

SITREP

Air Force Association NSW News and Views

Hoping for the Best; Fearing for the Worst

from Bruce Niblett, President Radar Branch

On the morning of the 20th February 1957, three Lockheed P2V-5 Neptune maritime reconnaissance aircraft of No 11 (MR) Squadron departed RAAF Base Richmond to represent the Australian Government at the Independence Celebrations in Ghana, Africa. The mission was named Operation Westbound as the aircraft would proceed westwards to Accra, capital of Ghana, and following the celebrations, would continue westerly and return to Richmond via the USA. The following route was taken: Richmond, Darwin, Changi (Singapore), Negombo (Sri Lanka), Karachi (Pakistan), Aden, Entebbe (Uganda), Accra (Ghana), Dakar (French West Africa), Casablanca (Morocco), Lages Field (Terceira, Azores), Bermuda, Jacksonville (Florida), Corpus Christi (Texas), San Francisco, Honolulu, Canton island, Nadi (Fiji), Richmond.

The Lockheed P2V-5 Neptune was powered by two Wright Cyclone 3350 twin-row, supercharged, air-cooled, 18-cylinder radial engines. These were the same engines that were used in the QANTAS 749 Constellations and proved to be very reliable during Operation Westbound. The problem for the RAAF Neptunes in 1957 was that they only had two of these engines and if a serious engine malfunction in the early stages of a long maritime or land transit resulted in an engine requiring shutdown, the aircraft could not maintain height on the remaining engine. Further areas of concern were that engine fire extinguishers were not fitted at the time, the Neptune could not dump fuel, nor could it turn around and land at its maximum take-off weight. Considering that the RAAF Neptunes spent much of their flying time involved in long maritime transits and operations, the above restrictions were considered less than satisfactory.



P2V-5 Neptune Wright Cyclone Radial Engine
© Ad Meskens / Wikimedia Commons

On Operation Westbound, all three aircraft arrived at Accra safely and on time. I had been lucky enough to be selected as second navigator in one of the crews, even though I had only graduated from nav course some eighteen months earlier. It had been a steep learning curve for me, and this would continue throughout Operation Westbound. Following the Independence Celebrations, the three aircraft commenced the homeward journey. Everything proceeded well until our aircraft suffered a 'swallowed exhaust valve' on the flight between Dakar and Casablanca. We landed safely and our maintenance team, split between the three aircraft, combined to change the cylinder overnight and test-



run the engine. The engine was declared serviceable and the three aircraft completed the flight to Portuguese-owned Lages Field (Terceira, Azores) the following day.

The flight from Lages Field to Bermuda was one of the longest over-water legs of Operation Westbound, over 2000 nautical miles. The weather was poor, with a headwind component of 40 to 60 knots, depending on your altitude. The decision was made by the lead aircraft to press on as we had a tight schedule to meet. We were the last aircraft to take off and we climbed to 1500 feet and set heading; 1500 feet was chosen because to climb higher would result in an inferior speed ratio. The sea was a mass of 'whitecaps': ditching would almost certainly have resulted in the aircraft breaking up. So the situation was fraught, even assuming the aircraft performed as normal.

About an hour into the flight there was a loud bang and the aircraft shuddered. This was similar to the valve incident on the Dakar to Casablanca leg. The Captain, a WWII veteran, decided it would be madness to continue and we turned back and commenced a slow climb to 6000 feet. I looked across at the senior signaller, also a seasoned WWII veteran, and I noticed he had gone ashen. It was then that it sunk into my thick skull that we were in an extremely dangerous situation. As we climbed, a further bang occurred, accompanied by the aircraft shuddering.



**Operation Westbound, the first round the world flight by the RAAF
20th February to 4th April 1957**

What were the options? Precious few. We could not feather the engine, we were one hour into a 14-hour flight, the aircraft had no hope of maintaining height on one engine. Jettisoning cargo would avail little as we were so far over maximum landing weight. If we returned to Lages Field, we would still be in excess of 10,000 lbs over maximum landing weight. We could not dump fuel. We had no alternative but to return to a position northwest of the field and hold. Our highly experienced engine fitter was convinced we had 'swallowed a valve' and we needed to get on the ground as soon as possible. Then came a third large bang as the engine ingested a second valve. This was accompanied by molten fragments of the turbocharger turbine coming out through the exhaust. There was nothing we could do but pray the engine would not disintegrate before we could eventually land. The bangs and the aircraft shuddering continued approximately every ten minutes thereafter and did nothing to allay my fears. As each of these instances occurred, more urgency crept into the engine fitter's voice, imploring the Captain to get us on the ground before the engine blew up, but knowing in his heart that this was impossible. At this point we were reminded that the engine did not have a fire extinguisher and even if it did, the amount of magnesium in the engine would probably render the extinguisher almost totally ineffective.



The Captain realised that if we were to survive it was now imperative to get the aircraft on the ground as soon as humanly possible. Bailing out was not an option given the weather conditions and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) recommended ditching. He consulted with the co-pilot and they calculated the aircraft weight - still 5000 lbs above maximum landing weight. Despite this he decided he had to return to base and land. We had been holding for over two hours. He realised it was going to have to be one of his best landings, a heavy landing would put the undercarriage struts up through the wings. He started his approach on a long final, to flatten the glide path as much as possible. I must say his landing was textbook; he greased it in. We touched down and the aircraft came to a halt in the middle of the runway. The engines were immediately shut down and we hastily vacated the aircraft as the airfield fire crew pulled alongside. What a huge sense of relief after several hours of deep anxiety and fear!

The other two crews had continued on to Bermuda and we were to eventually meet up with them in San Francisco. We spent eleven days at Lages Field during which time a new engine was flown in, fitted and tested, and we continued to Bermuda. From San Francisco the aircraft continued to Richmond, thus completing Operation Westbound, a memorable episode in RAAF history.

Footnotes:

- *In June 1959, the aircraft was flown to the USA and two Westinghouse J-34 Turbojet Jetpods were fitted. As these used the same fuel as the main engines, this overcame the problems associated with aircraft overweight vulnerability. The Jetpods were affectionately called 'Westinghouse Defuellers' and a yo-yo technique was used when an engine had to be shut down.*
- *Engine fire extinguishers were not fitted until 1961.*

Vale: Sadly, Bruce passed away on 2 January 2021 before seeing his article in print.



81 Fighter Wing Change of Command Ceremony

From Dave Leach, VP Fighter Squadrons Branch

Command of No 81 Wing was transferred from GPCAPT John Haley, DSC CSC, to the incoming officer commanding GPCAPT Matthew McCormack, at a ceremony at Williamtown on Friday 27th November 2020. Although numbers were reduced as a health measure, the families of both GPCAPTs were present, as was the Commander Air Combat Group, Air Commodore Timothy Alsop. Vice President Dave Leach and Secretary Geoff Peterkin represented the Air Force Association Fighter Squadrons Branch.

GPCAPT Haley spoke of the creditable achievements of No 81 Wing despite the difficulties presented by the Corona virus and the challenges of simultaneously introducing a new aircraft into the Air Force. He also spoke about the Kittyhawk Trophy and the important role the Kittyhawk played in the RAAF during World War Two. Dave Leach was then invited to present the trophy to the winning squadron – No 77 Squadron. A beaming WGCDR Jason ‘Easty’ Easthope, Commanding Officer of 77 Squadron, gratefully accepted the honour on behalf of his squadron.



Kittyhawk Trophy Presentation. Dave Leach and CO 77SQN, WGCDR Jason Easthope,

Photo by Corporal Brett Sherriff, Imagery Specialist, No 28 Squadron





RAAF Aircraft in Rainmaking Experiments

11 February 1947

This material is compiled from various sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and www.ozatwar.com. 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 Dr E.G. ('Taffy') Bowen, the chief of the Division of Radiophysics, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, announced that he had caused rain to fall over the Blue Mountains of NSW, between Bathurst and



B-24 Liberator Australian War Memorial P01 355.001

Katoomba. During four flights in a RAAF B-24 Liberator bomber, he used dry ice to 'seed' suitable clouds and initiate precipitation. Later that year, further experiments were conducted with other RAAF aircraft, including a Douglas C-47 in July (involving the dispersion of silver iodide from burners) and a Beaufort bomber in September. Artificial rainmaking trials continued throughout the 1950s, and in 1957 a different approach was employed which involved introducing a 500,000 volt electric charge to clouds via a bomb-shaped drogue. By the early 1960s, fewer RAAF aircraft were involved in this research, and by 1965 only civil aircraft took part in the program.

More here: <https://csiropedia.csiro.au/cloud-seeding/>



The Pub With...Some Beer

From Warren O'Grady

Once upon a time in Walgett (way back in 1974), there were a number of Caribous working very hard on flood relief. There was an understanding between us and the publican in Lightning Ridge (which had been isolated by the inundation) that if there was any spare room on the routine shuttle to resupply the town, then a few kegs would be added to the load.



Diggers Rest Pub, Lightning Ridge

The publican was very appreciative, as you would imagine, so he invited our crew up to overnight and celebrate with the town, so a weekend was duly organised with a Saturday overnight – the crew staying in makeshift (but air-conditioned, that God) motel type accommodation.

Bloody Hell! – We were treated to a Lightning Ridge dining-in night with the whole town in attendance!! In those days, residents were only identified by their first names (or nicknames) because their backgrounds were seriously questionable, but one of the partygoers stood out – Alexandra the Great 48! Her name was coined because of her ample cleavage and she had retired

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to Lightning Ridge to make her fortune and find anonymity after she had toured Australia as a famous stripper (you will have to be really old to remember her). She put on the best show, rivalling anything the Cross in Sydney could offer. Unfortunately, she was (probably) in her forties, maybe fifties and was not really attractive to our young Caribou crew, but our young crew was very attractive to her!!



37 SQN Milestone Achievement

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

In this year of the Air Force’s Centenary, No 37 Squadron celebrates 55 years of C-130 Hercules operations. Established on 15 July 1943 as No 37 (Transport) Squadron to support Australian and Allied defence forces during WWII operations in Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), Papua and later Philippines and British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan. The unit was disbanded on 28 February 1948.



No 37 Squadron was re-activated on 21 February 1966 in preparation to receive 12 x C-130E Hercules aircraft to supplement the 12 x C-130A Hercules already in operation with 36SQN at RAAF Base, Richmond NSW. The additional squadron of C-130s was required for Australia’s ongoing warlike operations supporting the Commonwealth’s forces commitment to the Konfrontasi and Vietnam campaigns.

The C-130E’s upgraded maximum takeoff weight and engines, compared to the C-130A, enabled direct flights from Butterworth to Richmond for casualties and KIA medevac flights, compared to the previous C-130A medevac route of Butterworth to Cocos Island for refuel, then on to RAAF Pearce overnight, then proceeding to 4 RAAF Hospital at RAAF Base, Laverton Vic. The C-130E direct flight Butterworth to Richmond averaged approximately 14 hrs flight time compared to the C-130A route flight time of approximately 17 hours over two days. Upon the cessation of the Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War in 1972, 37SQN transported the last contingent of Australian troops out of Vietnam back to Australia in December 1972.

37SQN, being the ADF strategic airlift squadron, was kept busy supporting military exercises, humanitarian, natural disaster, and peacekeeping commitments overseas. The end of 1974 morphed into 1975, an extremely busy period for the Herc squadrons starting with evacuation of Darwin residents after Cyclone Tracy in December ‘74, March/April ‘75 humanitarian operations evacuating refugees from Saigon, including Operations Babylift, Operation Rice Bowl in Cambodia, UN sponsored operations in Laos (aircraft had the RAAF markings removed and replaced with United Nations markings), and Australian Embassy personnel evacuations from Saigon and Phnom Penh at the end of the Vietnam War.



1978 saw 36SQN upgrade from the C-130A to the latest C-130H Hercules, delivered to Australia with a camouflage paint scheme signifying the squadron’s primary tactical airlift role. In the same year, the 37SQN C-130E fleet commenced a repaint



programme to the grey/white colour scheme, signifying the squadron's primary strategic airlift role, the same as the US strategic command fleet of aircraft. Aircraft A97-160 and 177 were the first two with the new paint scheme.

In the years following on from 1978, No. 37 Squadron continued as the strategic airlift squadron with taskings including search and rescue missions within Australian waters, PNG and the great southern ocean, evacuation of Embassy staff from Tehran during the Iranian Revolution, delivery of a stud bull 'Sabre Bogong' to the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Joint Services Staff College (JSSC) tour of China in November 1982, transport of 'Entombed Warrior' exhibition from Beijing to Hong Kong (where QANTAS flew the consignment to Australia for display) in 1983, transporting the Pope Mobile during the Pope's visit in 1986, movement of passengers stranded by the 1989 airline pilot's strike, 1990/91 Naval support tasks to Dubai in support of Gulf War 1, Operation Solace operations in Somalia and Kenya in 1993, and INTERFET resupply missions to East Timor in 1999/2000. 1999 also saw the arrival of the C-130E replacement, the latest model C-130J-30 Hercules, a stretched version of the C-130 providing the ability to uplift more cargo or passengers, as required.



The C-130E fleet continued operations until November 2000, when they were decommissioned with four airframes being retained as training aids plus one, A97-160, allocated to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook. The other eight airframes were returned to Lockheed Martin in the US. Six of the C-130Es were refurbished and upgraded with new wing supports, -15 engines (same as the C-130H) and glass cockpits, then on-sold to the Pakistani Air Force where they are still flying to date.

The C-130J-30 soon settled into the strategic role with tasking including the Bali Bombing medical evacuations in 2002 and Middle East Area of Operation (MEAO) ongoing since 2004, for which the aircraft were fitted with self-protection equipment prior to deployment. In 2006 the 12 x C-130H aircraft were transferred from 36SQN to 37SQN, making the unit a 'super squadron' of approximately 450 personnel. With the 24 Hercules, the tasking continued with Humanitarian assistance in PNG after Cyclone Guba in 2007; in mid-2008 the C-130J-30 took over the permanent detachment in the MEAO; humanitarian relief operations in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan 2013; airdrop of humanitarian supplies to civilians in Iraq 2014; and since 2015, an Australian C-130J-30 has participated in the annual Operation "Xmas Drop" operating from GUAM. On 13 June 2016, the unit was awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation in the Queen's Birthday Honours for "sustained outstanding service in warlike operations throughout the Middle East Area of Operations over the period January 2002 to

June 2014". 2020 saw the C-130 return to the Antarctic, the first time since 1990. November 2012 saw the decommissioning of the C-130H fleet, leaving 37SQN with the 12 x C-130J-30s which they operate to this day, due for replacement in 2030.



This information is a very brief

synopsis of 37SQN's various tasks and operations since 1966, where to date, the squadron has accumulated **495,939.5 accident-free flying hours**. A magnificent achievement envied by our fellow C-130 operating allies.





22 SQN Escape and Evasion

From Alan Lyons, President No 22 (City of Sydney) Squadron Association

The story of the escape and evasion by WGCdr Bill Townsend (later AVM) and FLGOff David McClymont has been published several times since they submitted their original report. The earliest was probably when it appeared in the Australian War Memorial Publication "RAAF SAGA." More recently Robert Piper's "Great Air Escapes" would not have been complete without it.

Pal Mal Mal Plantation lies on the shores of Jaquinot Bay in southern New Britain and was the target for RAAF operations on 3 November 1943. The prime objective was to destroy a bridge and the task was assigned to the Bostons. No 30 SQN Beaufighters went along to suppress the AA fire by strafing the gun positions and No 77 SQN Kittyhawks provided top cover and strafed the plantation house.

To confuse the enemy as to what was his real target, Townsend headed straight towards the plantation house. Flying about 100' above the trees at 260mph he waited until the last moment before turning towards the bridge and dropping his four bombs. As he did so a stream of 25mm AA fire entered the open bomb bay of the Boston. The hydraulic, electrical and radio systems were damaged, and the bomb bay fuel tank set on fire. In the rear compartment McClymont was firing at the house and watching the Beaufighters strafing alongside. As the Boston bore in with what he considered to be a disconcerting lack of evasive action he heard a heavy thump behind him. At the same time, he felt a sharp pain in his left elbow. The pain was of no apparent consequence, as it is not mentioned again in his E & E report. He turned and saw a raging fire in the radio equipment but was unable to unclip the fire extinguisher to deal with it. He clipped on his parachute pack to his chest but then realised that they were too low for him to have any chance of surviving a jump. As they were still going down, he braced himself for the inevitable impact.

Up front Townsend found that, though all the fuel cocks and some control levers had disappeared, he still had basic flight controls. The high speed of the attack allowed the blazing Boston to travel five miles before succumbing to gravity and settling on to the water. Without hydraulic power to close them, the bomb bay doors gaped open, inviting a rush of water to tear the aircraft apart. Aware of this possibility Townsend held the nose as high as he could, and the Boston aquaplaned on the tail section before coming to a relatively



WWII 22SQN Boston bomber being prepped for a bombing mission

gentle halt as it snagged on a reef. The bottom hatch was also open, and the incoming rush of water dislodged ammunition bins from their stowage. One was hurled into McClymont's face. The Boston came to a halt about one hundred and thirty metres from the shore opposite the village of Malakua. It had come to rest on a reef which lay about two metres under the surface. Townsend, having jettisoned the cockpit hatch as the aircraft hit the water, quickly undid his seat belts and stood up. He turned around and heaved the Type 'K' Dinghy out on to the wing where McClymont already stood, removing his parachute harness.

McClymont was dismayed to see that the dinghy, which had inflated immediately, was in danger of being torn on the jagged metal of the damaged wing. Townsend joined him on the wing and together they carefully launched the dinghy and climbed aboard. Being in full view of the plantation house made the fifteen minutes it took for them to paddle to the shore seem like an eternity. In their haste



they managed to lose one of the glove-type paddles and this extended the time for the journey. On the other hand, they were fortunately able to retrieve McClymont's pith helmet and binoculars, the latter kept afloat by their case. Townsend observed that they were lucky that the Boston had hit the reef where it did, as a couple of metres further out the water was quite deep. The Boston would have gone under immediately, making their egress far more difficult. As it was, the Boston was still visible on the reef well into the 1970s.

They came ashore on a low bank about a metre high and hidden under overhanging trees. From the dinghy they took two and a half kilos of survival rations, seven tins of drinking water, a ground sheet, a rubber basket, fishing lines and some cord. After slashing the dinghy open, they rolled it up and hid it under overhanging rocks. It was never found by the Japanese, but only because shortly after the airmen had left the scene, a friendly native re-hid it before the Japanese arrived. Townsend and McClymont plunged into the bush, heading directly away from the coast. They were unaware that not too far behind them the native was carefully obliterating their tracks. After about a hundred metres they came to a road. dived to the other side and set off through the jungle in a north westerly direction.

Japanese troops had arrived in the area where the airmen came ashore within a few minutes of their entering the bush and could be heard shouting as they searched. Finding no trace of anyone having come ashore, they suggested to the natives that the (estimated) four airmen from the crashed aircraft had probably been taken by sharks. The villagers had not actually seen the airmen and were puzzled as to how they could have disappeared so quickly. The fellow who had covered their tracks made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to catch up with them. However, he lost them when they moved over an area covered by a thick bed of leaves on which they left no tracks. Meanwhile the Luluai (village headman, pronounced: loo-loo eye) was questioned by the Japanese troops, but could truthfully say that he had seen no one.

Townsend and McClymont pushed on up the side of the mountain ridge and despite heavy rain, they had reached a height of about 350 metres before stopping for the night. They ate a little of the emergency rations and huddled together, wet and cold, under the ground sheet. The next day they continued towards the northwest until about three o'clock in the afternoon when it began to rain. They stopped and made a shelter but could not start a fire because the rain soaked everything about them. The building of a shelter about this time each day became routine for some time. By the third day, they were well up into the mountains and found it difficult to walk on the mossy ground. They found the going a lot easier along the ridges than it was in the gullies. They were often in clouds and could not see for any distance. As they travelled, they found most of the creeks and streams dry except for the odd rock pool in a creek. They drank from these and hollow bamboo pieces that had collected water. Despite having a booklet entitled "Friendly Fruits and Vegetables", they could find nothing to eat in the jungle. The emergency pack provided a daily dose of quinine and the iodine and dressings used to prevent small cuts and blisters developing into greater problems. Being well above the "mosquito line" they were not unduly bothered by insects.

On the sixth day, after scrambling a very steep mountain they found a wide, rocky creek which they followed downstream for the next two and a half days. When they came to a junction, they turned westward and continued for another two kilometres. Camp was set up for the night near a 120m high waterfall. Some wild taro was found and added to the dwindling ration supply. That night the taro was boiled up but turned out to be "totally inedible." Small fish in the stream were too elusive to help the ration situation. At least the stream afforded them the opportunity to wash their clothes and have their first bath since landing. Having seen some native tracks further back along the creek they thought they might find the same in that area. However, none were to be seen so they decided to leave the creek bed. It took all afternoon to climb out on to the adjacent ridge. Once there they found native tracks going in every direction except to the west where they wanted to go. The night was spent camped in an old native lean-to and the next day they set out along a path to the south. Later in the day, having decided that they were getting too close to the coast, they backtracked almost to the previous night's campsite. On the twelfth or thirteenth, while moving to the north west, they found an abandoned native



garden where they gathered three paw paws and 108 small bananas, all green. They left a razor blade, stuck in the trunk of the paw-paw tree as payment for the fruit.

(Razor blades were much prized by the natives and used as an important trade currency by the allied soldiers in the New Guinea, New Britain and Solomon Island areas. A strict code was adhered to. Woe betide any white man foolish enough to try and foist off a used blade as payment for a service for which a new blade had been promised. Once razor blades had been promised it was seldom satisfactory to offer any other form of payment.)

Laden with their bounty Townsend and McClymont pressed on through a cold, very wet and miserable day. About 1400 hrs they came to a native village and made a cautious approach. This proved unnecessary, as they were too far inland to encounter Japanese. They were well received by the villagers who derived much mirth from the visitor's efforts to communicate by reading phrases from their aircrew book of Pidgin. The natives cooked some bananas and taro for them and provided drinking water. They also agreed to take the airmen to a friendly chief who had been a plantation boss boy. The headman from the village was a "missionary boy" and the only one really able to make himself understood by the airmen. The next day, Sunday 14th, he led them back past the waterfall and along the stream that they had followed during the sixth to ninth day of their journey. They left the creek bed at a point where they had previously failed to find an exit and climbed the ridge before setting out to the north west. Their guide said he was taking them to a "Kaptan bilong Englis."

The group stayed the night in a village where they were fed taro, sugar cane and custard apples. The Tul Tul of this village told them that a local chief who was "Numba wan bilong Australia" had issued instructions that any airmen who were found were to be brought to him. The two airmen were passed from village to village where they were fed and provided with guides and forward scouts to prevent an accidental encounter with the Japanese. On the afternoon of 15 November, they heard rifle fire and began to suspect that the natives might be leading them into a trap. The guide was able to allay their fears and led them to a coastal village where they enjoyed a meal of fish, taro and coconut milk paid for with razor blades. That night the natives held a general meeting to decide on the best way to move their guests to the next destination. For a while, the scary prospect of marching along the Japanese road in the moonlight was considered. A scouting party was sent out to see if the way was clear, however they soon encountered a Japanese patrol and the idea was abandoned in favour of an inland route. the following day. They tracked inland to another village where they stayed for the next day and a half.

Having left a note with the coastal village Luluai, Townsend, then received word that "Numba Wan" knew where they were and would rendezvous with them at the mouth of a stream on the coast. On the way to the meeting place, they spotted a canoe approaching and hid in the undergrowth. As the canoe was paddled into the river mouth the airmen were surprised to see "Numba Wan" sitting up in the bow proudly wearing an Australian army cap and pullover. Across his lap was a Winchester .44 cal rifle of the type often seen in western movies. He introduced himself as "Fren bilong Australia tru. Nam bilong mipela 'Golpak'." ie, I am a true friend of Australia and my name is Golpak. Golpak took the airmen to his village of "Sali" arriving there on the evening of the 18th. About a mile from the village, he had a house built for his two esteemed guests. They were given cooking and eating utensils as well as a hurricane lamp. They were also given blankets and pillows that had been taken from a plantation house when the occupants evacuated it.

Townsend and McClymont ate well, being supplied with a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as pork and poultry. Golpak took great delight in bringing them fish that the villagers had caught using dynamite that had been supplied by the Japanese. The Japanese also unwittingly supplied the airmen with quinine when their own supply ran out. Golpak sent one of the village children to the Japanese garrison to say that he himself was ill. the messenger returned with 30 quinine tablets and some aspirin. While settling into the house, the airmen were told by Golpak of Australian soldiers operating in the area. On 20 November Townsend sent a note to this party, advising them of their whereabouts but recommending that no attempt should be made to join the Army party lest it give away their



position. The presence of the two airmen was an exciting event for the local villagers and, after living in the house for nearly two weeks, the inevitable loose talk led to suspicion on the part of the Japanese.



Gopak with Major AG Loundes at Jaquinot Bay

They began to question the natives as to the whereabouts of the two white men, even quoting their surnames. On the 3 December, Townsend sent a second note to the Army party to warn them of the trouble that was brewing around Gopak's village. This was partly motivated by his concern that they had not answered the first note. A party of twelve "Police Boys" (native constabulary - under the control of, if not necessarily loyal to the Japanese) were sent to arrest Gopak and the natives from the village. As they rounded up the latter, some of the piccaninies (children) escaped and ran to warn Gopak. Gopak's answer to the searching police was to move out onto a peninsular rather than going further into

the bush. He then reversed the position the next day while the beach area was being searched. To disguise their tracks, Gopak insisted that the airmen walk barefooted. The coral on the peninsular caused bad cuts on their feet. Gopak, accompanied by his ten-year-old daughter, then led the airmen about two miles back into the bush where they stayed for three nights. On the fourth morning (8 December), they were preparing to head even further into the bush when they heard shooting. The Japanese or the Police Boys had found McClymont's flying suit and the water tins that had been left in the house.

The house itself had only been found after the Police Boys beat some of the natives until they revealed its location and that of the airmen. As the shooting approached their position, the evaders made good their escape by running down the mountain towards the sea. In the rush McClymont became separated from the others. However, planning for just such a contingency allowed him to re-join the party at a pre-arranged spot at the bottom of the hill. Gopak then led the once again barefoot duo back into the hills to a small cave where they stayed for eight days. Here their diet was restricted to taro and coconuts stolen from the gardens and cooked only at night over a very low fire by Gopak's daughter. The gardens were also a source of some tobacco, which they dried and smoked. The festering coral cuts on their feet were lanced using razor blades sterilised in the fire. They were then treated with sulfanilimide and iodine from the first aid kit.

By 17 December, the Luluai Gopak was considered to be a fugitive from the Japanese. There was no indication that they were going to leave the village or release the natives that they had arrested. Gopak decided to move to another village farther into the bush. This village had been built by those members of Gopak's village who had managed to avoid arrest by the Japanese, or in some cases escaped from them after arrest. On arrival the airmen were told of a mission boy who was waiting for them with food and a reply from the Australian Army party. The reply indicated that it would be better for the two airmen and Gopak to join the Australian party. They decided to rest and take advantage of the good food, which was available before going on. On the second night in the new village guards reported torches approaching along the coast road and the whole village was evacuated. Despite the fact that it turned out to be a false alarm they settled for the night about a mile (1.6km) into the bush.

On 19 December, the Luluai and his two charges set out to the northwest over a large mountain. The following day they arrived at the campsite of a "Coast-watcher" group commanded by Major Ian



Skinner. For the next six weeks Townsend and McClymont operated as "Aircraft Plotters" for the coast-watchers. The Japanese were anxious to catch the group and it was necessary to shift camp quite often. Supplies were dropped from American B-24s and included a camera for a downed American airman who was also with the party.

Late in January word came through that the airmen could be evacuated by submarine. This would entail a forced march to reach the rendezvous at Open Bay on the north coast to the east of Ubili. They left the coast-watchers on 1 February and trekked for three days and three nights. On the fourth day they were concealed in the bottom of native canoes to make a dangerous crossing of Wide Bay. They then carried on in darkness to the rendezvous point. As they arrived at the rendezvous point, the Captain of the USS "Gato" was about to complete his stated mission by taking on board an Australian coast-watcher, Major A.W. Roberts of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) and four American airmen.

On board the submarine the ratings manning the .50 cal and .30 cal machine guns were nervously traversing the shoreline while they watched the slow progress of the two rubber dinghies that were bringing their passengers aboard. The dinghies had covered about 200m of the 3 km journey back to the submarine when they heard a commotion on the beach and saw what they later described as "crude blinker signalling". From the submarine the signal read as "sixty seven" more aviators to be picked up. The Captain ordered that the submarine's collapsible wooden boat be broken out in order to be used as a ferry. The cook was told to prepare a meal for eighty guests. Meanwhile the dinghies returned to the beach and found only three additional aviators; Townsend, McClymont and their American companion. They were embarked on the rubber boats and rowed to the submarine. Once all were on board, the "Gato" headed west towards Vitiaz Strait on four engines. The seven aviators and one coast-watcher were given the "SIX_B" treatment; ie. Bath, Bandage, Bread, Butter, Bouillon and Bed. At 0626 hrs on 7 February the submarine picked up an escort of two PT Boats and the three put into Dreger Harbour at 1330 that afternoon.

Golpak returned to the bush and continued to be a thorn in the side of the Japanese until the end of the war. Later, having become quite famous he also became a successful

businessman and was awarded the MBE. When he died in 1959, the local people with assistance from the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society, erected a memorial in his honour. Funds were also raised in Australia to build a school for his village. In 1964 Air Commodore Bill Townsend attended the opening of the school. He renewed acquaintances with one of the small children involved in his earlier adventures in that area; this was Koulia, the son of Golpak, who was to be the teacher at the new school.



Photo by George Oakes: 1961 unveiling the memorial to Paramount Chief Golpak





Exercise ‘Casualties’

From Les Anderson, Instrument Fitter

I was at 76 SQN (Mirage) Williamtown for four years after training; 1968-1972 including exercises in Darwin (76 SQN was Australia's ‘Home Squadron’ at that time).

During one particular exercise, the RAF attacked from Singapore with Vulcan and Victor bombers, dropping cut toilet rolls from their bomb bays onto the Darwin flight line.

Other people on the flight line and I were identified as ‘casualties’ and transferred to Medical section. We were released after two hours - it was the best/shortest day on exercise I have ever had!



76SQN Mirage



Boost In Support For Veteran Mental Health

*From the office of The Hon Darren Chester MP, Minister for Veterans Affairs, Minister for Defence Personnel
Monday, 1 February 2021*

Mental health providers, social workers and community nursing providers who provide vital services to our veteran community are set to receive a boost in funding from the Australian Government with an increase in fees from today. Minister for Veterans Affairs Darren Chester said the Government committed \$94.3 million in the Budget to increase fees paid to mental health, social work and community nursing providers, and ensure continued high quality care for our veterans and their families.

Maintaining competitive fees for these mental health and community support providers will enable better outcomes for our veterans and their families, and encourage providers to continue to offer services to support members of the veteran community through challenging times, Mr Chester said. It was crucial that the Government continues to deliver positive change to boost support for veterans mental health and wellbeing, particularly as we navigate a global pandemic.

This Government has invested in the veterans affairs portfolio year-on-year and will continue to do so to ensure we are putting veterans and their families first, including by regularly examining the fees paid to providers for health services. The \$94.3 million over four years to improve mental health outcomes and ensure high quality care for our older veterans and their families, and to better support their transition to civilian life by increasing fees paid to mental health, social work and community nursing providers.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing advocacy by ex-service organisations and peak bodies who work with us in partnership to ensure our veterans and their families have access to world-class care and support, Mr Chester said. For any veteran out there who may be struggling, I encourage you to reach out for help. Support is always available.

More information on mental health support available through DVA is available at dva.gov.au.

MEDIA CONTACTS:

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





Orders Given For Raising VAOC

22 December 1941

This material is compiled from various sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and www.ozatwar.com. 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

Orders for raising the Volunteer Air Observers Corps (VAOC) were given by the Air Board on this day, with formal War Cabinet approval following nine days later. Regulations approved by the Minister for Air, Arthur Drakeford, on 22 January 1942 provided that the Corps was to comprise principally civilians who gave their time in a voluntary and honorary capacity to report sightings of enemy aircraft over Australian territory. Accordingly, it was decided the VAOC would not be part of the RAAF, even though controlled by the Air Board. By the end of March, a network of 500 observation and control posts linked to RAAF Fighter Sector Headquarters was in operation, covering 240 kilometres inland from the coast from Cairns, Queensland, to Port Lincoln, South Australia, and from Albany to Geraldton in Western Australia. By July 1942, these posts were manned by approximately 26,500 volunteers, both men and women.



VAOC operations centre



More here: <http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/underattack/mobilise/scanning.asp>



Orange Exposure Doubles Risk of Developing Dementia

From Tony Horsington

Initially published 26 Jan 2021 Military.com By Patricia Kime

A new study of more than 300,000 Vietnam-era US veterans has found that those who were exposed to Agent Orange are nearly twice as likely to develop dementia as those who were not. The new finding, published Monday in JAMA Neurology, is among the most substantial to date linking cognitive decline with chemicals used for defoliation during the Vietnam War.

For the study, researchers at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Health Care System, examined the medical records of thousands of veterans and found a two-fold risk of dementia for those whose medical records indicated evidence of exposure. According to Deborah Barnes, a researcher with the University of California San Francisco and the Department of Veterans Affairs, the study authors found that, over the course of time, 5% of veterans with a documented exposure to Agent Orange were diagnosed with dementia compared with 2.5% of vets with no known exposure.

"Even though the absolute rates ... are low, these veterans were still relatively young, so if the risk holds, we would expect that to increase as they age," Barnes said in an interview with JAMA Neurology.



The research also discovered that the exposed vets were diagnosed an average of 15 months earlier than non-exposed veterans - a finding that can have a huge impact on former personnel, their families and society as a whole, Barnes said. "Studies have found if we could delay the onset of dementia by a year or 15 months, it would have a huge impact on the population prevalence over time," she explained.

For the study, the researchers reviewed the medical records of Vietnam veterans who received care through the Veterans Health Administration from Oct 1, 2001, to Sept 30, 2015. They excluded anyone already diagnosed with dementia and

those whose Agent Orange exposure was unclear. They found that even after adjusting for other factors and conditions that can play a role in the development of dementia - psychiatric conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, medical conditions like diabetes and Parkinson's, or demographic variables - the two-fold risk remained. "We did observe that veterans who had a history of Agent Orange exposure were more likely to have PTSD in their medical records or traumatic brain injury, so they did have other conditions that could increase their risk of dementia, so we adjusted statistically and ... yes, there [still] is an association," Barnes said.

Throughout the Vietnam War, US forces sprayed more than 19 million gallons of defoliant, including 11 million of Agent Orange, to clear the jungle and destroy crops. From 1962 to 1971, at least 2.6 million US service members were stationed in Vietnam and other places where the herbicides were sprayed or stored. Thousands of veterans have been diagnosed with varying types of cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and peripheral neuropathy as a result of exposure to the herbicides, according to the VA.

The research didn't explain why exposure may be linked with the development of dementia, but one of the main ingredients of the defoliants - dioxin - is known to be stored in fat tissue where it "sticks around for a long time," Barnes said. "It's possible that Agent Orange stayed in the fat tissue and is slowly being released and causing toxic effects on the brain. But we also know that Agent Orange increases the risk of other disorders that themselves are risk factors for dementia, so it's unclear if it's a direct effect of the dioxin, an indirect effect or possibly a combination," she added.

The researchers said that their study has some limitations, including concerns over the accuracy of Agent Orange exposure documentation in medical records or misclassification of a dementia diagnosis. Also, the study did not include veterans who receive care outside VA or contain any baseline cognitive scores, which could have revealed whether any of the veterans had undiagnosed dementia at the start. The researchers suggested that additional studies be conducted to determine the relationship between Agent Orange exposure and dementia and added that they hoped it would encourage physicians to screen their patients for the condition as they age. Dementia is on the rise in the aging veterans community, with a 20% increase expected among VA patients over the next decade, according to the department. Barnes said she also would like to see more research on the positive steps patients can take to offset increased risk -- physical activity, healthy lifestyle choices, treating their mental health diagnoses and more. "We can't change our past. ... What you can control is what you are doing now and what you do in the future. My hope is that, even if these veterans have this risk factor, engaging in a healthier lifestyle may help them offset that risk," she said.



A US Huey helicopter sprays Agent Orange over Vietnam. The US military used at least 11 million gallons of Agent Orange in Vietnam from 1961 to 1972. Wikimedia Commons





Follow up to ‘How many takes at being a CO?’ from Issue 15

From Dave Rogers, AVM (Ret'd)

Editor's comment: Dave has clarified why the list of COs 79 SQN changed so often and why many officers held the command several times...clearly, it had nothing to do with needing several attempts to get it right!

When No 79 Squadron was re-formed at Ubon in June 1962, the command issue of the squadron and in the early years of Ubon itself, was most unusual and continued throughout the life of the RAAF Contingent from 1962 to 1968. Your list is incomplete as the early years (62-65) are missing and the last two names, Poodle Wood and Bill Fitz Henry were COs of the unit at Butterworth flying Mirages (ten years after Ubon was closed) before their repatriation to Australia and subsequent disposal.

After the first few months in 1962 following the 77SQN deployment, two units were established; No 79SQN for the Sabre flying operations and Base Squadron Ubon, to obviously provide all the support needed for 79SQN. There was an OC Ubon (a WGCDR) to exercise command of the ‘RAAF Contingent Ubon’ as it was known. The manning of the OC post and the CO of 79SQN was unusual due to the nature of how the base itself was supported, especially in the early months.

The political aspects of the need for some security about Butterworth’s involvement are covered elsewhere but suffice to say that Butterworth provided all the support for the Sabre operations and initially some personnel for the Base Squadron. The latter changed over time to all being posted from Australia.

All the aircraft, pilots and groundcrew for 79SQN came from 78Wing at Butterworth. The squadrons shared the load and individuals were attached to 79SQN for two months at a time, such that in a normal tour of 2-2.5 years at Butterworth, every member would do three to four tours at Ubon. The command of the squadron was shared by the four flight commanders in Nos 3 and 77SQNs, so that on their tour, they would be appointed as CO 79SQN. That explains the short command tours in your little article.

Initially, the OC post was also manned from Butterworth. The COs of 3 and 77SQNs and at times, selected senior FLTCDRs (as Acting WCGDRs) were posted as OC for two month tours. This obviously impacted the command of the units at Butterworth, so from early to mid-1964, the OC post was manned by a GD WGCDR from Australia on a six month posting. All Base Squadron personnel (with a SQNLDR as CO) were similarly posted for six months. One of the early OCs was WGCGR Neville McNamara, later CAS and CDFS.



Mummy, I want to grow up and be a pilot.
Honey, you can't do both.

I was 14 when I wanted to be a pilot. I'm now 80 and still want to be a pilot, but I'd rather be 14 again.

The average fighter pilot, despite a swaggering personality and confident exterior, is capable of feelings such as love, affection, humility, caring and intimacy. They just don't involve others.

When you see a tree in the clouds, it's not good news.





RAAF 100th Anniversary

On March 31, *The Australian* will publish a special gloss magazine and digital extension to mark the 100th anniversary of the RAAF.

Australia's leading defence commentators, historians and senior military contributors will provide a comprehensive review of the RAAF's history and a detailed analysis of its current status and future direction.

Advertisers in the report will reach 438,000 readers including key government and defence decision makers.

The Royal Australian Air Force marks 100 years of service to the Australian people this year. More information is available here: <https://airforce2021.airforce.gov.au/> and here: <https://airforce2021.airforce.gov.au/journey>

A list of events is here: <https://airforce2021.airforce.gov.au/events>



The Future of Drones

From John Clarkson

This is from Ace Jewell, Commander USN (retired), now 88 years old, fighter pilot in three wars.

Drones will never be late to briefings; start fights at happy hour; destroy clubs; attempt to seduce other pilots' dates; purchase huge watches; insult other services; sing 'O'Leary's Balls,' dance on tables; yell 'Show us yer tits!' or do all of the other things that we know win wars. I see no future in them.



Pizza

From Murray Newham

CALLER: Is this Gordon's Pizza?
GOOGLE: No sir, it's Google Pizza.
CALLER: Sorry. I must have dialled a wrong number.
GOOGLE: No sir, Google bought Gordon's Pizza last month.
CALLER: OK. I'd like to order a pizza.
GOOGLE: Do you want your usual, sir?
CALLER: My usual? How do you know my "usual"?



GOOGLE: According to our caller ID data sheet, the last 12 times you called you ordered an extra-large pizza with three cheeses, sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms and meatballs on a thick crust.

CALLER: OK! That's what I want.

GOOGLE: May I suggest that this time you order a pizza with ricotta, arugula, sun-dried tomatoes and olives on a whole wheat gluten free thin crust?

CALLER: No! I detest vegetables.

GOOGLE: Your cholesterol is too high, sir.

CALLER: How the hell do you know?

GOOGLE: We cross-referenced your home phone number with your medical records. We have the result of your blood tests for the last 7 years.

CALLER: Listen! I do not want your vegetable pizza! I take medication for my cholesterol.

GOOGLE: Excuse me sir, but you haven't taken your medication regularly. According to our database, you only purchased a box of 30 cholesterol tablets once, at Drug RX Pharmacy, 4 months ago.

CALLER: I bought the rest from another pharmacy.

GOOGLE: That doesn't show on your credit card statement.

CALLER: I paid cash.

GOOGLE: But you didn't withdraw enough cash according to your bank statement.

CALLER: I have other sources of cash.

GOOGLE: That doesn't show on your last tax return unless you bought them using an undeclared income source, which is illegal, sir.

CALLER: WHAT THE HELL!?

GOOGLE: I'm sorry, sir, our sole intention is to help you.

CALLER: Enough! I'm sick of Google, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and all the others. I'm going to an island without internet, cable TV, mobile phone service and snoops who watch me and spy on me!

GOOGLE: I understand sir, but you need to renew your passport first. It expired 6 weeks ago.





National President's Message

From Carl Schiller OAM, CSM

Air Force Association Foundation

In the last SITREP, I mentioned the Association National Board's support for the establishment of a benevolent foundation designed to support veterans and families. The AFA Foundation Sub-Committee met twice during March to discuss the Air Force Association Foundation's structure and principal focus. The sub-committee invited a professional fundraiser who has substantial experience in assisting not-for-profit entities to raise large sums of money for beneficial purposes. Despite the impact of COVID on charity fundraising, there are very effective strategies to raise funds in the current environment. The days of 'tin rattling' and 'begging letters' have given way to more sophisticated methods. Underpinning the Foundation's success will be its ability to cultivate ongoing sources of funding, appropriate salaried and volunteer staff, good governance and effective oversight of its operation.

'Relief from distress' is likely to be the Foundation's raison d'etre. Clearly, there are many situations that create personal distress. The Foundation will not be able to cover every issue. It will attempt to avoid duplicating support that is available elsewhere. I would expect most of us are in a satisfactory position but many veterans and family members, for a myriad of reasons, find themselves in disturbing situations. Fulfilling a legacy of the Australian Flying Corps Association by helping fellow veterans is an honourable cause.

Creating the Foundation is an uncomplicated task. Operating it effectively and maintaining ongoing commitment is another matter.

Air Force 100th Anniversary

Many RAAF veterans' associations will celebrate in some form Air Force's centenary, including our State/Territory Divisions. I congratulate RAAF Association NSW Division for its celebration of the Association's 101st Birthday and the transfer of custodianship of the RAAFA NSW Memorial Book to the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies NSW. The event is testimony to the commitment of its members to the Association and memory of the Fallen. I am very much looking forward to attending.

Air Force Association Ltd Constitution

The Constitution Sub-Committee has met twice this year to examine several drafts of a new constitution. I am expecting an advanced draft to be presented to the National Board at its May 2021 Board Meeting.

Sir Richard Williams Sculpture, Moonta SA

Sir Richard was born in Moonta Mines, SA on August 3rd, 1890. The Moonta township is holding a Sir Richard Williams RAAF Centenary Celebration in August this year. Part of the celebration is the unveiling of a bronze statue of Sir Richard sitting on a bench looking towards the sky. The organising committee has been diligently working to raise funds towards the cost of the sculpture and has encouraged the SA Government to contribute. Our State/Territory Divisions have been asked to provide financial assistance. Air Force Association Ltd will match these contributions. NSW Division has donated \$1,000. At this point, the Association will likely donate \$15,000 towards the project.



A notice outside a University College building in Oxford:
Wanted reliable second-hand bicycle. Sex does not matter.

A note appended below the notice:
Speak for yourself!

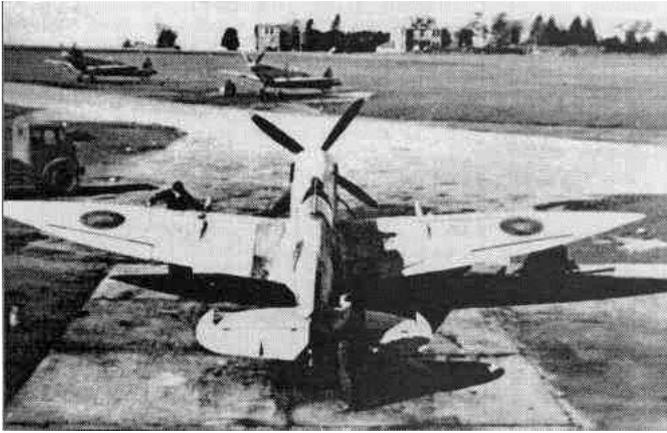




Friend or Foe

From Ray Winslow

Flashback to 1945. Serving with 691 SQN RAF, one of the network of Aerial Defence of Great Britain squadrons, I was an RAAF pilot based at Harrowbeer near Plymouth, Devon.



RAF Harrowbeer during WWII

Flying Spitfires, one of our exercises was calibrating the radar over the Channel. When returning to base it was essential to be identified and that was called IFF (Identification Friend or Foe)

On the R/T, a soft WAAF voice would say ‘Hello SCATTERBRAIN 17; is your cockerel crowing?’

Quite a number of times since, I have thought of inappropriate answers to that question! And as to the callsign SCATTERBRAIN, who said the English don’t have a sense of humour!



Malaysian Experience

From Peter Scully

As the nation’s greatest fighter pilot (elect) in May 1958, I was suddenly and cruelly, I thought, posted to RAF Kuala Lumpur to be Personal Assistant to the Air Officer Commanding No 224 Group RAF (Air Headquarters Malaya). No one had heard of the place until a USAF exchange officer informed us that KL was actually in Malaysia – but no one had even heard of 224 Group. Naturally, my heart sank. Here I was, a young Flying Officer fighter pilot posted to a ground job: I did not join the RAAF for that.

However, and much to my surprise, the posting had some benefits. I managed to gain more flying hours per month there than I managed on the squadron; obtained captaincies on both the Percival Pembroke and the Whirlwind HAR4 chopper.

I recall my first instructional trip in the Whirlwind: here was a great fighter pilot, this will be a piece of cake: WRONG! It really cut me down to size and was anything but easy to fly. Later on, after the RAAF took over Butterworth, I was also able to continue flying Sabres after they arrived.



RAF Westland Whirlwind HAR4

However, I also managed many hours in the single-engine Pioneer and that opened many more opportunities: a chance to fly out into the jungle and land at the many strips there, usually less than 200m long; the Pioneer had a threshold speed of about 22 knots. These jungle strips were associated with jungle ‘Forts’ manned by the Malay Police Force who provided support to the Malay Aborigines and to prevent the Communists Terrorists (CTs) using the aborigines for food and intelligence. They also intensely patrolled the jungle for any signs of CT activity. I became very friendly with one particular Fort Commander, Inspector Raynor (Butch) Walker of Thai/Scots mix who commanded Fort Chabai, and he invited me back



whenever I had the opportunity. Fortunately, my boss the AOC, actually encouraged me to get out of the office as much as possible and so I ended up with almost unlimited opportunities.

My next trip was with the RAF Education Officer, Terry Smith, a great rugby player. Butch took us well into the boondoo, meeting many local aborigines including staying overnight in a Long House which was an unusual but fascinating experience: many families in the one building, including dogs and each with their separate living space and fire. Butch always kept me on the go, no sitting around. On one of my later trips, he thought I might like to join one of his regular patrols – six Police and moi. It was just two days but it did test my legs and I frequently thought: “What is a young fighter pilot doing out here?” Also, I thought it inadvisable to let the boss know that I’d been out in the jungle chasing CTs.

Sometime later Butch told me he was thinking of exploring a different method of supplying the Fort – by river – and invited me to join him if I could get a week’s leave. Well, the leave was no problem and so off we went, just the two of us with two aborigines helping by carrying our heavy packs. We set off on foot with a two-day walk staying overnight at an aborigine’s hut. The aborigines knew all the short cuts and we didn’t see them until we reached our destination. On the first day all went well, the walk was not too arduous. However, at one stage, Butch turned to me indicating stop and be quiet. After several minutes he set off again and I asked him what the problem was. “Tiger” was his response. “Great” I thought, because our only weapon was a .38 Smith & Wesson which would probably just annoy a tiger. Fortunately, the beast was not hungry and wandered off.



Peter Scully helping out on the raft

When, on the second day we finally reached the river the aborigines made us a sturdy bamboo raft. Their skills were outstanding. So off we set down the river which was usually flowing sedately but a few rapids surprised us. I had one dip in a swiftly flowing portion causing much consternation for the aborigines – apparently losing a ‘white tuan’ would cause loss of face. For the first three days we saw no one at all and no sign of habitation. In the early mornings we saw local animals, deer and monkeys down for an early morning drink and the scenery in many places was absolutely spectacular. We had only one event which caused concern; we’d camped for the night on a large sand spit when a canoe with four locals pulled in and approached

us. We grabbed our arms and our concern was increased because Butch (who was fluent in local languages) was unable to understand them. However, offers of cigarettes were willingly accepted and we all sat around our campfire with mumbles and smiles.

As we approached the West coast of Malaya, we came to the main railway. Here, Butch and I left the raft which the aborigines took on further. We climbed up to the railway and Butch waved down the next train which took us on to Police HQ at Kota Bahru, where we called up KL for a lift home. It was a great adventure for a young man.



Me: Sobbing my heart out. “I can’t see you anymore. I’m not going to let you hurt me again.”
Trainer: “It was one sit-up! You did one sit-up!”

I miss the 90s when bread was still good for you and no one knew what kale was.

Do you ever get up in the morning, look in the mirror and think, ‘That can’t be right!’





Helicopter 'Ballast'

From WGCDR Ian Gibson (Intel)

After reading the article by Peter Ring in the latest *Wings* magazine about his check flight with Ron Mitchell when an A-4 went down, I was reminded of one day back in 1980 (or 81) when, as a brand new boggy PLTOFF INTELO at 5SQN, I was told to get my helmet from the Safety Equipos as I was going to be the ballast in a short-notice UH-1B trip to Wagga.



5SQN Huey UH-1B Iroquois on the apron at FBN
Photographer: Wal Nelowkin

5SQN Training Flight was there at the time and Ron Mitchell was the DETCDR. He was either starting up or shutting down when OC Wagga, in a lighty, taxied under the rotor disc of the Iroquois. You can imagine Ron's reaction to that, from memory, Ron confronted said OC in the Mess that night and upbraided him for his terrible airmanship.

The GPCAPT OC didn't take too kindly to that and rang CO 5SQN demanding that Ron Mitchell be returned to FBN forthwith. Hence the short-notice flight and, as there were no other pilots available, I sat in the co-pilot's seat as ballast for the trip over and back. We landed at Wagga, Ron embarked and we returned to FBN. Ron silently fumed all the way back and, once down at FBN, stormed out of the aircraft to have a chat with CO 5. Those who could overhear proceedings advised that extremely strong words were uttered, none of which reflected well on the OC Wagga!



Australia Day Honours for AFA NSW Members

Congratulations to the following AFA NSW members who were recognised in the Australia Day Honours list this year. (Shown in order of award precedence.)

Mr Richard Neil KELLOWAY

Award Member of the Order of Australia

Post-Nominal AM

Citation For significant service to air force organisations, and to veterans advocacy.

Mr Ronald Thomas GLEW

Award Medal of the Order of Australia

Post-Nominal OAM

Citation For service to veterans and their families, and to the community.

Mr Bexon WHANG

Award Medal of the Order of Australia

Post-Nominal OAM

Citation For service to veterans of the Korean War.





RAAF Commenced Balloon Flying

5 March 1990

This material is compiled from various sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and www.ozatwar.com. 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

In response to a growing number of requests for RAAF participation in public events, it was decided to establish a hot air balloon section to provide a colourful and spectacular, yet economical, solution to public relations commitments. A Kavanagh D77 envelope (of 77 000 cubic feet capacity) was acquired from Phil Kavanagh, Australia’s only balloon maker. After completing its maiden flight on this day (with the Chief of the Air Staff and the Soviet Ambassador aboard), this balloon flew during the RAAF’s 70th Anniversary Air Show. A second envelope was purchased, a Kavanagh D90 model, and commenced operations in 1993. A third envelope, also a D90, was bought and specially decorated with artwork to commemorate the RAAF’s 75th anniversary in 1996. As the balloon travelled around south-eastern Australia, it was initially crewed by a pilot and three ground staff drawn from No 28 (City of Canberra) Reserve Squadron, but the balloons are now operated by D Flight of RAAF Base East Sale-based Central Flying School.



Note: The Air Force operates four balloons; three Kavanagh B-105s (VH-LVD, VH-OUP and VH-DEF(II) and VH-BZU. VH-LVD entered service in July 2011 and is currently used as a back-up to the main display balloon. VH-OUP and VH-DEF(II) are the primary display balloons and are identical. They are fitted with easy access gated baskets that allow the far improved tethered operations. Both balloons feature artwork including, the RAAF Roundel, the RAAF Badge, a stylised eagle and an F-35. The design is called “Our place, Our skies”, and represents the connections between RAAF and indigenous Australia. VH-BZU, a Cameron Helmet-120 model, is the RAAF’s first special shape balloon. It is in the shape of a fighter pilot’s helmet and was manufactured by Cameron Balloons in the UK.

More balloon history is here: <http://www.adf-serials.com.au/RAAFBalloons.htm>
More here: <https://www.airforce.gov.au/displays/balloon>



Centenarian Honoured in RAAF’s Centenary Year

Reprinted with permission from CONTACT magazine

Betty Howells (nee Raby) was already seven weeks old when the Royal Australian Air Force was formed on March 31, 1921. She celebrated her 100th birthday on February 21, 2021. During



RAAF's centenary year, the Connect with a Centenarian project will honour former Royal Australian Air Force servicemen and women who also turn 100 this year.



Leading Aircraftwoman Emma Singleton with the Chief of Air Force award presented to her great-grandmother Betty Howells to mark her 100th birthday. Photo by Sergeant Bill

The presentation of a Chief of Air Force award recognised Mrs Howells' birthday and her service to the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II.

Mrs Howells was born in Willoughby, NSW. She was educated at Willoughby Central Domestic Science School, passing her Qualifying Certificate and completing 18 months in a commercial course. Gaining working experience in the commercial field at World Marine and General Insurance Company of Bond Street, Sydney, before the war, Mrs Howells' skills were sought after as Australia depended on everyone to apply their job skills to support the war effort.

Mrs Howells enlisted in the RAAF on January 4, 1942. With her clerical background, she began work as a stores clerk. She trained at Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) Geelong before being posted to No 5 Aircraft Depot Wagga then No 5 Maintenance Group, Darling Point. During her posting to Wagga, her expertise was invaluable in keeping Bristol Beaufort, Bristol Beaufighter, Lockheed Ventura and B-25 Mitchell aircraft in the air. The important function of providing administrative support to RAAF maintenance units in NSW, Queensland and New Caledonia was Mrs Howells' role at No 5 Maintenance Group, Darling Point, Sydney. Mrs Howells discharged from the RAAF on December 13, 1945, having attained the rank of sergeant. She now lives in Adelaide.

The family tradition of service continues and, as the Royal Australian Air Force commemorates its centenary, with Mrs Howells' great-granddaughter, Leading Aircraftwoman Emma Singleton starting her career as a Personnel Capability Specialist (*Ed: Clerk Admin in the old money!*). LACW Singleton also attended the presentation to mark her great-grandmother's birthday.

Posted to No 6 Squadron, RAAF Base Amberley, Leading Aircraftwoman Singleton said she could see similarities in her career to that of her great-grandmother. "I thought it special that my great-grandmother was in No 5 Maintenance Group and I start my career in No 6 Squadron," Leading Aircraftwoman Singleton said. "When mum called and asked me what I thought about being invited to attend this very special presentation I realised just how much it meant to me. "Knowing that I was following in my great-grandmother's footsteps and realising that I was going where she had gone, was at the front of my mind. "Realising the differences in how the RAAF was then, and how far forward it is now illuminating. "When great-grandma joined, it was in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force, but I joined the Royal Australian Air Force. "Today, women are on equal footing with men and able to serve in any capacity.



“Great-grandma had a very fast career progression from recruit to sergeant in three years. “She was obviously very intelligent, a hard worker and must have adapted very quickly to her roles. “I am so proud to be her great-granddaughter, I am so proud of her achievements and I am so proud that I have the opportunity to attend this very special presentation to her. “I love my RAAF career and I look forward to a long career as a Personnel Capability Specialist and hope my career progression is as rapid as my great grandmother’s.”

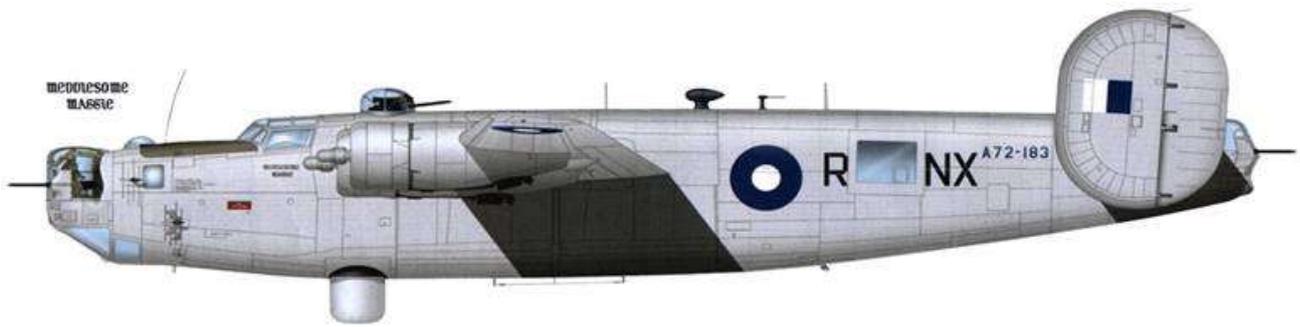
Director Community Engagement RAAF Edinburgh Group Captain Greg Weller and Executive Warrant Officer Intelligence Directorate Warrant Officer Janet Brennan presented the award to Mrs Howells in a small private ceremony with her family at her home in Adelaide on 22 February.



200 Flt formed at Leyburn, Queensland

15 February 1945

This material is compiled from various sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and www.ozatwar.com. 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



200 Flight B-24 Liberator 'Meddlesome Maggie'

In the latter stages of the Pacific War, RAAF Nos 200 and 201 Flights used small numbers of B-24 Liberators for special covert and electronic surveillance missions (under the direction of the Australian Intelligence Bureau). On this day, No 200 Flight was formed. Two Liberators from No 24 Squadron were initially assigned to No 200 Flight to assist a USAAF Liberator from the 380th Bomb Group in training with the Army's 'Z' Special Operations unit. The activities of the Flight were not publicised as it was tasked with the insertion and supply of intelligence gathering parties behind enemy lines. Crews involved on operations were forbidden to speak about them at any time.

The Liberator aircraft were suitably modified for special operations; the ball and mid-upper turrets were removed, as was the armour plate. The normal radar was removed and replaced by 'Rebecca', a short-range navigation system developed to support the dropping of airborne troops and supplies. Only 50 per cent of the remaining ammunition capacity was carried. At the rear of the aircraft a special slide chute for the dropping of paratroops was installed, as the dropping of men and supplies called for precise flying and teamwork by the aircraft crew.

More on the AIB is here: <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1070307/document/5519601.PDF>





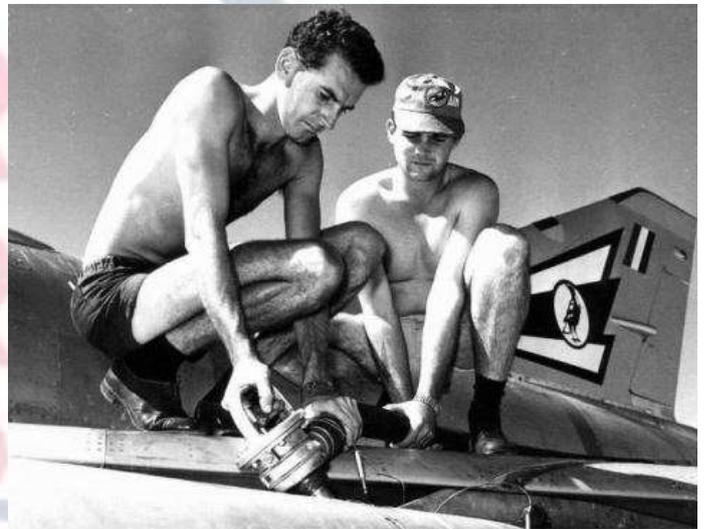
Trials & Tribulations at Butterworth

From Peter Scully

In 1967, No 75 Squadron quickly settled into our new home at Butterworth - or so we thought. 75 was the first all-weather fighter squadron in the current Air Force and was established as a three flight independent squadron, and we had our own organic deep maintenance organisation, not just on-line maintenance. Butterworth was still organised with a central maintenance organisation - No 478 SQN - which was the usual arrangement in day-fighter wings. Much to our surprise they did not accept our 'independent' arrangement and had every intention of absorbing our own maintenance facilities. So, the sparks flew, particularly between the CO 478, our CO and our Senior Engineering Officer. It was finally sorted - in our favour - but tensions between the 'chiefs' lasted for a long time. Fortunately, as Operations Officer I was able to stay out of the fight...for a while.

We started our training programme immediately, including our primary role of night flying. After our first night programme, I was summoned to the CO's office and told to write a 'Paper' to the Officer Commanding explaining why we needed to use afterburner for take-off. Apparently, the noise was not acceptable and the OC had directed our CO not to use A/B as the noise upset the residents.

Next was dress: back home in Australia, the troops were used to wearing short shorts. The OC had other ideas and so longer shorts were forced (not very successfully) upon us. On our first Base parade, I was a flight commander of a flight right at the rear of the parade (fortunately). As the OC arrived to take the salute, he stumbled as he climbed the steps to the dais. One of the characters in my flight observed, loudly: "Blimey, he's tripped over his shorts". Well, the flight collapsed into laughter and so did I - but being way back on the parade ground allowed us to escape notice.



Short shorts preferred by Australian troops

One of the other foibles the OC held was that fur felt hats had to be worn with the rims dead flat, a bit like the Mounties. The NCO at the clothing store was directed to produce the correct flatness with each issue and there was a fire bucket full of water on the counter where the correct 'bash' was imposed. Of course, everyone still preferred their favourite personal appearance. I fell into this trap one day: I was the President of the Mess Committee and had to discuss some matters with the OC. I marched into his office, smartly saluted and immediately realised that I had the wrong hat on. Well, matters of state were dismissed as I was informed that more was expected of a senior officer and that if he caught me again I would be on the first Hercules back to Australia. I won - I think he just gave up on Mirage squadrons.



More from 1960s Butterworth

From John Clarkson

A mate of mine and I were discussing or rather reminiscing about humorous events in Butterworth of the mid-1960s. The following anecdotes concern Air Officer Commanding (AOC) parades.

Whilst in 77 Squadron, Butterworth, there was an "Air Officer Commanding" (AOC) inspection and Parade. We had hoped that here, supposedly at the front line, they would not go through the rigmarole of painting everything prior to the inspection. Well, our hopes were well founded. On the day, we were simply asked to parade in our working dress, in a single line in front of our nicely parked aircraft.



There we were, in our stubby shorts and work boots, looking like bronzed ANZACs, standing ready to greet the AOC. The appointment of AOC Far East Air Force was rotated between the RAF, the RAAF, and sometimes the RNZAF. On this occasion, the AOC FEAF was from the RAF. I can still remember this fellow's name; he was Air Vice Marshall Sir Foxley Norris, a very British gentleman, and I believe a decorated pilot from the Battle of Britain.

Amongst this splendid line of airmen, stood one of our armourers, Corporal 'Darkie' McLeod, who, although a white Caucasian male, had tanned extremely well in the tropics. When the AOC walked to the point where Darkie was standing, the Air Vice Marshall said to our CO, "Isn't it wonderful that you have your indigenous labourers on parade with you?". Well, before our CO could respond, Darkie immediately responded "Corporal McLeod – Armament Fitter – Royal Australian Air Force – Sir". Not to be outdone, the Air Vice Marshall replied, "Young man, you'll have a lot of trouble getting back into Australia won't you – with the White Australia Policy?". Darkie began to respond, as we could almost see the steam rising, but several of us who were standing near him hissed "Shut up Darkie".

During late 1966, just prior to the close of the establishment of the Far East Air Force (FEAF), we had yet another Air Officer Commanding (AOC) inspection. The AOC FEAF at this time was Air Vice Marshall Eton from the RAAF. (many of you may remember him). Sad to say, the 478 Squadron Armament establishment gave in to tradition and were instructed to totally clean and repaint the Gun Bay. On the morning of the inspection, the AOC, accompanied by the Squadron CO, the Base Armament Officer, the Line Armament Officer and the 478 SQN Armament Warrant Officer, walked into the Gun Bay and met Sergeant Tom Bourbon, who was the Senior NCO in charge of the Gun Bay at the time. The Air Vice Marshall, who had known Tom from years ago on previous units, said, "Good Morning Tom, what a magnificently clean gun bay! How long did it take you to accomplish this?" Before the FLTLT could reply, Tom said, "Three weeks, Sir, and we haven't cleaned a gun in the last two weeks. We now have 15 serviceable guns and 65 unserviceable guns". The FLTLT (the well-known Norm Russell) gave Tom the infamous glare!



Mildura Pilot Restores WWII Tiger Moth biplane

*By Jennifer Douglas and Cherie von Hörchner,
Reprinted with permission from ABC Mildura-Swan Hill*

Andrew Mason has been in the flying game for more than 40 years and has taken his love of aviation to the next level by turning his attention to revitalising warbirds. From his base at Mildura in Victoria's north-west, the chief flying instructor, agriculture, and firebomber pilot has painstakingly restored a vintage De Havilland Tiger Moth, giving passengers the chance to relive bygone days.



"One of my passions is restoring vintage aircraft ... and we've got a few aeroplanes now that we've built up over the years," Mr Mason said. His Tiger Moth was built in 1942, in Australia, for the Royal Australian Air Force. "At the end of the war, it was sold off and never flew again. Until I bought it as a project in 2004 and over eight years, we had it rebuilt," he said.

It took hard work for Mr Mason to bring the skeleton of an aircraft back to life. "This plane, when I first got it, was what they call a bare-bones project," he said. "It was a steel frame and all the hardware ... just the nuts and bolts and bits and pieces, and nothing else.



"So we built it up from that to what is today. All the wings are probably better than new, we've used better glues [and] laser-cut ribs in the wings. "It's come from nothing to what it is now."

Mr Mason said the Tiger Moth had an interesting history. "The engine itself, and this aeroplane, was built by General Motors Holden. It was built in '42, and the first Holden motor car wasn't built until, I think, '48," he said. "Holden was very active in the production area before the first motor cars were put in place."

Mr Mason said vintage plane restoration was an uncommon skill, with the artisans who applied the classic touches becoming an even more exceptional breed. "The woodwork and fabric that's in this particular plane is a rare talent that's becoming less and less in the aviation industry," he said. "I had it done by the experts, and they've done an awesome job. "Parts are getting hard to find, but they are available if you shop around - but you've got to look around fairly hard to get good quality parts."



General Motors Holden built the De Havilland Tiger Moth engines years before they built cars

To be authorised to offer joy flights in the Tiger Moth meant ensuring it was built to modern commercial safety standards. "This aeroplane is a working aeroplane, so it has to comply with all Civil Aviation Safety Authority regulations," Mr Mason said.

"As a result of that the aeroplane's kept in very good condition, and we use it all the time. "To keep this aircraft flying is pretty expensive and you've got to have a passion to do that."



Mr Mason's interest in restoring antique planes stems from hearing his father's stories. "I've always had an interest in warbirds," Mr Mason said. "My dad was a trainee [and] the war finished before he could go into a fighter squadron. "There's been an interest in aviation ever since the early days of going over gliding fields with him after the war." And the passion for warbirds doesn't stop at the Tiger Moth - Mr Mason is in the thick of restoring an all-metal 1942 Harvard, a project that is so

far three years old. "We look at it as being the caretakers of the aeroplanes," he said. "I often tell people I've never worked a day in my life. "I just go to work and have fun every day."





463 SQN RAAF WWII Memoirs

From Geoff Raebel

My old man, Bob Raebel was an engineer with 463 SQN at Waddington. What follows are snippets of stories that he told over the years. There is not a lot of heroism, nor perhaps a lot of the drag of trying to get 24 aircraft repaired and ready for operations each night, and run what was a part of a highly efficient Air Station.

Cabbage Balls

When 463 and 467 (RAAF) Squadrons took over RAF Waddington in 1943 it was a permanent brick built station. The runways needed to be lengthened and were cut out of farmland. This immense runway length was to allow overloaded aircraft to get airborne and to receive shot up four-engined bombers. Earth moving machinery was still due to work in the overshoot areas at each end of the field and a farmer still had a crop of cabbages in the ground. Inevitably one of the new Lancasters went over the edge of the runway to be brought up short by the soft ground in the middle of the cabbage patch.

It was W/O Bob Raebel's first salvage of a Lancaster and he agonised how to get it out without damage. Fuel wagons were called in to drain off most of the fuel while ammunition, guns and radios were also removed to "lighten ship". Most crew wanted to use a bulldozer to drag the plane out but Bob reasoned they would probably rip the undercarriage off. So, he climbed in and started up all four engines then proceeded to "push the throttles through the gate". On emergency full power, with full flap, the Lanc shivered and shook until she began to heave herself forward out of the bog. The propwash from six thousand horses was blowing cabbages down the runway and it didn't stop when the Lanc turned and taxied slowly over the garden. Once back on the tarmac the plane was undamaged from its ordeal.

Live Bomb!

It happened in 1944, day after day, men winched great docile iron bombs into the bellies of bombers. They were good at their jobs, well trained and experienced. The bombs were safe enough, no bomb was armed until it had fallen far enough for a small propeller in the base or nose to unwind and arm the fuse.

On one occasion, the armourers connected two cables to the 1000-pound bomb and winched it up, securing it to the bomb release gear in the aircraft. Instead of moving the trolley under the next shackle point, they elected to drag the bomb slightly sideways on the existing cables. The arming propeller



RAF armourers bombing up an Avro Lancaster

assembly was sheared off by a trolley support as the bomb slewed under its own weight on the cables. In that instant the armourers looked at each other, mentally saying "goodbye", but oblivion did not come. "Everyone stop! Be quiet! Don't move! We have a live bomb on the hoist" yelled the corporal armourer. The engine fitter changing spark plugs on number four engine stopped. The instrument fitter in the pilot's seat called "Don't move everybody, we are sitting on a live bomb" "You," the Corporal pointed to 'Dusty'

Miller, "belt off to the Adjutant's office and get the field cleared; don't let any pompous pommie stop



you.” “Right Corp!” “You jokers,” he shouted to a group standing dumbly by the rear of the aircraft, “run around all the dispersals, tell them not to start aircraft engines but to run for the main gate.” The group took to their heels, scattering as they went. “You mechanics,” he pointed to engine fitters on high trestles, “climb down and clear out!” The corporal continued, “Now you on the engine, climb down carefully and once on the ground, run!” Turning his attention, “In the aircraft there!” he called to the white-faced instrument fitter at the pilots window. “Tell everyone to get out one at a time but don't rock the plane.” “Ok Corp” came a not too confident reply. Bodies began to tumble from the aircraft, confused, wondering why they were still alive. “If you value your hides, run for the main gate!” called the Corporal malevolently.

“Now exactly what is going on here?” The corporal spun on his heel to stare straight into the face of the Warrant Officer who calmly asked again, “What's the problem?” The Corporal was suddenly nervous and gulped, “You shouldn't be here sir, the arming vane was sheared off a 1000 pounder. It's armed and the whole load could go at any moment”. “Mmm,” came the unconcerned reply “Everyone clear?” “Yes sir.” “Well, let's stroll up to the Adjutant's office and see if he has called bomb disposal yet.” So, they walked away calmly like gentlemen. The corporal knew he'd had to hold himself together to get the men clear. Now all of his wound up nerves told him to run. He also knew the story would go down in legend when they were seen to be walking calmly away from 10,000 pounds of TNT sitting under five tons of 150 octane aviation spirit.

“You did very well Corporal”, the W/O said conversationally, “I'll be recommending you for a gong.” The Corporal straightened up, walking proud. “Thank you, sir.”

Fog of War

Fog was a major problem for Bomber Command and on some nights, they lost as many aircraft returning to their airfields as they had to enemy action. A chemical engineer came up with the idea of digging a shallow trench on each side of the runway as some airfields like Waddington. Along each side in the trench was a steel petrol line with burners. When the burners were set alight with petrol and anything cheaper, they consumed 275,000 litres per hour and burned off the fog in a vaulted arch visible as a glow to approaching aircraft. The big worry of course was ground looping into the ditches.

Wing Sweeper Casualties

At Waddington in the winter of 1944 the aircraft became covered in snow which had to be cleared before take-off. Ground crew were mustered with brooms to sweep the wings and stabilisers. Inevitably, there were many falls and given the height of the wings and the frozen ground, a lot of broken bones

The LNER Railway Detective

The winter of 1944 was as hard as any other of the three years most of the Australians at Waddington had experienced. Here on the east coast of England there was moist deep snow and it was wet and cold. The Lancaster bombers were dispersed around the field to localise damage from an accident or air raid. In each of these dispersals was a group of fitters who were responsible for each aircraft. These fitters built what we Australians call “humpies”; a non-permanent shelter with a warming fire where they could get out of the weather and brew up a cup of tea. So it was that Warrant Officer in charge of maintenance engineering was called into the Station Commander's office. “Bob, I'd like you to meet Detective Bryant of the LNER Railway”. As they shook hands Rollo Kingsford-Smith continued. “He's investigating the theft of railway tarpaulins and timber. Take him around the dispersals and see what you can find.”

Outside Kingsford-Smith's office the Warrant Officer elected not to get a vehicle but trudge through the snow out to the dispersals. The two turned up the collars of their great coats and spoke little; it was bitterly cold. Bryant was grateful when shown into the comparative warmth of the humpy. It was a wood frame with a front wall and door, an LNER tarpaulin formed the roof and three walls, enamel mugs of tea were passed around by the ground staff sheltering in the humpy. It was Bryant's first real contact with Australians. While they complained about the English weather he also listened to their



stories of home. It didn't seem possible that a country could be so good or warm. It marvelled him that these men could have come so far to fight in defence of a mythical "Mother Country". They were rough diamonds but true. "Well," he said, getting up "thanks for the chat." And to the Warrant Officer, "I think I've seen enough, if you would be so good as to see me to the gatehouse." "Oh," he said to the Warrant Officer as he was partway out the door, "can you get the chaps to paint that out?". The Warrant Officer followed his finger to the letters LNER stencilled on the canvas back wall facing them. "Right!", he grinned.



Inaugural Dudley Marrows Memorial Award

From Peter Dowling, Secretary NSW Sunderland Association

In November 2019, the 50th Sunderland Awards dinner was held at the Naval Military and Air Force Club of SA in Adelaide, jointly hosted by 10 Squadron and the NSW Sunderland Association. In 2019, in acknowledgement of the ages of the remaining founding members of the NSW Sunderland Association and the transition of 10SQN to a new strategic focus, it was announced the Sunderland Award would transition to a new award.



FLTLT Dudley Marrows at the controls of his Sunderland, WWII

This award is in memory of FLTLT Dudley Marrows DSO DFC Chev. LH, whose notable qualities and reputation both as a serving officer in 461SQN (Sunderland) and in his return to civilian life following WWII, have served as an inspiration to 10SQN over the decades since the war. It was felt this award would continue to recognise achievements of outstanding members of 10SQN into the future.



L-R: Peter Dowling Secretary NSW Sunderland Association, CO 10 SQN WGCDR Marija Jovanovich, award recipient SGT Le Yin, Marilyn Voullaire Marrows

The annual dinner has typically been held in November each year but of course in 2020, much of normality changed and the 2020 awards were postponed until January 2021. While negotiating challenging imposition and removal of border restrictions, attendees from NSW and Victoria joined 10SQN again at the Naval Military and Air Force Club.

It was particularly exciting to be welcomed by the new Commanding Officer of 10SQN, WGCDR Marija Jovanovich. Marija was the officer winner of the 2010 Sunderland Award. Marija spoke warmly of the NSW Sunderland Association, her

astonishment, pride and pleasure in being a recipient of the award in 2010, and of her admiration for Dudley Marrows. The recipient of the award for 2020 was SGT Le Yin. In the new format, there is only one recipient of the award. It is anticipated that the award for 2021 will be made in November, again in Adelaide.





Murphy's Laws – the other 15 laws.

From John Clarkson

1. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
2. A fine is a tax for doing something wrong. A tax is a fine for doing something well.
3. He who laughs last – thinks slowest.
4. A day without sunshine is like – well – night.
5. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
6. Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.
7. Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently talented fool.
8. The 50 – 50 – 90 rule: Anytime you have a 50 – 50 chance of getting something right, there is a 90% chance you'll probably get it wrong.
9. It is said that if you line up all the cars in the world end to end, someone from California would be stupid enough to try to pass them all.
10. If the shoe fits, then get another one just like it.
11. The things that come to those who wait, may be the things left by those who got there first.
12. Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit in a boat all day drinking beer.
13. Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.
14. God gave you toes as a device for finding furniture in the dark.
15. When go into court, you are putting yourself in the hands of twelve people, who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty.



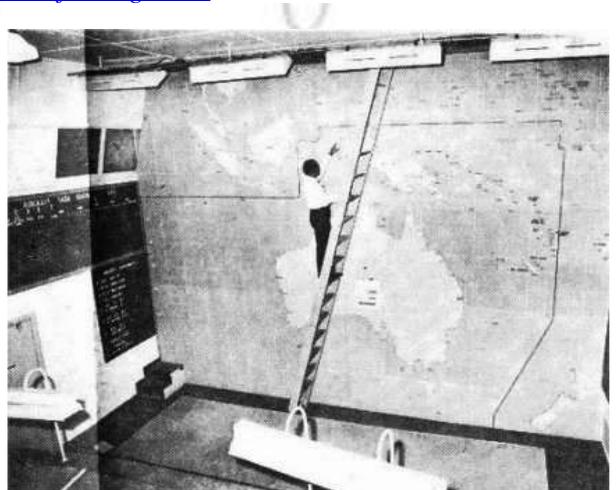
Five Fighter Sectors formed

25 February 1942

This material is compiled from various sources including the History and Heritage Branch–Air Force, the RAAF Museum, the Australian War Memorial, ADF Serials and www.ozatwar.com. 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

When the Australian War Cabinet decided that the RAAF should staff the air warning system, the decision also implied that a chain of filter rooms, operations rooms and fighter squadrons was needed to act as a single coordinated body. Consequently, on this day five Fighter Sectors (FS) were formed; No 1 (Bankstown, Sydney), No 2 (New Lambton, NSW), No 3 (Townsville), No 4 (Port Moresby, PNG) and No 5 (Sandfly Gully, Darwin). An American-operated Fighter Sector was located in Brisbane, Queensland in March 1942, but it was not numbered - as No 8FS - until it was taken over by the RAAF on 3 August

1942 when the Americans moved northwards. No 6FS was formed on 11 April 1942 at Mt Lawley, WA, and No 7FS at Preston in Melbourne on 5 May 1942. Later numbering of these units was changed, by



No1 FS, 1945



adding 100 to the original number, to avoid confusion with American units. There were successive changes in operations and title when Fighter Sectors became Fighter Control Units (FCUs) in early 1944 followed by yet another step to Mobile Fighter Control Units (MFCUs). Late in 1942 and early in 1943 six more Fighter Sectors were formed bringing the total to 14.

More here (Chapter 2, pp 21-27): <http://www.radarreturns.net.au/archive/EchoesRRWS.pdf>



The Pheasant and the Bull

From John Clarkson

One day a pheasant and a bull were grazing in a field; the bull was chomping the grass and the pheasant was picking ticks off the bull's hide. There was a huge tree at the edge of the field and the pheasant was very nostalgically looking at the tree. He said to the bull, "Alas, there was a time when I could fly to the topmost branch of that tree, now I do not have enough strength in my wings to get to the first branch."

The bull very nonchalantly said, "that's not an issue - just eat a little bit of my tongue every day, and in a fortnight you will get there." The pheasant said, "Come on, what kind of rubbish is that?" The bull said, "Try it and see what happens."

So very hesitantly, the pheasant started pecking at the tongue, and lo and behold, on the very first day, it reached the first branch of the tree. Within a fortnight, the pheasant had reached the top branch of the tree and was just beginning to enjoy the scenery. An old farmer was sitting in his rocking chair on his porch, and saw a fat old pheasant sitting in the top of a nearby tree; he pulled out his shotgun and shot the pheasant out of the tree.

The moral of the story is that many times even bullshit can get you to the top, but it never lets you stay there.



End of Another Era

31 December 1995

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It is with deep regret that we remember the passing of LAC BLOGGS, professional RAAF Motor Transport Driver (MTD). LAC BLOGGS (MTD) joined the RAAF in 1921 and served with distinction and pride until the 31st of December 1995 when cruelly taken from us by a bureaucratic decision. LAC BLOGGS (MTD) served in all ranks and positions of the known mustering up to and including WOFF MTD2, and in all areas required by the RAAF including those of deadly conflict. LAC BLOGGS (MTD) served in many guises and some paid the supreme sacrifice with both honour and dignity. LAC BLOGGS (MTD) is survived by many close relatives still serving in most, if not all, musterings of the RAAF with the





same family pride and distinction. Although the RAAF, and possibly Australia in general, may forget you in time, we will endeavour to ensure that your deeds remain known as long as possible. LAC BLOGGS (MTD) was laid to rest, in spirit if not in body, at RAAF Point Cook, the birthplace of all RAAF Professional Transport Drivers and the RAAF as a whole. Rest in peace LAC BLOGGS (MTD), it's time to park your rig for the last time. Lest we forget your deeds and proud history".

More unofficial material is here: <http://www.ermtda.com/>

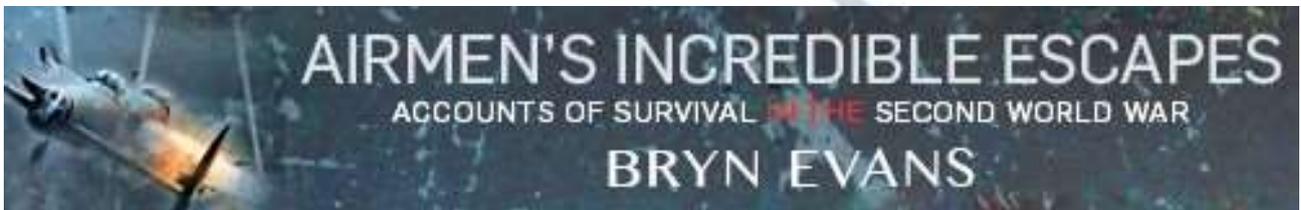


Saved by Strangers

From Bryn Evans, 2 March 2021

Saved by strangers - a message for us all, and future generations

In the latest book by author Bryn Evans, *Airmen's Incredible Escapes*, the resilience and self-sacrifice of the human spirit belie the horrors of war, in a message for us today and for future generations.



In the Second World War for airmen who survived being shot down, baling out, crashing their aircraft into the ground, ditching into water, and evading the enemy while on the run, life or death remained a lottery. An unknown number, while coming down by parachute, were machine-gunned to death by enemy fighters. Once on the ground they became desperate to evade being captured. Many who were taken prisoner, were summarily executed by enemy forces or civilians. In Germany, many civilians looked upon Allied aircrew as 'terrorflieger', and subjected downed airmen to the instant justice of the mob. Yet amidst the chaos, hate, destruction, and misery of the Second World War, the selfless kindness of strangers, and generosity towards fellow human beings was found in unlikely places. Aircrew brought down in enemy territory were only able to survive with assistance from either local civilians or enemy forces.

In one of the stories in *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* an American fighter pilot bales out into the dense jungle of New Guinea. After wandering for seven days lost and near delirious, Flight Lieutenant Gene Rehrer had reached the point of total collapse, when tribesmen from the Brown River village came upon him. Despite the threat of brutal recrimination by Japanese occupation forces if caught, they carried him back to their village, gave him water and food, then after a few days of rest, put him on a donkey and guided him to a European settlement.

Australian Flying Officer Barney Barnett when shot down over Japanese territory and into the mangrove swamps of the Burmese jungle, wandered on bare feet that were ripped and ragged. After four days without food or water he could walk no further, when he was found by some local villagers. At risk of certain death and their village being destroyed by the Japanese, they gave Barnett water, bathed him, then carried him across a river and handed him over to an advance party of British troops.

Having parachuted down near the Dortmund-Ems canal in Germany, Australian Flight Sergeant Harry Howard lay bleeding in a ditch. With a lacerated and near severed arm, hip and back injuries, he was unable to walk, and likely to bleed to death. By chance, a sympathetic German farmer found him, took him back to his farmhouse, and arranged for his transport to hospital.

These and many other such stories in *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* are astounding, and each one in many and different ways is unique. Perhaps the most remarkable and wonderful aspect is that so many airmen owed their survival to the help and kindness of perfect strangers, who put aside the ever present



threat to their own lives. ‘Helpers’ of shot-down airmen in each country risked their lives and their families. If caught, in Nazi occupied Europe it meant torture at the hands of the Gestapo to provide information on other resistance members. Then if they survived the torture, they and their families would be either sent to a concentration camp or executed. ‘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.

Now I have a glimpse, a partial insight into the trauma, anxiety and fear experienced during the Second World War, by both those in the armed forces and civilians. The worldwide COVID pandemic has provided a fleeting feeling of what they endured, what they lived through constantly, or succumbed to in nearly six years of war. Whether in uniform or not, no-one could plan ahead for their personal life.

My father served in RAF Bomber Command, and spoke of looking upon the empty chairs in the mess each morning, of those who had been lost during the night’s operations. My mother told me of lying in bed in the months before I was born, and listening to the Luftwaffe bombers droning overhead. My mother-in-law worked for a time in an ammunition factory in London, where one night she was blown off her feet into the road by an exploding bomb. My father-in-law served in a British infantry regiment in campaigns through North Africa and Italy, where he was wounded but survived. For six years no-one knew when the war or their own lives would end.

It was a nightmare everyone wished to forget. But we must not forget. The greatest generation left us a legacy, a priceless gift that we must always treasure. They found within themselves a fortitude and resilience to live each day as a gift, as if it were their last. It is an example we and future generations must emulate. The stories in *Airmen’s Incredible Escapes* are an inspiration, and leave a message for us all, and future generations.

Author’s Note: Although *Airmen’s Incredible Escapes* was published in September 2020, I have only recently received a consignment of books due to international post and freight delays caused by the pandemic.

I have now available a number of signed first editions of *Airmen’s Incredible Escapes* at a **heavily discounted price of \$35 for RAAFA members** (Booktopia \$88, Dymocks \$75); all my previous three books, are priced at \$30 each (plus \$10 approx for the cost of postage and packing within Australia) see below:

- *With the East Surreys in Tunisia, Sicily and Italy 1942-1945* (2012)
- *The Decisive Campaigns of the Desert Air Force 1942-1945* (2014 in hardback, or reprinted in paperback July 2020)
- *Air Battle for Burma* (2016)

Purchase two of these previous three books for \$50, or all three for \$70.



AFC Squadron Nomenclature

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During WWI, the units of the First AIF were named with an ‘ordinal’ system (for instance, ‘30th Battalion’). This also seems to have been the intention when the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) started raising new squadrons. Meanwhile, however, the Royal Flying Corps had established the template of using ‘cardinal’ titles (for example, ‘No 30 Squadron’). The British also had administrative control when the Australian squadrons went overseas, so a period of confusion ensued where the British title for an AFC squadron (for instance ‘No. 69’) was often subverted privately by the Australians in the Squadron, preferring to distinguish themselves as ‘69th Squadron’. By early 1918, the Australians had departed from the British convention and, for example, the former ‘No 69’



Squadron was officially called 'the 3rd Squadron AFC'. The newly-formed RAAF in 1921 reverted to British practice, hence 'No 3 Squadron' today.

The 3SQN Organisation website has more information here:

<https://www.3squadron.org.au/subpages/Number.htm>



Bomber Command Commemoration

From Gordon Johnstone

The members of the Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation are busy with arrangements for the 2021 Commemorative Service at the Australian War Memorial.

The Australian War Memorial will tell, through their Last Post ceremony, the story of an airman from Bomber Command who was killed during those turbulent years of the 1940s. This event will occur at the Australian War Memorial on Saturday 5th June commencing at 4.45pm, and is open to all who apply through the Australian War Memorial. More information is available on the AWM website at www.awm.gov.au/commemoration/last-post-ceremony.



Squadron crews of mainly "C" Flight, 460 SQN RAAF, lined up in front of 'A2' Aussie, March 1944.

On the Sunday, 6th June, the Annual Commemorative Wreath Laying Ceremony will be held at the Bomber Command Memorial on the grounds of the Australian War Memorial commencing at 11.00am. Invitations for this service will be forwarded by the committee although the ceremony is open to all who wish to attend. Seating and attendance will be in accordance with COVID policy.

The Bomber Command Commemorative Day Foundation has conducted this Memorial Service since 2008, and will continue to recognise the bravery, selflessness and devotion to duty shown by the Bomber Command air and ground crews for years to come. More information may be obtained at bccdf.org.au.



Hurry Up and Wait!

From Tomas (Paddy) Hamilton

When I joined the Air Force
I heard my D.I. state
"There's a phrase you all will soon learn,
'Just hurry up and wait!'"

I met my one and only love
And went out on our first date
Her mother said, "She ain't ready yet,
So just hurry up and wait!"



Our courtship was both up and down
Of that there's no debate
When I proposed she only said
"Just hurry up and wait!"

I was standing by the Altar
In a perilous state
Her bridal car had been delayed
So, I had to. "Hurry up and wait!"

We went on to have five children
That was always to be our fate
'cause we both ignored the warnings
to "Hurry up and wait!"

When I left for civvy street
I had so much on my plate
They said, "Sit down and sign these forms
and just Hurry up and wait!"

On arrival at the airport
I'll give it to you straight
Some check in clerk will always say
"Just hurry up and wait!"

Santa Claus is coming
And I've cleaned my slate
When I ask, "What's he bringing?"
I'm told to "Hurry up and wait!"

When I finally fall off the perch
And arrive at Heaven's Gate
I hope St Peter will not say
"Just hurry up and wait!"



RAAF Officer Headed UN Hospital in East Timor

23 Feb 2000

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On this day, Wing Commander Peter Clarke became the first RAAF medical officer appointed to run a United Nations (UN) military hospital, on taking command of the facility established at Dili, East Timor. The hospital, with a staff of 130 medical and ancillary staff, was established to meet the medical needs of 12 500 personnel supporting United Nations efforts to bring peace to the country after it had been ravaged by forces opposing independence from Indonesia.

Formed with about half its staff from the Australian Defence Force, the balance of personnel came from Singapore and Egypt. It was





both the first time that the RAAF had taken the lead in providing an ADF medical contingent, and also the first occasion on which the UN sent a multinational Level 3 medical facility anywhere in the world.



A Century of Service

By Tomas 'Paddy' Hamilton, 1 March 2021



A RAAF heritage formation at the RAAF Base Amberley Airshow 2008 – Mustang, Vampire, Meteor, Hawk, Hornet. Photo by CONTACT magazine.

The stench of dope and castor oil, no longer smelt today
As small fragile bi-planes, rose above Port Phillip Bay
A daring band of warriors, returned from the Western Front
Only too familiar, to the dangers, they would confront

The dreams of “Dickie” Williams and others who were wise
Wanted their own air force, to rule Australian skies
At first it wasn’t easy, when those plans were made
Inter-service jealousy said they’d never make the grade

Through hard times of the Depression, they knew what was in store
When the world was plunged into, another all out war
The free world was unprepared and was overwhelmed
To fight on against all odds, they were now compelled

Under manned and under armed, they knew what was at stake
Nations that fell like dominoes, they would not forsake
The Yanks finally came on board and joined them in the fray
They built s new alliance, that still survives today

Korea and Vietnam, names known from the past
A tragic reminder, that peace will never last
Yet there were other tasks, which put on extra strain
Floods, fires and earthquakes, saw their roles were not in vain

“Lest we forget” our heroes, who rolled the deadly dice
All those men and women, who paid the supreme price
Not a fake amongst them, no imposters or “poo bahs’
Per Ardua Ad Astra, “THROUGH ADVERSITY TO THE STARS.”





ADGs Provided Security in Baghdad

7 March 2008

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When the Australian Army's 13th rotation of personnel providing security for the Australian Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, departed from Darwin on this day, the 110-man detachment included a section of RAAF Airfield Defence Guards for the first time. The Air Force group, from No 2 Airfield Defence Squadron based at Amberley, Queensland, comprised a Corporal and 12 Leading Aircraftmen. They were fully integrated within the two platoons drawn from the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, which formed the main infantry combat element of SECD



13, and performed tasks ranging from sniper duties to armed escorts, and manning observation and entry control points. After serving six months, the 13th rotation was replaced by a fresh detachment – SECD 14 – which also included personnel from No 2 Airfield Defence Squadron. In association with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the SECD gradually scaled back the provision of security and assisted in the transition to a contracted security solution in line with that provided to other Australian diplomatic missions. The complete transfer of security capabilities to the civilian contractor took place in late July 2011.



An Exemplar for all Politicians

From Tony Horsington

Yesterday, Merkel left the party leadership position and handed it over to those after her and Germany and its people in the best condition. The reaction of the Germans was unprecedented in the history of the German people. Throughout the nation people everywhere went out to the balconies of their houses and applauded her spontaneously for six continuous minutes of warm applause.

Germany stood as one body bidding farewell to the leader of their nation, a Chemical Physicist who was not tempted by fashion or bright lights, fame and celebrity. She did not buy real estate, expensive cars, luxury yachts and private planes, knowing that she grew up knowing want in the austerity of former East Germany. She left her post after leaving Germany as one of the world's top countries. Over eighteen years she did not change her personal style often wearing old clothes. At a Press conference, a female journalist asked her: "We notice that your suit is repeated, don't you have another?" She replied: "I am a government employee, not a model."

At another press conference, they asked her: "Do you have housemaids who clean the house, prepare meals and so on?" Her answer was: "No, I do not have female workers and I do not need them. My husband and I do this work at home every day."



Another journalist asked her: "Who washes your clothes, you or your husband?" She answered: "I arrange the clothes, and my husband is the one who operates the washing-machine and it is usually at night, because off-peak electricity is available. The most important thing is to be considerate to the neighbours although the wall separating our apartment from the neighbours is quite thick. She went on to say, "I expected you to ask me about the successes and failures in our work in the government."



Mrs. Merkel lives in an ordinary apartment like any other citizen. She still lives in the apartment she lived in before being elected Prime Minister of Germany. She does not intend to leave it and does not own a luxury villa, servants, swimming pools and gardens.

Merkel, the Prime Minister of Germany, is leaving Germany with the largest economy in Europe. How can one not respect her?



Australian War Memorial – Development Update

From Matt Anderson, Director, Australian War Memorial

I am pleased to share a copy of [Our Continuing Story information booklet](#) with you. This information outlines the Australian War Memorial's proposed plans for the expansion of our exhibition galleries to share the untold stories of 100,000 Australians who have served our country in war, conflict, peacekeeping, humanitarian and disaster-relief operations over the past 30 years.

The project received approval through the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* process on 10 December 2020 and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works referral on 22 February 2021. It now moves to the final stages of approval with the National Capital Authority and the nine-year program of work enters the construction procurement phase.

I encourage you to share this booklet among your networks, so that all interested parties can gain a comprehensive understanding of the project and its important role in telling stories of Australia's contemporary service.

As the heart of national commemoration, our Memorial must reflect our living history – for every veteran and for every Australian. Our Development Project offers this opportunity while remaining true to the vision of the Memorial's founder Charles Bean, to ensure the sacrifices of Australians are not forgotten.



If you have any queries regarding the Gallery Development public consultation and engagement process, or the project in general, please contact our Development Project team via email at development@awm.gov.au. A limited number of printed publications of *Our Continuing Story* are also available on request.



Airfield Engineer Deployed to Bosnia

20 March 1997

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On this day, a RAAF airfield engineer, Flight Lieutenant Glen Heyward, arrived in Banja Luka, Bosnia, to oversee civil aid projects being undertaken in the war-torn republic that was formerly part of Yugoslavia. He was the only Air Force member in the six-strong Australian Defence Force contingent (codenamed Operation OSIER) sent to join the NATO-led Multinational Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.



Flight Lieutenant Glen Heyward on right

During a six-month tour with British forces, he coordinated around 800 civil engineering projects ranging from the refurbishment of schools and medical centres to agricultural redevelopment and factory construction. The task was difficult because of the harsh winter environment, and often dangerous because of landmines and road conditions affecting travel, and also hostility from segments of the local population. Other RAAF engineers followed Heyward, serving with SFOR and later Kosovo Force (KFOR) until February 2004.



Pilot dictum: remember, in the end, gravity always wins.

The older I get, the better pilot I was.

My junior high school teacher told me no one would pay me to look out the window. Now I'm an airline captain.

Soldier to a pilot: "Why didn't you join the Army?"

Pilot's answer, "I found out that good food and clean sheets were readily available on nearby Air Force bases."

As George Carlin said, "If black boxes survive crashes, why don't they make the whole airplane out of that stuff?"





Service Before Self

From Thomas (Paddy) Hamilton, 7/02/2021

One hundred years of service, our Air Force has achieved
Sometimes the butt of friendly jibes, but do not be deceived
They have been there for our nation, and are now the stuff of lore
From fragile wooden bi-planes, to a supersonic roar

He'd never heard of Kandahar, or even Tarinkot
But it's his fifth deployment here, so he's seen the bloody lot
A sniper in every crevice, no heed to age or gender
And every stranger that he sees, could be deaths silent vendor

The enemy conducts a hit and run, from a poppy field
Or tries to mount an attack, using a human shield
They always seem to know, when to change their tack
For it's hard to fight a swarm of ghosts, with one arm behind your back

A vapour trail the only clue, our army has a friend
It only takes a call sign, to strike or to defend
They've been through this together, many times before
Different corps and uniforms, united in the fire of war

Two decades in the sandpit, and a century in the air
Will history remember that they were ever there
Always on their guard, to the dangers they detect
Service before self, is the duty they protect

