



SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

REMEMBRANCE DAY 2021

From Gareth McCray, OAM

Originally called Armistice Day, Remembrance Day commemorates the end of the hostilities of the Great War, the signing of the Armistice, which occurred on 11 November 1918. Armistice Day was observed by the Allies as a way of remembering those who died, especially soldiers with 'no known grave'. In 1918, after suffering a number of defeats and heavy losses, the German forces agreed to an Armistice with the Allied troops, and this signalled the end of the First World War. The treaty was signed at 5am on 11 November 1918 but did not officially come into effect until six hours later at 11am. The Armistice was met by celebrations around the world; people yelled, cheered and danced in the streets.

In Australia, Armistice Day was renamed in 1997. The name change broadened the meaning of the day, widening the focus from the First World War to a day which commemorates all who served in any war or conflict. The creation of the "ANZAC legend" is an important part of the national identity of both our nations. It has shaped the way we view both our past and future.

It is Remembrance Day and we must remember! If we do not, the sacrifice of those Australian's lives will be meaningless. They died for us, for their homes and families and friends, for a collection of traditions they cherished and a future they believed in. The meaning of their sacrifice rests in our collective national consciousness; OUR future is THEIR monument. We often take for granted our values and institutions, our freedom to participate in cultural and political events and our right to live under a government of our choice. Those who went off to war truly believed that: "Without freedom there can be NO enduring peace and without peace NO enduring freedom". By honouring and remembering their service and their sacrifice, we recognise the tradition of freedom these men and women fought to preserve.

For Remembrance Day, we acknowledge the courage and sacrifice of those who served their country and acknowledge our responsibility to work for the peace they fought hard to achieve. We remember Australians who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations. Every Remembrance Day and Anzac Day, even the most eloquent find it difficult to define the essence of the word "Anzac". We painstakingly search for the right words in an effort to do justice to more than 102,000 Australian lives lost. Almost a century after the Gallipoli landing, we need not search for more than four words to embody the spirit of Anzac: **courage, endurance, mateship, sacrifice**. Three words have stood the test of time: **Lest we forget**.

Remembrance Day in Australia is an occasion to commemorate and remember all Australians who have died as a result of war. After years of conflict and millions of lives lost, war was finally over. We will always remember the sacrifices of our men and women and those currently on deployment overseas. Every year, nations around the globe fall silent for one minute at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month to remember those who have served their country during war. The idea of observing a period of silence was first proposed by Melbourne journalist Edward George Honey, who proposed a period of silence for national remembrance in a letter published in the London Evening News on 8 May 1919. The suggestion came to the attention of King



George V. After testing the practicality of five minutes silence – a trial was held with five Grenadier Guardsmen standing to attention for the silence – the King issued a proclamation on 7 November 1919 which called for a two-minute silence. His proclamation requested that "all locomotion should cease, so that, in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead".

Of the Australian population of 5 million, 300,000 young men went to the Great War. Of those 60,000 died and 156,000 were wounded or taken prisoner. On the night of Monday 11 November 1918, official news finally arrived in Australia after 7pm, which was 11am Paris time, confirming the signing of the armistice on the other side of the world. By 9pm streets were filled with celebrations. We danced on trams, we danced on lorries, we danced on the pavement, we shouted, we sang, office boys and girls yelled to their companions across the way, we cheered and cheered again and again, while the Church bells rang out a peal of jubilation. It was no wonder Australian soldiers and citizens were dancing in the streets. Armistice Day marked the end of the bloodiest war the world had seen.

It has been 103 years since the Armistice was signed. Since then, conflicts have continued to rage around the globe, but we still hold fast to the idea that peace is possible, and we continue to work towards that goal. On 11 November 1918, the guns of the Western Front fell silent after 4 years of continuous warfare. Beginning with their success at the battle of Hamel in July, the Australians in 1918 had taken part in key battles at Amiens, Mont St Quentin and Peronne and at the Hindenburg Line. By October the exhausted Australians were withdrawn from battle. We had almost 48,000 casualties just in 1918, including more than 12,000 dead.

The ritual of observing one minute of silence was first proposed by Australian journalist Edward Honey in 1918 and continues to be practised on Remembrance Day each year. Remembrance Day sees services held at 11am at War Memorials and cenotaphs across the country. Australians have served in:

- The Maori Wars of 1863,
- Sudan in 1885,
- The Boer War 1899,
- The Boxer Rebellion 1900,
- World Wars One & Two,
- Malaya
- Korea
- Borneo 1963,
- Vietnam
- First Gulf War
- East Timor 1990's,
- Iraq 2003
- Afghanistan 2001 - 2021,
- Peacekeeping Forces since 1947.

When the First World War broke out many citizens felt that war would be a way of demonstrating the mettle of the new nation. Major campaigns were:

- Gallipoli 1915. Key battles included Helles (May 1915) and Lone Pine, the Nek and Hill 60 (August 1915).
- Palestine 1916–18. The Australian Light Horse served as part of the Anzac and Australian Mounted Divisions under Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel in the Sinai, Palestine and Syria.
- Western Front 1916–18. Five Australian infantry divisions fought in many battles in northern France and Flanders including Fromelles, Pozières, Bullecourt, Messines, 3rd Ypres, Dernancourt, Villers-Bretonneux, Hamel, Amiens and Mont St Quentin.



The new Royal Australian Navy saw actions with the sinking of the German raider, Emden, by HMAS Sydney. Also, the naval and military seizure of German New Guinea in September 1914.

During the Second World War, Australia sent contingents from the three services to assist the British Empire in Europe and the Middle East, and then fought with the USA in the Pacific. Major theatres of war were:

- Middle East and Mediterranean: troops from the 2nd AIF, under General Sir Thomas Blamey, fought in North Africa, Greece, Crete and Syria. Significant battles were Bardia, Tobruk, Greece withdrawal, the defence of Crete, Merjayoun, Damour and El Alamein.
- Australian troops also served in Malaya, Java, Timor, Ambon, Borneo and New Guinea (Kokoda Trail, Milne Bay, Buna, Gona, Sanananda, Wau, advance to Salamaua, Lae, Shaggy Ridge, Wewak).

The RAN fought numerous battles including Sunda Strait, Coral Sea, Savo Island, Leyte Gulf and Lingayen Gulf. The RAAF fought in Europe with British Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands and also North Africa and the Middle East; over the North Atlantic, the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Mediterranean; India, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, Thailand, China, the Netherland East Indies, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Philippines and Borneo. They also fought over Australia.

As a member of the Western Alliance, Australia fought in two of the biggest conflicts of the Cold War: the Korean War and the Vietnam War. Australian forces also supported Britain in Malaya and assisted Britain and Malaysia against Indonesia.

- Korean War: significant battles were Kapyong and Maryan San.
- Malaya, 1950–60: Australia sent units from the three services to assist Britain and the Malayan Government fighting communist terrorists during the Malayan Emergency.
- Malaysia, 1965–66: Australian forces assisted Britain and Malaysia in countering Indonesia's Confrontation with Malaysia.
- South Vietnam: Australian forces assisted South Vietnam and the United States in the Vietnam War. The RAAF sent helicopters, Canberra bombers and Caribou transport aircraft. The RAN generally had a ship operating offshore.

After 1990, Australia again sent troops overseas for combat operations, although on a much smaller scale than in earlier wars. The Australian forces were part of coalition operations, generally led by the United States.

- Gulf War, 1991: Australia sent ships, clearance divers, special operations forces, medical personnel and RAAF Photo Interpreters to assist the US-led coalition in the war with Iraq.
- Afghanistan, 2001–02: Australia sent units from the three services to assist the United States. The SAS took part in several fierce battles.
- Iraq War, 2003: Australia sent units from the three services to assist the US-led coalition in the invasion of Iraq.
- Iraq 2005–09: Australia sent units from the three services to assist the US-led coalition maintain security in a vicious guerrilla war, but there were no Australian combat deaths.
- Afghanistan: Australia sent units from the three services to assist the force organised by NATO. In November 2001, Australia joined the United States-led coalition to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, to remove the Taliban from power and to defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan. There was no indication at the time that this would be Australia's longest war.

Operation Slipper included the first Australian combat deaths since the Vietnam War, and to date all casualties have occurred during operations in Afghanistan. 41 Australian soldiers have been killed and 261 wounded, the majority since October 2007. Another Australian was killed while serving with the British Army. We saw countless acts of courage and bravery - our soldiers have received commendations, medals and awards for gallantry, including four Victoria Crosses, the



first in almost 40 years. Army units received citations for gallantry and meritorious service, as well as a unit battle honours. RAN and RAAF units were also recognised with Meritorious Unit Citations.

Australian military and police have taken part in numerous peacekeeping missions around the world. The largest single deployment was as part of INTERFET in East Timor and the most recent in November this year to the Solomon Islands.

First World War correspondent and historian, CEW Bean, wrote this at the request of the Commonwealth Peace Celebration Committee:

“It is over! The enormous effort of the men – yes, and women and children – of every decent nation is finished. The last gun has sounded. The last troop-train winds homewards. The last big transports, turned homeward, are punching white foam out of the southern rollers. The vast ammunition factories will presently settle down to enrich the world with peaceful goods. The trains will carry busy passengers and commerce; the big steamers will move about the world with teeming holds; the little trawlers will unship their guns and go forth to their fishing; the earth will become itself again and Australia will settle down to carve out her new and splendid future. We are free to be happy again. Sixty thousand Australians bought us this happiness with their lives. Let us not ever forget that, to many of those to whom we owe the most, our thanks can never be given. They who raised Australia to the very height of the world’s regard – the gay welcome in our streets is not for them. For others the cheers, the smiles. The rejoicings which they so often longed for; they will never see”.

Finally, in 1993 the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr Paul Keating, talked of the Unknown Soldier: “We do not know this Australian's name and we never will. We do not know his rank or his battalion. We do not know where he was born, nor precisely how and when he died. We do not know where in Australia he had made his home or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe. We do not know his age or his circumstances – whether he was from the city or the bush; what occupation he left to become a soldier; what religion, if he had a religion; if he was married or single. We do not know who loved him or whom he loved. If he had children, we do not know who they are. His family is lost to us as he was lost to them. We will never know who this Australian was. He is one of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century. He is all of them. And he is one of us”.

The Inquisitive Mind of a Child

Author Unknown

Why are they selling poppies, Mummy?

Selling poppies in town today.

The poppies, child, are flowers of love.

For the men who marched away.

But why have they chosen a poppy, Mummy?

Why not a beautiful rose?

Because my child, men fought and died

In the fields where the poppies grow.

But why are the poppies so red, Mummy?

Why are the poppies so red?

Red is the colour of blood, my child.

The blood that our soldiers shed.

The heart of the poppy is black, Mummy.

Why does it have to be black?

Black, my child, is the symbol of grief.

For the men who never came back.



But why, Mummy are you crying so?
Your tears are giving you pain.
My tears are my fears for you my child.
For the world is forgetting again.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM, LEST WE FORGET



Errol's Day

From Fighter Squadrons Branch: Warriess and Stories

14th February 1956

The story of Errol O'Hara, an LAC Armament mechanic, at 77 Squadron stationed at RAAF Williamtown. At this time 77SQN was operating MK8 Meteors, and the day's program was Air to Air gunnery.

The first detail should be airborne by 0900. At 0800 most of us armourers are at the eastern end of the ORP (Ordinance Readiness Platform), waiting for the Meteors to be taxied down to start the arming up procedure. As usual, we are sitting on two trolley loads of boxes full of ammunition, including a supply of B.F.M (Belt Feed Mechanism) for the day's program. A tent has been erected on the grass, just off the hard standing. It is used as a flight hut to control the day's schedule. Tables and chairs are provided for comfort (not much), but it suits all. All the chocks and battery carts are lined up on the ORP and in position waiting for the aircraft to arrive. All the engine fitters and airframe fitters are waiting to marshal the aircraft to their appropriate spots. Before long, this area will have at least eight aircraft in position, and maybe two more as spares.

The first few aircraft are taxied down; having been pre-flight checked on the flight line. As soon as the pilots are out of their cockpits, the armourers are left to arm up. The Meteors have four Hispano 20mm cannons and they are a great aircraft to work on. We armourers are divided into four teams of two, and in no time we have the first four detailed aircraft ready, plus a spare. All Meteors have had all four guns armed with 60 rounds per gun, but only two will be plugged in on each sortie. I proceeded over to the flight tent to sign the EE77 of my aircraft as armed and serviceable.

I spotted a dual seat pilot trainer Meteor MK7 (A77-702), taxiing to the ORP. It was going to be the "target tug" for the day, so I decided to ask the OIC what the chance would be of getting a spare seat. Seat confirmed - great! All I need now was some flying gear. Most of the pilots were sergeants at the time (with a few officers) and I managed to borrow a leather helmet, oxygen mask and a mae-west from a sergeant pilot who was on the second detail. By now the Mk7 had shut down, and was waiting on the ORP, giving me time to be strapped into the back seat. I was in and ready! All I had to do was to wait for the pilot, Flight Sergeant Geoff Talbot, a tall thin man and a very experienced and capable pilot, to do his external checks. Time to go! Pilot is strapped in, engines started, external batteries disconnected, chocks removed. Our call sign for the day is "Despot Tugboat".

The pilot is cleared by the tower to move down the runway facing westward. I can see the two armourers at the target end of the tow line, on standby waiting for us to pass the airstrip. After about another 1000 feet we were marshalled to a stop by two more armourers; CPL Keith "Dad" Roddom and his offsider, disappeared under the Meteor to hook up the target cable to a release unit at the rear of the centreline (ventral) fuel tank. This steel cable is 1000 feet long, and has an extra length of 100 feet of webbing strap. The target banner is orange and is 30 feet long and 6 feet wide, with a big black ball painted in the centre as the aiming point. With the cable all hooked up, "Dad" marshalled the Meteor forward about 20 feet to take the tension on the cable. With this done, he directed the pilot to stop, then with a thumbs up to the pilot, we were ready to go!



The pilot advises “Here we go Gus”! The engines are roaring and the aircraft begins to vibrate for a few seconds, then the brakes release and we start racing down the strip. This is my first ride in a jet aircraft, and those two Rolls Royce Derwent engines are certainly giving some push. With correct speed



Dual Seat Meteor

obtained, the control stick is pulled way back, and the

Meteor climbs steeply. It gathers height quickly, as the banner has to leave the ground before we reach the end of the airstrip. Still climbing, the pilot does a 180 degree turn to port, and rolls out facing seaward. Looking over to my port side, I can see two Meteors taking off from the airstrip; Williamtown has never looked so good! The pilot tells me ‘Hey Gus! Turn your intercom off - you’re making too much noise!’ (heavy breathing). Crossing Stockton Bight, the Meteors I had seen taking off have caught up, flying 200 to 300 feet off our port side and are too far away to take some photos.

In a short time, we are on the ‘Air to Air’ range at about 20,000 feet. The pilot of the Mk7 clears the two fighters to commence shooting. This done, the first aircraft peels off and disappears behind our ‘tugboat’. Seconds later, he appears to starboard and barrel rolls over us and forms up on the other fighters port side. Each aircraft (in turn) makes about six passes, then they form up and let the ‘tugboat’ pilot, Geoff, know they have fired out. He tells them to switch off guns, and return to base. Two other shooters should be here soon. About five minutes passes, and Geoff, asks me to look for those two Meteors. So, with my steely blue eyes piercing the sky, I found them and report, “There they are, 11 o’clock high”; I knew what to say, as a couple of years ago I had seen the movie “12 O’clock High”.

While they are shooting at the banner, I took the time to admire the instrument panel. So far I have flown in a Catalina, Beaufighter, Ryan STM, Tiger Moth and a Dakota. This is the first time I’ve had a big instrument panel all to myself, and it looks like a sea of Chinese faces, as they all look alike to me. There are no armament switches on board, as this aircraft does not carry any weapons. I found the undercarriage lever, and those three yellow lights (must be ok?). I also found the three fuel gauges at the bottom of the panel. The back seat area of this dual is quite big, with plenty of arm room. There are no floor coverings, and you can see the bottom of the fuselage. There are two slides to rest the feet on, which lead up to the rudder pedals. There are also no ejection seats in the Mk7 but a bucket seat is provided to sit on, with a dingy pack and a backpack parachute is there. If in an emergency, and at a low level, you can’t get out. But at higher altitudes, the canopy is jettisoned as the aircraft rolls onto its back. I was told ‘just release the seat harness, and kick yourself out of the cockpit’, taking care not to hit the tailplane on the way out. About an hour has passed, and we have flown up and down the range quite a few times, seeing Broughton Island on every turnaround.

The last two Meteors have finished their passes and are headed back to base. We are now losing height, and tracking for Williamtown. “Willy Tower, Despot Tugboat”, Geoff calls base and asks for priority landing as we are getting short on fuel. The tower clears us as requested, and as we are now getting lower I can see Williamtown as we head for Stockton Bight. The banner we are towing must now be full of holes, and the aircraft that have been shooting at the target have different colour paint on their ammunition which marks the banner as the round goes through,



so each pilot knows his result. Getting much lower now over the sand. Geoff lines up left of the runway, and slows as we pass over the fence. As we continue on, about 2000 feet along the side of the airstrip, the banner and cable are dropped. Now free of the cable, Geoff accelerates and does a tight port turn, levels out and lowers the undercarriage. Looking at the landing gear panel, I see a green light, and two red lights. "This is not good!" I thought. The landing gear goes up and down twice more, and then the pilot notifies the tower of our problem. The starboard main and nose wheels were indicating "not locked down" on each occasion. Those red lights looked to me as though they were getting bigger and BIGGER, and looked like big red saucers to me.

We are almost on the ground, when Geoff tells the tower that the wheels won't lock, and that he intends to "belly land". He accelerates again, and gains a bit more height and does another tight port turn, jettisoning the ventral tank. "Dad" Roddom is on his tractor; he was retrieving the cable and banner and saw the empty tank tumbling down. He made a very hasty retreat! This turn was pretty tight and very low, as the trees did not look to be far away. By now, the "crash alarm" would have been sounding at the control tower and the emergency services activated. With wheels retracted, we line up with the airstrip. I looked at the fuel gauges - "EMPTY"! No more circuits on this flight! With a quick glance out the starboard side, I see all the aircrew and ground crew standing on the wings of the Meteors, getting a good vantage point to see the belly landing. A message from Geoff to "Tighten up your seat belt Gus!" was unnecessary, as the guy who strapped me in had done it that tight even a fart couldn't escape! Surprisingly, it was a smooth landing, with no jolt, just a scraping noise that got louder. (As I mentioned before, I had been in a Catalina and it made the same noise landing on water, but this one was smoother).

The aircraft slides to a stop with smoke coming from the starboard engine. The canopy is flung open (and it's a big canopy too), and Geoff yells "Get out quick Gus!" I quickly released the seat harness, ok now the parachute, easy rotate the turn buckle, hit ... NOTHING! Hit it again, NOTHING! More swearing! Thinking, thinking; safety clip, remove, HIT - success! Parachute released and I'M OFF! Now, Geoff had been calling me "Gus" a few times now, but this was hardly the time to tell him my name was not Gus, but Errol, as he had both feet on the ground and was ready to run. I stood up to get out, and forgot to unplug the intercom and oxy hose - more seconds wasted unplugging. As quick as lightning, I'm over the side and feet on the ground, I can hear the crash truck coming, with the Mae West still attached to the dinghy pack by a lanyard (I panicked a bit). I tried to break it with my hands, but couldn't. By now the pilot is about 30 - 40 feet away and running. I reached into the cockpit and pulled the dinghy pack out. Half the parachute comes out. I disconnect the dinghy from the parachute, drop the dinghy on the ground, and started to run. After about 20 feet, I find that the Mae West was still attached to the dinghy. It had tripped the gas bottle, and had started to inflate the pack. By now, the crash trucks had arrived, and I ran in between them with an inflating dinghy in hot pursuit! Geoff was now on his way back to the aircraft; he stops and puts his hand on my shoulder and asks, "Are you ok?" "Yes, I am ok". It is now that I found the simple release unit and unclipped the dinghy.

With the fire out and still a lot of commotion around and with my helmet and oxymask still hanging nonchalantly over my shoulder, I walked around with my camera and took a few photos. I went over to the ambulance, and the Sergeant medic asked how I felt. I told him I had a very dry mouth. All he had was some orange syrup, which was quite thick. I took a mouthful, which was enough. This ambulance was one of those old Ford Blitz trucks, with a big square box on the back, and a big red cross around it. You know, WWII stuff! The aircraft was now surrounded by pilots, and other officers all looking; everything was happening. The crane had arrived, and the sergeant pilot that I had borrowed the gear from came over to get it back, so I can't be posing anymore! Within minutes, a jeep arrived and took me back to the ORP where I was greeted with a very warm reception. In no time at all, I was back to work. There were aircraft to be serviced, and armed.



About an hour later, an officer approached me and said I had to see the base doctor. The doctor asked if I had been hurt? "No", I replied. And then, how did I feel? "Good", I said. "OK then, back to work", he says. I walked back to the armament section, and spoke to F/SGT Johnson. We talked for a while, and then I was dropped back to the ORP, where I finished my day! Well, what a day! Its been a great day. A very exciting day. The emergency in the air only lasted a few minutes. I don't think I was frightened or scared, as everything had happened so fast. I may have panicked a bit (a BIG bit!) but, I knew I was in safe hands with the pilot, Geoff Talbot, who at all times was in complete control. I can now add another aircraft to my 'flown in' list.

I joined the RAAF as a cooks assistant, and re-mustered to armament. I have always been proud of my trade, my squadron, my work mates, and the great aircraft I have worked on. But today, was MY day. And not too many armourers would have experienced a day like today. Then again, it was also a "Day in the life of an Armourer" as later, I was summoned to the "Pilots Room" to make a statement for the crash enquiry. Halfway between the Armament Section and the Crew Room, I passed the CO of 77 Squadron. Thinking I was in a non-saluting area, I did not salute; BIG Mistake! He stopped me and told me in no uncertain terms of my obligations. He then received the biggest and best salute I have ever given.



Loyal Wingman Project Achieves Milestones

From Contact Magazine, Story by Samara Kitchener



The Boeing Australia, Airpower Teaming System – ‘Loyal Wingman’

Photo by Corporal Craig Barrett

The landing gear of a Loyal Wingman unmanned aircraft has been raised and engaged for the first time during a flight mission at Woomera in South Australia. This was the highlight of several major milestones the project recently achieved, which included the maiden flight of a second aircraft. Head of Air Force Capability, Air Vice Marshal Cath Roberts, praised the efforts of the team involved in achieving these results. "It is so exciting seeing two aircraft in the air as the Loyal Wingman continues to excel in the flight test program," Air Vice Marshal Roberts said. "This opens up significant capability agility for Air Force, particularly with features such as the reconfigurable nose. We're heavily engaged in the payload development and the element of surprise that it gives us in the battlespace. You never really know what's in the nose."

Throughout the flight test missions, teams gathered aircraft performance data to be used to inform and refine the digital twin of the Boeing Airpower Teaming System, known as the Loyal Wingman, with the view to accelerating the aircrafts development where possible. "The Loyal



Wingman uses on-board autonomous command-and-control technology, tested both in the lab and in the field," Air Vice Marshal Roberts said. "The team has tested the mission system in the lab by flying a live, digital copy of the entire aircraft design thousands of times. "This advances the aircraft's 'brain' before we hit the flight range."

Director Boeing Airpower Teaming System – Australia and International, Glen Ferguson, provided some insight on the work that went into achieving the milestones, but pointed out there was more work ahead for the project. "We're in a steady rhythm of flight testing that will continue throughout the year on the way to mission and operational testing, enabling Boeing Australia, RAAF and our Australian industry team of more than 35 companies to progressively advance the flight characteristics and capabilities of the uncrewed teaming system," Mr Ferguson said. "This latest test block had significant involvement from key partners. "RUAG Australia supplied the landing-gear systems and BAE Systems Australia were integral to supporting the flight control and navigation systems testing."

The Loyal Wingman program has also been enabled by significant internal partnerships. "We have had deep involvement from DSTG (Defence Science and Technology Group), CASG (Defence's Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group), Defence Export Office, Defence and Air Force legal teams, Air Force Headquarters, Air Warfare Centre, No. 20 Squadron, and No. 32 Squadron – the program has been significantly enriched through broad internal engagement," Air Vice Marshal Roberts said. "So many have been working to achieve these milestones for a long time, and I want to thank them for their efforts. Being the first is never easy – there are so many unknowns to charter, so many hurdles to jump and so many paths to define. "This is particularly the case for the Loyal Wingman as a pathfinder for the integration of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence to create smart human-machine teams. The upside of being first is that you get to experience the rush of seeing your hard work lift off to the skies."



Aircrew Behaving Badly - An Occasional Series

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

No 460 Squadron was based at RAF Brighton and several aircrew were returning to base after a night out in Goole. Coming across a steam roller parked on the side of the road, they decided that it would be a fitting ornament for the Mess. As Ron Whitney, Bob Appleton, "Digger" Hammett, and Sydney "Mick" McGrory, bomb aimer (who claimed that, as he was always up the front in a Lancaster, he would ride shotgun to the rear insisting he was the rear gunner) didn't feel like walking home, they climbed aboard, threw some coal into the fire box, and, after some pushing and pulling of levers, the monster began to move.

As there was no mutual agreement who would drive, whenever one pulled a lever the other automatically pushed one; consequently, a rather erratic course along the road was set. However, a small crowd of bystanders had by this time gathered to watch the spectacle and - with plenty of encouragement being given - they pursued a course for Base, travelling at a speed which is not normally expected or required of a steam roller. They drove it for some distance and about a mile short of their destination they took a dive to port, off the road, over a ditch, and through a hedge where the machine stopped and - despite much coaxing - the crews were unable to restart it and reluctantly they abandoned ship.



The following morning, the 'crew' couldn't remember where they had left it. "All we did know was we had not shut the thing off so, if it had managed to build up any more steam, it would have gone off on its own. So, when we took off on an exercise, we flew round a bit to see if we could spot it. But there was no sign of that steamroller.



Non-Australian aircrew (ie qualified) steamroller operators

I still have visions of it in a ditch bottom and the incident was almost

forgotten until about five days later, when all aircrew were summoned to the briefing room where a harassed CO, Wing Commander Kaufmann, asked if any of the assembly either thieved, borrowed or left a steam roller somewhere between Goole and Brighton. After some indecision one of the culprits volunteered the information that there was one parked in a hedge about a mile down the road. The local Council were duly notified and that steam roller was seen in action again on the same stretch of road, but when not in use the controls were always carefully padlocked".

Strike and Return, Peter Firkins



Sam Hecker and his Gipsy Moth

From Ian Campbell, Brisbane

One of the great joys of researching *Thinks He's a Bird*, my book on FLTLT Keith Watson, a Queensland Pathfinder pilot, was discovering Sam Hecker, the man who gave Keith his first flight as a youngster in the early 1930s off the beach at Toogoom on the Fraser Coast. Unfortunately, limited space in the book demanded I only offer a truncated version of Sam's story and the history of his Gipsy Moth. It is with pleasure I now offer a little more precious detail.

Locals at Toogoom record a young pilot by the name of Sam Hecker doing joy flights off the beach. Born in Cootamundra in 1910, Sam had moved with the family to a farm at Temora in New South Wales. They built an airfield on the property, the only one in the district. Sam started flying lessons. As he recalled, 'About 1931 Kingsford Smith landed on our aerodrome at Temora conducting joy rides, and later still landed [there] on his way to Canberra to be knighted.' That was June 1932. By then he was famous, having done the trans-Pacific and trans-Tasman flights in 1928 and the trans-Atlantic crossing in 1930.

When the Depression hit wheat and wool prices during 1931 and 1932, Sam decided to go to Queensland where [his] old flying instructor had organised a deal with the Flick Pest organisation to exterminate white ants in the whole of Queensland north of Rockhampton. When that fell through, Sam was already in Maryborough, some 250 km north of Brisbane. While there,



he established a motor dealership in 1932 – Adam & Hecker P/L – with his mate Mr N.A. Adam, selling Austins, Hillmans, Singers and Willys, then Chevrolets.

Sam, who enjoyed anything mechanical and had a need for speed, was in his element. (Prior to coming to Queensland, he had twice raced motorbikes at the Australian Grand Prix at Bathurst.) He would subsequently take on the Holden dealership, running it for 50 years and becoming a prominent Maryborough businessman.



Sam Hecker and his racing bike

Photo courtesy of the Hecker family collection

Hecker and Adam shared a love of flying. In fact, Adam was the first instructor at the Wide Bay and Burnett Aero Club, which had officially come into existence on 5 February 1932, although the local flying fraternity had staged their first annual aerial pageant in June 1930. Their third pageant in July 1932 was marked by the visit of the now Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, who arrived on 22 July in The Southern Cross to offer joy flights over the weekend and become patron of the club.

Newspaper reports of the pageants held by the various aero clubs show just what this flying fraternity got up to when they found an excuse to get together. Cootamundra 1931: Women's Bomb Dropping; Obstacle Race; Balloon Bursting; Height Guessing; and the Aerial Derby. Cootamundra 1932: the Grand Parade ('all planes in the air at once'); the RAAF formation; Inverted Flying; the Old War Dogs' Race; Aerobatics and Crazy Flying; and a repeat of the Height Guessing competition and the Aerial Derby. Maryborough 1936: Local Pilots' Handicap; Bombing Competition; Aerobatic Competition; Aerial Derby; Visitors' Handicap; and the Obstacle Race.

Geoffrey de Havilland, the owner of the aircraft company and a test pilot in his own right, attended the 1931 pageant at Cootamundra. Sam recalls, '... met Major de Havilland who arrived in a Puss Moth. After the pageant, de Havilland – with passenger – took off and did a loop right off the deck. Everyone held their breath as he was mighty close to the deck coming out of the loop!'

Back in May 1931 while still in Temora, Sam, at just 21, had taken the extraordinary step of buying a Gipsy Moth. He wasn't to gain his commercial pilot's licence until February 1932, adding a ground engineer's licence five months later. It's previous owner was P.G. ('Bill') Taylor. Taylor was to achieve fame and an Empire Gallantry Medal by saving Kingsford Smith and The Southern Cross in an aborted flight across the Tasman in 1935. For that story you need to read Rick Searle's excellent book, *The Man Who Saved Smithy*.

But it was in his Gipsy Moth that Taylor first made it into the public eye. On Saturday, 28 February 1931, he was one of five members of the Australian Aero Club who took off to fly in formation as a farewell to one of their number, Mr W.J. Hickey, who was departing to become an instructor with the RAF in England. After they had accompanied the ship to Sydney Heads, three pilots turned south for the aerodrome at Mascot, but Taylor and his friend Mr R. Annabel had other ideas. They flew back to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It was under construction and the suspended road deck had been laid down, but it wouldn't be opened until March the following year. They circled until there was a break in the water traffic below. 'They picked their moment and dove down, passing below the bridge and within 10 feet of the water, apparently, to the great consternation of passing ferry passengers.'



The air navigation regulations did not prevent such a stunt, probably because until then no one had thought of doing it, or at least had the gumption to do it. Captain V.W. Burgess, district superintendent of the Civil Aviation Department, said they would investigate a complaint if one was made and pointed to the possibility of the Minister for Defence issuing new regulations if pilots started making a habit of it. Essentially, however, his approach was to pour a bucket of cold water on the whole thing by directing part of his public statement at any pilots who might now be tempted to emulate the feat:

'The desire to be the first to fly under the bridge was probably what prompted this exploit. Merely to fly under the bridge would hardly attract pilots. It requires no particular skill. A pilot who could not easily do it should not be flying.'



Sam Hecker aloft in Diana

Photo courtesy of the Hecker family collection

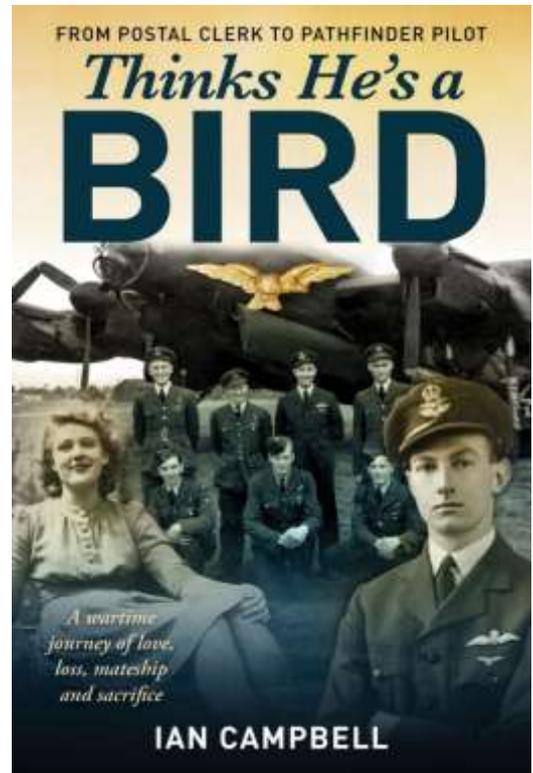
Some might have disagreed, but it had its desired effect. Not long after, Taylor put his plane on the market through the de Havilland company. Sam went to Sydney for a test flight. By June 1931, Gipsy Moth VH-UIH was his. He took it to Temora and then ultimately on to Maryborough in 1932. He did some modifications to the plane, including installing a cockpit canopy (only to remove the pilot's section later because it impeded his view when

landing), and called it 'Diana'. From Maryborough aerodrome he would periodically fly 'Diana' 25 miles north to the nearby coast and offer joy rides off the beach. Among those who gathered was a young lad on holidays from Wondai called Keith Watson, the future Pathfinder pilot.

My heartfelt thanks to Diana, Sam's daughter, who generously shared her father's archives with me when I was researching my book. Sam deserves a book of his own. All the photos are from the Hecker family collection.

You will find my wartime biography of FLTLT Keith Watson, *Thinks He's a Bird*, on the Big Sky Publishing website. There you can read a precis, some early reviews and, if you click on 'Look Inside', everything from the front cover to the end of Chapter One. <https://www.bigskypublishing.com.au/books/thinks-hes-a-bird/>. It will be in bookshops in January or you can download the e-book from Booktopia.

I welcome any feedback. You can contact me through Big Sky.





Multi-National Air Force Exercise Held in Synthetic Battlespace

From Contact Magazine



An Air Battle Manager from No. 2 Squadron at RAAF Base Williamtown conducts surveillance operations on Exercise Coalition Virtual Flag 22-1.

Story by Flight Lieutenant Nat Giles, Photo by Leading Aircraftwoman Catherine Kelly

Royal Australian Air Force personnel and their allies from Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom were challenged on Exercise Coalition Virtual Flag 22-1 (CVF22-1). Held from October 25 to November 5, CVF22-1 was a US Air Force-led, large-scale, virtual, constructive activity, where participants, joining the fight from their own homeland, honed their skills via simulators in the synthetic battlespace.

Exercise Director Wing Commander Michael Tully said the virtual exercise aimed to cultivate international partnerships and enhance Australia's interoperability with the United States Air Force (USAF), United States Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Air Force. "Coalition Virtual Flag 22-1 offered unique training opportunities that are not normally accessible in other exercises," Wing Commander Tully explained. "Coalition Virtual Flag 22-1 provided vital training for our squadrons and supports the continued development of distributed mission training capabilities in the ADF."

The Air Warfare Centre's – Distributed Training Centre at RAAF Base Williamtown facilitated the training scenarios via an integrated simulation network across multiple assets and locations. "CVF is designed to provide training to both operational and tactical war fighters, utilising a wide array of platform simulators, virtual mission training systems and constructive entities," Wing Commander Tully said. "It challenges the participants with executing and developing tactics for several of the USAF high-interest areas, such as CAS [close air support] in a fifth-generation environment, massed drone attacks, multi-domain suppression of enemy air defences, high-risk dynamic targeting and conventional and nuclear integration while facing both near-peer and low-end adversaries."

Units from around Australia participated in the exercise, including a full range of air battle manager roles from No. 2 Squadron's virtual E-7A simulator. No. 41 Wing's virtual control and



reporting centre provided high-end warfighting capabilities, while the rapid airlift of critical force elements into contested and denied environments came from No. 37 Squadron's virtual C-130J and No. 36 Squadron's virtual C-17A simulators. No. 83 Squadron's Distributed Ground Station Australia Training System provided real-time, or near real-time, multi-source fused intelligence product. "CVF22-1 was a very successful exercise and demonstrated the utility of distributed mission training and LVC [live, virtual and constructive] capabilities in achieving fifth-generation training outcomes," Wing Commander Tully said.



Bye Bye Blackbird

From an SR-71 Blackbird pilot, via Pieter La'Brooy



In April 1986, following an attack on American soldiers in a Berlin disco, President Reagan ordered the bombing of Muammar Qaddafi's terrorist camps in Libya. My duty was to fly over Libya, and take photographs recording the damage our F-111's had inflicted.

Qaddafi had established a 'line of death', a territorial marking across the Gulf of Sidra, swearing to shoot down any intruder, that crossed the boundary. On the morning of April 15, I rocketed past the line at 2,125 mph. I was piloting the SR-71 spy plane, the world's fastest jet, accompanied by a Marine Major (Walt), the aircraft's reconnaissance systems officer (RSO). We had crossed into Libya, and were approaching our final turn over the bleak desert landscape, when Walt informed me, that he was receiving missile launch signals. I quickly increased our speed, calculating the time it would take for the weapons, (most likely SA-2 and SA-4 surface-to-air missiles, capable of Mach 5), to reach our altitude. I estimated that we could beat the rocket-powered missiles to the turn, and stayed our course, betting our lives on the plane's performance.

After several agonizingly long seconds, we made the turn and blasted toward the Mediterranean. 'You might want to pull it back,' Walt suggested. It was then that I noticed I still had the throttles full forward. The plane was flying a mile every 1.6 seconds, well above our Mach 3.2 limit. It was



the fastest we would ever fly. I pulled the throttles to idle just south of Sicily, but we still overran the refuelling tanker awaiting us over Gibraltar.

Scores of significant aircraft have been produced, in the 100 years of flight, following the achievements of the Wright brothers, which we celebrate in December. Aircraft such as the Boeing 707, the F-86 Sabre and the P-51 Mustang are among the important machines that have flown our skies. But the SR-71, also known as the Blackbird, stands alone as a significant contributor to Cold War victory, and as the fastest plane ever, and only 93 Air Force pilots, ever steered the 'sled,' as we called our aircraft.

The SR-71 was the brainchild of Kelly Johnson, the famed Lockheed designer, who created the P-38, the F-104 Starfighter, and the U-2. After the Soviets shot down Gary Powers U-2 in 1960, Johnson began to develop an aircraft, that would fly three miles higher, and five times faster, than the spy plane, and still be capable of photographing your license plate. However, flying at 2,000 mph would create intense heat on the aircraft's skin. Lockheed engineers used a titanium alloy, to construct more than 90 percent of the SR-71, creating special tools, and manufacturing procedures to hand-build each of the 40 planes. (Wow! 40 planes? I thought only 7) Special heat-resistant fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluids, that would function at 85,000 feet, and higher, also had to be developed.



In 1962, the first Blackbird successfully flew, and in 1966, the same year I graduated from high school, the Air Force began flying operational SR-71 missions. I came to the program in 1983, with a sterling record and a recommendation from my commander, completing the weeklong interview, and meeting Walt, my partner for the next four years. He would ride four feet behind me, working all the cameras, radios, and electronic jamming equipment. I joked, that if we were ever captured, he was the spy, and I was just the driver. He told me to keep the pointy end forward.

We trained for a year, flying out of Beale AFB in California, Kadena Airbase in Okinawa, and RAF Mildenhall in England. On a typical training mission, we would take off near Sacramento, refuel over Nevada, accelerate into Montana, obtain a high Mach speed over Colorado, turn right over New Mexico, speed across the Los Angeles Basin, run up the West Coast, turn right at Seattle, then return to Beale. Total flight time: two hours and forty minutes. One day, high above Arizona, we were monitoring the radio traffic of all the mortal airplanes below us. First, a Cessna pilot asked the air traffic controllers to check his ground speed: 'Ninety knots,' ATC replied. A Bonanza soon made the same request: 'One-twenty on the ground,' was the reply. To our surprise, a Navy F-18 came over the radio, with a ground speed check. I knew exactly what he was doing. Of course, he had a ground speed indicator in his cockpit, but he wanted to let all the bug-smashers in the valley know what real speed was: 'Dusty 52, we show you at 620 on the ground', ATC responded. The situation was too ripe. I heard the click of Walt's mike button in the rear seat. In



his most innocent voice, Walt startled the controller by asking for a ground speed check from 81,000 feet, clearly above controlled airspace. In a cool, professional voice, the controller replied: 'Aspen 20, I show you at 1,982 knots on the ground'. We did not hear another transmission on that frequency all the way to the coast.

The Blackbird always showed us something new, each aircraft possessing its own unique personality. In time, we realized we were flying a national treasure. When we taxied out of our revetments for take-off, people took notice. Traffic congregated near the airfield fences, because everyone wanted to see, and hear the mighty SR-71. You could not be a part of this program, and not come to love the airplane. Slowly, she revealed her secrets to us, as we earned her trust. One moonless night, while flying a routine training mission over the Pacific, I wondered what the sky would look like from 84,000 feet, if the cockpit lighting were dark. While heading home on a straight course, I slowly turned down all of the lighting, reducing the glare and revealing the night sky. Within seconds, I turned the lights back up, fearful that the jet would know, and somehow punish me. But my desire to see the sky, overruled my caution, I dimmed the lighting again.

To my amazement, I saw a bright light outside my window. As my eyes adjusted to the view, I realized that the brilliance was the broad expanse of the Milky Way, now a gleaming stripe across the sky. Where dark spaces in the sky, had usually existed, there were now dense clusters, of sparkling stars. Shooting stars flashed across the canvas every few seconds. It was like a fireworks display with no sound. I knew I had to get my eyes back on the instruments, and reluctantly, I brought my attention back inside. To my surprise, with the cockpit lighting still off, I could see every gauge, lit by starlight. In the plane's mirrors, I could see the eerie shine of my gold spacesuit, incandescently illuminated, in a celestial glow. I stole one last glance out the window. Despite our speed, we seemed still before the heavens, humbled in the radiance of a much greater power. For those few moments, I felt a part of something far more significant, than anything we were doing in the plane. The sharp sound of Walt's voice on the radio, brought me back to the tasks at hand, as I prepared for our descent.



The SR-71 was an expensive aircraft to operate. The most significant cost was tanker support, and in 1990, confronted with budget cutbacks, the Air Force retired the SR-71. The SR-71 served six presidents, protecting America for a quarter of a century. Unbeknownst to most of the country, the plane flew over North Vietnam, Red China, North Korea, the Middle East, South Africa, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Libya, and the Falkland Islands. On a weekly basis, the SR-71, kept watch over every Soviet nuclear submarine, mobile missile site, and all of their troop movements. It was a key factor in winning the Cold War.



I am proud to say I flew about 500 hours in this aircraft; I knew her well. She gave way to no plane, proudly dragging her sonic boom through enemy backyards, with great impunity. She defeated every missile, outran every MIG, and always brought us home. In the first 100 years of manned flight, no aircraft was more remarkable. The Blackbird had outrun nearly 4,000 missiles, not once taking a scratch from enemy fire. On her final flight, the Blackbird, destined for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, sped from Los Angeles to Washington in 64 minutes, averaging 2,145 mph, and setting four speed records.



Fighter Squadron Histories

From Roger Wilson

These three squadron histories are now available to read online at radschool.org.au web page. I received permission from each current CO to copy the books to Rad School.

3 Squadron - SECRETS REVEALED 1916 - 1991

77 Squadron - SWIFT TO DESTROY 1942-1986

75 Squadron - SEEK AND STRIKE 1942-2002

Copyright of the 75 book, SEEK and STRIKE, is with Lex McAulay at Banner Books and the author was David Wilson (a high school friend of mine from Canberra 1959/60). David contacted Lex for me and each gave their permission to copy the book to Rad School. (On page 148 the 3rd pilot is not Bay Adams but Ken Andrews, CO 75, and still alive at 103.)



Trevor Benneworth, an ex RadTech of my era, does a magnificent job with his other volunteers in keeping the radschool.or.au site going and it contains a wealth of information for all with an interest in RAAF history. All the course photos are worth a browse. You don't have to be an ex RadTech to join the Association, but I would encourage you to do so as it is the only source of revenue for them. If you don't want to join you could still make a small donation (their bank details are on the "Membership" page).



We hang petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.
Aesop, Greek slave and fable author





80th Anniversary of 460 Squadron

15th November 2021

From 460 Sqn Veterans & Friends Committee: Bob Spence, Janenne Moffatt, David Barrington and David Tod

Formed on November 15, 1941, 460 Squadron was initially equipped with twin engine Vickers Wellington bombers and for operational reasons, the squadron began service with RAAF air crews and a mixture of RAAF and RAF ground crew and staff. The squadron then moved to Brighton, Yorkshire on January 4th 1942, with Commanding Officer, WGCDR Hubbard DSO DFC in charge. Three months later on March 12th 1942, the squadron became operational and participated in the first 1000 bomber operation.



460SQN Lancaster and crew

The squadron then transferred to RAF Binbrook on May 14th 1943 and equipped with the Avro Lancaster. During the months ahead, the squadron displayed the sort of determination for which the crews of 460 Squadron were noted. Fittingly, the squadron's motto is STRIKE and RETURN.

A total of 3,428 aircrew served with 460 Squadron and 1,018 were killed in action. Australians serving in Bomber Command represented only 2% of all Australian enlistments in all services during WWII, however they represented 20% of all Australian combat deaths.



460SQN Memorial, Binbrook

The squadron's last raid was notable, being carried out on Anzac Day 1945, and in the last days of the war, the squadron was involved with the repatriation of prisoners of war from Europe and the Manna operation over Holland. The squadron disbanded on October 10th 1945.

Sixty years later on the 2nd July 2010 and witnessed by eleven 460 Sqn WWII veterans, the squadron was reformed at a ceremony held in front of "G for George" at the Australian War Memorial. 460SQN Canberra has recently celebrated their 11th Anniversary. On this special day we remember all those who served with 460

Squadron and together we toast the squadron with the words from Sir Hughie Edwards VC, KCMG, CB, DSO, OBE, DFC, K of StJ:

Never above you, Never below you, Always with you!



The Centenary of Civil Aviation Administration

From Peter Evans, Secretary CAHS

The original predecessor of Australia's four civil aviation government agencies – the Civil Aviation Branch of the Department of Defence – commenced operation on 28 March 1921. Since then, we have seen the formation of The Department of Infrastructure and Transport, the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Airservices Australia and the Australian Transport Safety Bureau



During the Paris Peace Convention in 1919, it was decided to establish an International Convention which would lay down rules for air traffic and which would serve as a basis for uniform national regulations and thereby set standard rules for the regulation of aircraft and air navigation. This was to be administered by a permanent International Commission for Air Navigation (ICAN) under the direction of the League of Nations. The Australian Government enacted the *Air Navigation Act 1920* which broadly adopted the international standards for the regulation of Australian civil aviation. The Civil Aviation Branch of the Department of Defence was established to administer the Act.



The Creation of the Civil Aviation Branch and its Early Years of Operation

Commemorating the Centenary of Civil Aviation Administration in Australia
28 MARCH 2021



In late October 1920 applications for the position of Controller of Civil Aviation at a salary of £750 pa [\$58,000 today] were called. Thirty eight applications were received and from these Lt Col Horace Clowes Brinsmead MC (1883-1934) was selected. His first task was to recruit staff and the original members of the Civil Aviation Branch (CAB) were three superintendents, four clerks and a typist. The superintendents appointed were Captain EJ Jones (Flying Operations), Captain. FW Follett (Aircraft) and Captain. EC Johnston (Aerodromes). The Civil Aviation Branch of the Department of Defence commenced operation in the board room at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne, on 28 March 1921.

‘Melbourne Airport has produced a booklet covering the creation of the Civil Aviation Branch and its early years. The link below takes you to an online flipbook.

<https://www.flipsnack.com/899F89F6AED/the-creation-of-the-civil-aviation-branch/full-view.html>



When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become President; I'm beginning to believe it.
Quoted in 'Clarence Darrow for the Defense' by Irving Stone.





Career Decisions

From John Clarkson

The following happened in 492 Squadron, RAAF Base Edinburgh somewhere around 1979 or 1980. At the time, both maritime squadrons (No 10 and 11 squadrons) were operating at very high operational levels. During one period, the maintenance people were doing shift work to support the number of missions being conducted at high serviceability rates. During one early shift (2300hrs to 0700hrs), we had a short quiet time and began to chat about service conditions, etc. In this lively group, there was the squadron Warrant Officer Engineer (WOE), a few senior NCOs (including myself) and one very junior Pilot Officer Avionics Engineer. The junior officer was placed with us to learn some of the ropes from the SNCOs and to gain some experience.

During this quiet time, a few of us found ourselves in a rather unusual discussion. During this discussion, the PLTOFF told us how pleased he was to be on such an operational squadron, as he felt this would enhance his career prospects. He also said that he would be very careful in any decision making that he hoped he would not make any 'wrong' decisions, as these may damage his career prospects. We SNCOs smiled at this, and told him that we make our decisions based on the operational effect and the safety of the aircraft and its crew. If the powers that be didn't like our decisions, then so be it. He was amazed at our attitude and asked how some of these 'decisions' may have affected our own careers!

We SNCOs simply looked at one another and said that we never thought of that. He replied that he hoped he never made any serious decisions which would harm his career prospects. I then piped up and said that as far as a career goes, that in my first ten years of service, I never met a Warrant Officer of the technical trades who had less than 26 years of service. The WOE agreed with me, saying he had already served some 27 years, and most of the other SNCOs were already 20 year men. The young officer was astonished, and hoped that sort of thing never happened to him.

The next day, the squadron CO, a brilliant man and a good leader, asked the WOE how the young officer was going and did he have any thoughts on the young fellow's prospects. The WOE described the conversation of the previous night, and the CO was very surprised and a little alarmed. Following that evening, I am led to believe that the CO had a number of conversations with the young fellow over the next few weeks. The outcome of the event was that the young officer was posted to Support Command with a comment that he was not yet suited to operational squadrons until he had matured a little.

Sometime later, the CO had a talk with a number of us SNCOs and commended us for our service attitude and told us never to be afraid of making an unpopular decision, as he said he would back us all the way.



Winjeel 'Flameout' at 220 Knots

From Garry Ryan

During a Kangaroo Exercise in the Shoalwater Bay Training Area in 1979, Leroy Gordon and I were the "Orange" Forward Air Controllers (FAC), operating out of Samuel Hill airfield. Part of "Blue" Force flying out of Rockhampton, was 77 Squadron operating Mirages. A bounty of a carton of XXXX beer was the prize for the first fighter pilot to shoot down the Orange FAC.

Contrary to 77 Squadron expectations, we were not operating at low level, but spent most of our time at around 8000 feet, amongst the fair weather cumulus that were prevalent. The Winjeel's endurance with cruise power and auto-lean mixture was four hours, and our maximum sortie length was about two and a half hours.



One afternoon, with Leroy flying and me using a pair of binoculars, a “slow speed” Mirage appeared slightly above us and descending into the same small gap between clouds that we were using. We decided that we didn’t need to be there, and started a descent staying close to the cloud. With what must have been over thirty degrees nose down, and sufficient power to maintain



A ‘Mirage-dodging’ FAC Winjeel

Vne, the engine quit! Leroy exclaimed: “What’s going on GR!?” Me: “S…… if I know Leroy!”

With the closing of the throttle, raising the nose and selecting the boost pump on, the engine restarted. We realised that the engine had failed due to fuel starvation in a prolonged steep nose-down attitude, with the fuel remaining trapped at the front of the tank. We returned to Samuel Hill; no XXXX for 77 that day!



Caribou Ended Service in Support of UN Observers in Kashmir

28 November 1978

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, the RAAF Caribou light transport that had been flying in support of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) since 1975 undertook its final ‘milk run’ prior to returning to Australia. A detachment from Richmond-based No 38 Squadron had been operating with UNMOGIP since March 1975, maintaining and crewing the Caribou that provided a scheduled Tuesday



courier service for observers in the disputed territory of Kashmir, and also transporting the UN Chief Military Observer on his visits to 35 observer stations scattered along the ceasefire line.

The detachment’s single aircraft was changed over at six-month intervals by another sent from Australia. By the time that the final run from Rawalpindi (Pakistan) to Srinagar (India; the



detachment alternated between both bases) was completed, the Caribous had flown 1800 hours on UN duties. Operating under a new ferry crew, the aircraft commenced its return flight from Rawalpindi, bound for Richmond, on 2 January.

More on UNMOGIP is here: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unmogip>



Air and Ground Radio School (A&GRS) Ballarat

From J the T

I joined the RAAF in October 1951. At the beginning of 1952 I went off to the RAAF Air and Ground Radio School (A&GRS) at Ballarat as a member of No 5 Signallers Course. Twelve people finished up on the course – Frank Howie, ‘Bull Dog’ Drummond, Ted Zinnecker, Jim O’Brien, ‘Smokie’ Langlands, ‘Tubby’ Cameron, Don Tripney, Neil Cameron, Peter Drake, and Keith Coglin.

At the time RAAF Ballarat was commanded by a bloke called Wing Commander Reynolds. The WOD was a rather stern individual called “Shagger Marr”.



Photo of the members of No 5 Signallers Course

Every Tuesday, after we were assembled on the parade ground for the weekly Officer Commanding (OCs) parade, “Shagger” would bellow out: “Fall out the Roman Catholics, Jews, unbelievers and Pakistanis” (at the time there were a number of Pakistani Air Force people doing radio courses at Ballarat).

If you were unfortunate enough to fall into one of these categories, you were lined up at the back of the parade and marched off to the Barracks Yard, there to chop the hardest, toughest, mallee



roots in the Southern Hemisphere. The mallee roots were used to fuel the stoves used to heat the Messes and Barrack blocks. Ballarat is a cold hole.

The blokes that were left on the Parade Ground were marched off to attend a “Church Parade” and did not have to face the mallee roots. A number of miraculous religious conversions materialized from within the ranks every Tuesday morning. Interesting days long gone.



The Old Magpie

From Contact Magazine

By Tomas ‘Paddy’ Hamilton, 22 October 2018

You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said
 As he gazed down on the poppies, in our garden bed
 Your flowers they bend in tribute, to the sixty thousand dead
 You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said

You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said
 Your seeds were sown with loving care, when the winter frost had fled
 The weeds that have been cast aside, now leave you in good stead
 You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said

You’re a long way from the western front the old magpie said
 Fragile petals wilting, crushed by the soldiers tread
 Now they pause in silence as solemn words are said
 You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said

You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said
 Each year your blooms remind us, of all the blood they shed
 For glory and the empire, like lemmings they were led
 You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said

You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said
 Let you now grow in peace, far from the mortal dread
 For solace when once achieved, hangs by a slender thread
 You’re a long way from the western front, the old magpie said



In celebration of their mascot, the Australian magpie, No. 75 Squadron applied a black and white commemorative paint scheme to F/A-18A Hornet A21-018. The aircraft will sport the new colour scheme ahead of the squadron’s transition to the F-35A Lightning II in 2022. The squadron adopted the magpie because it is a belligerent defendant of its young with the courage to attack.

Photo by Sergeant Pete Gammie



As the Hornet is Farewelled, anecdotes from its introduction...

From Gary Jeffrey

When we got our first aircraft we had to follow American launch procedures; in which the 'plane captain' informs the pilot of checks. When the aircraft were handed over to us for our first launch we had two troops go out; one on the fire bottle and the other in front, thumbs up for start, tail hook down/up and chocks out. The American Engineer came out yelling to us that 'you cannot do that! He was 'politely' told that this is now an Australian aircraft and this is how we operate.

Also while at Pax, we filled our own Liquid Oxygen (LOX) bottles for our aircraft. For one particular planned flight, we had to go and get our LOX bottle but it had disappeared, notwithstanding that it was marked as an Australian asset and not to be used by others. After quickly contacting the Americans, it was found that our bottle had been loaded into an F-14 and was now on its way to a US aircraft carrier. The F-14 was called back to Pax and the bottle returned to its rightful owners.

At around this same time, P. Kiss, K. Vincent and myself were attached to NAS Fallon in Nevada to observe bombing operations. When we arrived, Ken and myself were invited to the US boozer and then informed of an American gunnie tradition - we had to skull a 'Whispering Death'! The drinks were prepared and we drank them with some trepidation: well founded as it turned out - it burned all the way down. We choked out "what's in it?" and their laughing response was a shot of tequila, a shot of Jack Daniels and a shot of Tabasco sauce!



One of our first two Hornets to arrive at NAS Patuxent River (USA) in April 1985 and the maintenance crew.



L-R: D Cochran, Col White, G Jeffery, R McLaren, S Glover, G Whitby, I Powel, G Luland, K Vincent, B Gifford, Equipo ???, S Coughlan, R Greer, B Keegan, S Marshal, J Fallon (McAir), R Jackson, D Reig, Dewayne Stivers (McAir)



A21-102 hanging around during testing

On arrival at NAS Patuxent River (Pax), the late K Vincent and myself, being gunnies, got on well with American gunnies. One Friday night we asked about any good bars and they told us that just down road a couple of hundred yards there is a bar; it doesn't look good from the outside but you will have a good time. So, in we go and stopped short as it was an all African American bar. We went up to the bar with lots of people starring at us and ordered a beer. The barman asked if we were Australians and when we answered in the affirmative, we were made very welcome, and we knew we would be safe.



Classic Hornet farewelled after decades of Service

Photo courtesy Flight Global





Lasting Tribute to 'Father of Air Force'

From Contact Magazine; Story by Flight Lieutenant Nat Giles. Photo by LAC Stewart Gould



The sculpture of Sir Richard Williams in Moonta, South Australia

To commemorate 100 years of Air Force, the Copper Coast Council in South Australia held a centenary celebration to honour the 'father of Air Force', Sir Richard Williams. Born in Moonta Mines, South Australia in 1890, Sir Richard was instrumental in the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921 and its continued development between the wars. Appointed the first Chief of Air Staff of the RAAF, he served in the position three different times for a total of 13 years, rising to the rank of Air Marshal.

Group Captain Greg Weller, RAAF Edinburgh's assistant Senior ADF Officer (SADFO) and responsible for community engagement, said he had been working closely with the Copper Coast Council and Air Force Association for more than a year on the celebrations, which were a keynote event for the Air Force centenary in South Australia. "In a fitting tribute to the most significant figure in the history of the RAAF, the Copper Coast Council and the people of Moonta came together to have a wonderful park sculpture of Sir Richard Williams and a plaque telling his story of achievement emplaced in his hometown of Moonta," Group Captain Weller said. "We hope the sculpture will inspire generations to come to achieve from humble beginnings just like Sir Richard Williams."

The statue was unveiled by Governor of South Australia, Frances Adamson, and the plaque was unveiled by President Air Force Association (South Australia), Dr Robert Black. The celebrations comprised a street parade including RAAF Base Edinburgh members and Army and Air Force Cadets, a RAAF PC-21 flypast, a vintage aircraft flypast comprising a DHC-1 Chipmunk, DH-82 Tiger Moths and DH-94 Moth Minor; a VIP lunch at the Moonta Town Hall and a thanksgiving service at the Moonta Mines Uniting Church. "The thanksgiving church service was a particularly poignant part of the event, bringing together Sir Richard Williams' family members, Army, Navy and Air Force personnel, cadets, South Australian dignitaries and local community members to celebrate the achievements of an extraordinary man in the church that Sir Richard Williams attended as a youth," Group Captain Weller said. "The celebrations were a keynote event of our



AF2021 calendar of events in South Australia and an incredible opportunity to showcase Sir Richard Williams’ achievements and Air Force’s heritage with the South Australian community.”

Acting senior Air Force representative South Australia, Group Captain Pete Mitchell, presented the Copper Coast Council mayor and the Moonta RSL president with an AF2021 framed print to thank the Moonta Community for acknowledging Sir Richard during the Air Force centenary.



C-141 Incident at RAAF Richmond 1977

From Jim Hall

I was a Flight Engineer at Richmond in 1977 when this aircraft incident occurred. The aircraft subsequently spent about three months in the 2 AD Hangar before flying again. Apart from repairing numerous holes in the fuselage, all brakes and engines had to be replaced. I think the crew still meet yearly to mark the occasion.

The C-141 Starlifter took off toward Richmond (and the mountains) when number 3 engine blew and reportedly a turbine wheel broke away and went straight into the number 4 compressor, stopping it dead. The forward cowl on number 3 stood up like a speed brake; the fuselage and wing were peppered with turbine fragments; there were numerous holes in the fuselage; number 3 fuel tank was punctured and leaking fuel and number 3 engine was basically broken in half and dangling. I don’t know how big the Starlifter rudder is, but from memory the pilot did a left



USAF C-141 Starlifter

circuit which must have been a feat in itself, trying to keep directional control as well as altitude. Eyewitnesses said the flames from number 3 engine extended beyond the tail and bits were shedding over and around Richmond. Fuel was dumped and the crew (Reserves) were battling two engines out on the same side, a fuel leak, hydraulic leaks and a cargo fire started by hot metal penetrating the cargo hold. A Hercules in the circuit helped them find the Richmond runway.

Brakes were burnt out on landing of course, and the crew jumped out and reportedly kissed the bitumen before going to the bar. Oddly enough, a similar scenario was introduced as an exercise carried out by the crews in the Flight Simulator at 36 Squadron some weeks before. The only difference being that number 4 engine was not damaged but the bleed air system in the right wing leading edge was damaged.

The USAF Report

Australia/1977

Date	15 Oct 1977	Cause	Multiple Engine Failure	Condition D/N	D
Wing/Base	63 MAW/SBD	Location	Richmond RAAF B Aust	IMC/VMC	VMC
Tail #	40614	Fatalities	None	Fatigue?	N/A



Synopsis: Shortly after a heavyweight take-off, #3 engine experienced an uncontained engine failure, causing #4 engine to fail, and starting a cargo fire. The crew was able to maintain control, clean up the aircraft and return to the airport on two engines. There were no injuries.

Passing 700' during a heavyweight take-off from Richmond RAAF to Pago Pago, the #3 engine experienced an uncontained engine failure. Parts of #3 engine penetrated #4 engine, instantly causing it to also fail.

Parts also penetrated the cargo compartment, starting a cargo fire within a pallet of household goods. The Aircraft Commander (AC), in the right seat, took control of the aircraft as the aircraft started losing airspeed and altitude. Initially planning to crash land, the AC turned toward a nearby riverbed. With the two good engine throttles firewalled the aircraft continued to descend. #3 engine was dangling from the pylon and on fire. #4 engine was peppered with holes. The wing was leaking fuel.



The aircraft continued to descend into the riverbed. In a final effort to keep flying, while still expecting a crash landing, the pilot elected to slowly retract the flaps. As the flaps retracted the airspeed stabilized, then increased. The aircraft stopped descending well below airfield elevation, just above the riverbed. As they started a climb, the crew had lost sight of the airbase. They requested directions back to the airfield from tower, but were out of sight of the tower. An Australian C-130 in the traffic pattern gave them vectors to the runway.



In the cargo compartment, the loadmasters grabbed walk-around oxygen bottles and fire extinguishers. They fired the fire extinguishers into the pallet, while other crew members formed a fire brigade refilling oxygen bottles. Smoke filled the cargo compartment, reducing visibility to less than four feet. Smoke was filling the cockpit. The pilot attempted to open the ram air door, but it was stuck. He was about to open the pilot's window, when the navigator reached up and opened the sextant port. This quickly and effectively rid the cockpit of

smoke.

With the remaining two good engines operating at "Firewall Thrust", the pilots maintained control of the aircraft and set up for a visual straight-in. The aircraft landed trailing engine parts and fuel. The crew and passengers evacuated successfully. The local fire department extinguished the fire.

Until this accident, the technique of "milking up" the flaps on a multiple engine failure had never been taught, and was not an officially recognized procedure. The crew members each received the Air Medal.





'Breaker Morant' Trio Issued Service Medals

From Contact Magazine

By James Unkles, (www.breakermorant.com)



Lieutenants Harry 'Breaker' Morant, Peter Handcock and George Witton are being issued service medals they were entitled to – 120 years late. The medallic recognition for meritorious and loyal service is eventually being issued thanks to tireless efforts by 'Morant' campaigner, James Unkles. Retired Australian military lawyer James Unkles has been working on the 'Morant' case as a passion project for more than 10 years, on behalf of the descendants of Harry 'Breaker' Morant, Peter Handcock and George Witton. This is his latest report:

Service Medals

I am pleased to announce on behalf of the descendants of Morant, Handcock and Witton, medallic recognition that they rendered loyal and exemplary service to the Colonial Contingents during the Boer War. Australian and British authorities no longer issue medals for service in the Boer War – however replica medals can be sourced for descendants once details of service are confirmed. There is no legal impediment to such medals being issued to the descendants of these men.

Details of Service

Morant, from Renmark, served as a volunteer with the 2nd South Australian Mounted Rifles during the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902). His service was meritorious and loyal. He was commended by his CO for his service to the Regiment. Morant held the rank of Lance Corporal and was promoted to Sergeant during his service in South Africa. Morant eventually also served in British Contingent, the Bushveldt Carbineers. During his service he was commended for the capture of notorious Boer Commander, Kelly.

Handcock, from Bathurst, joined NSWs Mounted Rifles and deployed to South Africa on 17 January 1900 and served for 12 months. His service was meritorious and loyal. He then joined the Bushveldt Carbineers as a Lieutenant on 21 January 1901.



Witton, from Victoria, joined 4th Victorian Imperial Bushmen as a Corporal, and went to South Africa on 1 May 1900. His service was meritorious and loyal. He also joined the Bushveldt Carbineers as a Lieutenant, on 1 June 1901. Medals were recognised for Lt Witton’s service.

One of his descendants, Brian Turley, celebrated Witton’s service to 4th Victorian Imperial Bushmen, on 1 November 2021.



James Unkles presents George Witton’s service medals to Witton descendant Brian Turley.

Photo supplied by James Unkles.

Presentations to the descendants of Lieutenants Handcock and Morant will follow as soon as can be arranged.

Background

In service of the British Empire, the Australian colonies offered troops for the war in South Africa. Australians served in contingents raised by the six colonies or, from 1901, by the Australian Commonwealth. The Australian colonies had volunteers serving in contingents. About 25,000 Australian served in the war. The war is also remembered for the controversial trial and execution of Lieutenants Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant, Peter Handcock and the imprisonment of George Witton for shooting Boer prisoners.

On 27th of February 1902, Lieutenants Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant and Peter Handcock were executed, George Witton was imprisoned. Historians have claimed these men were used as scapegoats for the political interests of British Military Commander, Lord Kitchener, and his political masters. Evidence has emerged these men were not tried and sentenced according to law, and advocacy continues to have this injustice addressed. A House of Representatives motion tabled in 2018 by Scott Buchholz MP, on 12 February 2018 highlights this. The motion expressed sincere regret and apology to the descendants of these men for the manner in which Morant, Handcock and Witton were treated.

The Motion stated:

‘sincere regret that Lieutenants Morant, Handcock and Witton were denied procedural fairness contrary to law and acknowledges that this had cruel and unjust consequences; and, sympathy to the descendants of these men as they were not tried and sentenced in accordance with the law of 1902’.

Scott Buchholz’s address to the House is compelling:

‘Lieutenants Morant and Handcock were the first and last Australians executed for war crimes, on 27 February 1902. The process used to try these men was fundamentally flawed. They were not afforded the rights of an accused person facing serious criminal charges enshrined in military law in 1902. Today, I recognise the cruel and unjust consequences and express my deepest sympathy to the descendants’.





Pathfinder Force 80th Anniversary

From Jeff McClenaughan, Secretary Bomber Command Association in Australia

Next year is the 80th Anniversary of the formation of the elite Pathfinder Force (PFF) under the leadership of Australian Air Vice Marshall Don Bennett.

Next year, 2022, marks the 80th Anniversary of the formation of the Pathfinder Force within Bomber Command in the UK during World War 2. The Pathfinder Force was formed on the 5th July 1942 and the crews assembled at their respective bases on the 17th August. Such was the urgency to improve the accuracy of Bomber Command raids, and the insistence from Arthur Harris that they be ready to start immediately, they flew their first mission the following night on the 18/19 August. The man tasked with forming, training and leading this group was an Australian, Group Captain Don Bennett, a master navigator and airman, having survived being shot down over Norway and making his way, on foot, back to England. He went on to become the youngest Air Vice Marshal in the RAF at the age of 33.

The Pathfinders were a unique band of men gathered together from all over the Commonwealth, including many from Australia. Hand-picked for their excellence and dedication to duty, this elite group was highly trained in the latest navigation technology available at the time. They became an efficient and potent force that guided the main bomber streams to their targets. Bombing accuracy improved enormously and Bomber Command went on to become the most powerful striking force the world had seen to that time, the likes of which will never be seen again, wreaking havoc across enemy held territory and its factories. Nowhere was this more evident than the accurate marking and bombing of German positions on the front line in support of allied troops after the D-Day landings. It was a high-risk role with crews expected to do two tours of duty; consequently losses were grievous - 3,727 Pathfinder aircrew were killed on operations. Pathfinders were highly decorated with three Victoria Crosses awarded to Pathfinder pilots, all of them posthumously. Pathfinder aircrew proudly wore the coveted Golden Eagle Badge, the only one of its type permitted by the RAF.

As the son of a Pathfinder and former secretary of the Pathfinder Association, I feel that it is important that the occasion is marked by a suitable gathering of all interested families and friends of PFF and Bomber Command veterans. Celebration of the Anniversary next year is an opportunity to remember and reflect on just how much the men and women of Bomber Command achieved, and the sacrifices they endured. Their role in turning the tide is still little known or recognised today.

My intent is to arrange a lunch at the Royal Automobile Club, Macquarie Street Sydney, on the 18th August 2022, under the banner of the Bomber Command Association in Australia Inc. (BCAA). To get the ball rolling, can you please let me know if you would like to attend and if there are other people you know of to contact. I have emailed all those that I could find on my mailing list that had a connection with the Pathfinder Force, in particular those members past and present from Air Mobility Group. I also intend to write to the PFF Association in the UK to see what they have planned.

Those interested, please contact me on: 0403 061 212



I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.

Charles de Gaulle, French general & politician



Compassion and Pride in Historic Airlift

37SQN 'FOREMOST' Again First In, Last Out

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

Air Force led the way in Australia's remarkable contribution to bringing evacuees from Afghanistan to safety, LCDR Andrew Ragless writes.

Over nine sweltering days in August, ADF personnel took part in the largest humanitarian airlift operation in recent history. As the Taliban swept across Afghanistan, Australia deployed five aircraft and the Army's Ready Combat Team to evacuate Australian nationals and approved foreign nationals from Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul.

In coordination with DFAT and Home Affairs, about 4100 people were evacuated on more than 30 Air Force flights from August 18 to 26.



Afghanistan evacuees disembark an Air Force C-130J Hercules at Australia's main operating base in the Middle East

Photo by LACW Jaqueline Ferguson

C-130J Hercules Combat Systems Officer, FLGOFF Jono, said the experience had been challenging but rewarding. "The mountainous terrain around Kabul can be difficult to navigate at night," he said. "We were wearing night-vision goggles to maintain clearance, but the sheer volume of traffic also presented a problem. "It's safe to say Kabul airspace was one of the busiest in the world at that time." Once on the ground, C-130J Hercules and C-17A Globemaster III aircrews were required to manage the loading of exhausted and frightened civilians in a semi-permissible environment. "We had to do all of our own security and screening of personnel coming aboard to make sure they didn't pose a threat to the aircraft and crew," FLGOFF Jono said.

Each aircraft travelled with a minimum of two pilots, a combat systems operator, two load masters, eight security officers and two medics. On landing, the aircraft security officers exited the airframe to provide a secure perimeter while also helping with processing and screening. Medics provided a quick health assessment of personnel as they boarded, then continued to look after those who were injured or dehydrated on the flight to a temporary safe haven established at Australia's main operating base in the Middle East. Loadmasters were responsible for the weight and balance of each aircraft flight.



Meanwhile, an Australian KC-30A air-to-air refuelling aircraft flew eight sorties providing about 375,000 pounds of fuel to coalition fast jets such as F-16s and F-18s, ensuring the security of the airspace around the airfield. "I'd say that if you asked me three months ago, when I finished course, that I'd

be a part of this, I'd struggle to believe you," FLGOFF Jono said. "Seeing the countless number of



people that we've been able to get out of Afghanistan, and the look of appreciation on their faces, and to be part of a professional team of Australians working hard to make a difference in these people's lives – it's been a real highlight."

Of the total number of evacuees, 3637 flew to Australia or New Zealand through Australia's main operating base in the Middle East. The remainder were from the UK, US, Singapore and Fiji. The youngest was eight days, the oldest 81. Commander Joint Task Force 633, AIRCDRE David Paddison, said throughout the operation ADF personnel had witnessed, in various forms, the strength of human character. "While there are stories of tragedy, Australian Defence personnel should be proud of their contribution to either return people home or give others a new start," he said."



Formation of Army Aviation Corps

1 December 1960

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, No 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron was formed at Amberley, Queensland, by renaming No 16 Air Observation Post (AOP) Flight which had been in existence since 1958. With the role of providing light aircraft support for the Army, the new squadron initially operated Cessna 180 fixed-wing aircraft from the disbanded AOP Flight (transferred from Canberra) and the first three Bell 47G-2 Sioux helicopters delivered from a total of 11 on order from the US.

The squadron was planned to function as an integrated unit, with 72 Army and 65 RAAF personnel. Commanded by Wing Commander K.V. Robertson - the RAAF's first helicopter pilot - the new unit's pilots were all from the Army, while technical and ground maintenance staff came from the Air Force. By April 1966, the squadron had been renamed as 1 Aviation Regiment, and on 1 July 1968 the Australian Army Aviation Corps was formed.

More here: <https://www.army.gov.au/our-people/organisation-structure/army-corps/australian-army-aviation-corps>





A Bloody Great Aussie Poem, Mate

From Gregory Newlyn

The sun was hot already - it was only 8 o'clock
The cocky took off in his ute, to go and check his stock
He drove around the paddocks checking wethers, ewes and lambs,
The float valves in the water troughs, the windmills on the dams

He stopped and turned a windmill on to fill a water tank
And saw a ewe down in the dam, a few yards from the bank
"Typical bloody sheep," he thought, "they've got no common sense,
"They won't go through a gateway but they'll jump a bloody fence"

The ewe was stuck down in the mud, he knew without a doubt
She'd stay there 'til she carked it if he didn't get her out
But when he reached the water's edge, the startled ewe broke free
And in her haste to get away, began a swimming spree

He reckoned once her fleece was wet, the weight would drag her down
If he didn't rescue her, the stupid sod would drown
Her style was unimpressive, her survival chances slim
He saw no other option, he would have to take a swim

He peeled his shirt and singlet off, his trousers, boots and socks
And as he couldn't stand wet clothes, he also shed his jocks
He jumped into the water and away that cocky swam
He caught up with her, somewhere near the middle of the dam

The ewe was quite evasive, she kept giving him the slip
He tried to grab her sodden fleece but couldn't get a grip
At last he got her to the bank and stopped to catch his breath
She showed him little gratitude for saving her from death

She took off like a Bondi tram around the other side
He swore next time he caught that ewe he'd hang her bloody hide
Then round and round the dam they ran, although he felt quite puffed
He still thought he could run her down, she must be nearly stuffed

The local stock rep came along, to pay a call that day
He knew this bloke was on his own, his wife had gone away,
He didn't really think he'd get fresh scones for morning tea
But neither was he ready for what he was soon to see

He rubbed his eyes in disbelief at what came into view
For running down the catchment came this frantic-looking ewe
And on her heels in hot pursuit and wearing not a stitch
The farmer yelling wildly "Come back here, you lousy bitch!"

The stock rep didn't hang around, he took off in his car
The cocky's reputation has been damaged near and far
So bear in mind the Work Safe rule when next you check your flocks
Spot the hazard, assess the risk, and always wear your jocks!





Getting Ready for Artificial Intelligence

From Contact Magazine; Story by Alexander Manning



Air Force's Cognitive Assistant Avatar, AIMEE.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a force multiplier that has the potential to deliver faster, smarter and safer military effects with less resources. It is an essential technology that is at the heart of advances in decision support, situational awareness, logistics, robotic process automation, natural language processing and digital twin modelling. Massive investments have already been made by both allies and competitors seeking to lead or gain advantage through application of AI. To highlight this, a recent report from the US National Security Commission on AI recommends that, "by 2025, the (US) Department of Defense and Intelligence Community must be AI-ready".

What does an "AI-ready" organisation look like, and what does Air Force need to do to realise the benefits? It is with this in mind that Jericho Disruptive Innovation held a series of AI Fluency sessions for Air Force Headquarters with Deloitte's AI Institute. The sessions, also attended by Army, Navy and Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group representatives, were the first step in a program to develop Air Force's fluency in these rapidly growing technologies. Rebecca Blackford, data scientist at Deloitte's AI Institute, described AI as a collection of interrelated technologies used to solve problems and perform tasks that normally require human intelligence.

AI has never been more accessible, with rapid advancements in off-the-shelf AI. Machine-driven thinking is ready to integrate further into daily life, but the question is, is Air Force ready for AI? Wing Commander Michael Gan, Jericho Disruptive Innovation AI Lead, explained that the uses of AI within Air Force were wide. "The most exciting, however, are those that enable Air Force personnel to make smarter and quicker decisions, often in high-risk situations," Wing Commander Gan said. "A Decision Support System is one type of AI that aids personnel in making smart choices, arming them with simplified data and generated insights. "A simple example of this could be a camera on the flight line that counts air mobility aircraft and classifies them. That data will be sent to a dashboard, which can ultimately assist you in your decision on aircraft arrivals and departures, as well as loading priorities, whether it be fruit or munitions."

Air Commodore Grant Pinder, Director General Logistics, attended one of the sessions and reflected that AI could play a significant role in the future of logistics. "AI has tremendous potential to enhance logistics in areas such as supply-chain management, intelligent automation,



preventative maintenance and demand projection in the delivery of air and space power,” Air Commodore Pinder said.

Another key capability that AI offers Air Force is the ability to recreate real-life environments and scenarios in real time. This technology, named “digital twins”, allows users to figure out the best approach to high-risk scenarios such as a bushfire emergency, a car crash or rescue mission, creating a space where variables can be tested. Dan Sutherland, solutions lead at Deloitte’s AI Solution Studio, put it simply. “It’s trial and error without the error,” he said. Digital twins will play a large role in Air Force’s adoption of AI – Air Force is already using digital twin technologies in new capabilities such as the Loyal Wingman and M2 satellite.

In launching the 2021 Head of Air Force Capability Strategy (HACSTRAT), Air Vice-Marshal Cath Roberts said that this new digital-testing space could support and speed up decision-making processes apace with this dynamic environment. “These projects have also allowed us to trial digital twin approaches to speed up capability development, by creating realistic synthetic environments to design, test, train and run mission simulations. Digital twins will become increasingly integral to rapid capability development,” she said. To be able to harness the technology and be “AI-ready”, Air Force will need to develop its strategy, people, processes, data and technology to meet the challenges of the future. This will need to occur at the enterprise as well as unit and individual level.



New Life Member of AFA NSW

Lesley Gent, OAM

The State Council of AIRFORCE ASSOCIATION (AFA) NSW awarded Life Membership to Lesley Gent OAM in recognition of the outstanding contributions and commitment made over many years to the preservation and collation of the history of RAAF and RAF veterans, the Fighter Squadrons Branch (FSB) and the AFA generally.



Mike Lavercombe presents Lesley with her life membership certificate

FSB President Mike Lavercombe presented the award - which included a letter from the State President Ron Glew OAM, a framed certificate and Life Membership Badge - to Lesley at a Committee Meeting on 6 December 2021 in the Heritage Room at Fighter World, Williamtown.

In Lesley's own words, she was 'thrilled with the Life Membership and was rendered speechless.' She said she loves doing history and gathering stories from veterans and does not find it a chore at all.

The FSB congratulates Lesley on a well-deserved award.





Seeking Veterans' Inspirational Stories for a New Book – 'To Escape, Survive - or Die'

From Brynn Evans

Following my most recent book, *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* (Sept 2020), I am seeking contributions for my research on a book in a similar vein. In these difficult times of the pandemic many readers of *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* have told me how they have found inspiration and strength from veterans' amazing accounts of survival.

The new book, which is planned to cover the Second World War, is envisaged as a collection of inspirational true stories of escape and survival from members of all armed services and civilians, with a tentative title, *To Escape, Survive – or Die*. All escape and survival stories seem to be dependent to some degree upon an element of luck. The good fortune that assists someone's escape appears to be random chance, indifferent to the individual and the circumstances. Yet often the person favoured by the will of the gods, feels as if an invisible power may have intervened to allow their survival. The Roman goddess of fortune, Fortuna, was the personification of chance, luck and fate in Roman life and religion. She might bring good or bad luck, and was sometimes represented as veiled or blind, just as in more modern times the Lady of Justice is depicted. However Fortuna did not hold the scales of justice in a balance, but came to represent the capriciousness of life.

Another constant element is the fear experienced at the time by the survivor. Although there is nearly always a mixture of courage, skill and resilience assisted by luck, that enables escape and survival, some degree of good fortune pervades every such situation. The most inspiring element is the determination shown by those facing unimaginable adversity, irrespective of whether they survived or not. These stories of miraculous escapes or survival, often over a period of time in extreme adversity, are found everywhere; so many little known and unrecorded, and demonstrate the relentless perseverance of the human spirit. Two such stories from the two World Wars well illustrate the remarkable persistence to go on when all seems lost.

In the First World War, Walter was a private soldier in the Sherwood Foresters Regiment. In 1917 he was wounded on three occasions in France within a few months. The third wounding was critical; a serious gunshot or shrapnel in his neck, resulting in him being evacuated by ambulance, train and ship to a hospital in Britain. Against all the odds, Walter recovered and re-joined the Sherwood Foresters in March 1918 in the pivotal battle for Villers-Bretonneux. Walter was in the front lines again to live or die in a battle where Allied forces must halt a major advance by the German army, otherwise the Allies would suffer a catastrophic defeat.

On the night of 7 December 1941, the day of the attack on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, Japanese forces invaded Thailand and made amphibious landings in north eastern Malaya. In the face of the Japanese onslaught in northern Malaya at that time, Bill was a Captain and Quartermaster with infantry of the 2nd Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment. Driven south with other formations of the British and Indian armies by Japanese forces, the East Surrey's suffered heavy casualties at the battles of Jitra and Gurin. By 20 December, the East Surrey's were reduced to less than 300 officers and other ranks, less than half their original strength. Over the next two months Bill and the remaining East Surrey's joined with the similarly decimated Leicester Regiment, and retreated south to Singapore. In mid-February, with the Japanese conquest of Singapore imminent, Bill was ordered to take 24 men and evacuate by small boats to Java. On 14 February, while being shelled by the enemy, Bill embarked with fourteen men in one gunboat, the Dragon Fly, one of the last boats to leave Singapore. The same day Japanese aircraft bombed and sank the boat with many casualties. Clad only in his shorts and bare to the waist Bill was hurled into the sea and swam for his life. As Bill and other lucky survivors struggled in the water they were machine-gunned by Japanese fighters, losing more men. Bill and just a handful of



remaining men swam on to an unknown fate. Could they make land, or be picked up by another boat?

Many survivors also owed their lives not only to fate, but also to the help of others, comrades, perfect strangers, or even enemy troops. Those who found themselves isolated in enemy occupied territory, only survived in most cases because of an instinctive desire to care by a civilian or a member of enemy forces. Such acts of kindness often led to the helper and their families, if found out, being punished, tortured and executed by enemy authorities. Amongst the stories of miraculous escapes and survival, there are those who did not in the end survive. Many men had remarkable escapes, even on multiple occasions, only for fortune to turn against them, so that they did not live to tell their stories. Yet in many cases, their experiences were documented either by comrades, family, friends or the authorities.

Contact me

For my research on my next book, I would be delighted to hear from any readers who can contribute a story of an amazing escape or survival. Written material by a veteran, a family member, friend or eyewitness, and previously unpublished would be preferred. All contributions will be diligently read, and where assessed as a potential inclusion, a complimentary signed first edition of one of my previous books will be available. All contributors in the new book; *To Escape, Survive – or Die*, will receive a complimentary signed first edition on the book's publication.

As a separate matter and offer, I can make *Airmen's Incredible Escapes* or any of my previous books available as signed first editions (hardback) at a heavily discounted price. I have been selling copies privately at A\$30 plus postage within Australia. I can make copies available to RAAFA NSW at \$25, which is a large discount on the UK RRP of UK £25, or higher through retail outlets eg Dymocks A\$75.

I can be contacted at: bryn.evans@ozemail.com.au.



Pulling Together for a Good Cause

From Contact Magazine,
Story by Flying Officer Lily Lancaster

In support of mental health, No. 36 Squadron has hosted RAAF Base Amberley's biggest fundraiser of the year with a team challenge for a tug-o-war with an aircraft. And you can't get much bigger than a C-17A Globemaster III.

Every year, personnel across the ADF are moved around the world by No. 36 Squadron's C-17A Globemaster III. For the squadron's annual charity event, RAAF Base Amberley personnel returned the favour by moving the jet themselves in a tug-o-war challenge. Commanding Officer No. 36 Squadron, Wing Commander Dean Bolton, set the challenge for the competitors.

The winner would be the squadron which could pull the aircraft the farthest in five minutes. "It's been a challenging time for the community and many serving in Defence. The opportunity to support Beyond Blue whilst having some fun with other base units was a great idea by the team," Wing Commander Bolton said.

The winner of the inaugural competition was No. 36 Squadron, which pulled its own aircraft the farthest (by a huge margin). This proved to be no easy feat with the C-17A Globemaster III weighing in at about 143,000kg, a fraction of its loaded maximum weight. Headquarters 86 Wing placed second with 1 Combat Communications Squadron, No. 23 Squadron and No. 35 Squadron placed joint third.



No. 36 Squadron aviators pull a C-17A Globemaster III aircraft during the tug-o-war challenge at RAAF Base Amberley. Photo by Corporal Jesse Kane

Wing Commander Bolton was pleased to claim the new trophy. “Thanks to the talented aviators at 36 Squadron who gave their time to craft the trophy and plan the event,” he said. “Considering recent circumstances, it was fantastic to see units from across the base come out here to compete whilst supporting a good cause.”

The real win however was the amount raised for Beyond Blue – an organisation that works with the community to improve mental health and prevent suicide. The challenge was a part of the squadron’s month-long fundraiser, raising \$8513 for the charity so far.

Event organisers Flight Lieutenant Coen Imoda and Leading Aircraftwoman Megan Hughes were proud to see RAAF Base Amberley get behind the cause. “Since the COVID-19 pandemic developed, it has become increasingly apparent that looking after our mental health is a priority,” Leading Aircraftwoman Hughes said. “In doing events like the tug-o-war, we are able to support and showcase great support resources such as Beyond Blue.”

Donate to their cause at: [Sure as Heavy Airlift – Fundraise for Beyond Blue.](#)



Wing Commander Dean Bolton and Leading Aircraftwoman Stacey Hayes, with the trophy awarded to 36 SQN. Photo by Leading Aircraftwoman Emma Schwenke





*From the Editor to all the
members of AFA NSW,*

*have a very happy and healthy
festive season...*

and keep your contributions coming in 2022!

