in 2000. The Macchi's last public appearance was at the 2001 Australian International Airshow at Avalon.

Horn Island: The Only Queensland Military Installation that was Regularly Targeted

From TRIBUTE, The Newsletter of the Military Historical Society Australia, Qld Division, by Ian Curtis

During the 19th century, colonial defence planners had recognised that the Torres Strait was strategically and commercially important, and Thursday Island was fortified in the early 1890s. Concerns about Japan's intentions, even before that country entered World War II on 7 December 1941, led to additional coastal artillery defences in the Torres Strait, and in addition Horn Island (Ngurapai) was chosen as the site of a RAAF Advanced Operational Base.

Horn Island (the airstrip can be seen at the northeast corner of the island)

The RAAF undertook aerial surveys over north Queensland during 1938 in response to a plan for the establishment of an Advanced Operational Base network in the region as the likelihood of war with Japan increased. A decision was made to develop an airfield on Horn Island despite the twin difficulties of poor water supply and the lack of adequate wharf facilities. Approval for construction of an all-weather landing ground with limited facilities for RAAF supplies was announced on 31 August 1939, three days before the commencement of World War II in Europe. The Queensland Main Roads Commission was made responsible for the construction of the airstrip.

Ships carrying Main Road Commission engineers and surveyors began arriving at Horn Island in late 1939 and early 1940. Assisting them were Torres Strait Islanders employed on the project. By May 1940 clearing of the north-south 136 degree runway (today known as Runway 32) had been completed and earthworks and grading were proceeding. Runway 136 was completed and ready for use as a gravel runway by February 1941 and clearing had begun on the east-west 81 degree runway (today known as Runway 26), which was ready for use by late 1941. The two

runways were each over 1200 metres long. The first dispersal points were constructed in November 1941, along with bomb dumps, machine gun posts and petrol storage installations. After Japan entered the war the Main Roads Commission also built aerodrome obstructions and splinter-proof traverse walls around key buildings, including the wireless receiving and transmitting huts.

The strategic importance of Horn Island was emphasised in January 1942 when the Japanese captured Rabaul and made it their main South West Pacific base. On 14 March 1942 Horn Island Airfield received its first Japanese air raid. In the late morning, coast watchers on the southern shores of New Guinea in the village of Kerema, just west of Port Moresby, radioed RAAF Thursday Island that they had seen a large formation of silver twin-engined planes and escort fighters at about 20,000 feet heading towards Cape York. There were eight Mitsubishi G4M1 heavy bombers escorted by twelve A6M2 Zeros of the 4th Kokutai in this bombing raid. The eight G4M1s had taken off at about 0555 hrs from both Rabaul and Lae airfields, while the twelve Zeros had taken off at about 0830 from Lae airfield.

The alert was passed on to the RAAF base at Horn Island where Captain Bob Morrissey, Commanding Officer of the United States 7th Pursuit Squadron, of the 49th Fighter Group, received the 'scramble call'. His pilots had just finished their morning patrols by 1130. He ordered them to *'Take off together. Stay together. Don't wander from your wingman. Take off to the northwest and make a left climbing turn at full power. Form up on me.'*

They took off at 15 second intervals. At 10,000 feet to the south of Horn Island they charged their guns, but Morrissey (flight leader A flight) found that his gun switch was dead. He handed the squadron over to 2nd Lt Bill Reddington (flight leader B flight) and made a quick landing where RAAF ground staff cleared and recharged his guns. After 30 minutes he was in the air again and rejoined with his squadron 15 minutes later. Reddington then advised that his guns had also failed. He was ordered back to the airfield and 2nd Lt C.T. Johnson was placed in charge of B flight. At this time bombs started to hit the western end of the airfield. An RAAF Hudson bomber was destroyed along with a fuel dump, and the RAAF bivouac area was damaged. Several Zeros then started to strafe targets on the ground.

2nd Lt Hal Martin became separated from the other aircraft. He had set off alone before Morrissey returned, to intercept the Japanese raiders. At maximum range he opened fire on the three Japanese aircraft to the left of the formation. Finally, when he had approached an optimum firing distance, he targeted the big brown and green bomber at the far left and expended all his ammunition at this bomber. He rolled away to the left as the Japanese returned his fire. He then immediately headed back to Horn Island. Morrissey had arrived on the scene to witness Martin firing at the Japanese bomber formation; however he was not aware at the time that it was Martin.

At 1300 precisely, as Morrissey and his group were about to attack the formation of bombers, he spotted a group of six light grey Zeros coming in from their right. He ordered A flight to attack the Zeros. A dog fight persisted for 10 minutes above the Torres Straits. Morrissey shot down a Zero in flames when he fired on it from 200 yards. The Kittyhawks of 2nd Lts Claude Burtnette and Stephen Andrews were both riddled by machine gun fire. They both returned to Horn Island. 2nd Lt A.T. House fired at a Zero which rolled away sharply trailing smoke. He followed the Zero, but then his guns jammed due to the G forces of his sharp turn. Another Zero attacked Morrissey, and House, despite his lack of guns, deliberately drove his right wingtip into the Zero's cockpit. The collision tore away three feet of House's wingtip, but he witnessed the Zero spiral away towards the sea. House then made a forced landing with three feet of his wing tip missing. Back on the ground Morrissey scolded Hal Martin for leaving the formation but praised him for his

bravery for his single-handed attack on the Japanese formation. Japanese records indicated that only two zeros were lost during the air raid.

Between March 1942 until June 1943 eight bombing raids were made on Horn Island Airfield, which became the only military installation in Queensland to be regularly targeted by the Japanese. As a result of the raids, a dispersal field for Horn Island was cleared on the tip of Cape York at Jacky Jacky Creek in late 1942, and was later named Higgins Airfield.

Responsibility for the overall administration and operation of Horn Island as an Advanced Operating Base was performed by RAAF No 28 Operational Base Unit, formed in May 1942. The unit was responsible for re-arming, re-fuelling and wireless telegraphy communications. Both RAAF and USAAF aircraft used the airfield as a stopover for fighters flying to Port Moresby, and as a staging strip for re-fuelling and re-arming in preparation for raids on targets further north. The USAAF 6th, 7th, 23rd, 32nd and 75th squadrons were based at Horn Island while others flew in, stayed overnight and then flew out the next day to complete their mission. The Consolidated Catalina flying boats of RAAF 11 and 20 Squadrons also used Horn Island for refuelling and repairs.

Small craters pockmark the surface of the Horn Island airstrip following a Japanese bombing raid.
Source: Torres Strait Heritage Museum

The Allied Works Council was formed in February 1942 to step up construction of defence works and ensure a coordinated national approach to projects. The Civil Constructional Corps was established in April 1942 to provide the manpower, while the Allied Works Council organised the heavy equipment and contractors. Works were supervised by the Main Roads Commission or commercial building contractors. During June 1942 a requisition was made for substantial improvements to Horn Island Advanced Operating Base. The US Army's 46th Engineer General Service Regiment 'A' Company arrived at Horn Island on 24 June 1942 to work on a western extension to runway 81, which was lengthened to 7000 feet, or 2134m. During August the United States Army Services of Supply organisation requested the Allied Works Council to complete the sealing of both runways at Horn Island as an urgent priority. Runway 81 was sealed by December 1942, however by September 1942, as the threat of invasion lessened, airfield demolition works at Horn Island were cancelled. By this time, one demolition tunnel had been constructed part way under the intersection of the runways and other tunnels had been commenced.

In June 1942 the first moves had been made to provide anti-aircraft defence for the airfield when A and B batteries of the US 104th Coastal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft) were deployed to the island. However, the gun crews were only equipped with light .50 calibre machine guns which were

ineffective against high flying bombers. On 23 June 1942, detachments of the US 94th Coastal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft), equipped with searchlights and 3" guns, were moved to Horn Island.

The anti-aircraft defence of Horn Island was augmented by the 34th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, which arrived at Thursday Island on 14 October 1942. The 34th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery was accompanied by the 157th Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Battery, equipped with 40mm Bofors guns to provide low level protection. The men of 34th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery commenced unloading guns, equipment and camp stores at Horn Island jetty on 15 October 1942. On Horn Island the 34th Heavy AA Battery was split into 'A' and 'B' Sections, each forming a 'Class A' Heavy Anti-Aircraft Gun Station of four Quick Firing 3.7 inch guns and one Quick Firing 40mm Bofors gun for close air defence.

The first camp was formed on Double Hill, west of the airfield, which was initially known as Section 'A' and subsequently became GS 442. On 16 October the men began excavation of gun emplacements and the construction of kitchens, stores, ablutions and latrines. A supply of drinking water was another early problem faced by the unit. By November 1942, with the wet season approaching, priority was given to the completion of the reinforced concrete structures for the gun stations.

A 3.7-inch anti-aircraft gun used during World War II remains in situ on Horn Island. Recently added signage shows what the gun pit looked like with shells in the bays.
Source: Gordon Grimwade Military Historian and heritage specialist

Each gun station would consist of four 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns on static mounts within in-ground gun emplacements of octagonal shape. The interior walls of each gun emplacement contained recesses where ready ammunition for each gun was stored. The guns were arranged around a reinforced concrete semi-underground Command Post. The standard Command Post design included a roofed plotting room plus open concrete pits outside for a height finder and predictor (a mechanical computing machine that predicted the future position of a target). Nearby were four magazines of reinforced concrete.

By 10 December GS 442, along with Section 'B' GS 443 at King Point, north-east of the airfield, were operational and ready for action - except that no ammunition had arrived. The 3.7 inch ammunition finally arrived at Horn Island on the last day of December 1942. The guns at GS 443 were successfully proof-fired on 2 January 1943 and at GS 442 the next day. All ammunition was stored on site under cover, until construction of permanent concrete magazines (which occurred by the end of May 1943). On 30 January 1943 the battery took delivery of an AA No.1 Mk II short range anti-aircraft radar transmitter and receiver (also known as GL 2 or AA Mk2 Radar) for GS 443. By the end of June 1943 camouflaging of GS 442 was well underway. Gun emplacements for GS 443 were completed during July and camouflaging commenced.

In late 1943 the 34th HAA Battery was reformed as 131st Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, 51st Australian Anti-Aircraft Regiment (Composite), Royal Australian Artillery. The

redesignation combined the 34th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, 157th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery and 74th Searchlight Battery together into one composite unit.

Meanwhile, work on the airfield had continued. After the US 46th Engineers moved on to Port Moresby in December 1942 the RAAF's No. 4 Works Maintenance Unit was directed to complete stump clearance and drainage works, and consolidation of the aircraft hardstands ahead of the approaching wet season. Heavy rain during January 1943 led to the failure of a timber log drainage channel and a bridge which carried the western extension of runway 81 over a creek. Failure of this extension put paid to plans for operation of a heavy bomber squadron from Horn Island and underscored efforts on the mainland to complete Higgins Airfield on the tip of Cape York. However, 5000 feet (1524m) of runway 81 remained serviceable.

By January 1943 detached units of RAAF 7 and 75 SQNs (Beauforts and P-40 Kittyhawks respectively) were based on Horn Island. RAAF 6 SQN, with Lockheed Hudsons, had been present in late 1942. Other squadrons based on Horn Island included RAAF 32 SQN (Lockheed Hudsons) during 1942 and RAAF 23 SQN (Vultee Vengeance dive bombers) during 1944. USAAF

units which spent time based at Horn Island included the 71st and 405th squadrons of the 38th (Medium) Bombardment Group in late 1942. Most aircraft of the US 5th Air Force passed through Horn Island at some point.

Kittyhawk fighter aircraft were based on Horn Island during WWII.
Source: Australian War Memorial

On 8 January 1943 1st Australian Camp Hospital moved from Thursday Island to Horn Island to use the American hospital that had been vacated. The hospital had 36 beds and was canvas, with the tents leaking so much that the nurses had to put umbrellas over the patients during the wet season. The nine nurses were the only females amongst the 5000 men on the Island. The unit remained on the island until disbanded on 10 August 1944.

Water storage remained critical on Horn Island and was high on the list of works to be completed. Men were being rationed to one water canteen a day. On 14 May 1943 men from the 17th Field Company commenced constructing 1,295,000 gallon wooden tanks. Grouped in sets of four they were situated near the wharf (today in Wasaga Village) halfway to the airport, a third set near Vidgeon Creek all being supplied by pipeline from Vidgeon Creek. The first successful bore was sunk on Horn Island during July 1943. A second successful bore was sunk during November 1943 and a 13 million gallon dam was finally completed by the 17th Field Company in late 1943. Although recently supplemented by a much larger dam, the wartime Army Dam still provides water for Horn Island residents.

By July 1943 the need for splinter proofing of aircraft dispersal bays was receding and Horn Island and Higgins were the only Advanced Operating Bases in Queensland where this remained a priority. At Horn Island, 18 splinter proof pens were constructed in late 1943. Almost every type of aircraft then in service used the base, and thousands of aircraft used Horn Island at its busiest between early 1942 and late 1943. Other units that served on Horn Island included Detachment 4th Australian Division 'G' Branch (Intelligence), 5th Machine Gun Battalion, 26th Infantry Battalion and the 31st/51st Infantry Battalion. The phasing down of Horn Island in favour of Higgins Airfield was underway by early 1944. However, in March 1944 the island still hosted a number of RAAF units including 28 Operational Base Unit, 36 Radar Station, 112 Mobile Fighter Sector Headquarters, 84 Squadron (P-40 Kittyhawks, previously Boomerangs), 75 Wing Headquarters, 1 Repair & Salvage Unit (detachment) and 7 Squadron (detachment).

131st Heavy AA Battery departed from Horn Island in October 1944 and was disbanded in Melbourne the following month. That same month a decision was made to transfer the radio transmitter and aerial from Horn Island to Higgins. On 15 December 1944, 28 Operational Base Unit on Horn Island was disbanded. By August 1945 Horn Island Airfield was being used by the RAAF for the aerial survey of Cape York. The airfield was taken over by the Department of Transport and maintained as the gateway to Thursday Island and the Torres Strait. Terminal facilities were upgraded during the early 1990s and in June 1995 the Torres Shire Council took over ownership of the facilities from the Commonwealth. The airfield is now known as Horn Island (Ngurapai) Airport. Horn Island today is a Military History tourist attraction.

On Horn Island there is a war Memorial with a series of plaques to commemorate those who served on the Island during the War and those who made the supreme sacrifice. The plaques were unveiled by Major General J P Stevens AO on 19 September 2007. The Horn Island Veterans Memorial states; *Here you stand on Nurapai, Horn Island. During the Second World War this island was the most advanced allied airbase to New Guinea while still in Australian waters, and as such was vital to the Allies northern offensive advance through New Guinea. During World War Two this island was the Japanese primary target in Queensland, the second most attacked location in Australia, with the enemy bombarding the island base during eight air raids and performing constant reconnaissance flights overhead.*

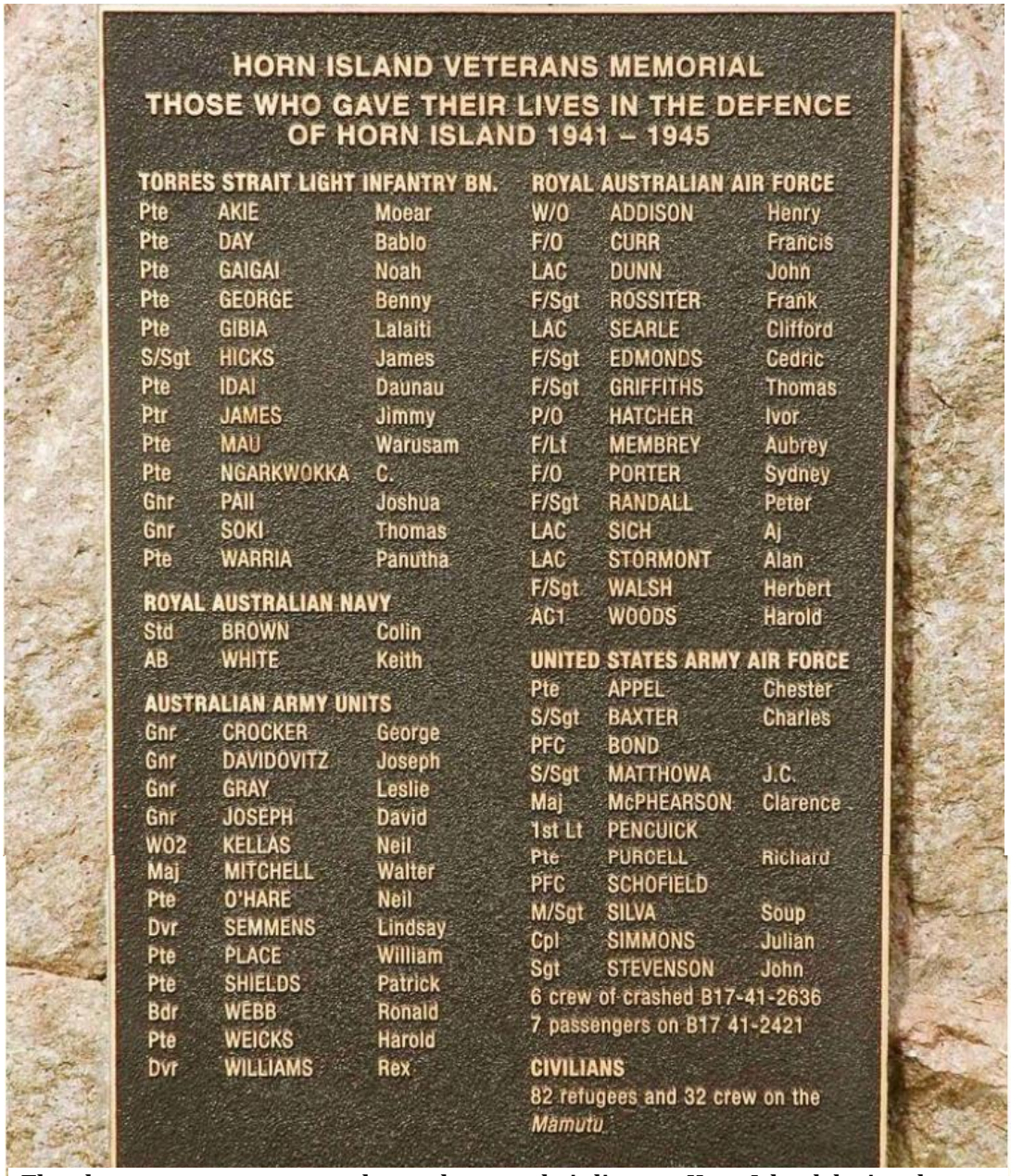
The Royal Australian Air Force, the Australian Army and the United States Army Air Force worked together on Horn Island to ensure that continuous, successful, attack, reconnaissance and supply flights into New Guinea were conducted, while constant refuelling, repairing and rearming of aircraft was completed. The Japanese did not have a base so strategically located as Horn Island forcing them to keep their aircraft close to the front line and thus open to destruction from allied raids conducted from Horn Island. Approximately 5000 Australian and American servicemen called the island home by the end of 1942.

Civilians also served on Horn Island, with these two runways built by the Civil Construction Corps and the Main Roads Department, while the Allied Works Council assisted with their maintenance. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross provided personnel support to the thousands stationed here.

Upon these stones are etched the names of those brave souls who gave their lives in the defence of Horn Island, Torres Strait and Australia during World War Two. These men were Australian, American, someone's sons, brothers, husbands, mates and fathers, they were warriors who volunteered to help defend our nation and paid the ultimate sacrifice. Torres Strait will forever be their home. Alongside their names are the units and squadrons, whose members spent their youth on this isle, and for whom Horn Island memories are ever present.

Lest We Forget

The plaques were unveiled by Major General J.P. Stevens AO (Retd) on 19 September 2007. (Source: Memorialsaustralia).



The plaque to commemorate those who gave their lives on Horn Island during the war

The author would like to commend Vanessa Seekee who, after arriving to live on the Island, spent more than two decades along with her husband uncovering and restoring some of the islands most significant military installations. She produced a book in 2002 *'Horn Island - in their steps 1939 – 1945'*, which is currently out of print.

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A bit of 11SQN History

From John Clarkson

Recently, I saw a rare photograph on a Facebook page. I have no idea of where or when this photo was taken but it is well worth keeping. It showed four maritime reconnaissance aircraft flying in loose formation. I hope that those with more experience than I have on maritime squadrons will be able to identify the location and timing of this photograph. (I served on the maritime squadron for a short period from September 1978 until December 1980). The unusual quality of this photo is that the historical service of these aircraft ranges from 1941 through to present day. No 11 Squadron was founded in 1939 and went into action in the second world war in 1941 with the Catalina (Black Cat) aircraft.

Since 1939, 11 Squadron has operated nine different aircraft, and of these, the ones which served the longest or served on operations were as follows:

- Consolidated Catalina – 1941 to 1950, including significant operations in World War II in the Far East;
- Lockheed P2-V5 Neptune – 1951 to 1968, including a famous 'Round the world' flight, and escorting the HMAS Sydney to Vietnam;
- Lockheed P3-B Orion – 1968 to 1986, including several anti-submarine exercises in several oceans around the world;
- Lockheed P3-C Orion – 1968 to 2002, including several reconnaissance missions in the Middle East;
- AP-3C Orion – 2002 to 2016, including several reconnaissance missions in the Middle East; and
- Boeing P-8A Poseidon Reconnaissance Aircraft, which continues to carry out several reconnaissance missions in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Pure Speed: The World's Fastest Aircraft - Then and Now

From simpleflying.com, By Joe Kunzler and Alexander Mitchell
Updated Dec 9, 2023

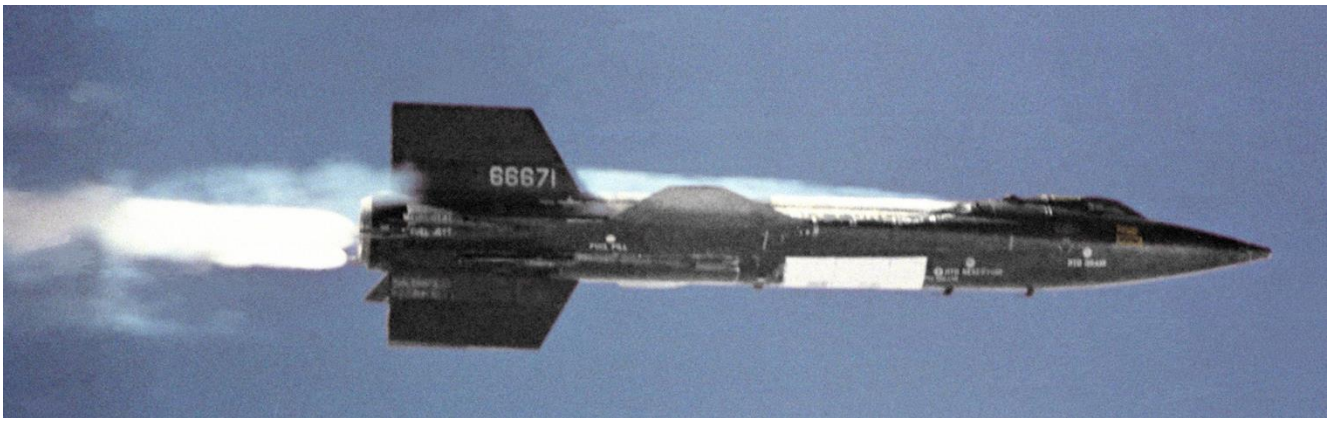
Photo: John Selway | Shutterstock

Mach numbers are used to measure the speed of ultra-fast aircraft, with Mach 1 being the speed of sound and higher numbers representing faster speeds. The North American X-15 holds the record for the fastest aircraft ever, reaching a top speed of 4,520 miles per hour (Mach 6.7). The Concorde was the fastest passenger aircraft, capable of cruising at Mach 2.04, but its high costs and limited routes hindered its commercial success. However, Boom Supersonic's Overture aims to bring supersonic travel back with lower costs and sustainable aviation fuel.

Mach numbers matter because the Mach number is the aircraft's speed versus the speed of sound. So, if the plane is flying at Mach 1, the aircraft is flying at the speed of sound. If the aircraft is flying at Mach 2, the aircraft is flying at *twice* that number, and at 0.5 it's at half the speed of sound. Put differently, most commercial airliners cruise the friendly skies at roughly Mach 0.6-0.7, and private jets can push higher reaching into the Mach 0.85-0.9 range. However, this wasn't always the case, with supersonic travel emerging in the latter part of the 20th century.

Nowadays, the only sonic boom you can hear is if you live near an air force base and fighter jets are scrambled for an emergency mission. But this could be set to change in the future, with new sonic boom technologies creating quieter and quieter sounds, there is certainly potential for supersonic flying jets to become far more common. In commercial aviation, aircraft speed is rarely talked about, with most planes cruising at similar rates. However, this wasn't always the case, and the sound barrier was not the barrier to speed. Here are the fastest aircraft to fly - both military and civilian, and the future of supersonic travel.

The fastest airplane was the North American X-15, built for NASA to conduct high-speed aeronautic research. The X-15 was launched from a Boeing B-52 to reach the edge of space or go as fast as its single Reaction Motors XLR99 rocket engine with 70,400 pounds of thrust could take the aircraft.



NASA's X15

The top speed the X-15 hit was 4,520 miles per hour, or Mach 6.7, on October 3, 1967, the reigning record. From its distinctive shape and massive afterburning engine, one can easily determine this aircraft to essentially be a rocket with wings. But considering the plane did not take off on its own, it can be tough to consider it the fastest ever.

The world's fastest aircraft, now only on displays at aviation museums like the Evergreen Aviation Museum in Oregon: The Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird.
Photo: Joe Kunzler | Simple Flying

If you look at more 'conventional' aircraft, the title belongs to another unique creation. This title belongs to Lockheed Martin's SR-71 Blackbird, an absolute beast in terms of airspeed and a true marvel of engineering. The jet was a high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft made to outrun and outclimb all Soviet-era surface-to-air missiles and fighter interceptors. The aircraft descended from the Lockheed A-12 'Oxcart' initially developed for the CIA. With the SR-71's two Pratt & Whitney J58 turbojet engines, each capable of 32,500 lbf of thrust, the plane could cruise at Mach 3.2. Sadly, the SR-71 is no longer in our skies. The high costs of operating the airplane and the end of the Cold War eventually ended SR-71 flight operations for the US Air Force, the CIA, and even NASA in October

1997. Nonetheless, if you want to see the iconic aircraft, Blackbirds are proudly on display at museums across the United States

In terms of the fastest aircraft ever to carry passengers, the Concorde is undoubtedly the victor here. Built by Aérospatiale and BAC, the plane introduced supersonic travel to the flying public or at least those who could afford to fly the extremely fast but expensive mode of transportation. The Concorde could cruise at a maximum of Mach 2.04 (1,354 mph / 2,455 kph) and was the only commercial aircraft to break the sound barrier with the exception of the Soviet Union's Tu-144, which briefly saw service in the USSR.

Photo: Joe Kunzler | Simple Flying

Unlike fighter jets, the Concorde wasn't allowed to go supersonic just about anywhere. The sonic boom angered local residents who were tired of the sudden loud sounds and windows rattling. The Concorde was allowed to only fly commercially on overwater routes. However, the program didn't revolutionize travel as once hoped. Despite cutting travel time down significantly, the cost per seat was far too high. A fatal crash in July 2000 saw the plane suspended for months, and by 2003, it became clear that Concorde didn't have the commercial viability to succeed in a market with slower but more efficient subsonic jets. But what the Concorde did was revolutionize the idea of what supersonic travel could be. Once thought to be the future of air travel for the masses, Concorde proved that supersonic travel could even be profitable if specifically targeted at a very niche high-end consumer.

Photo: Boom Supersonic

Boom Supersonic's Overture is in the works to give civilians a chance to scratch that 'need for speed' itch again. Boom plans to take passengers up to Mach 1.7 by 2029 at a significantly lower cost per seat than the Concorde. To make things better, the Overture will be capable of flying on 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), and will only break the sound barrier over water to prevent booms near the population.

Despite some hurdles last year, namely in finding an engine supplier for the ambitious project, Boom was successful and had a strong year. Orders for the jet have come from big-name customers,

including United Airlines and American Airlines, and there are other airlines for which the jet could prove a perfect fit. If all goes well, we might be headed into the second era of supersonic travel, and one that is here to stay.

What Happened to Boeing's Proposed Supersonic Jet?

From simpleflying.com, By Justin Hayward and Molly Russell
Updated Nov 14, 2023

Ever since Concorde's retirement by British Airways over 20 years ago, aviation enthusiasts have eagerly awaited supersonic air travel's return. Europe's Concorde and the former USSR's Tupolev Tu-144 are the only commercial supersonic aircraft to date; however, things could change over the next decade.

With Boom Technology and other US-based startups leading the charge for the supersonic renaissance, it is easy to gloss over the country's former attempts at launching its own Concorde competitor, the Boeing 2707.

Operating the extremely popular transatlantic route with British Airways and Air France between 1976 and 2003, among other flagship services, Concorde is undoubtedly the most well-known supersonic commercial jet, but it was not the first foray into supersonic travel at the time. The first supersonic flight took place in October 1947, with flying ace and US Air Force test pilot Chuck Yeager at the helm of a Bell X-1. Yeager hit Mach 1.06 in the rocket-powered aircraft, beginning the start of a new competition to develop both military and commercial supersonic aircraft.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, The United States, Soviet Union, and Europe all launched a range of projects; however, only two ever made it past the drawing board. Concorde first took to the skies in 1969, eventually entering into service in 1976 with British Airways and Air France as its launch customers. With rising fuel costs during the 1973 oil crisis, airlines began looking towards more fuel-efficient aircraft to keep travel expenses low and passenger levels high. By

1975, the gas-guzzling Concorde was a relic of a now-bygone era for aviation, and all but 14 orders remained.

It was the Soviet Union that won the supersonic travel race, launching the Tupolev Tu-144 two months before Concorde. The jet was faster, capable of cruising at Mach 2.15 compared to Concorde's 2.04, and held more passengers, though its range was limited, and the Tu-144 could barely reach from Moscow to the USSR's Pacific coastline. While tickets were affordable for most citizens, the jet was equally costly and inefficient to operate, relying on afterburners for the entire journey and incredibly unreliable.

Tupolev TU-144
Photo: RuthAS | Wikimedia Commons

Following the tragic Tu-144 crash at the Paris Air Show in 1973, Soviet officials exercised caution, launching it on just one route between Moscow's Domodedovo Airport (DME) and Almaty International Airport (ALA) in Kazakhstan. After just 103 scheduled flights, the Tu-144 was pulled from commercial service, though it remained in use as a testbed until 1999.

As with the space race, the US had ambitions to revive national pride and best the red terror with its own supersonic commercial jet. In the early 1960s, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) projected the need for up to 500 supersonic transport (SST) aircraft by the 1990s, and President John F. Kennedy pledged to subsidize up to 75% of the development costs, launching the campaign.
Three proposals were put forward from North American, Lockheed, and Boeing. It was Boeing that won out with its Mach 3.0 capable Boeing 7207.

Alongside outrunning Concorde, the aircraft was planned to be significantly larger, holding capacity for 292 passengers across two classes while maintaining the same range. During its development, the aircraft was immensely popular, seeing 122 orders from 26 airlines, including then-industry leaders Pan American and TWA, who ordered 15 and 12 aircraft respectively. United Airlines, Northwest, and American Airlines all ordered six of the type, while Continental Airlines and Delta Air Lines ordered three each. Several operators also held orders for Concorde, however, US pride once again outweighed market interest, with the 2707 set to have become the most prevalent US-based SST. Despite its high order volume, the Boeing 2707 never took to the skies. In May 1971, during the construction of its prototypes, the US House of Representatives voted to stop funding the project amid ongoing economic issues and rising fuel costs.

Like Concorde and the Tu-144, Boeing's SST was fuel-hungry, and politicians remained cautious of its actual viability on the market. The industry began leaning towards Boeing's 747 jumbo jet concept, which offered higher capacity and lower fares, keeping aviation accessible. The 747 was not hampered by design challenges either; there was no requirement for specifically manufactured lightweight materials or the development of new engine concepts.

Although it did not take to the skies, the 2707 casts its shadow over current developments. Demand remains for SST, something Boom Technology is targeting. The Boom Overture, currently in development, is set to bring supersonic travel back to the masses. To meet the noise and environmental regulations that led to the 2707's failure, the Boom Overture is set to be around half the speed of Concorde, at around Mach 1.7, and powered by four non-afterburning engines. The resumed interest in travel has also led the FAA and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to reexamine legislation to permit overland supersonic travel. As of November 2023, the aircraft has 35 orders from American Airlines and United Airlines, while Virgin Atlantic, Japan Airlines, and several unnamed customers hold options for up to 171 jets.

Generations of Navigation Cross Paths

From www.defence.gov.au/news-events/news/2024-06-19, 19 June 2024

Last month, a contrast unfolded in the art of navigation. A group who once relied on the celestial dance of stars and planets to chart their course met a generation trained with GPS. Forty years to the day after graduating from No. 64 Navigator Course, a close-knit group of friends reunited to visit what was then called the RAAF School of Air Navigation.

Despite one member passing away, six surviving graduates toured simulators and observed the latest software at RAAF Base East Sale's Air Mission Training School. The group, who have shared a lifetime of career changes and health challenges, donned their old flying jackets and suits for the reunion. Mission aircrew students guided the class of '84, which included retired Wing Commander Gavin Small, through take-off checks on the ground missions trainer simulator, showcasing technology vastly different from the '80s.

Air Force aviators reunite 40 years after graduation. Rear, from left: Squadron Leader Michael Spencer, Squadron Leader (retd) Geoffrey Menzies, Wing Commander (retd) Gavin Small, Flight Lieutenant (retd) Russell Lucas, Group Captain (retd) John Heinrich and (front) Wing Commander Michael Hicks.

Back then, manual navigation over water relied on whatever positional data was available – often celestial cues and solar observations. Sextants and mathematical equations helped calculate heading and airspeed, always mindful of the wind's potential to alter its course. Despite the 'navigator' title no longer existing, many aspects of the role remain the same. 'The work during our course was vastly different from what students do now, but someone still occupies the seat I once did, they just have extra duties and a bit more comfort with modern equipment,' Mr Small said.

Pilot Officer Zachary Smith shows Squadron Leader (retd) Geoffrey Menzies and Group Captain (retd) John Heinrich the ground missions trainer simulator used for mission aircrew training.

The group marvelled at how today's compact A4-size charts starkly contrasted with the sprawling maps of the past, which once required an origami lesson to fold. The old and new generations shared lunch and listened to yarns from 'back in the day'. The veterans' strong bond left an impression on the students, offering them a glimpse of what their futures might hold. The group emphasised to the students that their classmates could potentially become lifelong friends, not just temporary acquaintances. 'We wanted to show them that we old blokes are still great friends, as it certainly never crossed our minds during the course that we would forge such a lasting bond,' Mr Small said.

Reflecting on the camaraderie he observed, Pilot Officer Zachary Smith found it inspiring and was proud to be part of the reunion. 'Hearing their war stories and learning what they got up to on trips away was fascinating,' he said. 'I could see their personalities in their mateship – the funny guys, the thoughtful guys. I could picture them all 40 years ago on course together. I hope to stay in touch with my current training mates and return to relive memories years from now.'

Most of the original course, including those who did not graduate, continue to have regular catch-ups and maintain a Facebook group. 'RAAF Base East Sale holds significance for us and provides another opportunity to reconnect and reminisce about old memories,' Mr Small said. The group previously celebrated their 30th reunion, with plans already underway for a 45th reunion. 'We don't want to wait too long between gatherings; after all, we're not getting any younger,' Mr Small said.

A Very, Very Close Call

From Pete Nuske

At the end of 1971, I was a relatively new pilot in 76 (Mirage) Squadron. It was a Friday, and we were programmed for air combat tactics. Since Monday of that week, thunderstorm cells had been rolling in from the west but crossing the coast about 30 miles south of the base. Williamtown was very murky, and we had been grounded all that week so far. Frustration and

impatience were rising as everyone wanted to get into the air combat phase. The following details are from memory, which can dim somewhat over the years, but are accurate to my mind.

On the Friday morning, a Macchi weather check showed that there was clear sky above 30,000 feet. Landing conditions were ok for GCA approaches as I recall. Launch!!! Either three or four pairs got airborne for 1v1 tactics, high level. It was interesting trying to manoeuvre for tactics while staying above 30,000 feet. At some stage, a recall was radioed in as the thunderstorms were approaching the base.

With a wingman in close formation, I commenced a TACAN letdown with the aim of picking up a GCA for landing. About half way down the descent, the cloud was so thick that the wingman got spat off and I was on my own. Then TACAN went off the air, and Approach Control advised that the base was being deluged and there was no radar available either. Without TACAN or ground radar available, the Mirage was totally blind for a bad weather approach. To summarise the situation, I only had enough fuel for a landing at Williamtown. I have no idea to this day what happened to the other aircraft, but more about that later. I think they must have got in before the TACAN and radar went off the air. Approach Control went completely silent and provided no assistance whatsoever from that time on; that is not a criticism, just a statement of fact.

I was descending through thick cloud, with no verification of my position, so – what now? Obviously, circumstances had rapidly deteriorated into a very grim position. I decided that I would have been not far from the coast, so I turned east and commenced a slow descent. Eventually I spotted the waves below through a cloud gap, so I was able to get below the cloud base and turn west, hitting the coast around Anna Bay. I followed the coastline south, and saw the fingers of sand and hootches which were on the extended centreline of runway 30, so I lowered the undercarriage, turned onto the runway heading, and guessed an appropriate point to commence a descent, holding a standard rate of descent.

I was in contact with the tower at this point and was cleared to land. My plan was to continue a descent to a minimum height of my determination, but around 150 feet if everything looked ok. If I was more than about 10 or so metres off the centreline when I saw it, then things would not be good as I would have to overshoot and my fuel situation would not have permitted another approach attempt, but I was fast running out of options.

About half way down the descent, there was an absolutely solid white wall of cloud, but all I could do was to punch into it and continue with the descent. My major concern was not to push safety as the civil terminal was to the left, and the base to the right, so I was very aware of my height. At around 150 feet above ground level, I looked ahead, and saw the runway lights; I was dead on centreline, and in a perfect position for landing. The drag chute deployed normally, and about halfway down the runway I saw the tower for the first time. Later that day, the person in the tower said he could not see the aircraft until it passed the tower, that's how bad the visibility was.

76SQN Mirage taxiing

Until this point, I had been as cool as a cucumber, just concentrating on my options, making decisions, and executing them. But at the end of the runway, I did get a dose of the shakes, it was all so very close to an ejection becoming necessary. I taxied very slowly, and thought well, I am ok, the aircraft is ok, I am certain to get a serve from someone higher up, but I will be home tonight. There is going to be some kind of investigation though.

I walked into the crew room at 76 Squadron, and nothing was said by anyone. People were just carrying on normally. To my amazement, nothing whatsoever was ever said to me about the incident, I have no idea how the other aircraft got home to this day. No one asked how I got home. There was no investigation into how badly things were handled (or not handled). I still believe that some discussion should have taken place to learn from the incident, but that didn't happen.

That was the closest call I ever had during my fighter flying time, and I still have very vivid memories of the day. I am resigned to the fact that I will never hear the details from anyone else involved, but I do know that nothing else saved me but for keeping cool, sifting through the available options, local knowledge, and maybe a hand on my shoulder. It could easily have worked out very differently!

Two Air Forces Re-form an 80 Squadron Together

Reproduced with permission from CONTACT magazine

Royal Air Force Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton (left) and Australia's Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Robert Chipman shake hands at the 80 Squadron re-formation ceremony at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

Story by Flight Lieutenant Rachael Blake. Photos by USAF Samuel King Jr

In a significant move for allied air capability, the Royal Australian Air Force and Royal Air Force have re-formed their respective 80 Squadrons. The occasion was marked with a dual squadron parade and re-formation ceremony, attended by Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Robert Chipman

and Warrant Officer of the Air Force, Ralph Clifton, at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, United States, on 15 April.

80 Squadron represents the transition of the Australia Canada United Kingdom F-35 Reprogramming Laboratory (ACURL) capability into an integrated, operationally relevant squadron that will continue serving the world's most advanced strike fighter jets – the F-35 Lightning II. Air Marshal Chipman said Australia's partnership with allied nations was of utmost importance. 'Together, we must adapt to meet the challenges of the future, leveraging opportunities for collaboration and cooperation,' he said.

Royal Navy Commander Chris Wilcox, Officer Commanding RAF 80 Squadron, acknowledged the importance of re-forming the two historic units in RAF and RAAF. 'Officially we will be two squadrons, but our early years of F-35 reprogramming have seen us grow into an harmonious and prolific relationship, and as such, we will be proud to share just one name,' Commander Wilcox said. Royal Air Force Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton underlined how the F-35 warfighting capability in Europe and the Indo Pacific was dependent on how well the specialist personnel at 80 Squadron continued to 'sharpen the spear' in their work together in Florida. 'A critical part of our strength comes from how effectively and synergistically we can operate our fifth-generation capabilities,' Air Chief Marshal Knighton said. 'Co-location of the whole F-35 reprogramming enterprise at Eglin AFB provides a unique opportunity to integrate with our closest F-35 partners to the fullest extent. 'It's an opportunity that wouldn't exist if we were at home alone.'

The effort of re-raising RAAF's 80 Squadron and RAF's 80 Squadron has been four years in the making. Air Marshal Chipman said the Australian journey from the ACURL F-35A mission-data team into an operational support squadron held profound importance. 'I am proud of how the team has grown to support global exercises and operations, providing first-class, responsive operational support to frontline warfighters,' Air Marshal Chipman said. 'It signifies that the people and the specialist work they do, is operationally relevant – fostering unit identity and aviator pride.'

Warrant Officer of RAAF 80 Squadron Warrant Officer Sean Bell described ACURL as a unique force element, comprising a multi-faceted RAAF, RAF, Royal Navy and US workforce. 'We are a fully blended unit in terms of three nations of three military services supported by a US-government and prime-contractor workforce all interacting as one team. 'We are also planning for the Royal Canadian Air Force to join us over the next four years,' Warrant Officer Bell said. 'It certainly makes for a challenging but rewarding workplace, knowing that our mission data products are supporting both Australian and UK F-35 operations.'

Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force members stand in formation

At the re-formation ceremony, Wing Commander Matthew Rapson, Commanding Officer RAAF 80

Squadron, commented on how the team would manage future challenges and opportunities. 'Remaining true to our vision of operationally responsive reprogramming, while navigating significant transitions and breaking down barriers to address our challenges, can only be achieved through what got us to this point – enduring successful collaboration within our enterprise underpinned with trust, dedication, cooperation and transparency, driven by innovation and a commitment to our people who will bring about this transformation,' Wing Commander Rapson said.

He described the support of the United States Air Force in enabling the squadron's mission and highlighted opportunities for collaboration. 'Our capabilities will undergo a series of essential, complex upgrades to remain in lockstep with the collective F-35 modernisation while also introducing enhanced software tools critical to our mission,' Wing Commander Rapson said.
Air Marshal Chipman touched on the Pacific legacy behind RAAF's 80 Squadron badge, which shows a large owl clutching two lightning bolts in its claws. 'The sooty owl, found across eastern Australia, is a formidable and silent predator and, the owl is also a universal symbol of wisdom and strategy,' Air Marshal Chipman said. 'Lightning bolts symbolise the enabling capability of mission data, allowing the F-35 to operate within the electromagnetic spectrum. 'Together, these two images perfectly embody the readiness of the squadron's mission and motto, 'Strike True', and also reflect the unit's commitment to precision and accuracy in all they do.'

An Easter Message

From Chris Beasley

A man, his wife and mother-in-law went on vacation to the holy land.
While they were there, the mother-in-law passed away.
The undertaker told them: 'You can have her shipped home for $5000, or you can bury her here for $150.'
The man thought about it and told the undertaker he'd just have her shipped home.
The undertaker asked, 'Why would you pay $5000 to ship your mother-in-law home, when it would be wonderful to have her buried here and spend only $150.'
The man replied: 'A man died here 2000 years ago; he was buried here, three days later he rose from the dead.' 'I just can't take that chance!'

37SQN (RAAF) Association Visit Hercules Production Line

From Col Coyne, President No. 37 Squadron (RAAF) Association

The No. 37 Squadron (RAAF) Association was formed a decade ago and brings together former and current C-130 aircrew, maintenance personnel and support staff who have contributed to the RAAF's C-130 operations since the arrival of the first C-130A at RAAF Richmond on 13 December 1958. Our association has a close connection with Lockheed Martin which enabled some members of our association to recently visit the Hercules production facility at Marietta, Georgia in the USA.

The night before the tour we met and dined with the RAAF contingent currently embedded at Marietta for the upcoming RAAF C-130J project. The team is led by WGCDR Matt Grinham, a former ENGO and then SENGO at 37SQN in the early 2000s. Next morning our group was hosted by Mr Mark Jarvis, LMCO Director Europe-Americas-Pacific Rim, Air Mobility & Maritime Missions; Mr Nick Smythe, LMCO Director International Air Mobility, Aeronautics Strategy & Business Development; Mr Richard Wells, C-130 International Business Development; Ms Nicole

Davidson, Senior Program Manager RAAF C-130J TLS Office at RAAF Base Richmond and Mr Jeff Rhodes, LMCO Marietta Aeronautics Company Historian.

L-R: Phil Hellis, Al Harris, Col Coyne

Upon entry to the Marietta facility, we were greeted with a sign welcoming our Association members on the tour. Following entry into the conference room, we received comprehensive briefings delivered by Mark Jarvis, Nick Smythe, Nicole Davidson and 37SQN Association President, Col Coyne.

The enormity of the Hercules production facility was an eye opener; the site covers an area of approximately 850 acres with the C-130J final production line employing over 4,500 personnel. Continuously operating, the facility has produced in excess of 2,700 Hercules airframes over the last 70 years. Production is planned to continue well into the future. The tour of the production facility was conducted by Jeff Rhodes, a very knowledgeable gentleman who imparted information on the history of the Marietta plant from its beginnings through to current day operations.

While the Herc production line occupies one length of the facility, the other side produces the F-35 Lightning II centre wing assembly, after which they go for final assembly and checkout at Fort Worth, Texas. Being Aussies, we took the opportunity to 'photobomb' the second Kiwi C-130J-30 having its final quality control check prior to entering the paint shop the following day.

The tour was scheduled to commence at 0800hrs and conclude at 1030hrs, but after the tour we returned to the conference room for morning tea where a presentation of a canvas print was made from the 37SQN (RAAF) Association to LMCO in appreciation of their hospitality. A convivial atmosphere with the LMCO hosts and the RAAF contingent resulted in our association members remaining until about midday, when we adjourned with the RAAFies to a local food court for lunch. I must mention one of our association members - no names, no pack drill - ordered a burger and chips for lunch. He was a bit perplexed when handed his burger and a packet of potato chips. Hmm, would you like fries with that?

All in all, it was a great experience thoroughly enjoyed by the attendees, who really appreciated the courtesy and hospitality extended to our group by the LMCO Marietta Directors and staff.

In conclusion; on Saturday 24 August 2024, the 37SQN (RAAF) Association is hosting a function at the Royal Hotel in Richmond to celebrate 25 years of C-130J-30 operations by 37SQN in conjunction with Lockheed Martin's 70th anniversary since the inaugural flight of the Hercules prototype, the YC-130, and 70 years of Hercules production from Marietta, GA.
Information and bookings available at www.trybooking.com/CLUGN.

21 March 1942: 75 SQN Arrived in Port Moresby

From AFA-SA Facebook page, written by Greg Weller

On 21 March 1942 No 75 Squadron arrived in Port Moresby ready to defend the town even though the Squadron had only been formed 17 days earlier in Townsville.

Established as one of three fighter squadrons in early 1942 to defend Australia's north from Japanese attacks (76 Squadron and 77 Squadron being the others), 75 SQN was thrown into the thick of combat one day after arriving in Port Moresby conducting a strike against Lae destroying 12 aircraft on the ground. Until this stage, only four of its 21 pilots had ever seen combat. The squadron's younger pilots had an average of nine days training on the Kittyhawks and had fired their guns only once.

Flying Officer Peter Masters, 75 SQN RAAF, standing in front of his Kittyhawk aircraft named 'Poison Pat'.
Courtesy of Australian War Memorial Digital Online Collection (copyright expired, public domain)

Under the Command of SQNLDR John Jackson, the unit was in combat daily from their arrival till the end of April. Over a dramatic six weeks, 75 SQN accounted for 35 confirmed destroyed, four probably destroyed and another 44 damaged Japanese aircraft while suffering itself twelve fatalities and losing 22 Kittyhawk aircraft. On 7 May, the squadron depleted to only several serviceable aircraft, withdrew to Townsville after American Aircobra aircraft reinforcements arrived. Incredibly, 75 SQN reconstituted over the next several months before

returning to New Guinea in late July where it again proved instrumental in the defence of Milne Bay.

Flying Officer Masters, a South Australian educated at King's College (now Pembroke College), enlisted in September 1940. He attended No 1 Elementary Flying Training School at Parafield. During World War II, he completed four operational tours each in a different squadron: 4SQN, 75SQN, 80SQN, 86SQN. In New Guinea, he shot down two Japanese Zero fighters in April 1942. He survived the war and was discharged in mid-1945.

South Australian WWII Bomber Command Veteran Turns 100

From AFA-SA Facebook page, written by Greg Weller

We would like to congratulate South Australian WW2 Bomber Command veteran Donald Wills who turned 100 on 16th March 2024! Born in Broken Hill on 16 March 1924, Don worked as a Clerk/Storeman before enlisting in the RAAF on 30 June 1943.


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL AWM2017.520.1.241

After completing basic training at No 4 Initial Training School, Victor Harbour, he completed air gunnery training at No 2 Bombing and Gunnery School, RAAF Port Pirie, receiving his Air Gunners Badge on 16 Sep 1943.

He was selected for duty in Europe and after completing heavy bomber conversion training at No 17 Operational Training Unit from January to March 1944, he was posted to No 51 Base Headquarters for further conversion training onto Lancasters, before being posted to No 463 Squadron in June 1944 as a Tail Gunner flying Lancasters.

One of his first missions was in support of the D-Day offensive, where he participated in a mission striking German positions around Caen. During mid-September, he endured a particularly difficult week. On Sunday evening, his crew flew a mission targeting Brest. The next morning, they were again tasked to fly a strike mission targeting Brest, only to return home and fly another mission that evening targeting Darmtadt. On Tuesday evening, they flew a mission against Stuttgart. On Friday evening a mission was scrubbed at the last minute. On Sunday morning before daybreak, they were awoken with orders to conduct a morning strike targeting German ground forces in the Boulogne area. It would be his 26th mission and an unforgettable one.

At briefing, the crew were told that there were flak positions in the target area and thus, they could go in a low altitude. There was no escape kit issued for the mission as it was considered low risk. Don recalls: 'We were told it was just a matter of go in, drop bombs and straight home.' On ingress to the target area, the aircraft encountered significant flak. Just as the aircraft's bombs were released, the pilot, FLGOFF Tanner (RAF), suddenly screamed across the intercom, 'Get Out'

as the stricken aircraft quickly began losing altitude suffering severe flak damage to the wings and engines. At 4,000 feet, crew were finally able to begin bailing out having been delayed by finding the rear hatch jammed and having to make their way back up to the forward hatch. By the time the aircraft had descended to between 2,000 and 3,000 feet, all crew apart from the pilot, had successfully bailed out. The pilot subsequently survived crash landing the stricken aircraft on a hilltop.

Meanwhile, Don parachuted to the ground to be rescued by a French farming family. Thankfully, this was on allied controlled territory, and he was returned to an allied base and eventually England. He was subsequently posted to No 467 Squadron where he completed another four missions to complete a 30 mission tour of duty with Bomber Command by January 1945.

He returned to Australia in mid-1945 and transferred to the Reserve in September 1945. He was awarded the 1939-1945 Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-1945, and Australian Service Medal 1939-1945. He was awarded the Legion of Honour by the French Government in 2016.

He is a long-time member of AFA-SA Mitcham Branch and one of South Australia's few remaining Bomber Command veterans. He is one of a generation who gave so much during World War 2 and to whom we as a nation, now owe so much for their sacrifice and service.

Congratulations on reaching your Centenary Don!

Workplace Nicknames

From Chris Beazley

I have worked with all these guys during my career...

'Wicket keeper' - puts on gloves and stands back.

'Harvey Norman' - 3 years, no interest.

'Grenade' - waiting for him to pull the pin.

'Sensor light' - only works if someone walks past.

'Blister' - appears when the hard work is done.

'*Showbag*' - full of s**t.

'*Seaweed*' - floats around all day and stinks.

'*Lantern*' - not very bright, and has to be carried.

'*Penguin*' - always on the ice.

'*Deck chair*' - always folds under pressure.

'*2-stroke*' - hard to get started, and always smokes.

'*Morphine*' - slow moving dope.

'Bushranger' - holds everyone up.

'Pothole' - Always in the road, needs to be filled in.

'Jungle' - Thick and dense.

'Wheelbarrow' - Only works when he's pushed.

Flying a Modern Aircraft Without Electronics

From John Clarkson

After reading this morning about the pilot who experienced a total black out of all his instruments, and the training Qantas pilots receive on the same topic, I now remember another incident which actually happened to a Qantas crew.

The B747-400 aircraft was the first aircraft in the Qantas fleet which boasted a complete 'Glass Cockpit'. All the instrumentation, including flight control data, fuel, hydraulic, engine performance, electrical components, plus a dozen or so other indicators necessary for flight were all displayed via a complex set of avionics. The first of these aircraft arrived in August 1989, followed by other 747-400 aircraft arriving from the Boeing plant. Due to the high content of avionics on board, our avionics engineers wrote to Boeing and asked if there was a check list to follow if all the electronics were to fail at once. Boeing replied that the chance of that happening was so slight that no, they had not written a check list. So, the Qantas avionics engineers set about designing one. The following true story was related to me by a couple of senior captains in the 747-400 fleet when I arrived in Flight Operations myself in 1995.

In early 1990, one of our 747-400 aircraft departed Melbourne (QF9) enroute to London – via Singapore. The operating captain, whilst reasonably new to the 747-400, had some 20 or more years experience flying the 747-200 and 747-300 aircraft (affectionately known as 'the Classics'), whose instrumentation was all analogue. It was a lovely fine day, and as they were flying over Central Australia, enroute to Singapore, every instrument and every screen in the entire flight deck went blank! The investigation later revealed that all four generators (one per engine) were generating 110 volts AC at 400Hz, and feeding all that power to the central electrical bus. There is a device which ensures that the power from all generators feeds into the main electrical system, aligning all frequencies to 400Hz. It was this device which failed. Therefore, no power at all was being fed into any system which required 110V AC – 400Hz. This left the flight crew with just three analogue instruments; altimeter, air speed indicator and an artificial horizon!

So, what did they do? As I said previously, the captain had many years experience flying the classics, so he made a simple announcement to the crew and all passengers: 'Ladies and gentlemen, we have a minor electronics problem up here, so we are going to divert to Sydney where an aircraft will be waiting for you, so you may continue your flight.'

Using just these three analogue instruments, and using alternate hydraulics, he turned the aircraft and headed for Sydney. In a few hours, he joined the incoming air traffic waiting to land at Mascot and although he told Air Traffic Control that he had very limited avionics, they placed him in a normal pattern and eventually he landed at Mascot. Afterwards, many avionics technicians and other younger pilots asked him how he managed to fly such a huge aircraft and execute a perfect landing without any avionics?

The reply from this very senior classic pilot was: 'They can introduce all the high-tech systems they like, but the things we learnt on the classics will never be obsolete!' Following that incident, programmes were introduced into the 747-400 Flight Simulator so that all 747-400 pilots could practice flying the aircraft without electrical power.

Never be afraid to try something new.
Remember, amateurs built the ark…professionals built the Titanic.

ANZAC Day 2024 Flypast

From Peter (George) Beath

RAAF 2SQN Wedgetail AEW&C looking for prey in Canberra, ANZAC Day 2024
Photo: Bruce Comber

9SQN and the Battle of Binh Ba

From Dave Moles DFM

Prompt action by two 9SQN Bushranger gunships during the Battle of Binh Ba on June 6,1969, saved the lives of a Centurion crew when their tank, callsign 22B, was disabled by an RPG-7. National serviceman Trooper David Hay said the tank took minor damage from the first hit, and when a second RPG-7 struck and penetrated 22B's turret, it left him temporarily blinded by shrapnel.

'The tank was immediately silenced - the electrical connections to internal turret guns were severed, the turret crew all wounded by shrapnel and, apart from the Crew Commander's .30 calibre machine gun, the tank was undefended,' he said. If ever an element of luck was needed, this was the time, and that "luck" came from above.

Two Iroquois Bushranger gunships from 9SQN RAAF arrived with not a second to spare, brought their miniguns to bear and eliminated the threat. The plight of 22B would have become catastrophic had it not been for the strike by the RAAF Bushrangers light fire team (LFT) immediately after the Centurion was disabled. Bushrangers 71 and 72 worked as a pair in the LFT and provided the bulk of the fire support.

LAC (later SGT) Dave Moles, a crewman on board Bushranger 71, takes up the story. 'When we first arrived over Binh Ba, FLGOFF Alan Adamson asked the ground controller if all locals were evacuated from the buildings and was told "yes". Al said he was going to do a dry pass down the village and have a look in the windows, which we did, LAC Moles said. 'I could see the enemy running out of the buildings and ducking under tanks guns. Our next pass was live miniguns, rockets and four M-60 machine guns - and Bushranger 72 did the same. We saw the disabled tank and the VC who were about to fire on it, but after a quick burst from us, they didn't.'

After the start of the battle, Bushranger 73 was called forward to work with Bushranger 71 and 72 as a heavy fire team (HFT). LAC Moles said Bushranger 71 got a message from the Forward Air Controller (FAC), who told them a VC had fired an RPG-7 at them and it had missed by just yards. 'We continued to do firing passes, and on our last pass before we went back to 'the Dat' to re-arm and re-fuel, I noticed we were lower than the previous passes,' he said. 'As our last rocket was fired, a piece of roof tile flew up and went through the front window of Bushranger 71, between the two drivers, hitting the transmission wall. I retrieved it and showed the drivers; co-pilot, FLGOFF Treloar, was not impressed…nor was I'.

Bushranger rocket pods and minigun

'I believe without timely air support, the battle outcome would have been very different, with more KIAs instead of only one. From memory, the HFT fired a full load, that is, each aircraft 10,000 7.62 minigun rounds, 4,000 door gun M-60 7.62 rounds, 14 2.75" HE rockets, as well as what we fired after refuelling and rearming. A few days later when we were at the re-arm point at the Dat, a couple of diggers came into the area and presented me and Al Lamb, the gunner on 71, an AK-47 from Binnh Ba; we hung it in the boozer.'

Sprung!

From John Clarkson

The other night I was invited out for a night with the 'girls'. I told my husband that I would be home by midnight – 'I promise'.

The hours flew by and the margaritas disappeared far too quickly. Around 3.00am, a bit loaded, I headed for home. Just as I got in the door, the cuckoo clock in the hallway started up and cuckooed three times. Quickly realising my husband would probably wake up, I cuckooed another nine times. I was really proud of myself for coming with such a quick-witted solution, in order to escape a possible conflict with him – even when smashed. 3 cuckoos plus 9 cuckoos totals 12 cuckoos = midnight!

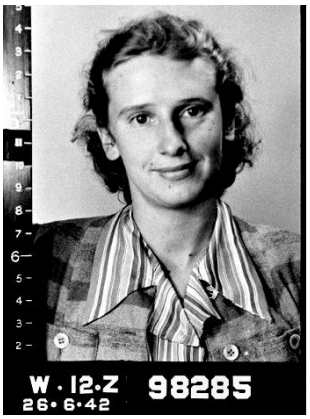
The next morning my husband asked me what time I got in; I told him 'Midnight'. He didn't seem annoyed in the slightest. Whew, I got away with that one!

Then he said: 'We need another cuckoo clock.' When I asked him why, he said; 'Well last night our clock cuckooed three times, then said 'Oh shit!', cuckooed four more times, cleared its throat, cuckooed another three times, giggled, cuckooed twice more, and then tripped over the coffee table and farted.

The Best Dressed WAAAF in Australia

From Shire Military History Club, written by John Campbell

In 1944, ACW Jean Stewart Myers of Cronulla, was awarded the title of 'Best Dressed WAAAF in Australia'. Her unnamed prize was awarded by WAAAF Director, Group Officer Stevenson at Townsville. One newspaper reported that this was the second time she had won. [1] By today's values, that might be a demeaning title for a servicewoman to have, but as you read further you will find that Jean was not just a snappy dresser but a highly intelligent young lady who gave her 'all' for Australia's war effort.



She was born in Rockdale on 20 November 1921 and was an excellent student who passed her Intermediate and Leaving Certificates. She then studied to be a school teacher. By then the family had been at 3 Nerang Street, North Cronulla for some time. Upon graduation Jean was sent to teach at Cooma school. [2] She volunteered to join the RAAF in 1942 (98285). She was 155 cm tall and weighed just 150 lbs and described as 'quiet and reserved'. She passed the aptitude tests and was accepted as a trainee wireless operator.

After graduating her course, she was posted to Allied Air HQ in Brisbane. After more training, Jean moved on to 131 Range and Direction Finding Unit in March 1943 (the early name for Radar). The 131 RDF unit was situated on Ash Island near Newcastle at the time. Jean had missed out on being closer to home when the unit had earlier been located at Kogarah and then Kyeemagh. Her next posting was to 108 Fighter Control Unit, Brisbane.


BEST-DRESSED W.A.A.A.F.

A/C/W JEAN MYERS, W.A.A.A.F., of No. 3 Nerang Rd., N. Cronulla, who has been judged the best dressed W.A.A.A.F. in Australia. She won this distinction in a competition held in connection with a R.A.A.F.-W.A.A.A.F. handicraft exhibition at Townsville recently, according to official R.A.A.F. Magazine Wings. Before joining up, Miss Myers was a schoolteacher in the Cooma district.

[3]

In March 1944 Jean was posted to 136 Radar Station which had been at Mascot but was then at Alligator River near Townsville. In 1944 Jean was promoted to acting corporal and about then, in Townsville, she was awarded the title of Australia's Best Dressed WAAAF.

Jean was 'de-mobbed' on 15 January 1946. In September the same year she was a candidate of the Queen of the Services competition. She was to be presented to the public at the Cronulla Theatre in September. The competition was to raise funds for the RAAF Members Welfare Fund. Another nominee was Kathleen Woodcock of Glencoe Street, Sutherland – clipping above. She had served in the AWAS but her story is for another day.

Jean married SX32715 Murray Thomas Phillips in 1947. Murray was born and enlisted in South Australia. Murray passed away on 16 July 2012 aged 90, and Jean died just seven months later on 11 February 2013, aged 91. Jean served her country in its period of threat, carrying out responsible positions as part of Australia's defences.

Sources:

1] Newcastle Herald-- 15.7.1944
2] https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection
3] Daily Mirror, Sydney— 22.6.1944

Aviation Humour

From John Clarkson

We were waiting to take off at around midnight from LAX to New Zealand, which is a very long flight, almost entirely over water with very little land in between. We were delayed because of a technical malfunction. The Captain came on the intercom and explained that he was waiting for a replacement part and that it would be arriving shortly, which would allow the maintenance staff to install the new part. Groans were audible throughout the full aircraft.

He then said: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I share your disappointment. But we are going on a long flight, and I can assure you that I would rather be on the ground wishing I were in the air, than to be in the air, wishing I were on the ground'. After a moment of stillness, applause erupted.

ADF Helicopter-Pilot Training Increased 50%

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Royal Australian Navy EC-135 helicopters from 723 Squadron conduct a fly past during a 723 Squadron Graduation Ceremony at HMAS Albatross, Nowra.
File photo (July 2022) by Leading Seaman Ryan Tascas

After substantially increasing flying hours over the past two-and-a-half years, 723 Squadron has increased its graduate output by 50 per cent. Although it is a Navy unit, 723 Squadron is a joint and integrated effort, currently featuring an Army commanding officer, Navy, Army and RAAF staff, and ably supported by Boeing Defence Australia, who provide assistance to ensure capability and training requirements are met.

Since the flying rate of effort was increased in 2021, 723 Squadron has delivered the highest flying output in the rotary community for 2023, with the trend continuing into 2024. This was made possible by the contributions of every unit member, including maintenance and support staff, in particular instructors – a mix of Navy, Army and Boeing Defence Australia personnel, who work side by side to prepare the ADF's next generation of helicopter aircrew.
723 Squadron operates the EC-135T2+ helicopter, from HMAS *Albatross* on the NSW south coast. The region offers a diverse range of flying environments, supporting world-class helicopter training for both Royal Australian Navy and Australian Army aircrew.

Commanding Officer 723 Squadron Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Schadel was proud of the squadron's achievements and appreciated the work of the diverse workforce. 'The team here at 723 Squadron is committed to the training of aircrew for combat, and the quality, rate and effort at which they excel in their work is a credit to themselves and the Fleet Air Arm,' Lieutenant Colonel Schadel said. 'The culture and values of 723 Squadron makes it a very rewarding place to work and this is seen day in and day out in the way in which the staff and students alike are committed to their courses and ensuring we train quality rotary-wing aircrew, with a combat mindset, ready for their operational conversions in the Fleet Air Arm and Aviation Command.'

76 SQN Tales

From Les Anderson

A guard at the gate at Williamtown went to check a car - the driver said 'Air Commodore Cumming', and the guard said 'Thanks mate, I'll look out for him'.

Civilian Aircraft Lands in Safe Hands

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Royal Australian Air Force aviators from No. 26 Squadron provide assistance to occupants disembarking Beechcraft B200 Super King Air VH-XDV after an emergency wheels-up landing at Newcastle Airport, NSW.
Story by Flight Lieutenant Robert Cochran. Photos by Leading Aircraftman Kurt Lewis

A civilian light aircraft with one crew and two passengers on board performed a textbook wheels-up landing at RAAF Base Williamtown with the help of air traffic controllers from 453 Squadron. Flight Lieutenant Bree Woollett, one of the three controllers who guided the stricken Beechcraft B200 Super King Air on 13 May, said the pilot reported the landing-gear malfunction to air traffic control shortly after take-off. 'He requested to remain within Williamtown airspace to troubleshoot,' Flight Lieutenant Woollett said. 'Troubleshooting

revealed that it was unlikely the aircraft would be able to land with its wheels down, so we began preparing for a belly landing.'

This involved burning off fuel, which included the aircraft circling over the Newcastle area for more than three hours while emergency responders prepared for all contingencies. 'Generally speaking, emergencies don't come with a lot of time,' Flight Lieutenant Woollett said. 'Luckily, in an unlucky situation, he had a lot of fuel on board and burning down that fuel before landing was something that needed to happen – that bought us hours and was something we had in our favour.'

While the Super King Air circled overhead, a full air base emergency was declared on the ground.

Beechcraft B200 Super King Air VH-XDV conducts an emergency, wheels up landing at Newcastle airport, NSW

Williamtown's Aerodrome Emergency Plan was activated, and both military and civilian emergency services were moved into position, ready to respond. 'The realness of the situation is not lost on you and you definitely feel yourself kick into gear,' Flight Lieutenant Woollett said. 'Once the pilot was satisfied with his fuel levels and the weather at the airfield, he made his approach, and safely landed the aircraft on its belly. 'He did so well.'

Safe on the ground, Flight Lieutenant Woollett said she felt relieved and thrilled for the pilot and passengers. 'It would've been a very stressful few hours leading up to the landing, especially for the passengers, so to see it so well executed and all three of them step out of the aircraft unharmed, was a big win for everyone involved,' she said. The other two air traffic controllers involved in the incident were Flight Lieutenant Wade Dring and Flying Officer Troy Cousins. 'Teamwork in an emergency is everything,' Flight Lieutenant Woollett said. 'It's emergency situations like this that see the controlling team really pull together to ensure the pilot is supported and the appropriate emergency services are activated and ready.'

Commanding Officer of 453 Squadron, Wing Commander Adrian Buckley, said he was incredibly proud of the way the controllers handled the emergency. 'Successful emergency response requires exemplary teamwork, dedication and the ability to remain calm under pressure,' Wing Commander Buckley said. 'A key enabler is our high-quality ADF training that ensures staff are ready to respond. 'It was great to see all emergency responders quickly coming together to support the pilot, who also did amazingly well.'

Sir Winston Churchill Quotes

When McDonald became Prime Minister:

'We know that he has, more than any other man, the gift of compressing the largest amount of words into the smallest amount of thought.'

Historic RADAR Site Renewal

From Ian Gibson, Secretary RADAR Chap FSB and WOFF Chad Harper, 3CRU
Photos by WOFF Harper's Mum

From the germ of an idea, over the last few years, the remains of 131 Radar Station, Ash Island, near Newcastle, NSW has seen significant work to establish it as a recognised World War II Memorial. This involved submitting an application to the NSW War Memorials Register which, after many months of work, resulted in the recognition of the site as an official memorial in February of last year.

3CRU members in front of WWII RADAR building, Ash Island ANZAC Day 2024. (WOFF Harper at left)

The principal driver behind this great outcome was President of the RADAR Chapter of Fighter Squadrons Branch, John King. John liaised with HQ 41 Wing, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Friends of The Schoolmasters House Inc Landcare group, which first brought the remains of 131 RS to our attention.

Providing a key conduit to current Air Force surveillance units, was WOFF Chad Harper, Squadron Warrant Officer, No 3 Control and Reporting Unit at RAAF Base Williamtown. Through their combined efforts, the first commemoration held at the site was on Remembrance Day 2022 and included representation from serving members and executives of 41Wing units. Following that success, an ANZAC Day service was held on the site last year, repeated this year including a flypast by an F-35 fighter from Williamtown.

RADAR Banner at Ash Island ANZAC Day, 2024

With the continued support of Air Force units such as 3CRU, Surveillance and Control Training Unit and 41WG Headquarters, commemorative services honouring those involved in 'the secret war' will continue to be held at 131 RS. Plans include constructing a radar display inside one of the remaining buildings, a PA system and the erection of permanent flag poles on the site. To that end, John is becoming very adept at drafting grant funding applications!

RAAF: 1, NSW Police: 0

Two Hunter Traffic Patrol Officers from Newcastle Local Area Command, were involved in an unusual incident while checking for speeding motorists on the F3 freeway at Wyong. One of the officers used a hand-held radar to check the speed of a vehicle approaching over the crest of a hill and was surprised when the speed was registered at over 800 kph! Their radar suddenly stopped working and they were unable to reset it.

Just then a deafening roar over the treetops revealed that the radar had locked onto a Williamtown based F/A-18 that was conducting a low level exercise over Wyong, approaching from the ocean.

Back at police HQ, the local area commander fired off a stiff complaint to RAAF Williamtown. Back came the reply in true laconic RAAF style:

> *'Thank you for your message, which allows us to complete the file on this incident. You might be interested to know that the tactical computer on the Hornet had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked onto, your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it. Furthermore, an air to ground missile on board the fully armed aircraft had also automatically locked onto your equipment.*
>
> *Fortunately, the pilot flying the aircraft recognised the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile system's alert status and was able to override the automated defence system before the missile was launched and your hostile radar installation was destroyed.*
>
> *Thank you for your enquiry.'*