



# SITREP

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION NSW - NEWS AND VIEWS

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## A Close Call in a Hercules

*From Phil Frawley*

After about two years flying as a co-pilot on the venerable C-130 Hercules, I was being Agroomed for captaincy and as such I was doing a lot of flying with the squadron executives to ensure that I was capable of being a captain. On this particular mission I was programmed to fly with the CO of the squadron. This CO was a particularly hard man who was obsessed with being ahead of schedule at every opportunity and drove his crews harshly to achieve his aims.

The mission itself was a comparatively easy one, known as an East Coast Courier. The task was simply to fly from RAAF Base Richmond to RAAF Base Amberley (in Qld) and then onto RAAF Base Townsville and return the same way. At each stopover we would pick up general cargo and passengers as required by the RAAF Air Movements organisation, who determined what cargo and passengers needed to be transported to the various bases.

On taxiing into Amberley, the flight engineer asked me for the required fuel load to continue on to Townsville and as I gave him the necessary upload, I was countermanded by the CO who would not let me take on any fuel. The CO was trying, as usual, to get well ahead of schedule and I perceived that he was testing my ability to fly the aircraft to its maximum economical fuel burn. The problem was that the weather in Townsville was not very good. At this time different weather forecasts for airfields were issued for military and civilian aircraft. Additionally military aircraft had access to a better landing approach guidance capability than was available to civilian airlines. This was called a Ground Controlled Approach or GCA. The GCA used specially trained Air Traffic Controllers using a very accurate radar system that could inform you of your exact tracking and glidepath down to 200 feet above the runway. To that end, the military forecast on this day for Townsville did not require military aircraft to carry any holding fuel for the bad weather affecting Townsville, but the civilian forecast did. Holding fuel requirements are detailed in airfield forecasts and may require either 30 or 60 minutes holding fuel to allow for possible weather breaks which would ensure a successful approach and landing.



**All four models of the Hercules operated by the RAAF. In the foreground is the 'A' model followed by the 'E', the 'H' and the 'J'. I flew the 'A' and the 'H' models.**

Footnote: I was on the last crew to fly the 'A' model in the photo

At Amberley we arrived with enough fuel to continue to Townsville on a fine weather day but not enough for any bad weather eventuality. I was concerned about the civilian forecast and I



told the CO that we would be wise to take on more fuel but he refused to allow it. It is worthwhile explaining that the squadron had just recently transitioned to a newer model Hercules which was more powerful and as such consumed more fuel and so the corporate knowledge of its performance was not fully understood by the older aircrew in the squadron who had operated the previous model for many years. Most of the younger aircrew, including myself, were very aware of the implications of how the new aircraft performed due to the extensive training that we had been given.

So it was that we pressed on to Townsville. As we entered the cruise, the navigator received weather updates for Townsville that indicated deteriorating conditions requiring at least 60 minutes holding, but these were the civilian forecasts. I again expressed my deep concerns to the CO who quizzed me about my options and I said that the flight leg was not long enough to conserve enough fuel to satisfy the Townsville forecast and that we should divert to Rockhampton to take on more fuel. Again, he refused. It then came to light that because we were a military aircraft and the GCA was available to us we didn't need to have the extra holding fuel and we were perfectly legal.

I explained that even though that was technically correct, the conditions at Townsville were worsening by the minute and we might be caught out with nowhere to go. Now let me explain the GCA at Townsville. Normally a GCA would pick you up from approach radar directly to around 10 miles but at Townsville the leg to come to this point is about 30 miles extra and a missed approach and follow on approach could be a distance of around 60 miles; a long way. This is due to the terrain in and around Townsville.

At the descent point for approach to Townsville, about 80 miles out, Air Traffic Control declared that, due to heavy rain and very low cloud, Townsville airfield was closed to all operations. We had enough fuel for a visual approach and no more. I don't know if the sudden gravity of the situation hit the CO, but he didn't show it. I flew the GCA and I admit I didn't do a very good job because I was so scared. When we got to the absolute minimum descent altitude for the approach we could not see a thing. At this point the CO took control of the aircraft and descended to approximately 100 feet above the ground. I looked out of the chin window and I could see the houses below us that were very close and I thought that we were actually going to crash. A moment or two later the flight engineer yelled that he could see the runway off to our right and he guided the CO to the spot.

The first 1000 feet of the runway was visible and we landed into a wall of water just beyond. We found it difficult to taxi off the runway with the poor visibility and as we made it onto the taxiway the outboard engine fuel tank empty lights illuminated. On board the aircraft was some dangerous cargo that had to be offloaded in a special area, so we taxied to that area where the inboard engine tank empty lights illuminated just prior to shut down. Following the offload of the dangerous cargo, the CO elected to start the aircraft and taxi it to the Air Movements ramp to prepare for the return leg. The flight engineer attempted to start the auxiliary power unit but there wasn't enough fuel to even start this unit and the aircraft had to be refuelled before it could be moved. The CO did not acknowledge the danger that he had placed his crew and his passengers in, and never spoke of it at any time.

I spoke to the crew, away from the CO, and they realised the danger and expressed their concern at what had happened. They also agreed with my assessment of the situation as it unfolded way back at Amberley, although they admitted that, at the time, they believed the CO knew more about the information than any of us. I went on to gain my captancy in what was then record time for the squadron, not because of my ability but because many pilots were leaving the RAAF for the airlines. I really enjoyed my time flying the Hercules and I look back on it with a lot of pride.





## Pathfinder Force 80th Anniversary Commemoration

*From Jeff McClenaughan, Minutes/Membership Secretary, Bomber Command Association in Australia Inc*

On the 18th August the Pathfinder Force in Australia Veterans and Friends Group (NSW) and the Bomber Command Association in Australia Inc, celebrated the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Pathfinder Force within Bomber Command. The first mission flown by the Pathfinder Force was on the night of 18/19 August 1942. A raid on Flesburg, that was a total failure. It is worth noting that the crews only arrived at their new stations the day before.

The Pathfinder Force was formed in 1942 after the initial two years of the bombing campaign of Germany and its occupied territories had proved ineffectual. The Butt Report of 18 August 1941 found that only 1 in 10 aircraft came within 5 miles of the target. Many aircraft ditched their bombs in open country or returned to base with their bomb load still intact. To address this the Pathfinder Force was formed under the leadership of Acting Group Captain Don Bennett, an Australian from Queensland. Don Bennett was a brilliant pilot and navigator and was the first to prove the viability of ferrying aircraft from Canada across the Atlantic to the UK. Bennett formulated the tactics and training of the Pathfinders and later went on to be the youngest Air Vice Marshal in the RAF. Coloured flares were used as target indicators for the main bomber stream to use as aiming points. Pathfinder crews were highly trained in navigation techniques and drilled extensively on the importance of split-second timing. Crews came from all over the Empire, with many coming from Australia and New Zealand. Under the guidance of the Pathfinders, Bomber Command went on to become a deadly striking force the likes of which the world has never seen and will never see again. Their skills and bravery contributed enormously to the successful outcome of the war.

A luncheon was held at the Royal Automobile Club in Sydney to commemorate the occasion, with 94 guests attending, including Air Commander Australia, AVM Darren Goldie AM, CSC; Air Commodore David Strong, Commander AMG along with AMG WOFF Stephen Weaver AM; retired AVM Jack Plenty and AVM Dave Rogers AM (Patron of QLD Branch of the PFF Association) and ex-commanders of AMG, AIRCDREs Ian Scott and Richard Lennon also attended. Many serving RAAF personnel were there from 37 Squadron and 460 Squadron, as well as a representative from 464 Squadron, SQNLDR Cath Plenty. Bomber Command Association is encouraging the active participation of the re-formed Australian Bomber squadrons from WW2 at their functions. There was also a strong attendance of descendants of PFF and Bomber Command veterans, while Rev Geoffrey Usher from AFA (NSW) said grace.



**Air Commander Australia, AVM Darren Goldie AM, CSC**

Keynote speaker was Dr Alan Stephens OAM, who gave an excellent account of Bomber Command and the effect of the Pathfinders on the outcome of the bombing campaign. Dr Stephens is a visiting fellow at UNSW Canberra, and a research fellow of the Sir Richard Williams Foundation. He has lectured internationally, and his published works have been translated into more than twenty languages. A former RAAF pilot, where his experience included the command of an operational squadron and a tour of Vietnam. AVM Darren Goldie gave a short talk on the current capability of the RAAF in today's uncertain climate. A slideshow of 185 photos on a large



screen was played on a continuous loop during lunch. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and inspiring day, with many commenting it should be a regular event.



## My Time in the Air Training Corps

*From Ian McDonnell*

Almost the first thing I did in first year at Sydney Tech High School, Bexley was to join No 2 Flight Air Training Corps. Twelve years old and it was probably what I thought was the most important thing for me to do in that first year at high school. Certainly, far more important than Latin classes. So yes, there is a background story, like most of us had.

I lived the first six years of my life in Parkes NSW, which in the early 1950s was very quiet, the annual show being the major event of each year unless there was a drought or a flood. But this all changed for me at Christmas 1954, when my parents must have spent a king's ransom to send us three children down to Sydney to visit our grandparents – by air. Enter Butler Air Transport, a DC-3 and an amazing aircrew. The two lovely hostesses knew how to look after a four year old boy, as did the air crew. I was allowed into the cockpit and stand on the co-pilots seat and I really did believe I was flying the plane. So started several love affairs: flying, the DC-3/C-47/Dakota and ... pretty women.

We moved to Sydney in 1955, residing at Bexley smack under the approach/departure lane for Mascot. Through the 50s and 60s I watched aviation history unfold above our house. The love affair continued and deepened, and so did problems at school with attention diverted to things flying overhead rather than boring lessons. Who could bother with lessons when an Avro Vulcan or a Lancaster flew over?

So, joining the ATC in 1961 was a natural progression really, and a way to satisfy a deep lust for more airborne activity. A cadet week trip to the RAAF facility at Bankstown airport to pick up uniforms opened my eyes to a place where a myriad of aircraft flew from and resided. This then became a regular destination for me on my pushbike right through high school days.

The very first school holiday break saw me going to Richmond RAAF Base, wow, what an awesome experience for a young boy. We wore out our arms saluting, wore out our ears being yelled at by instructors of varying forms, and were then rewarded by two flights in the C-130A Hercules. One thing that I did learn at Richmond and had confirmed later, was a certain distrust between senior RAAF NCOs and their junior officer unit commanders. This became important later in life in understanding the difference between education, competence and experience, and knowing that they are not interchangeable.

The five years at high school was just something I had to do in between holiday spells at different RAAF bases. Richmond, Wagga-Wagga, Fairbairn and Williamtown all provided the greatest memories of my developing years. This period saw the introduction of the mighty Caribou at Richmond, and the ritual scaring of cadets with the short take off and landings with the rear door open. Wagga provided me rides in a C-47, rekindling that love affair. Canberra of course was the mighty UH-1 and the also the ritual scaring of cadets with auto-rotations. A single trip in the back seat of a Winjeel was also part of a joyous base period. And who could forget the travel warrant system that allowed us to go by second class, non-sleeper trains overnight from Sydney's Central Station to Wagga Wagga, to be picked up in soft side trucks of indeterminate vintage. Bleary eyed



**Air Training Corps garrison cap badge**



parade, gear into the accommodation (hopefully huts, sometimes old tents), before the mandatory medical exam (aka 'short arm parade'). Great days indeed; character building certainly. Every base visit provided weapon training using the SMLE .303, (short magazine Lee Enfield) my favourite weapon (another love affair? – I did not like the later SLR), and the promotion training camps for Corporal and Sergeant chevrons were also tough, but valuable periods.

In my fifth year as a cadet, I applied for a Flying Scholarship, and after the selection process I was overjoyed to win one of the ten for that year. So, during late 1965 and early 1966, I did the initial Private Pilot Licence training at Bankstown, gaining my licence in March 1966. More love affair enhancement! My dreams of going into the RAAF were shattered just after this, when I did not pass the selection process for aircrew, rapidly followed by rejections from QANTAS and Ansett.

Now sixty one years later, I consider that my years with the ATC were not just fun, but formative and the lessons learned have followed me through life. The discipline required in those years, the demands of total compliance to standards of dress, behaviour and respect of fellow force members and physical and mental training, were all things that contributed to reaching goals during my life. I can still march to a military standard, I can still shoot accurately, still throw a decent salute and I can still eat a healthy breakfast!

I am still a frequent light aircraft pilot, own a share in an Aeroprakt A32 Vixxen and just enjoy the freedom of flight, having continuously held a licence since 1966. This would never have happened without the RAAF's flying scholarship. As an aside, while I did not keep up the cadet contacts from the flying training days, the bonding at the initial school with nine other cadet pilots was incredible, and something I will never forget as an example of how to help each other.

After a spell making steel at Port Kembla, I joined the undergrounders in coal mining, gaining very senior roles in the field. Learning discipline (including the now often lacking self-discipline in modern youth), respect (same comments re youth), goal setting and achieving targets in the ATC, have been invaluable to me all my life, and I am truly grateful for the years that the RAAF gave me in the 1960s. My middle grandson, who turned 13 this year and is in first year at high school, joined the Australian Air Force Cadets at Bathurst in NSW earlier this year, and has had his first RAAF flight in a C-27 Spartan (loved it!), has spent a school holiday period at RAAF Base Richmond, learned to fire a rifle (liked that too), and learned to enjoy base food.

History repeating? I hope so.



## The Genesis of Top Gun

Founder tells how he started elite fighter pilot school, rewrote book on air-to-air combat  
*From Chris Beaz*

**T**here's no doubt fans of "Top Gun" were thrilled with Maverick's silver screen comeback. But the real-life story behind that elite fighter pilot school is mind-blowing in equal measure. Or maybe way more mind-blowing.

The Navy's Advanced Fighter Weapons School (or Top Gun) was spearheaded in dire times during the Vietnam War by Dan Pedersen, now 86, the "Godfather of Top Gun." It started from nothing—no classroom, no funding, no mechanics or aircraft of their own—just a few top-notch pilots he hand-picked, and a tight deadline. Their mission? To reclaim air superiority from the Soviet-trained North Vietnamese, who knew how to tangle in the skies.

Pedersen's book "Top Gun: an American Story" sets out that riveting backstory. The Hollywood blockbuster, he told The Epoch Times, is "great public entertainment" but "very unrealistic about Top Gun, how it existed years ago, and as it is today."



Now 53 years on, Top Gun is “still going strong,” he added. As ‘Maverick’ and ‘Goose’ were tasked with taking on Russian MiGs over the Atlantic in 1986, Pedersen had faced a grave situation in Vietnam: American fighter pilots were being shot down—killed—at a staggering rate. One American was lost for every two enemy. The North Vietnamese were adept at pushing the limits of their vastly outdated Russian MiGs in air-to-air combat, what fighter pilots call “dogfighting.”

The Americans were basically training aviators to use equipment, sending them into battle, then expecting to see victories. “We lost 11 guys in 17 days,” Pedersen said of his stint on the USS Enterprise. They would go to dinner and see empty chairs at the table.

Mentored by WWII ace Eugene Valencia, Pedersen, then 31, was called to turn the tide. He picked eight elite fighter pilots—all in their twenties—including his righthand man,



**An F-4 Phantom releases a load of Mark 82 bombs over South Vietnam. (Courtesy of the US Navy)**

Mel Holmes, and set about literally rewriting the book on air combat at the Naval Air Station in Miramar, California. It was experimental, serious, and dangerous.

“We were given 60 days,” he said. “This was a graduate school. This had to be something we knew would win. “When Top Gun was formed, in the beginning, all of us had made two combat cruises on carriers to Vietnam. It was very serious what we were doing.” Nobody was going to furnish them new planes with greater capabilities; they relied on what they had: the F-4 Phantom, a “great airplane” with “two very reliable high powered engines,” said Pedersen. “I’ve flown that plane 2.47 Mach...at that point, the airplane would come apart due to heating.” Pushing the F-4 to the very threshold, they outlined new tactics.

“We all had opinions because we had been out on different carriers at least twice. And one of the guys had been shot down twice,” he said. “We were motivated, man.” They flew the airplane the way they envisioned their new tactics to prove what worked. Knowing MiGs, he also knew how to beat them. One new maneuver involved rocketing straight up, vertically, in full afterburner right to zero airspeed. This would foil the enemy. “There’s not a MiG pilot in the world that’s going to follow you through that aura,” said Pedersen. “It’ll go up to 40,000 feet like that. And there’s nothing in the MiG airplane stable that’s going to be able to do that.”

That fits into a comprehensive “flying in the egg” tactic, traversing a colossal, vertical circuit culminating in an apex upside-down at the “top of the egg,” the enemy fully visible below, then swooping down from behind for the kill. “If you can’t get a good shot, you pull off,” Pedersen explained. “If you missed, you went right straight vertical again, right straight up and upside-down on the top of the egg. “While you’re down there shooting, the other guy, your wingman, is up on top keeping track of the fight watching out for others.” You could wind up tangling with two, three, or even six enemy planes in one raucous, hairy dogfight.



Dan Pedersen. (Left: Courtesy of Dan Pedersen; Right: Courtesy of Palm Springs Air Museum)

Within weeks, they were ready to re-join the war. A tight nucleus of new, cutting-edge know-how was dispersed throughout the United States military, and by the war's end, that kill ratio of 2 to 1 became 24 to 1. What made this comeback successful was the pilots "pushing the envelope," exceeding safety limits set by the manufacturer; the F-4 could do way more than first thought. "The safety factor that was built into that airplane was fairly large," said Pedersen. "The airplane was capable of a whole lot more than we had been flying it the first five years of that war." So, what did top brass think

of their shattering safety protocols? "Success speaks for itself," said Pedersen. "When you win to that degree and you go to 24-to-1 kill ratio, nobody would take us on. "We actually won the air war in Vietnam, who's going to argue with you? "Nobody in Washington is going to make an argument."

The world now has "Top Gun: Maverick." It's also seen breathtaking new advancements in aircraft technology, with the F-35 and its vertical take-off and landing and stealth-capable F-22 Raptor. In the film, pilots fly the now mightily respected F-18 Super Hornet.

Has all this new sophistication changed the rules for dogfighting? A man of simplicity, Pedersen says no. "It only takes one bullet to bring you down, even today," he said. "Give me a gun and some heat-seeking sidewinder missiles, and I'll take on anybody in China or Russia right now."

A decade after founding Top Gun, in 1980 he became captain of aircraft carrier USS Ranger, in command of 5,000 sailors with an average age of 19.5 years. Numerical superiority in easily serviceable jets, Pedersen says, far outstrips the technological superiority of ultra-expensive weapons that are hard to maintain. "Sometimes, a \$300 million airplane isn't the answer," he said. "I personally like to have 8 or 10 lightweight fighters that are maintainable, you got to be in the 98 percent reliability. "The 'magic missiles' [of today]...somebody's making a lot of profit off this stuff," he said. "I tend to believe in simplicity. Having flown the MiGs, which were an older generation, the guns work 98 percent of the time."

The legacy of Top Gun today is as important as it was in Vietnam. They continue to train the top 1 percent of fighter pilots, who pass their knowledge on to their squadrons—with a great deal of confidence. Their results speak for themselves. "We rewrote tactical aviation worldwide, it still is the standard," said Pedersen, who now gives credit where credit is due—they were all young mavericks, as Top Gun still is today. "Not just me, but my eight guys and some senior people who made me bulletproof—that's a pretty risky thing to do, something like this in 60 days. "So when we pulled it off, and the kill ratio is 24 to 1, I wanted to make sure the story is told accurately."



Top Gun instructors in 1969 with Pederson's original eight in bold print. (Courtesy of the US Navy)

**Author's Footnote:** I remember at the RAAF Academy one of the lecturers - SQNLDR Ian Whisker - had flown F-4s in Vietnam and he had photos of a missile coming directly towards him. He had done the vertical manoeuvre described here. He dived directly towards the missile and then pulled away at the 'right time'. No photos of that - he was a bit busy!!



## Whatever Happened to the "Barmy-Ba"?

From Bill Maconachie

Most of the Australian service personnel who served in the Republic of Vietnam from 1962 to 1972, would have probably sampled and not forgotten the Vietnamese brewed "Bia 33" or "Ba Moui Ba", which means simply 33 in Vietnamese. Bia 33 was commonly referred to as "Barmy Ba" or just "33" by Australian forces, who have the instant ability to give everything their own stylised, slang name.

Bia 33 is said to have originated in France using a German recipe and ingredients, perhaps produced in early 1900, moved to Indochina for French troops and was brewed in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) as a rice beer, then emerging as one of South Vietnam's leading beers. It was already there when the first "Aussie" forces arrived. Now brewed by the SABECO Brewery, would you believe it, (Saigon Alcohol Beer and Beverages Corporation), which is owned by Vietnam's Ministry of Trade and Industry, and produced 1.2 billion litres of beer in 2011,





that's 51% of the in-country market, mainly Saigon Beer and Biere 333.

In the 60s, there was a persisting rumour that formaldehyde was used in the beer as a preservative, but this did not seem to deter many drinkers. It was proven, however, that this was not the case, although some of the hangovers, following a leave day out, would seem to support the former theory. Usually obtained in local bars, I don't remember seeing it in messes or clubs, the beer was on the whole cheap, bought with Vietnamese Piasters (Dong). It was usually not cold, due mainly to the lack of refrigeration and the fact that the Vietnamese usually drank it at room temperature anyway. There was local ice available which was often broken up on the pavement and placed in a glass with the beer and drunk at one's own peril. Otherwise, it was drunk warm, unless the bar owner could be convinced to produce an ice bucket of some form, then it became "Champagne"!!



Following the fall of Saigon and the North Vietnamese takeover of the country, the name of the beer was changed to "Biere 333", in an effort to erase everything related to the former regime and to distance itself from colonial origins. These days, there are many different brand names, local and foreign beers available in Vietnam brewed in-country, which are enjoyed by visitors and locals alike with great gusto. "Mot! Hai! Ba!"



### Morrie Confusion

*Reprinted with permission from 37SQN Trojan Tales*

Trev 'Shirl' Pleass was a 37SQN Loadmaster in the 80s. One day Trev was tasked on a rescue flight so had to go home to go to pick up some overnight gear. He didn't have a vehicle at work so he asked one of the other loadies if he could borrow his Morris 1100 to go home and get some gear. The other loadie told Trev it was running low on fuel and gave him \$5.00 to put fuel in the Morrie, (\$5.00 bought plenty of fuel in those days!)

Trev went to Hobartville, put \$5.00 worth of fuel in the Morrie, came back to base, parked the Morrie in the same spot he had found it in and departed on task. That night, on the way home, the other loadie ran out of fuel in the Morrie, much to the chagrin of his 'aunty' - nudge, nudge, wink, wink - say no more!

Upon arrival back at Richmond, the other loadie fronted Trev for not putting the fuel in the Morrie, to which Trev swore he did. The other loadie was having a hard time believing it until Trev asked, "Is that your Morrie down



Morris 1100



there?”, looking out in the car park from upstairs in the loadies’ office. “Nope” replied the other loadie, “mine is over there”, pointing to another Morrie of similar colour on the other side of the car park. The other loadie and Trev proceeded downstairs to the ‘other’ Morrie, unlocked it and put the key in the ignition and started it. Surprise, surprise, Trev had taken the wrong Morrie and even put five bucks worth of petrol in it!



## Funding Boost for Veteran Wellbeing

*From The Office of The Minister for Veterans Affairs, 5 August 2022*

*Authorised by The Hon Matt Keogh MP.*

The Australian Government has today committed \$55 million to better support the wellbeing of Australian Veterans. This commitment consists of \$22 million in funding to provide psychiatric assistance dogs to veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and \$33 million to extend access to free medical treatment for veterans. Minister for Veterans’ Affairs Matt Keogh said the Department of Veterans’ Affairs’ Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program matches highly trained dogs with veterans diagnosed with PTSD to support them through their clinical recovery. “I am pleased to announce a boost of \$22 million to ensure the ongoing operation of the critical Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Program which is changing the lives of veterans,” Minister Keogh said. “This Government commitment will also extend support to eligible veterans who have privately sourced an accredited psychiatric assistance dog prior to the start of the Program in September 2019, including maintenance funding for expenses such as veterinary bills, pet insurance, and vaccinations.” “By properly funding this important program, the Australian Government is continuing to address the needs of veterans living with PTSD as a result of their military service.”

The funding announcement comes as the Program celebrates a milestone 100 dogs placed with veterans, many of whom have experienced a positive shift in their wellbeing and relationships thanks to their assistance dog. “It’s fantastic to see the positive impact this program is having on veterans. I’ve had individuals share with me the joy of finding a routine and getting out and about again. For many people with PTSD simply leaving the house is difficult; the assistance dogs have helped turn that right around,” Minister Keogh said. “It is truly incredible the impact these dogs are making to help our veterans with day-to-day activities and gain back their independence.” To be eligible for the Psychiatric Assistance Dog Program, veterans must have a Veteran Gold or White Card, have a current diagnosis of PTSD from a psychiatrist and be engaged in treatment with their mental health professional for a minimum of three months.



Copyright: Department of Veterans Affairs



The free Provisional Access to Medical Treatment program provides access to medical treatment for twenty of the most commonly claimed conditions to veterans who have lodged a claim with DVA. “We know veterans waiting for claims to be processed need support – this is a challenging time and dealing with a medical condition can make it even more stressful,” Minister Keogh said. “I am very conscious of the compensation claims backlog, with some veterans waiting too long for their claims to be processed. This is unacceptable, the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has been under resourced for too long.” “The process of fixing that backlog by rebuilding DVA is now underway, with the Labor Government committed to employing more permanent staff in the Department.” “This funding will ensure veterans can continue to access medical treatment for their condition while they wait for their claims to be processed. Ensuring veterans have access to treatment earlier can make a big difference to their recovery.” “The Government is committed to a better future for veterans and this program will provide them with access to medical treatment when they need it,” Minister Keogh said.

To learn more about the Provisional Access to Medical Treatment program, visit the [DVA website](#)

For more information on the Psychiatric Assistance Dogs Program, visit [www.dva.gov.au/dogs](http://www.dva.gov.au/dogs)

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## Defence Community Dogs

*From Mounira Hijazi, Executive Officer Air Force Association NSW*

The Air Force Association NSW (AFA NSW) together with Defence Force Welfare Association (DFWA) are proud to announce the sponsorship of an assistance dog through Defence Community Dogs. Defence Community Dogs provides highly trained Assistance Dogs to Australian Defence Force Veterans, trained in specific tasks to support mood, depressive and anxiety disorders including Post Traumatic Stress.

They bring companionship and connection and provide support to help Veterans suffering from the effects of service to rebuild their lives. Upon graduation our sponsored dog will be paired with a compatible RAAF veteran who could benefit from such support.



If you or someone you know is a Royal Australian Air Force Veteran who suffers from mood, anxiety and depressive conditions including PTSD, and would benefit from a DCD Assistance Dog, apply now [www.dcdogs.com.au/apply](http://www.dcdogs.com.au/apply)





## New Air Force Chief Welcomed

*Reprinted with permission from CONTACT magazine*

*Story by Flight Lieutenant Jessica Aldred. Photo by Leading Aircraftman Adam Abela*

Air Force has welcomed its new Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Robert Chipman, and farewelled the outgoing Chief, Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, in a fitting Change of Command ceremony in Canberra on July 1.



**Outgoing Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, and wife Mrs Louise Hupfeld, right, with Air Marshal Robert Chipman, and wife Mrs Alyce Chipman at the Change of Command ceremony**

Air Marshal Hupfeld became the Chief of Air Force on July 4, 2019, following his role as the Chief of Joint Operations. He reflected on his three years as Chief and some of the changes that have taken place.

“When I commenced my role as Chief of Air Force, we were in a period of great transition – we were bringing on some of the very first F-35A Lightning II jets, EA-18G Growler and P-8A Poseidon,” Air Marshal Hupfeld said. “At the time, we were becoming an Air Force for the next generation in an uncertain strategic environment and, as I said when I became Chief, our people are, and continue to be, at the heart of our capability. “I am most proud of our dedicated and skilled workforce who are trusted to deliver air and space power for the joint force wherever it’s needed.”

Some of Air Marshal Hupfeld’s key tenure highlights include the Air Force Strategy to ensure Air Force is ready to defend Australia and its interests, and the commemoration of Air Force’s Centenary. He said leading the Air Force during this historical milestone was the peak of his 42-year career. “We were able to honour the service and sacrifice of past and present members, engage the Australian nation and inspire future aviators. “I’ve had so many great opportunities throughout my career, from flying Mirages and F/A-18A/B Hornets, commanding 75SQN in the Middle East and being the Air Commander Australia through to becoming Chief of Air Force,” Air Marshal Hupfeld said. “To lead all aviators as your Chief was a great highlight, a privilege and an honour – and I thank you for your support. “I have no doubt that Air Marshal Chipman will continue to shape and lead a capable and modern Air Force for all Australians.”

Air Marshal Hupfeld is looking forward to spending more time with his wife Lou in the great outdoors and finding some time to fly his P-51 Mustang.





## Successful SAR

*From Geoff Sheppard*

**I**t is strange how sometimes, things that happened nearly forty years ago remain relatively fresh in your mind - I guess that is a measure of how much of an emotional impact the event had on you.

In 1979 I'd been temporarily assigned to OPCOM for three months as a duty Operations Officer; whilst the job was effectively sitting behind a desk waiting for a brush fire to start, I did put the time to good use studying for my Senior Commercial Pilot Licence subjects. One morning shortly after I'd started there, I was working as an Operations Officer at OPCOM and I arrived at work and was seconded to assist the SARO, 'Lofty' Mason. A motor launch had gone missing on its maiden trip down the east coast from Brisbane. The weather was pretty crappy, and the Air Force had been called in to help in the search. The launch was light blue on top, had an aluminium dinghy and each of the five people on board had a light grey lifejacket. For those who have ever done any searching at sea, this meant they were almost impossible to spot, particularly in bad weather..

When I got there, Lofty was working out what he was going to do - I had a look at the search area, which was only 40 miles off the coast and thought, it would be really nice to have some helicopters to get the people if we found them. At that point I was thinking of a "Four Corners" program (I think it was) that covered a civil SAR down Melbourne way where they had found the person and they had a helicopter available, but their rules said they couldn't use a single engined aircraft. A light twin dropped a raft; however the person was too weak to get into it and so the aircraft circled, watching him get weaker and weaker until he passed away.

I suggested that we position two 9SQN Iroquois abeam where we thought we might find them, then if we did, the choppers could just go out and get them. When Lofty asked why two, I said that since the Iroquois has only one engine, if one had to ditch, then the second would be available to rescue them. I knew how hard it was to find people in a churning sea, and I knew from practical experience how hard it is to get into a life raft that has just been dropped to you, especially when you are tired. Lofty agreed with my thinking and it was done, although I subsequently found out there was only one tasked.

The day wore on, there was low cloud, rain and churning seas - things didn't look too good. About midday, a P-3 Orion called us to get in on the action. He had been exercising with the Navy and as he was leaving, the ship's Captain told him of the SAR and that maybe he should call. We grabbed him! Next thing, we had an angry telephone call from the Navy about how we had stolen their exercise aircraft. I think Lofty's conversation included something like "finders keepers".



**9SQN Iroquois over water**



We put the P-3 to work searching an area that had already been searched in the morning, just to be sure. Up to this time we had employed several C-130 using visual observers. The weather was 500ft overcast with rain and about a five foot swell. Difficult at the best of times.

Not long before dark, the Orion found three of the five; they were standing on the roof of the launch, which was floating just below the surface. A life raft was dropped, but they couldn't get in, so the Iroquois launched in not very pleasant conditions. The Orion circled the position and guided the Iroquois to pick up the survivors and they brought them back. It transpired that two of the five had gotten into the dinghy, the other three were unable. Unfortunately, those two from the dingy were washed up on a beach, lifeless.

A day or so later, Lofty got a letter from the father of one of the survivors. He had hired a light twin to go searching for his daughter that day and saw the conditions. That evening he was in town utterly distraught when someone told him to get out to the airport because helicopters were coming in with survivors. He said that standing there hearing and feeling the Huey's "thump, thump, thump" of the rotors as the two machines appeared out of the gloom was something he will never forget. I've often wondered how that suggestion of mine became a 'sliding doors' moment and how it changed people's lives.

After submitting the story, the following excerpt was found while reading through some 9SQN history:

*The highlight of the year was probably the rescue of three mariners by Angus Houston and his crew. Following a call for assistance, the squadron was tasked by HQOC to deploy to the vicinity of Evans head and await instructions to retrieve any survivors of a shipwreck located by searching P3C and C130 aircraft. Shortly after arriving in the vicinity Angus was directed to some wreckage well out to sea. On arrival he found three survivors clinging to wreckage and proceeded to winch them to safety. Huge seas battered the crewman (Sandy Roman) during his three trips to the water while Angus hovered in gusting winds of some 70 knots. Once the three survivors had been transferred to shore-based ambulances Angus conducted an inshore search for the two missing yachtsmen; but to no avail. Angus and his two crewmen were later the recipients of well-deserved Air Force Cross and Medals.*

Subsequent to learning this extra information, I contacted Sir Angus through his executive officer and received this reply:

*Geoff,*

*A few details about the SAR operation for the loss of a large motor launch, NOCTURNE II on 24 September 1979.*

*9 Squadron SAR Crew: FLT Houston, PLT OFF Langford, SGT Russell, SGT Roman.*

*Early AM: Distress call from NOCTURNE II. SAR crew departed Amberley in Iroquois A2-377 for Evans Head.*

*Weather: Gale force winds in excess of 50knots. Huge breaking seas.*

*Search continued all day and conducted by a 36SQN C130 and some light aircraft.*

*9SQN helicopter on standby for rescue at Evans Head Range.*

*Late Afternoon: Arrival of 92WG P3. Found wreckage in water. 3 survivors. Dropped smoke buoys to mark their position.*

*9SQN crew scrambled and radar vectored into the area of the survivors by the P3.*

*Visibility restricted by sea spray. Finding survivors visually in white water was very challenging.*

*All 3 survivors recovered by high hover and lowering SGT Roman into the water to recover survivors. Each survivor raised to helicopter by double hoist of two people (survivor and SGT Roman) on the wire.*



*Survivors told us that the other two people aboard NOCTURNE II had jumped into a dingy when the vessel sank. Last seen disappearing downwind at high speed.*

*We searched for them but did not find them.*

*Survivors, which included Fred Markwell, the Skipper, were removed to Ballina Hospital.*

*There was only one helicopter involved – A2-377.*

But wait, there are steak knives! I looked the airframe serial up on the website "<http://www.adf-serials.com.au/3a2.htm>," and it had this to say about the aircraft.

*Officially retired to the Point Cook museum on the 30/06/2007. It was flown down from Oakey to Canberra by CAPT Brad Wheeler, LT Glenn Miller, and SGT Rob Knox. It arrived in Canberra at 1705 on the 29th of June, landing at Russell Offices.*

*It departed RAAF Fairbairn on the 30th in a three ship form with the crew as CAPT Brad Wheeler, ACM Angus Houston (CDF), and SGT Rob Knox.*

*The CDF flew the Huey almost the entire 3.3 hours it took to get to Point Cook, doing all take offs and landings.*



**Iroquois A2-377 in its Army 'uniform' at RAAF Museum, Pt Cook**



During a reunion of WWI airmen, decorated fighter ace Ole Olsen of Sweden was introduced as a speaker by the MC. During his presentation, Ole was asked by a member of the audience about his most trying moment in battle. "Well," he began, his Nordic accent heavy, "one day flying over the North Sea, I look behind me and there's all these fokkers closing in." At this point the distressed MC rushed to the microphone and hastily explained: "Ladies and gentlemen, the Fokker was a warplane used by Germany". "Ya", continued Ole, "that's true, but these fokkers were flying Messerschmitts!"





## HARS Naval Historical Flight

*By Carl Robinson & Terry Hetherington*

*US-born and long-time Australian resident, Carl Robinson was a Vietnam War Correspondent and is a volunteer at HARS, co-editor of the Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) bi-weekly newsletter and co-organiser of the 40th Anniversary of the MG99/RAN Rescue by the HMAS Melbourne at HARS in June 2021. Terry Hetherington is the HARS Grumman Tracker maintenance team leader; he was a founding member of the RAN Historic Flight in 1985 and was Manager and Senior Curator of the Fleet Air Arm Museum from 2006 to his retirement in 2019.*

Created in early 1985 at HMAS Albatross, the RAN Historic Flight was an ambitious project to keep a representative core of Australia's classic navy aircraft operational and in the air. For the next 14 years and without major incident, the RAN Historic Flight operated a variety of aircraft and appeared at military and public events as far north as Mackay, west to Adelaide and south to Hobart, Tasmania. And then in 1999 for a combination of safety, administrative and budgetary reasons, the Historic Flight was grounded by RAN. Sadly for its supporters and aircraft too, another 20 years dragged on before a new home for its remarkable collection was finally found at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) Aviation Museum in Albion Park, NSW, 100 kilometres south of Sydney.

Today, HARS is the proud home of the re-badged Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) and keeping these vital pieces of Australian Navy aviation history alive. A total of nine aircraft make up the NHF collection, with three – our C-47B, Tracker 844 and Iroquois or Huey 898 – dating from the RAN Historic Flight's earliest days. At HARS, these former Historic Flight aircraft will join two other former RAN aircraft, most notably HMAS Melbourne-based Grumman S-2G Tracker 851 which played such a crucial role in the rescue of 99 Vietnamese refugees in the South China Sea 40 years ago, and whose sterling history was only recently discovered. The other is a tiny single-engine Auster J-5G Autocar, a replica of one of two once flown by the RAN.

The genesis of the RAN Historic Flight began in 1974 with the establishment of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) Museum at HMAS Albatross by then-Commanding Officer, Captain Andrew Robertson DSC.

Several 'out-of-service' aircraft such as a Fairey Gannet, de Havilland Sea Venom, de Havilland Sea Vampire, Bristol Sycamore, Douglas C-47A Dakota, Hawker Sea Fury, Westland Scout and Fairey Firefly had been retained as 'gate guards', ground-training aircraft and



**Sea Venom W870 on display at HMAS Albatross**

historical artefacts and were displayed or stored at various locations around the Air Station. Captain Robertson appointed a supernumerary 'Museum Officer' and a full-time 'Curator' whose job it was to assemble the aircraft and to create a display in 'D' Hangar, an unoccupied WW2 vintage Bellman hangar. The Museum was officially opened in December 1974 and was managed by the Curator, Leading Seaman Aviation Glen Dore.

As a result of the destruction of the Tracker squadrons and 'H' Hangar by an arsonist in December 1976, however, the FAA Museum was dislodged from 'D' Hangar to make way for a temporary home for the replacement Tracker aircraft. The Museum aircraft were relocated to an



area on the northern boundary of the Base, known as the Dummy Deck, and once again displayed in the open air. Several WW2-vintage buildings were also relocated to provide storage, display and administration accommodation. By the early 1980s the FAA Museum was operating as a public tourist attraction but in the ensuing years formal support from Navy and the Department of Defence was officially withdrawn, leading to the establishment of the Australian Naval Aviation Museum Foundation. This Foundation laid the groundwork and raised the multi-million dollars to construct and operate today's impressive Fleet Air Arm Museum at HMAS Albatross.

The concept of a RAN Historic Flight grew out of an idea by LCDR Ken Alderman, a Navy helicopter pilot who was the Commanding Officer of HU816 Squadron between 1985 and 1987. He had also been involved with the further development of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and recognised the synergies of both Units. The RAN Historic Flight was first recognised in March 1985, with LCDR Ken Alderman first CO of the Flight, followed by CMDR Keith Englesman, CMDR Jeff Ledger and CMDR Cris George. The Historic Flight was allocated a WW2-era Bellman Hangar and associated admin buildings in 1985 and began operations in March 1985 with a core of eight volunteer personnel and two aircraft: a Westland Scout helicopter and C-47B Dakota N2-90, which was recovered after some preparation work from HMAS Nirimba at Quaker's Hill and put on the civilian register as VH-NVZ.



**Tracker 844 and Firefly**

The Dakota's first public appearance was at the 50th Dakota Anniversary at Mackay in April 1985. N2-90 performed faultlessly on the trip to and from Mackay. Later in 1985, the S-2G Tracker 844 (VH-NVX) and AS6 Firefly WD826 (VH-NVU) were added to the Flight and brought up to airworthy standard the following year. The Historic Flight's Firefly only flew for

two years until suffering a major engine defect. Between 1992 and 2015, however, an enormous effort was expended on WD826 by volunteers, not to mention hundreds of thousands of dollars, to make it airworthy. But sadly, the Firefly never flew again and is now part of the FAA Museum's permanent display. But Grumman Tracker 844 has proved a real stalwart and, along with Huey 898, the pride of today's HARS NHF collection with a hard-core of volunteers keeping the aircraft going through those trying years after the Historic Flight was grounded.

In 1987, Sea Fury FB11 WG630 and Sea Venom DH-112 WZ895 were added to the collection for Historic Flight restoration to flight status. But neither reached airworthy status by the time the RAN Historic Flight was disbanded, and the aircraft later sold to HARS. Along with the RAN C-47B Dakota, a British-made Westland Scout WS-101 was the first operational helicopter of the Historic Flight but crashed at an air show in November 1985, later rebuilt for static display at the FAA Museum. (A replacement ex-British Army Scout was acquired, but never made airworthy and was sold off by public tender in 2019). But as noted earlier, the most active aircraft with the Historic Flight was the Bell Iroquois or Huey 898 (N9-3104) which first flew in 1991 and remained airworthy and continued display flying.

Between the Historic Flight's grounding in 1999 and 2010 when the RAN convened a Project Board to consider its future operation and the disposition of its aircraft and assets, the only aircraft approved and capable of flying was Huey 898. Quite simply, Navy was becoming



increasingly averse to the level of risk in ownership and operation of Historic and Warbird aircraft. This culminated in a formal invitation issued by senior Navy personnel, to three Australian Museums including HARS, to bid for a selected range of RANFAA aircraft. Thankfully, HARS already had a close relationship with the Historic Flight from when its first Neptune aircraft was based at HMAS Albatross, including joint participation in various air shows, and assisted by the Fleet Air Arm. And in 1989, President and Chief Pilot, Bob De La Hunty, Vice President Maureen Massey and Gordon Glynn discussed the future of the Historic Flight with Chief of Navy. So, HARS clearly had an inside track as talks for a possible solution continued over the years.

By June 2015, an operational pause was invoked on the RAN Historic Flight with the FAA Museum Manager appointed custodian of both entities, as the representative of the Director of the Naval Heritage Collection. At that moment, HARS representatives with Michael Hough appointed Project Leader were invited to join the Project Board with one possible outcome RAN retaining ownership but transfer operational responsibility to HARS. A 'due diligence' audit of the overall status of Navy's heritage aircraft collection, both static and flying, was then undertaken by technical, operations and logistics specialists. The audit provided an understanding of the aircraft and spares holdings and also revealed governance and compliance shortcomings within the RAN Historic Flight management. The Navy hierarchy determined that the best course of action was to disband the RAN Historic Flight and ensure that the best example of each aircraft type in the Heritage Collection was selected for display in the FAA Museum. Observing all the obligations of ownership, and because outsourcing the delegated responsibility of flying Commonwealth-owned heritage aircraft to a third party was not legally possible, Navy absolved itself of ownership by placing nine selected former Historic Flight aircraft up for open tender. HARS was the successful tenderer and took ownership of the aircraft in December 2018.

## History of HARS

Formed in 1979 by a group of passionate aviation collectors desperate to preserve Australian aviation history, HARS was a logical new home for Historic Flight with its rich collection of over 50 historic military and civilian aircraft, many still operational. In its early years, HARS members traversed the Australian continent seeking aviation artefacts that were located on farm properties, scrap yards and bushland. These expeditions resulted in HARS providing considerable assistance to many restoration projects including outside of HARS itself, both in Australia and overseas. Of great significance was the recovery in the early 1980's of two Beaufighter airframes from north-western Australia. One, a Mark I Beaufighter aircraft, was restored by HARS and subsequently exchanged for the Lockheed Super Constellation, VH-EAG, the only one in the world still operational. That Beaufighter now resides in the United States Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

HARS became an incorporated society with a formal Constitution in 1988 and is a registered deductible gift recipient organisation allowing tax deductible donations to support its operations. The development of a mission statement strongly emphasising its direction reflects what as a group we do today. That mission is, "to recover and where possible restore to flying condition, aircraft or advise on aircraft that have played a significant part in Australian aviation history, both in the civil and military arenas". The membership of HARS – now close to 800 – includes many current or former licensed aircraft engineers and others with piloting, regulatory or general support skills, including many from the Royal Australian Navy. Its 11,000 square metre hangar complex at the Illawarra Regional Airport receives financial support from corporate sponsorship, supportive entrepreneurs and the general public, plus various events. Like the rest of its operations, HARS depends heavily on private and public donations, plus



sponsorship, to keep the Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) going both in the air and in restoration projects and is eager to hear from old-timers ready to help. Donations are always most welcome.

With the successful tender, HARS specially created Navy Heritage Flight (NHF) took possession of nine former RAN Fleet Air Arm airframes: two Grumman Trackers; two Iroquois (Hueys); one Sea Venom; one Sea Fury; two Wessex helicopters and one C-47, plus spares, and quickly moved off-base to nearby Air Affairs, a HARS sponsor. But even greater challenges lay ahead. For one, years of outdoor storage and neglect had taken their toll. The flagship C-47B no longer flew, the Venom was broken up and stored in a container but the Sea Fury was in slightly better shape. Thankfully, Grumman S-2G Tracker 844 was flyable from Nowra up to Albion Park, but its S-2E cousin, Tracker 845, was in very poor condition. Thankfully, the two Iroquois were safely hangared and in good shape.



Restored Grumman Tracker S-2E 845 at HARS Aviation Museum

And then the collection’s big land moves began with Wessex 832 making its way to HARS Albion Park and the second, Wessex 813, all the way to the museum annex at Parkes. Without too much effort, the Sea Fury was safely hauled up to Albion Park and soon on static display. After two years of meticulous work by HARS volunteers, the reassembly of the Sea Venom has been an amazing project and just recently gone on static display. Last on the road in July 2020 was the

venerable C-47B and then Tracker 845, both the worse for wear as they were unloaded at HARS, Albion Park. But in remarkably short time, the Dakota had its wings back on and put onto the restoration path to operational status, its interior royally re-done to honour the aircraft’s role in Queen Elizabeth’s 1954 tour to Australia, then in RAAF livery. With a new coat of paint, roundels and front windscreens, Tracker 845 – a lone surviving S-2E from that 1976 hangar fire at HMAS Albatross – looks almost pristine. Tracker 844 has just done its 10-year service and expected back in the air by year’s end.

With hangar space from Air Affairs, plus locally residing maintenance crew and pilots, the NHF’s two Iroquois remain in Nowra with Huey 898 back in the air with regular flights up to HARS, Albion Park, and appearances at air shows and flyovers such as this year’s RAAF Centenary over



Huey 898 today

Canberra. Present plans call for Huey 893’s refurbishment as helicopter gunship in honour of those RAN veterans who flew with the US Army 135th Assault Helicopter Company (EMU) in South Vietnam.



Under the tender agreement, HARS pledged to eventually shift its Navy Heritage Flight to a hangar complex on land adjacent to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at HMAS Albatross with its own collection of static aircraft. But that is still some time away. So, in the meantime, those wanting a close look at the Royal Australian Navy's aviation heritage, including still-functioning aircraft, will always be warmly welcomed at HARS Albion Park, open for guided tours every day of the year except Christmas. To keep in touch with this ongoing story, and any donations, please email: harsnhf@hars.org.au. Website: www.hars.org.au. We're also on Facebook.



## HARS Tribute-Commemorating 50 Years since Vietnam War Ends

23 September 2022

*From Michael Hough, NHF Project leader (Served in Vietnam 1968)*

*Photos by Howard Mitchell, Frank Palmieri, Tim May*

This special report provides the main features of a major tribute event held on Saturday morning 17th Sep, organized by HARS to commemorate this significant event in our recent military history. While there is debate about what year the conflict ended, HARS has followed the example of the NSW-based Anzac Memorial (located in Hyde Park Sydney CBD) which declared 1972 to be the end year of the war. The Anzac Memorial has allocated its second half year exhibition to the end of the Vietnam conflict, and I urge all to visit this very significant and moving memorial building and display.

The HARS event involved the cooperation and support of the following organisations: Corrimal RSL Sub-Branch and Corrimal RSL Club (which co-sponsored the fuel costs of the event after the DVA declined a grant application to do so); the Vietnam Veterans Association (Illawarra Branch); Corrimal Rangers Football Club; Wollongong City Council and Corrimal Uniting Church.



**Huey 898 with Vietnam vets including ARVN veteran**



**HARS Caribou A4-34 overflying Rangers football ground**

The day's programme started with a welcome and brief speeches by sponsoring and supporting bodies and a keynote address by MAJGEN (Ret'd) Hori Howard AO MC (who won the MC as OC A Coy 3 RAR in Vietnam in 1968). This was followed by the arrival of HARS NHF Huey 898 at Rangers Number 1 Football Ground, which was open for inspection, including sitting in back seat. Then around 1130 a flyover by HARS Vietnam-era aircraft Caribou, C47 and Grumman Tracker, making four passes overhead.



It is estimated that about 350 people turned up to enjoy the free admission to the grounds, food stalls supporting the Rangers, ground displays by 314 City of Wollongong Australian Air Force Cadet Squadron; Vietnam Veterans (Illawarra ) and Fairy Meadow Rotary Club; ARVN Veterans Association members; NSW Police Community Liaison, Fire Brigade and the HARS shop.



**HARS Tracker 844 overflying Rangers football ground**

This event would not have happened without a great deal of goodwill and co-operation between many people and organizations, but in particular I want to acknowledge: HARS President -Bob De La Hunty OAM, HARS Flight Coordinator Dick Elliot (ex-RAAAF Caribou pilot), President, Corrimal RSL Sub-Branch Mr Morrie Gallina, Vice President, Corrimal RSL Club Mr Paul Barrett and General Manager Corrimal RSL Club Mr Andrew Bolt, President Vietnam Veterans (Illawarra Branch) Mr Phil Braid, CO 314 City of Wollongong AAFC Cadet Unit FLTLT (AAFC) Paul Adams, Councillor Cameron Walters- Wollongong City Council and Minister, Corrimal Uniting Church Rev. Graham Anson. In addition to those listed, to all who contributed in some way, please accept our sincere thanks.



## **Bird Strike – F111C A8-138, 19Aug1987**

*From Errol McCormack (AM Ret'd)*

Over the period Aug 86 to Nov 88, I was posted as Officer Commanding No 82 Wing which comprised No. 1 and 6 Squadrons and support units operating F and RF-111C Strike and Reconnaissance aircraft based at RAAF Base Amberley (AMB), Queensland (QLD). Over the period 13 to 19 Aug 1987, I accompanied Wing elements to a bombing camp out of Townsville in Nth QLD. The camp was to train crews on the use of live GBU-10 and 12 Laser Guided Bombs, which was a first for the Wing, with Cordelia Rock as the designated target. Cordelia Rock, which had been used as a live bombing target since the early days of WWII was a large flat solo rock sticking up out of the water just off the coast north of Townsville. Apart from the rock being a little dusty its use as a target was not obvious. After a week of live LGB bombing, we had drilled a very distinctive hole into the surface of the rock having a lot more success with GBUs than with the unguided bombs previously used.

On 19 Aug my navigator SQNLDR Mike Bennett and I were programmed to re-deploy to Amberley from Townsville via a simulated attack on one of the mines at Moura, inland from the coast in central Qld. To avoid more populated areas, we planned to approach the target from the west, accelerating to 540kts and 400ft using Terrain Following Radar. As we rolled onto attack heading, Mike locked up the target on radar and we settled into a standard Initial Point to Target run. At about this time I was attracted to a black object rapidly growing larger in the gunsight. I figured it was not friendly and jerked back on the control column. Apart from a rapid change in pitch angle the aircraft did not move out of the previous line of flight and we hit the object on the right underside of the radome, the black section of the fuselage forward of the cockpit. With the

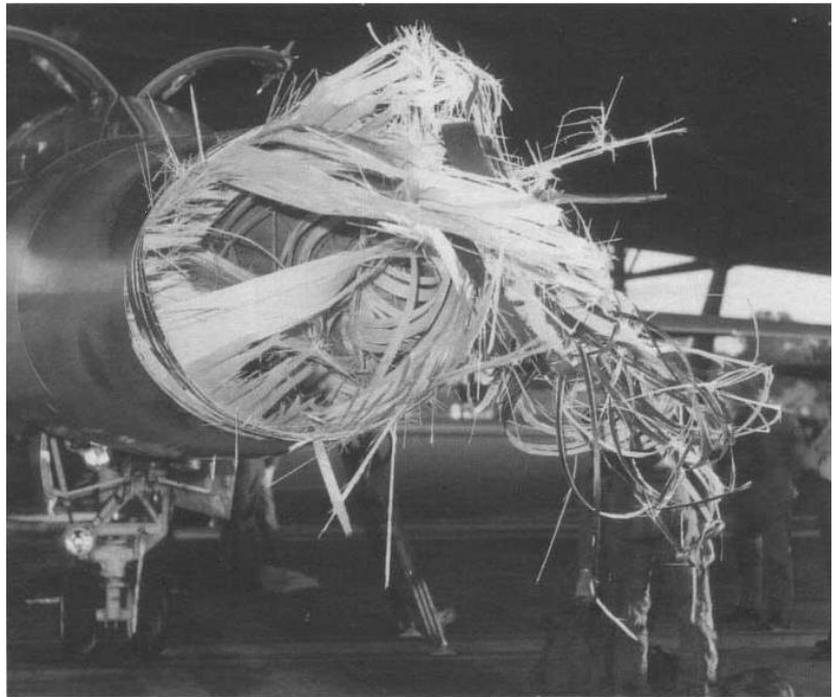


sudden pitch change, Mike had his head in the radar scope and was pushed solidly into the 'bucket'. The object of sudden interest turned out to be a wedgetail eagle with a rabbit in its claws, which was confirmed at AMB after landing when the remains were retrieved from one of the Terrain Following Radar antennas.

Some years earlier the Wing had lost an aircraft at Evans Head Range when it hit a flock of pelicans. The crew had ejected but were too late and the capsule had hit the ground at high speed, killing the crew. I believe it was because of this knowledge and the fact that he had his head in the scope concentrating on the target when we hit the bird, Mike would have had no idea what had happened to cause the aircraft to go instantly from a quiet, smooth aircraft into an extremely noisy wreck of a machine and immediately grabbed his ejection handle. Because I had a better understanding of what was happening, I put my hand over Mike's hand to prevent him from ejecting us, climbed to a couple of thousand feet and eased off the power so that we rapidly lost speed and by the time we reduced to about 350kts we could talk to and understand each other. The warning and caution panel was alight like a Christmas tree but we decided the aircraft was flying OK, declared a mayday, turned direct for Amberley and started the myriad of checks to try to get the cockpit warning systems to go quiet.

The radome is made of synthetic material that provides an aerodynamic shape while allowing aircraft radars to operate without interference. The radome flayed into strips of material across the cockpit, destroying the aerodynamics of the aircraft which resulted in an unholy noise such that we could not hear the radio or each other. Bits of the radome and infrastructure were ingested by the engine which did some damage. Interestingly, as we returned home, the radome slowly unravelled further with the radome component strips gathering inside the radome, only to be disgorged in a massive tangle when we got home and stopped.

When the radome collapsed the Pitot Boom normally at the front of the radome was no longer functional as it was at the side of the cockpit pointing rear ward. Any system that relied on air pressure inputs became defunct; including Indicated Air Speed (IAS), Altitude, Alpha and Beta indicators for example. However, we did have inertial navigation system ground speed which ensured we could remain safely flying. The F-111 had flight control systems that in certain modes, control movement resulted in the demanded 'g' independent of airspeed. This resulted in a very interdependent system of systems. Thus, with IAS unavailable many systems became un-useable and subject to activating warning systems.



**A8-138 radome after the bird strike**

Thus, as we headed for Amberley, we started going through the warning systems in the flight manual. As we completed each warning system checks that system would shut down but activate another system. We had not completed all the tests before we landed! It was because of the interlinked method used it gave Mike another chance to eject us. Because we had not finished the checks as I put down the second level of flaps the aircraft lost a stability mode, connected the



unstable Beta Probe located on the radome to the Rudder and started to weave us across the sky. Mike reached for the ejection handle, but not quite ready to pull. As we were already on final approach, I immediately retracted that level of flap and accepted a higher flight and landing speed, thus deselecting that instability: after all we had 10,000ft of runway and I used most of it.

I had asked ATC earlier to direct any 82 Wg aircraft to join us in formation to guide us into AMB at the correct approach IAS. As it turned out it would have been impossible to use a lead aircraft because of the limited flap extension and we never did get down to normal approach speed. However, that was no excuse for the actions of a WG crew who was moving into position to formate but decided we were too dangerous to fly near because of the danger of debris and bugged out providing no assistance at all.

A key landing attribute of the F-111 is the Alpha Angle (describing angle of attack) which is provided by the Alpha Probe also located on the Radome. Given the issue with the Beta Probe, Mike was very concerned that we didn't rely on the information being provided by this Probe while we landed. Fortunately, at the speed we were using it was less important. However, that speed caused another issue in that braking from that speed could have caused a brake fire. Fortunately, while the brakes were very hot they survived that experience.

We taxied off the southern end of the runway and into the Carports where a very large crowd had gathered to see the damage. There were two incidents of note from the gathering: the Base Commander called me aside to admonish me for not switching off the landing lights as per the checklist; and two airmen looking at the damage said, "gee that would have scared them" and the other replied "the old guy was fine but the young guy was a bit shaken" and Mike can confirm that they were absolutely correct.

The aircraft was repaired some months later after the entire electronic systems were checked and replaced and it re-entered service, but the troops did suggest that it would have saved them a lot of work if we had left the aircraft back at Moura. Oh well, you can't please everyone. The aircraft was retired in 2011 with the remaining fleet and is now the gate guard at RAAF Base Amberley.



F 111 A8 138 Amberley Gate 19th December 2015

Photo Mick Raftery





## Rogue Aircraft Embarrassed the RAAF

30 August 1955

*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](http://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](mailto:airforce.history@defence.gov.au)*

**O**n this day, the RAAF was greatly embarrassed when it failed to shoot down an unmanned civilian light aircraft that had been drifting out of control over Sydney. The two-seat Auster had got away from its pilot when he restarted the engine on the ground at Bankstown airport shortly before 9 am, and crossed the city before passing out to sea. A RAAF Wirraway



**Auster Archer, of same type, pictured at Bankstown in 1955**

trainer from Richmond tried to shoot the Auster down using a hand-held Bren gun from the rear cockpit, but this fire appeared to have no effect. A Meteor jet fighter arrived from Williamtown, but its cannons jammed after only a few rounds. Two more Meteors were then called in, but they were beaten to it by a pair of Sea Furies from No 805 Naval Air Squadron at Nowra at about 1135. The episode raised questions about the RAAF's capacity to provide control of the air.



## Australia's Decision to Purchase Airborne Warning and Control Aircraft

*From Dave Bowden (AIRCDRE Ret'd)*

**I**n 1988, Exercise Pitch Black was in full swing in Darwin with a full suite of Orange and Blue aircraft participating in their respective strike and air defence roles. The RAAF was fortunate to have a USAF AWACS (modified B707) working for Blue but generally only one sortie per day. When the AWACS was unavailable the air defence resources were rather easily overwhelmed because of range limitations of ground based air defence radars. A planned visit by the Minister of Defence (The Honourable Kim Beazley) provided an ideal opportunity to demonstrate to him how the AWACS completely changed the Air Defence situation.

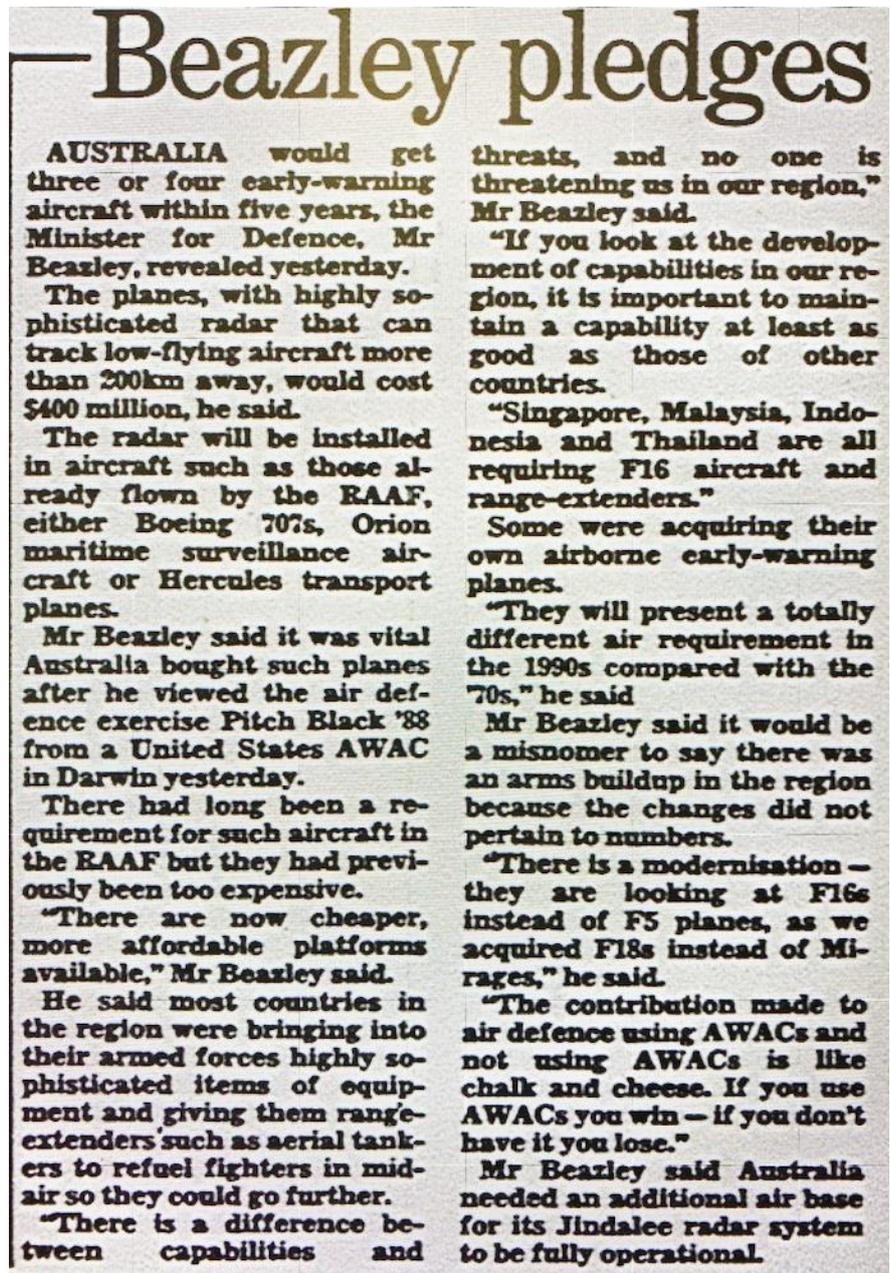


**USAF E-3 AWACS**

The morning exercise setting was conducted without the AWACS and as had become the normal outcome, Orange Forces attacked mainly at low level and successful intercepts were very few and close to their target - Darwin. The Minister observed this situation in the Sector Air Defence Operations Centre(SADOC) based at 2 CRU, where whatever kills were achieved were recorded by range and bearing from Darwin which was the primary target.



The afternoon segment included the AWACS which had the Minister plus Orange and Blue Force Commanders on board to observe the play. As Orange aircraft completed their outbound legs and turned to start their attacking runs, the Senior Controller aboard the AWACS turned to the Minister and requested which targets he should commit to first, as all Orange aircraft were clearly in view. Blue assets were assigned to each target and kills were duly plotted. No Orange aircraft escaped being engaged and several were engaged numerous times as they proceeded inbound on their attack profile. An overlay of the intercept results with and without an AWACS were dramatic. What the Minister and Blue Forces did not know prior to the session, was the Orange Force attack profiles for both morning and afternoon sessions were identical, thus allowing a like for like assessment of the utility of an AWACS. The Minister's statement at the conclusion of that demonstration was quite direct as illustrated by the article in the Australian next day.



RAAF E-7A AEW&C Aircraft



It is interesting to note that the USAF have decided to replace their aging AWACS with a version of the RAAF E7A, as reported by Stephen Losey in Defense News, Apr 27 (see SITREP Issue 21).



## 37 Squadron Boeing 707 History

1979 – 1981

*Reprinted with permission from 37 SQN Trojan Tales*

In 1978, the Australian government decided to purchase two passenger jets for strategic transport. Qantas agreed to sell the government two Boeing 707-338s for \$14.5 million, the first was transferred to the RAAF in March 1979. The initial cockpit crew members were trained by Qantas, beginning with Ground School at Qantas Jet Base Mascot on 2 Jan 1979, all former C-130 crew members except for one flight lieutenant with a P-3 background.



**VH-AEG – A20-627 "Windsor Town".**

Qantas tail minus Kangaroo – RAAF Roundel on front

Located at RAAF Base Richmond, New South Wales, the 707s were initially operated by No 37 Squadron, under the command of WGCDR Geoff Lumsden. The first two aircraft were A20-624 and A20-627 (formerly VH-EAD and VH-EAG respectively). Tony Ryan, the initial B707 Flight Engineer Leader, said "We did our initial training in VH-EAG which became A20-627 after we did a RAAF Acceptance flight on it on 28th March 1979."

"We continued our training in A20-627 until check out and then shortly after, on 1st June 1979, we accepted A20-624 from Qantas following a Block servicing." During No 37 Squadron's years of operating B707 aircraft they were primarily utilised for Butterworth personnel and families changeover operating between Sydney (Mascot) and Penang (Paya Lebar) airports, personnel and equipment deployments/redeployments within Australia and overseas, plus VIP travel for the Prime Minister, ministers, ministerial staff and members of the press contingent.

Some notable tasks undertaken by the 37SQN B707s include:

- June 1979: 1 x B707 task Singapore to Sydney conveying Vietnamese refugees. 1 x B707 task Djakarta to Sydney conveying Vietnamese refugees.
- July 1979: 1 x B707 PM (Malcolm Fraser) VIP trip to Africa.
- September 1979: 1 x B707 Governor General (Sir Zelman Cowan) VIP to UK and return for funeral of Lord Mountbatten.
- October 1979: 1 x B707 Deputy PM (Doug Anthony) Trade Mission to SEA.

No 37 Squadron continued to operate these two airframes until 2nd February 1981. On that date No 33 Flight, under the command of WGCDR Dave Grierson, was formed and ultimately became No 33 Squadron, RAAF Base Richmond in July 1983.





## **Piercings, long hair, facial tattoos allowed under new Canadian Armed Forces dress rules**

*Reprinted with permission from CONTACT Magazine*

In a bid to open up recruiting to a wider cross-section of society, the Canadian Armed Forces have completed a major overhaul of dress rules, to allow beards, piercings, long and/or coloured hair, face tattoos – even sunglasses on parade! Basically, it seems, almost anything goes as long as it is safe and can accommodate operational requirements. The updated Dress Instructions will take effect in early September 2022. Canadian Armed Forces headquarters issued the following Q&As to explain the new rules.

### **Will recruits need to shave their head on basic training?**

No, the updated hair policy applies to all CAF members from recruitment to retirement.

### **Is there a maximum length for hair?**

No, there are no restrictions on the length of hair. However, long hair must be tied when extending below the top/ridge of the shoulder or that extends below the service dress collar for ceremonial occasion. It must not prevent the proper wear of headdress and must not impede the visibility of the member's face. Safety and operational requirements shall be met.

### **What types of braids are considered acceptable?**

Any style braid(s) may be used, as long as it remains in line with safety and operational requirements. Hair must be tied to ensure the headdress can be worn properly and the face is visible. A bun, braids, or ponytail are examples of appropriate ways to tie the hair.

### **Is unnatural-coloured hair acceptable in ceremonial orders of dress? And must accessories match the colour of hair?**

Yes, the colouring of hair is permitted in all orders of dress unless it inhibits an operational duty. For example, bright coloured hair may have a negative operational impact during field operations or training. Leaders are invited to discuss with their members to find a simple, suitable accommodation, such as a scarf to cover the hair. Accessories do not have to match the colour of the member's hair. However, all accessories shall meet safety and operational requirements and not must not discredit the CAF.

### **Is there any change on the beard policy?**

Yes, the wearing of sideburns, beards, moustaches and goatees, or combination of style, is authorized for all members of the CAF from recruitment to release. There is no maximum or minimum length. Only, they must be kept neatly groomed and symmetrical in style while always complying with safety requirements and operational requirements.

### **Can CAF members be asked to shave their facial hair?**

Yes, Commanders of Commands, Task Force Commanders, Formation Commanders and Commanding Officers retain the right to order restrictions on the wearing of facial hair to meet safety and operational requirements. This instruction does not supersede Federal or National safety codes or regulations.

### **Since multiple facial hair styles are approved, must a person request a period of transition for each change in facial hair?**

No, as long as it is neat and evenly trimmed. For example, a member going from a goatee to a full beard should shave down the goatee so facial hair appears evenly and symmetrically trimmed.

### **Are tattoos on the face permitted? And what is considered the face?**

The face is the front part of the head that extends from the forehead to the chin and from the anterior part of one ear to the other. Tattoos are permitted on the face as long as they conform to



the regulations outlined in Section 2 – Appearance. “Tattoos that the member knows, or ought to know, are associated with criminal activities (e.g. criminal gangs), tattoos that promote and/or express, on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination as defined in the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA), the following: hatred, violence, discrimination, or harassment: and tattoos that a CAF member knows, or ought to know, promote and/or express: racism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, ableism, or sexual explicit material” are not permitted.

**Are hoops and long earrings acceptable in uniform?**

Yes, ear piercings, hoops and spacers are authorized but can be no more than 2.5 cm in length from the bottom of the ear. Safety and operational requirements must always be met. Spacers must not extend 2.5 cm in diameter. In all ceremonial orders of dress (No. 1), only one single stud type (one in each ear) is permitted in the lobe not to exceed 1 cm.

**What jewelry is acceptable for ceremonial orders of dress?**

The following is acceptable:

- Rings: a maximum of two rings which are not of a costume jewellery nature. Additional rings may only be worn when they indicate professional standing, such as an engineer, or are worn with a wedding band as a single set indicating betrothal or fidelity, e.g., an engagement or an anniversary ring. Rings shall not inhibit the execution of proper arms drill or cause an unsightly bulge in white or black gloves.
- Necklaces and bracelets: shall not be visible;
- Piercings: the only piercing jewellery authorized are single or single set of stud or single stone earrings (one in each ear) in the earlobe(s) only. Piercings are not permitted on the face. Earrings shall not exceed one centimetre square or diameter. Gauges/spacers shall not exceed 2.5 cm in diameter.
- Plain tie-pins or clips or with a Canadian military insignia are permitted.

**In operational dress (order of dress 5), is there a limit to the number of ear-piercings that are acceptable?**

In general, there are no restrictions unless there is a safety issue or operational effectiveness may be jeopardized.

**Following both the jewelry and piercings policy, can two piercings be connected with a chain in one ear?**

Yes, as long as both piercings and chain are within 2.5 cm in diameter or length, and safety or operational effectiveness is not compromised. However, only one single stud (max 1 cm) or spacer(max 2.5 cm) per ear is authorized in ceremonial orders of dress (order of dress No. 1).

**If a CAF member recently had their upper ear pierced and cannot remove this earring for 2 months, what should they do when asked to wear a ceremonial order of dress?**

Members should communicate with their chain of command to find a solution.

**Can CAF members with eye lash extensions be ordered to have them removed?**

Yes, if they affect operational duties, as in the case of wearing night-vision goggles (NVGs).

**Are CAF members permitted to have long fingernails in uniform?**

Yes, long fingernails are permitted so long as they do not impede the member’s ability to perform their duties. An example of this is being unable to do weapons drills due to long fingernails. Safety and operational requirements must always be met.

**Are CAF members required to wear gloves at all times while wearing a toque?**

No, gloves do not need to be worn when the toque is worn or vice versa. The toque is authorized as alternative winter headdress and can be worn with all orders of dress.



**Are sunglasses permitted for wear on a ceremonial parade? Are transition (photochromic) lenses, mirrored lenses and clip-ons permitted?**

Yes, sunglasses are permitted for wear in all orders of dress, including ceremonial (No. 1) dress. Eyeglasses and sunglasses are permitted for wear in all orders of dress, including transition lenses, mirrored lenses, and clip-on lenses.

**Are backpacks required to be slung over both shoulders?**

A backpack can be worn slung over both shoulders, or over the left shoulder; this leaves the right arm free to salute.

**Can the different gender design of the DEU uniforms be intermixed or must CAF members only wear either the “female” pattern or the “male” pattern?**

DEUs are no longer gender based. Both catalogues are open to all members and they may be intermixed. CAF members may choose whichever design best fits, as long as it is worn as per the Dress Instructions. Some restrictions may be imposed in certain circumstances such as on parade.

**References to gender have been removed but traditionally gendered items like skirts, nylons, and purses are still part of CAF dress. Does this mean that CAF members who identify as men can wear skirts?**

Yes, it does. The overall aim of the updated Canadian Forces Dress Instructions is to make the policy more inclusive and less prohibitive, and to allow CAF members increased freedom to make personal choices regarding their appearance, providing that safety and operational effectiveness are always maintained.

**What if a CAF member’s religious beliefs require them to dress in a way that isn’t covered by the new Dress Instructions? Or conversely, what if their appearance does not conform to the regulations outlined in Section 2 – Appearance but it conforms to their cultural beliefs?**

One of the goals of the Canadian Forces Dress Instructions update was to make the rules more inclusive and therefore limit the need for accommodations. However, accommodations will always be available to CAF members who have special requirements related to religious or spiritual belief. Members should communicate these requirements with their chain of command, as leaders retain the right to order restrictions based on the need to meet safety and operational requirements.

**The following text has been removed: “Behaviour such as chewing gum, slouching, placing hands in pockets, smoking or eating on the street and walking hand in hand, is forbidden.” Does that mean CAF members can now do all those things when in uniform?**

Pursuant to QR&O 17.02, the deportment and appearance of all ranks, in uniform or when wearing civilian attire, shall on all occasions reflect credit on the CAF and the individual. It is the responsibility and duty of all CAF members to ensure that, while in uniform, they comport themselves in a manner which projects a positive military appearance. Leaders at all levels have a role to play in this regard.

**What happens if a CAF member doesn’t follow the updated Dress Instructions?**

When a uniform is required to be worn, all CAF members shall wear the applicable uniform described in this manual in accordance with the instructions contained herein. Pursuant to QR&O 17.02, the deportment and appearance of all ranks, in uniform or when wearing civilian attire, shall on all occasions reflect credit on the CAF and the individual. It is the responsibility and duty of all CAF members to ensure that, by their vigilance, actions and example, the policies, regulations and instructions contained herein are adhered to.



**Are any more changes expected to the Dress Instructions?**

The update is occurring in three phases. The first phase involves a rewrite of critical policy where significant change is necessary (Section 2, Chapter 2); changing exclusive or gendered language to inclusive throughout the policy; and reducing the need for accommodations. Also, as part of this phase, the Logistik online clothing catalogue was opened to all members in September 2021, so that clothing choice was no longer restricted by gender. Later phases of the update will revisit the functional authority changes from 2017 (where each Environment has its own specifications); change terminology in catalogues and supply manuals; and make design changes to the clothing itself.

Going forward, the intention is to continually review the updated Dress Instructions, in order to provide additional clarity where necessary and to include any elements previously overlooked.



**Cat 1: Nav 0**

*Reprinted with permission from 375SQN Trojan Tales*

**O**ur task took us to Bandung where we were met by Australian Air Attaché, Stan Clark. We were transported to our accommodation which was a 1.5 star hotel of two storeys with a courtyard. The hotel should have been called, 'Satay Central' as the courtyard contained about 30 or so feral cats.

On the morning of the second day, one of our navigators thought it would be a good idea to pat one of the cats. Wrong! The cat firmly attached its teeth to the navigator's hand. The cat was screaming and so was the navigator. Each was trying to get rid of the other. Once the cat managed to scramble free, we had to take the navigator to a medical centre for treatment. The nav was given a rabies shot, a not very pleasant injection, in the stomach.



We were informed to 'catch' the cat. Next morning, I managed to lower a laundry basket over the offending feline and trap it inside. The next trick was to place the cat in a

hessian bag. I put on two pairs of flying gloves with a pair of asbestos fire gloves from the aircraft. Suitably armoured, I managed to get hold of the cat and gently dropped it in the bag, tied the top and placed it in the crew van. The cat was really upset and during the trip to the aircraft, it was obvious the cat wanted out of the bag so it could kill us all.

At the aircraft, the bag with the murderous moggie was given to Attaché Clark as it had to be placed in Isolation for at least 21 days in case it had rabies. The instructions were to keep an eye on the navigator in case he showed any unusual symptoms, like attempting to cough up fur balls, fear of water or licking himself in unusual places. The rest of the trip went without incident and a few weeks later, the Air Attaché sent a signal to the squadron. "No need to shoot the navigator, the cat's OK"!



These days, being an adult is mostly just googling how to do stuff.





## The Ghost of Bobby Gibbes

By Tomas 'Paddy' Hamilton, 29 August 2022  
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**A Mk VIII Spitfire, sporting the 'Grey Nurse' moniker used by 'Bobby' Gibbes, flying at the Australian International Airshow at Avalon, Victoria (2011). This aircraft is now part of the RAAF's No. 100 Squadron, also known as the Air Force Heritage Squadron**

*Photo by Brian Hartigan*

Wartime fighter pilots, gallant knights of the air  
Few would ever make that claim, they wouldn't ever dare  
Bobby Gibbes was one such hero, who excelled in every test  
In terms of skills and combat, he was up there with the best

No hatred for the enemy, he once wept when he downed a foe  
Showing such compassion, few would ever know  
Little time for his own doubts, he often tempted fate  
Landing well behind the lines, to rescue a fellow mate

The anti Aussie attitude, wasn't hard to see  
If he had been a Pommie, he'd have won a VC  
Fighting in the desert heat, or above the steaming jungle  
Paying the ultimate price, for the "Poo Bah's" bungle

Battles should not be fought, by "big wigs" far away  
For what was true, so long ago, is still a fact today  
So many brave men lost, for little or no gain  
Loved ones' tears may sometimes ebb, but they'll always feel the pain

Their only tribute, a gravestone in the ground  
But sadly, for so many, they were never found  
We honour their memory, with pride tinged with regret  
And the solemn oath we often make, the words "LEST WE FORGET"

I hear the crackling of a Merlin, as a Spitfire taxis past  
A vision of his Grey Nurse, a beauty unsurpassed  
His ghost it still attends me and visits once in a while  
For his legacy can still be seen, in his daughter's smile

*Robert Henry Maxwell Gibbes, DSO, DFC & Bar, OAM (6 May 1916 – 11 April 2007) was an Australian fighter ace of World War II, and the longest-serving wartime commanding officer of No. 3 Squadron RAAF. He was officially credited with 10½ aerial victories, though sometimes reported as 12 including two shared.*



## Australia's first MQ-4C Triton unveiled

*Reprinted with permission from CONTACT Magazine*



**Australia's first MQ-4C Triton.**  
Photo supplied by Northrop Grumman

Northrop Grumman today unveiled Australia's first MQ-4C Triton autonomous aircraft with a ceremony at its high-altitude, long-endurance (HALE) aircraft production site in California. Attended by Australian and US government and defence officials, the event highlighted the continued progress of the MQ-4C Triton program for both the Royal Australian Air Force and US Navy.

President of Northrop Grumman Aeronautics Systems Tom Jones said the event marked a significant milestone for Australia and the MQ-4C Triton program. "As we get ready for final system integration and flight test, we are one step closer to delivering this extraordinary maritime awareness capability to Australia," Mr Jones said. "Australia is a cooperative program partner in the Triton program and was critical in helping shape the requirements for the system. "As partners, US and Australian defence forces will be able to share data collected by their respective Tritons, a critical ability in one of the world's most strategically important regions."

Chief of the Royal Australian Air Force Air Marshal Robert Chipman said Triton would provide the RAAF with an unprecedented capability to monitor and protect Australian maritime approaches. "Triton will work alongside the P-8A Poseidon and this unmanned aircraft system will allow us to cover significant areas, at longer ranges and has the ability to stay airborne longer than a traditional aircraft," Air Force Air Marshal Chipman said.

Northrop Grumman initiated the build of the first Australian Triton in October 2020 at its production facility in Moss Point, Mississippi, and met another major production milestone in December 2021 when the fuselage and one-piece wing were mated in Palmdale, California. The aircraft is scheduled for production completion in 2023 and delivery to Australia in 2024.

