



# FLYBY

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Image: Geoff Goodall

## A Dakota Experience – by John Van Gelder

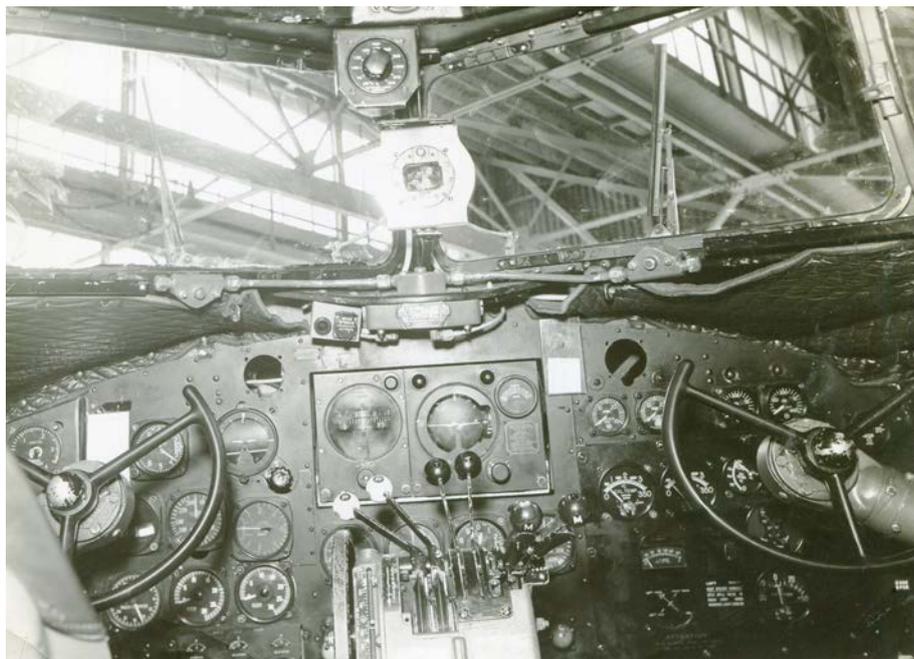
**FOR THOSE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE LATE 1930s and through the 40s, 50s, 60s and probably even today the mention of the Douglas DC3 is synonymous with flying and air transport. Incredibly, even today television advertising tells us that we can have a ‘luxury’ tour over Sydney in a Dakota! For pilots who were fortunate to fly the aircraft it was more than just another aircraft, it became almost a way of life.**

After about four years of successful airline service with the DC2 followed by the DC3 and with the rapid approach of war, the American armed services looked for a new reliable and robust transport aircraft. Modifications to the DC3 to suit it for military service were relatively simple. Some strengthening in the rear fuselage area, larger doors for cargo handling, an astrodome and uprated engines were basically all that was needed. In this way the military version of the aircraft was born and became known as the C47, referred to as the Douglas Skytrain by the Americans and the Dakota when they entered service in the British and Commonwealth services. In total, about 13,000 were built.

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The longevity of the DC3s and C47s was due, no doubt, to an extremely sound and aesthetically pleasing design, and of particular significance, the inherent strength of the multi spar wing construction. The visual appearance of the Dakota seemed to inspire confidence.



*The Dakota's cockpit: rudimentary by today's standard, but modern in the early 30's when the first derivative was produced.*

The RAN operated four ex-RAAF Dakotas from HMAS Albatross between 1950 and the mid 1970s. Two were in service when I was invited to take more than just a casual interest in the aircraft in early 1957. The two aircraft were A65-43 and A65-23 with side numbers 800 and 801 respectively. The last two Dakotas transferred from the RAAF to the RAN were A65-90 and A65-123 and flown from RAAF Base East Sale to Nowra in February 1968. Their side numbers were 802 and 803 and I had the honour to deliver both aircraft from East Sale to Nowra.

In January 1957 I was enjoying myself flying Fireflies and Sea Furies from HMAS Albatross when I was bidden by the Director of Officers' Appointments to take myself off to the RAAF Central Flying School at RAAF Base East Sale for a conversion course on Dakotas. This came as a complete surprise to me, but never one to disobey a direct order I travelled south and delivered myself unto the tender mercies of one Flight Lieutenant **Robert 'Snow' Joske** to be instructed in the intricacies of the legendary Dakota. 'Snow' was an A1 category Qualified Flying Instructor and perhaps the most professional flying instructor I have ever known. Incidentally, Group Captain Joske RAAF (Rtd) is a good friend of mine to this day.

Two weeks concentrated flying on the Dakota taught me many things I had not appreciated when flying single engine aircraft, but mainly how to fly a twin-engine aircraft on one engine! It was very rarely in a training flight that one engine didn't 'accidentally' fail because the instructor had surreptitiously turned off the fuel to an engine, and one found oneself like a one-armed paper hanger trying to keep the aircraft flying with one hand and rectify the problem with the other whilst at the same time trying to complete a complex instrument homing or approach procedure.

In any flying training programme simply taking-off and landing the aircraft and basic manoeuvres are the easy part. Where flying training is most important is in teaching the pilot how to overcome problems when things don't go according to plan. That is the critical time when an emergency happens. If a military pilot does not concentrate every second he is in the air thinking about what may happen to his aircraft if unexpected things happen he is likely to die.

Since Dakotas were designed as a transport aircraft there was a fundamental requirement to fly them over relatively long distances in all but extreme weather conditions. For this reason Dakotas were fitted with de-icing equipment on the wings, propellers and windscreens. Additionally, the two RAN Dakotas, which were originally equipped only with radio compasses as a navigation aid, were upgraded in 1956/57 with Visual Aural Range (VAR) combined with Instrument Landing System (ILS) instrumentation. The addition of this equipment meant that the aircraft could now operate

**Below.** *The RAN operated four ex-Air Force Dakotas, with the first two being delivered in '49/50 and the remainder in '68. The last was phased out just five years later, in 1973.*



safely in the Civil Air Routes and could be flown into major civil airports in inclement or low cloud weather conditions. This also meant much more instrument flying practice and the need to become proficient in civil instrument approach procedures for the naval pilot. A type of flying in which he had very little previous experience.

The cockpit design and layout was interesting in itself and probably set a pattern for all future transport aircraft. American aircraft designers were a long way ahead of their counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic when it came to user friendly cockpits for pilots. The cockpits were generally spacious and the layout of the instrumentation was logical, and came easily to hand. By modern standards the Dakota cockpit was fairly primitive but functional. The one outstanding piece of equipment fitted was the automatic pilot. This was robust and reliable and a great comfort to have on a long trip.

The aircraft was designed to operate with two pilots, the aircraft captain in the left-hand seat and co-pilot in the right, however, it could be flown without difficulty by one pilot. This was a good thing because with so few RAN pilots qualified on the Dakota during the 1950s and 60s it was usual practice to have an unqualified pilot sitting in the right-hand seat. Once I became a Qualified Flying Instructor this usually meant that almost every flight became a training flight for the co-pilot! I recall putting this procedure into practice one afternoon flying south from RAAF Base, Townsville, trying to convert the co-pilot to the old Dakota in my best flying instructor technique. Little did I know for some time that our transmit button was inadvertently switched on and I was unwittingly giving a flying lesson to any pilot on the Queensland air radio frequency! In any event, I must have impressed my co-pilot since he later became a senior check captain with Qantas.

Everyone seems to assume that the Dakota was a good safe reliable aircraft. Basically this was so but if one was not very careful under some circumstances the old darling could react

very badly. One such circumstance was landing in a high crosswind. The Dakota could cope fairly well with a crosswind component of up to 13 knots, approaching that component and beyond became a little tricky.

At HMAS Albatross, Saturday 9th June 1962 was a clear, cold winter's day with a very strong westerly wind blowing. Mid afternoon I received a phone call from Commander Air, the late **Jim Bailey** asking if I had had a drink. Assuring him that I had not, he directed me to meet him at the Squadron (724) from whence we were to proceed to the South Coast regional airport of Merimbula in order to airlift a fourteen-year-old boy suffering from an accidental gunshot wound to the chest to Sydney for hospital surgery. With Jim in the right-hand seat (and unqualified on the aircraft) we set off for Merimbula in some of the worst turbulence I had ever experienced. The airport at Merimbula had a single runway running roughly north and south and with almost a gale from the west the prospects of a nice neat landing appeared somewhat grim. In the event a landing was achieved, although it could have been better described as an arrival.

With our young patient loaded on board and made as comfortable as possible, and also attended by a nursing sister who had never been in an aircraft before, we took off for Sydney. To ensure as much comfort as possible for the patient we flew about twenty miles out to sea to avoid the turbulence. On arrival at Sydney at 1800 I was fairly convinced that our good nurse was probably in worse shape than the patient after her first flight! However, we were met by an ambulance and a medical team and also the press. Needless to say next day one of the Sunday papers ran a story and photograph of our Dakota on arrival at Sydney and saying how well the RAAF had executed the medical mercy flight! No wonder HMAS Melbourne was not replaced.

The two RAN Dakotas, A65-23 and A65-43, were configured internally as flying classrooms for Observer training. The aircraft were equipped with ASV

19B radar, the set fitted to the Fairey Gannet. The radar scanner/aerial was located adjacent to the cargo doors and surrounded by a guard rail. In operation the scanner was lowered electrically in its radome, which was about three feet in diameter, and protruded below the aircraft fuselage by about four feet (from memory). Naturally, the radome could not be lowered with the aircraft on the ground as there was insufficient clearance.

One sunny afternoon we were returning to Albatross after a successful radar exercise with a class of observer trainees when I was quietly advised by the observer instructor, the irrepressible Lieutenant **Arthur 'Slug' Whitton**, that he was unable to retract the radome. As I did not

**Below:** A later shot of N2-43 after carrying out a forced landing in Queensland. Originally delivered to the RAN in early '49, it was later modified as a flying classroom using Sea Venom and Gannet radars.





fancy landing the aircraft with the radome down and tearing or wearing it off on the runway with the attendant risk of fire I sought a conference with 'Slug' in the vicinity of the reluctant radome. Mustering all the electrical knowledge we had between us, which amounted to very little, we came to the conclusion that if we could bridge the gap between two obvious electrical contact points 'something might happen'. With this course of action agreed upon 'Slug' wrapped a pair of navigation dividers in the nearest available Mae West and jammed the divider points onto the two electrical contact points, which were perhaps two inches apart. The results were instantaneous. Three distinct things happened. There was a blinding blue flash of electrical energy, the navigation dividers melted and burnt the Mae West and Lo and Behold the radome retracted into the housed position for landing! Flushed with success and having convinced our observer trainees that we were virtually supermen we retired to the cockpit for the circuit entry and landing. Intentionally leaving the door open between cockpit and main cabin I sat 'Slug' in the co-pilot's seat and directed him to place his left hand on the throttles and pitch levers. In this manner we landed the aircraft and almost convinced our observer trainees that observers can do anything a pilot can do! Occasionally one can have some fun in the air, particularly in an aircraft such as the Dakota.

The safe and reliable old Dakota could become a bit of a handful if things did not go according to plan. In Hobart, 26th October 1962, the weather was superb with bright sunshine, warm temperature and virtually no wind. We had flown from Nowra to Hobart the previous day for the purpose of returning a few of our maintenance personnel and their equipment to Nowra after they had attended to servicing some Sea Venoms in Hobart.

Take off conditions shortly after midday on the northern runway at Cambridge airport were ideal. No other air traffic in the area, a gentle breeze, and the Derwent River beyond the runway looking like a millpond, although the Dakota, A65-43, was fairly heavy.

With my perennial unqualified co-pilot Jim Bailey in the right hand seat and all pre-flight checks completed we were cleared for take-off.

It should be pointed out at this stage that there are two significant speeds to be considered during the take off and initial climb procedure for multi engine aircraft. The first speed is the Critical Speed, which occurs at about 67 knots for the Dakota,

when the wheels just leave the runway and the aircraft becomes airborne. The second speed, known as the Safety Speed, occurs at about 92 knots. The significance of these two speeds is that if complete power is lost on one engine before reaching the Safety Speed the aircraft will not climb and is unlikely to remain airborne. Above that speed the aircraft should maintain height flying on one engine. Obviously, total weight of the aircraft in these situations is a vital factor.

The take-off run was quite normal and as the aircraft lifted off the runway action was initiated to retract the undercarriage. When only a few feet off the runway, with the airspeed perhaps a little over 70 knots, the port engine fire warning light came on. Let me assure you, there is no mistaking a fire warning light in an aircraft, it is a brilliant red light which sears itself into one's brain with the simple message '... Do something – NOW!' With an engine fire the first action should be to cut off the fuel supply and subsequently activate the fire extinguisher(s).

In this situation the correct, and possibly safest procedure, would have been to shut off the fuel to the port engine, fire the extinguisher and ditch the aircraft off the end of the runway into the Derwent River. Although, this course of action was contemplated for a split-second I then considered that I was not dressed for the occasion, I had no desire to take a Dakota swimming with me and furthermore I did not think it was my prerogative to force a swim on my passengers without their consent. Oh yes!

In the event I took a course of action for which I could be justifiably criticised but fortunately for all concerned it turned out well. The immediate action was to reduce power on the port engine but maintain sufficient power to attain at least Safety Speed. I could see no flame around the engine and the observer, **Lieutenant Bob Bloffwitch**, at my behest could see neither smoke nor flame coming from the trailing edge of the port wing. On reaching about 300 feet I initiated a tight right hand circuit with the port engine almost back to idling power (under the circumstances it may have been needed again on the approach) and landed the aircraft back on the runway from whence we had just come, at the same time turning off fuel to the port engine.

On shutting everything down on the runway (no other air traffic) the source of the problem was simple to find. In the port wheel well a bolt had sheared and allowed the bottom segment of the exhaust manifold to drop between six and twelve inches. Fortunately it did not fall out of the aircraft but jammed itself into the engine nacelle. The effect of all this was that exhaust flames were pouring into the wheel well initiating the fire warning system. On the downside we were rather lucky, as the flames were starting to burn the hydraulic lines that actuate the engine cooling gills. Within an hour the problem had been rectified and we were airborne again on our way to Nowra.

As I have said many times the Dakota was not just an aeroplane; for a pilot it was a way of life and an enjoyable one at that.

John Van Gelder  
Naval Historical Review ✪

## Defence Asbestos and Hazardous Chemicals Exposure Scheme



Defence has an 'Asbestos and Hazardous Chemicals Exposure Scheme' (DAHCES), which combines what was previously two related initiatives.

It's open to current and former employees of the Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force members (including Cadets) who suspect that they have been exposed to asbestos or a hazardous chemical during their employment with Defence.

Persons wishing to participate in the DAHCES should call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) to register their details and access further information. When you register exposure to a hazardous chemical via the DAHCES your details and exposure type will be recorded. You will be sent a letter stating your registration number, and in some cases, additional information relating to the hazardous chemical you have registered an exposure to. There are also a small number of information sheets available on the website.

You can see the website [here](#). ✈

## Wall of Service Update

Anyone who is on the Wall can check out their name [here](#), which will also tell them where on the Wall their plaque is mounted.

Order No 41 has 11 applications. We will hold it for another week before it is sent to the Foundry for manufacturing, so if you are quick you can jump on this bandwagon!

The following names are currently on the list:

LCDR A.J. Byrne	LCDR A.F. Beauchamp
LSATW R. H.G. Ralph	LSATWL R. W.G. Ralph
POAVN A. Ross	CPOATWO J. Hunter
NAMW D.R. Smith	SWRATA M. Sullivan
CAPT A.M. Whittaker	CMDR S. Whittaker
LCDR P. James	

The Wall of Service is a terrific way to record your own little piece of history by having a plaque marking your service to the Fleet Air Arm. It is relatively inexpensive and is a lasting gift either to yourself or to a loved one.

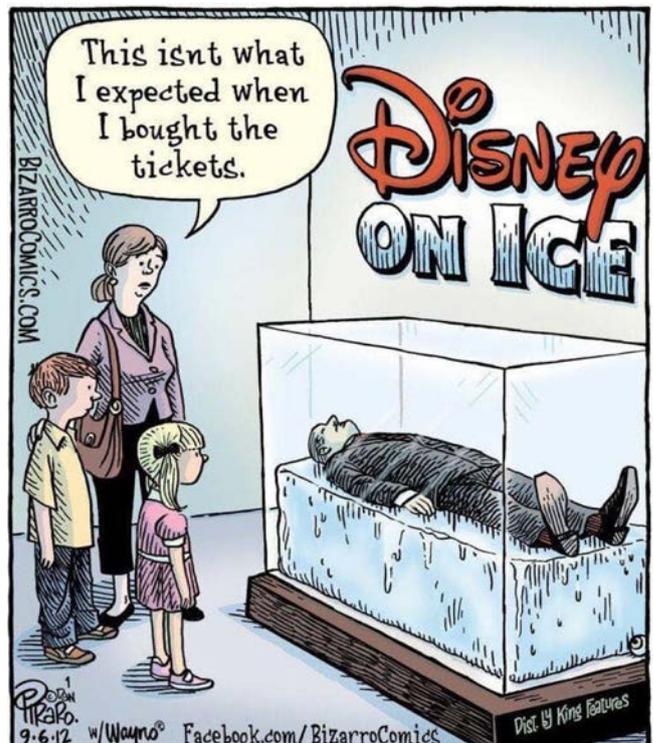
You can find more information, including how to apply, by clicking [here](#). ✈

Any of our readers who flew RN Sea Kings might like to watch the Tribute Video by clicking on the image below. It runs for just under five minutes and is rich in nostalgia...even for the Editor, who flew Mk.1s.



## † REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of **Brian Terry**, **Terry O'Donnell** and **Brian Koch** You can read a little more of these sad events on our Obituary pages [here](#). ✈



## TRAGIC ANNIVERSARY



03June 2019 will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the collision between HMAS Melbourne and USS Frank E. Evans, in which 74 American lives were lost.

Does anyone know if there is to be a commemoration service anywhere? If so, please let the Editor know [here](#).

# Saving Boxer 22



by Don Hollway  
Courtesy Vietnam Magazine &  
History Net

The mission went wrong almost from the start. Two U.S. Air Force F-4C Phantoms of the 558th Tactical Fighter Squadron, call sign “Boxer,” found their primary target weathered over. They diverted north to the village of Ban Phanop, Laos, near a chokepoint where the Ho Chi Minh Trail crossed the Nam Ngo River, to sow the ford with Mk-36 mines—500-pound Mk-82 low-drag bombs with fuses in their tails. In the trailing aircraft, Boxer 22, pilot Capt. Benjamin Danielson and weapons systems officer 1st Lt. Woodrow J. “Woodie” Bergeron Jr. were on their first sortie together. Just after dropping their ordnance, the Phantom suddenly pitched up, then down. Their flight leader called over the radio: “Boxer 22, you’re hit! Eject! Eject! Eject!”

It was Friday morning, Dec. 5, 1969, and Boxer 22 was about to become the objective of the biggest rescue mission of the Vietnam War.

Ejecting, Danielson and Bergeron—Boxer 22 Alpha and



The crew of Boxer 22. Weapons systems officer Woody Bergeron, at left, and pilot Benjamin Danielson immediately became hunted prey of enemy troops. (Courtesy Don Hollway)

Bravo—came down on opposite sides of a dogleg in the Nam Ngo, in a valley a mile across and a thousand feet deep, walled with karst, limestone cliffs. They were just 10 miles from the North Vietnam border, but only about 65 miles east of NKP—Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Base, the main base for U.S. Air Force special operations squadrons specializing in search and rescue.

A-1 Skyraider fighter-bombers scrambled, and a summons went out for HH-3E Jolly Green Giant rescue choppers, fast jets and forward air controllers (spotter planes to direct the attack aircraft). Standard procedure was to find and extract downed airmen before enemy forces concentrated on their position. Unfortunately, the enemy was already concentrated around Ban Phanop.

“Sandy 1, this is Boxer 22 Alpha,” Danielson radioed the first Skyraiders to arrive. “I need help now! I’ve got bad guys only 15 yards away, and they are going to get me soon.”

1st Lt. James G. George, the Skyraider leader, answered the call: “22 Alpha, this is Sandy 1. Keep your head down. We’re in hot with 20 Mike Mike.” Four Skyraiders raked the enemy troops with 20 mm cannon fire.

It was as if the entire valley answered back. From his position, Bergeron saw the enemy open up with 23, 37 and 57 mm anti-aircraft artillery and heavy machine gun fire from positions in the karst paralleling the river. Evading the fountain of tracer rounds, George informed King 1, the HC-130 Hercules airborne command post orbiting 24,000 feet above Laos, “We are going to need everything you can get a hold of.”

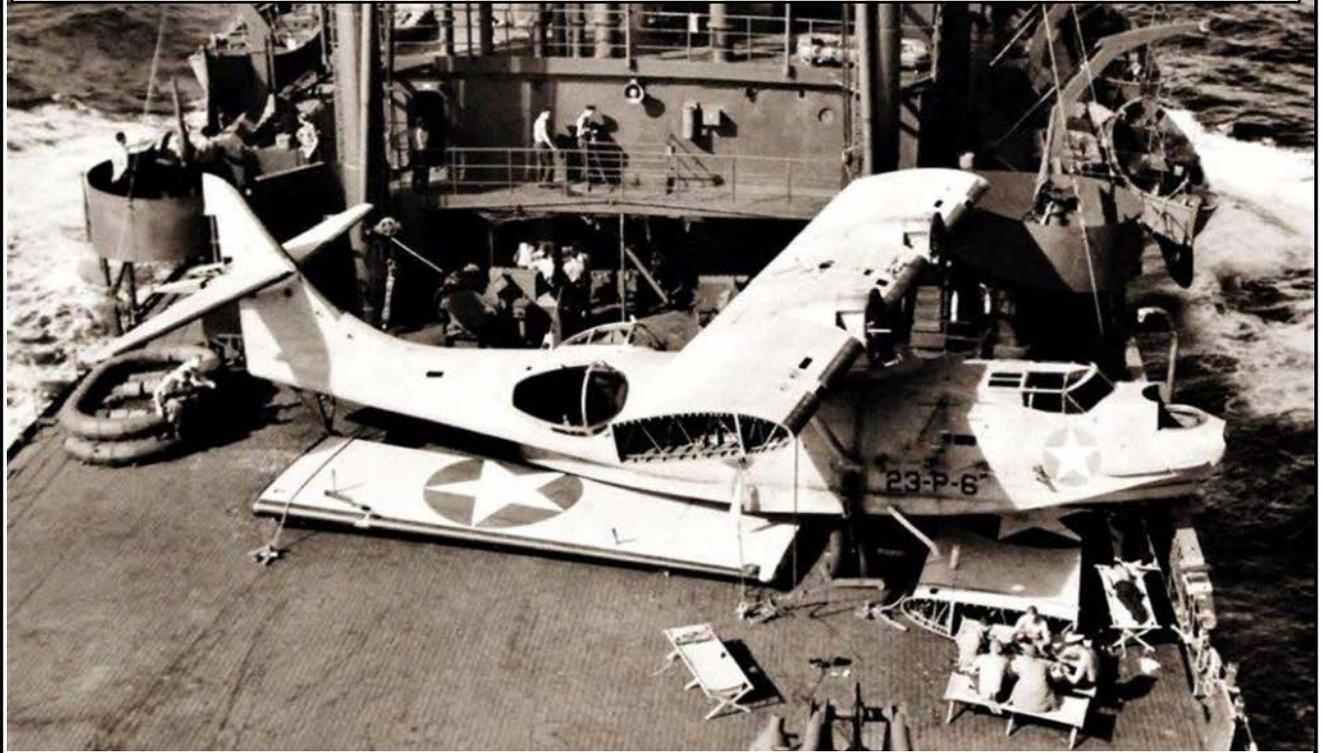
Word of the Boxer 22 shutdown had already been passed up the chain of command to 7th Air Force headquarters at Tan Son Nhut air base near Saigon and from there to “Pentagon East,” U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. From all over Indochina, American air power converged on Ban Phanop: F-100 Super Sabres, F-105 Thunderchiefs, Navy A-6 Intruders, more Phantoms and more Skyraiders—guns

(continued on page 8)

## CAPTION COMPETITION

The following captions were received:

- “OK fellas I know I bet the port and starboard wingtips and lost; now I want a chance to win them back. Double or nothing!” *Mark Radisich*
- ‘I still think the performance would be better if we put the wings back on.’ *Ed.*
- “So much for the new wing-fold mechanism...” *Bomber Brown.*
- “And I’ll raise you \$2 for the starboard wing!” *David Prest*



### CAN YOU HELP?

The photo to the left shows a couple of Sycamore helicopters operating in what appears to be a remote area.

We'd like any information about the photo: where they were and what they were doing, and a date if you have one please.

Contact the webmaster [here](#).

## Saving Boxer 22 (from page 6)



and bombs, rockets and napalm to pound those enemy guns into submission.

George assured Bergeron and Danielson, "We're going to lay CBU [cluster bomb units] all around you, and then we are going to bring in the choppers in to scarf you up and we'll all go home for a beer." But he urged two Jolly Greens standing by 5 miles to the west to move fast: "Let's get this done. I don't think we can waste any time."

At 12:40 p.m. Capt. Charles Hoilman took JG-37 in for the rescue. His crew reported an increasing trail of flak following the chopper as it approached the pickup point. The moment they slowed to a hover over Danielson's position, the Jolly Green became a big, stationary target, and the enemy brought every gun to bear. With the fuselage riddled and the turbines overheating, Hoilman climbed out to the northeast. "I've got to go home," he radioed. "I've burned the shit out of these engines."

In retaliation, Skyraiders saturated the cliffs with napalm and the valley with tear gas. But when JG-09 arrived, the enemy fired small arms and two 23 mm cannons from the karst caves, driving it off with a transmission leak, hot temps and malfunctioning controls. Less than two hours in, the rescue had turned into a pitched battle.

The Americans called in new HH-53E Super Jolly Greens—bigger, more powerful, better armed and armored. The Skyraiders dropped cluster bombs and fired 20 mm shells to within 100 feet of JG-76, remembered pilot Capt. Holly G. Bell: "It sounded like we were caught in a popcorn machine."

As Bell's chopper swung in over Danielson, tail gunner Airman 1st Class David Davison hosed half the valley with a red stream of tracer fire at 4,000 rounds per minute, but he was outgunned. The helicopter received multiple shots to the fuselage and rotor system and began to vibrate hard. "I knew if we took more hits, my Jolly would be shot down," Bell later reported. "During egress from the valley, I received notification that Davison had been badly hit." Struck in the head, the airman would be posthumously awarded the Silver Star. (Two months later, Bell and his entire crew would be shot down

and killed during another search and rescue operation.)

By now the enemy game plan was obvious: Hole up while the Skyraiders and jets did their worst and then, when the rescue choppers came in, emerge from cover and let them have it. A burst of fire cut a hydraulic line in JG-69, piloted by Capt. Jerald Brown. The spraying fluid caught a spark, and the helicopter climbed away gushing flames.

An enemy 37 mm shell blew a 2-by-4-foot hole in the belly of Maj. Jerry Crupper's JG-79. Hovering in JG-68, Maj. Hubert Berthold remembered seeing "the entire area lit up with tracers from both sides, from both the karst and the ground." His chopper took fire a full 5 miles west of the crash site. The crews were lucky to survive.

Skyraider pilot Col. Daryle Tripp, deputy commander of operations of the 56th Special Operations Wing, told everyone: "We have at least 45 minutes to sunset. We will make at least one other attempt. But it's fairly apparent from the gunfire out here that I just saw that there is still more work to be done."

Capt. Donald Carty got his JG-72 to within 30 feet of Danielson before being driven off. "We were so low and it was so dark on the egress that we almost

hit the karst," he said. "I advised against making another attempt because it was too dark and our miniguns were either jammed or out of ammo."

Ninety aircraft had dropped almost 350 bombs and rockets on the Nam Ngo valley, but as night fell the enemy was still there and its tracers rounds streamed up for the Americans. "The AAA was firing above us across the entire valley, with the tracers ricocheting off the side of the karst on the opposite side," recalled a low-flying Skyraider pilot. "It was like being in the bottom of a tunnel of fire."

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The rescue of Boxer 22 was the largest search and rescue mission of the Vietnam War. A total of 336 sorties were flown by aircraft that expended 1,463 smart bombs, high-explosive bombs, cluster bombs, smoke bombs, napalm bombs and rocket pods over the course of three days. Skyraiders alone flew 242 sorties; the HH-3 and HH-53 helicopters, over 40. Five Skyraiders were damaged, but the Jolly Greens got the worst of it. Five of the 10 involved never flew again.

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An HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giant helicopter, similar to the ones used in the Boxer 22 rescue, awaits the crew of its next mission. (U.S. Air Force)

Five of seven helicopters that had taken serious hits were unlikely to be repaired by morning, and it was unclear if the remaining two would ever fly again. Commander Tripp broke the news to the Boxer 22 crew: "We have run out of helicopters, and I want you to bed down. Try to get yourself dug in, and we will be out here first thing in the morning."

"Good night, see you in the morning," Bergeron replied. He decided to stay where he was and "just dug deeper in the foliage and debris I was hiding in." Bergeron and Danielson kept in touch with their survival radios. "Neither of us slept that night."

At Nakhon Phanom air base, ground crews worked into the morning to have their birds ready by dawn. The 7th Air Force commander, Gen. George S. Brown, informed the Pacific Air Forces command and the top military commanders in Saigon that all aircraft in theater, except those supporting troops in direct enemy contact, would be used in the rescue effort. As of sunup, virtually the entire air war above Southeast Asia was to be fought over Boxer 22.

Meanwhile, Bergeron had a front-seat view of the enemy supply convoys crossing the Nam Ngo a quarter-mile to the north. "I'd sit and count the trucks, and I learned how they got the trucks across the ford. They'd hold up flashlights one way to start the winch, another way to pull the truck across, and another way to stop it."

But the North Vietnamese knew he and Danielson were still out there. "I could hear the enemy looking for Ben," Bergeron said. "They would go to a clump of trees or other spots where he might be hiding and fire off a few AK-47 rounds. No one came looking for me."

On Saturday, Tripp resumed command over Ban Phanop at 6 a.m. They were still organizing the aircraft for a rescue attempt when Bergeron reported that the North Vietnamese had just killed Danielson. "They were talking in a fairly normal tone, and then all of a sudden they started yelling, like they found him. They shot a very long burst of AK-47 bullets. I heard Ben scream. It was definitely him. I knew that he had been killed."

There was no time to mourn. Enemy troops were already wading the river toward Bergeron's position. "I decided they weren't taking prisoners. If they came over to where I was hiding, I was going to try to fight it out with my pistol." He called in Skyraiders and Phantoms to strafe the river with 20 mm fire, and the soldiers "physically disappeared."

Aircraft streamed down one after another through the narrow valley. On cross routes, Phantoms targeted the gun caves with AGM-12c Bullpup air-to-ground missiles, AGM-62 Walleye glide bombs and 2,000-pound laser-guided Paveway smart bombs. "Watch out for midair collisions with the Skyraiders raking the valley floor underneath you," Tripp warned, "and check the big AAA guns on the tops of the east karsts as you pull off."

The big 2,000-pounders homed in right over Bergeron's head. He remembered, "When the Paveways would hit, it would physically throw me in the air about two inches—a beautiful feeling." As the valley filled with smoke, gas and dust, the guided weapons had trouble locking onto their targets, but they only had to get close. When Bergeron saw a Paveway hit

halfway up the cliff wall above a gun site, "the explosion literally just dumped the mountain down on top of them," he said.

For five hours the valley was cluster-bombed, napalmed, rocketed and shot up, with ordnance hitting dangerously near Bergeron's position. "The closest they came to me with 20 mm cannon fire was about 1 foot," he recalled. A tear gas bomblet actually bounced off his chest; one whiff was enough to make him "urinate and retch all at the same time," he said. "Physically and mentally you can't control yourself." (In 1993 an international treaty banned the use of tear gas in warfare.)

The Skyraiders' smoke corridor—two banks of gas and white phosphorus—was so massive it was visible from space, as recorded by a Nimbus III weather satellite shortly before noon. Pilots could see the smoke from Nakhon Phanom, 65 miles away. "At 5,000 feet, it looked like a Texas sandstorm," a Skyraider pilot remembered. The airstrikes were so heavy that the 7th Air Force began running low on smoke bombs.

Down in the acrid haze, visibility dropped to near zero. Jolly Greens made six rescue attempts, but whenever the air over the Nam Ngo valley wasn't thick with smoke, it was full of bullets. As soon as the choppers came to a hover over Bergeron—one so low that its rotors clipped the trees—their wash swept everything clear, and the enemy gunners found them.

At 6 p.m. the day's last rescue attempt failed. Night fell, the American planes drew off, and the North Vietnamese closed in. "I knew that the enemy was aware I was hiding somewhere on the bank of the river," Bergeron said, "and it was just a matter of time until they found me." About 15 minutes after dark, three enemy soldiers emerged from cover, tossed a tear gas bomblet into his bamboo thicket and sprayed it with AK-47 rifle fire. All they found was his survival gear. Bergeron had moved 40 feet to the north and was hiding under exposed tree roots. In the scramble, though, he had lost his .38-caliber revolver. "If those guys had a flashlight," he realized, "they could have found me."

Before the last Skyraider departed, its pilot had advised, "If the river is deep enough, get in it and go downstream." When no enemy troops were in sight, Bergeron waded in, but was too worn out to swim. He dragged himself to a bush overhanging the bank and got under it. Lying there in the darkness, exhausted and hungry, listening to enemy trucks rolling past on both sides of the river, he drifted in and out: "During the night I began to hallucinate. I envisioned two members of my squadron were with me, discussing my plans of action."

At Nakhon Phanom, nobody was giving up. The ramps and taxiways were jammed with aircraft being repaired, refueled and reloaded, as all hands worked to get them patched up and ready for another go in the morning.

After nearly 48 hours in enemy territory, Bergeron was on his last legs: "I was drinking water out of the river and had only a little food." Finally, at 5:15 a.m., the lead Skyraider picked him up on radio and asked him to authenticate. "What's your best friend's name?"

He replied, "Weisdorfer."

The Skyraider pilot had to laugh. "I don't even have time to check it, but it's gotta be you." By 6:30 a.m., the valley was

under renewed attack. American aircraft forced the enemy gunners to take cover and laid a fresh smoke corridor. Lt. Col. Clifton Shipman took HH-53 JG-77 down for the pickup and was immediately submerged in smoke. "When we got down on the river," he reported, "we could see absolutely nothing." But the enemy could see them. The helicopter took fire from a camouflaged truck, and Shipman spotted an estimated 500 to 1,000 troops to the northwest, massing for an attack.

During the past two days Skyraider leader Maj. Tom Dayton of the 22nd Special Operations Squadron had flown four separate helicopter escort missions, only to see 15 rescue attempts fail. Now he ordered the Skyriders into two rotating "daisy chain" formations on either side of Bergeron's position, 10 to the west and 12 to the east, circling like a pair of gears to grind the enemy with smoke, gas and cannon fire. The truck gun was quickly silenced. The valley was sanitized and saturated with smoke. Shipman refueled JG-77 in midair, and his gunners topped off their miniguns. Everybody was ready for another try. Dayton gave the go-ahead at 11:40 a.m.



Riding the "penetrator" rescue hoist a Pararescueman (right) brings back another rescued airman. (U.S. Air Force)

Coming from the east, Shipman's crew couldn't spot Bergeron. Dayton, flying overhead, talked them in. "They flew over me," Bergeron remembered, "did a 360-degree turn" and then lowered the penetrator, a bullet-shaped, anchorlike rescue hoist with spring-loaded flip-out seats. After days of popping smoke and flares, the only thing left that Bergeron could signal with was his vinyl escape chart, a scale map of enemy territory. He bolted from his hole waving the chart's white side. "The penetrator landed about 4 feet away from me in the water," Bergeron said. "I put the strap on first and then flung the penetrator beneath me."

Meanwhile, Shipman's tail gunner was hosing his minigun at 20 to 30 enemy soldiers just 50 feet away; the left-side gunner was spraying troops across the river. The crew dragged Bergeron aboard and the Jolly Green powered upward. "We've got him," Shipman announced, "and we're coming out!"

Every radio over Ban Phanop promptly jammed with cheers. Dayton (who was awarded the Air Force Cross, just below the Medal of Honor in valor awards) ordered everybody home. Over Nakhon Phanom the Jolly Greens streamed red smoke from their tail ramps in victory. Every ground crewman, air crewman and the entire command staff crowded around Shipman's aircraft, and Bergeron emerged to roaring applause.

Bergeron was awarded the Silver Star for his intelligence of enemy operations at the Nam Ngo ford and after the war flew A-10 Thunderbolt II attack jets, retiring in 1987 as a lieutenant colonel.

The rescue of Boxer 22 was the largest search and rescue mission of the Vietnam War. A total of 336 sorties were flown by aircraft that expended 1,463 smart bombs, high-explosive bombs, cluster bombs, smoke bombs, napalm bombs and rocket pods over the course of three days. Skyriders alone flew 242 sorties; the HH-3 and HH-53 helicopters, over 40. Five Skyriders were damaged, but the Jolly Greens got the worst of it. Five of the 10 involved never flew again.

In 2003 a Laotian fisherman discovered human remains, a partial survival vest, a survival knife and Danielson's dog tags along the banks of the Nam Ngo. On June 15, 2007, Lt. Cmdr. Brian Danielson of U.S. Navy Electronic Attack Squadron 129—18 months old when his father was shot down—laid his father to rest in his hometown, Kenyon, Minnesota. At the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Danielson and JG-76 tail gunner Dave Davison are remembered next to each other on panel 15W, lines 26 and 27. ✈

### Editorial: Are Airlines Out Of Control?

You have been saving for that dream car, and the great day arrives. You walk into the showroom and order it, your heart bursting with excitement. It won't be delivered for another nine months, but you figure it's worth it, and because that model is in high demand you don't mind the wait...besides, it will give you a bit more time to save the last of the money you need.

The young salesman, as neat as a new pin, shakes you by the hand and smiles his junior-Jaws smile.

'So that will be \$50,000' he tells you.

'How much deposit do you need?' you ask.

'All of it. Up Front.'

'What!?! But I don't get the car until next September!'

He shrugs dismissively. 'You've just signed the Sales Agreement, Sir, and those our terms...see – right here on page six -' he thrusts his finger at the miniscule font. 'Oh, and did I mention that if you change your mind you forfeit the entire amount? That's here too.'

You look, and sure enough if you screw up your eyes you can just see it: '*Payment not refundable*'.

Would you buy a new car from that salesman? Or that company, for that matter? Probably not...but that's exactly what Airline A – a leading regional airline – is doing right now, and it's not alone.

These terms apparently only apply to 'non refundable tickets' which is a bit like saying non-refundable parking fees only apply when you park. I'd get it if the deal was a hot special at short notice, but in my case it was a bog-standard trip at the scheduled rate and booked nine months in advance.

Fortunately, my travel agent pointed it out before I coughed up, and I was able to find airline B that doesn't enforce a non-refund policy. (continued on page 13)

# Royal Navy Historic Flight to be Discontinued

By Sue Eagles

For nearly 50 years, the Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF) based at RNAS Yeovilton, has valiantly kept the Royal Navy's aviation heritage in the public eye, displaying some of the Britain's most iconic naval aircraft, including the Swordfish, Firefly, Seahawk and Sea Fury. These historic aircraft are the golden thread that link the past with current operations and the future; flying them at air shows and events brings history to life in a dynamic way showcasing the evolutionary story of naval aviation and the technological advances that have changed history.

Keeping the story of the Royal Navy's aviation heritage alive and relevant to modern audiences has, however, become increasingly more difficult in recent years.

Next year, however, in a situation not dissimilar to that faced by the RAN Historic Flight, the RNHF is to be stood down and responsibility for the preservation of its flying heritage transferred to the charity **Navy Wings**.

Successive defence cuts together with the complex problems of maintaining and flying these priceless old aircraft have made it difficult to keep them operational. However, both the Service and the charity are intent on keeping the aircraft flying and Navy Wings will take ownership of the RNHF aircraft from 1 April 2019, operating them on the civil register.

"We are at the most exciting period in the Charity's history as we transition and expand to take on the aircraft of the Royal Navy Historic Flight" said **Jock Alexander** OBE, Chief Executive of Navy Wings. "The new business model will give us greater freedom to develop our charitable and commercial aims and secure the financial future of the aircraft. Heritage organisations like Navy Wings also have a fundamental role to play in educating and enthusing young people and we are actively renewing our focus on partnerships and apprenticeship schemes with other organisations in the aviation skills and heritage sector" continued Jock.

Navy Wings also works with private owners of other historic naval aircraft and the Navy Wings 'Associate Collection' has grown from two to eighteen aircraft in



*Sea Fury VR930 (RNHF)*



Royal Navy Historic Flight Sea Vixen and Seafire. (Image RNHF)

two years. “The Associate Collection is a great success story for the Charity” said Jock. “The addition of a Wasp, Wessex V and Sea King also enables us to tell the Fleet Air Arm rotary wing story.”

The future of our naval aviation heritage is as bold as it is challenging, and Navy Wings is looking at all sorts of ways to raise the £1.3 million a year needed to preserve Britain’s naval aviation heritage and keep the Royal Navy’s collection of historically important aircraft flying.

The interest and support of the FAAAA is greatly appreciated and members are warmly welcome to visit the Navy Wings Heritage Hangar at Yeovilton whenever you are in the UK.

To find out more about Navy Wings click [here](#). ✈

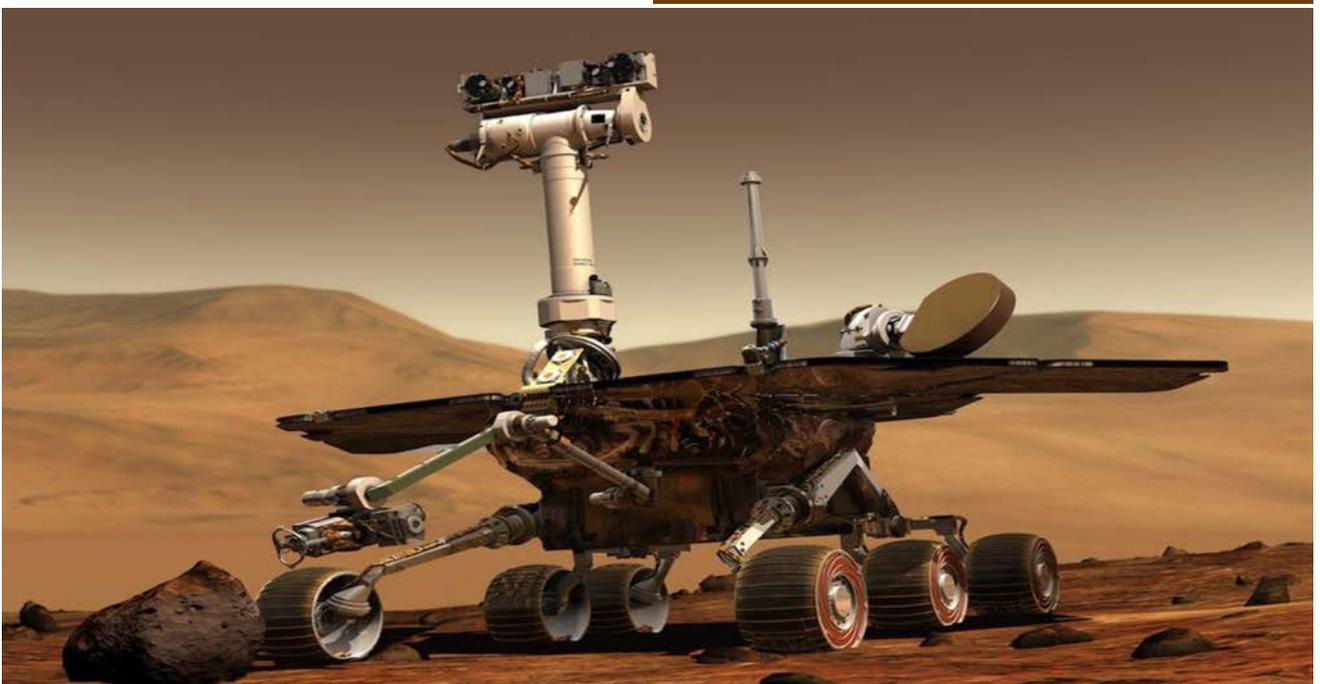
### How Did They Do It?

‘*Opportunity*’, also known as MER-B is a robotic rover active on Mars since early 2004. It was planned to be active for just 90 days but was still operating in June of this year until forced into hibernation by a severe dust storm.

Putting *Opportunity* on the surface of the Red Planet called for a carefully orchestrated series of events – from the initial launch in a Delta II rocket to the deployment of the huge air cushions at the very last moment to protect the craft on landing.

*Opportunity* has beaten the record for a distance travelled by a man-made vehicle on another planet, has been stuck in a sand dune, suffered amnesia and, until the dust-storm, had exceeded it’s ‘use by’ date by some 14 years. It is an amazing piece of technology.

You can see an extraordinary video of how the *Opportunity* reached the surface of Mars on this video [here](#) ✈



## Editorial: Are Airlines Out of Control?

(continued from page 10)

Because airline B allows a conditional refund on unused tickets, if I break a leg there's a fighting chance I'll get the majority of my money back without having to argue with a travel insurance company.

Interestingly because airlines A and B code share, I'll be flying some sectors on the very same flights as before – but they will all be refundable now because of the ticketing arrangements.

Just out of interest I spoke to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, who referred me to their [2017 Report on Airlines' Terms and Conditions](#). It covers a range of subjects such as No Refund Statements, Excessive Fees for Cancellations and Changes, and Unfair Contract Terms.

Of note, however, the report and its observations only appears to apply to Australian flag carriers – if you travel on another country's airline you will most probably be fresh out as far as Australian Consumer Laws are concerned.

Now, I know that most Flyby readers won't give a rat's proverbial about my own experience, but hopefully this article will cause you to think when you next book a ticket on a flight somewhere. The key points are:

- consider using a travel agent and ask them to explain the terms and conditions of the flight(s).
- read the fine print regarding refunds, cancellations and changes.
- shop around if you don't like it, and
- be aware of your rights.

It could be a very expensive mistake if you don't!

*Post Script. I wrote this in mid December, but I see from recent press coverage that the ACCC has taken Aussie-based airlines to task over their refund policies, and in particular Jetstar. The ACCC is looking to impose a hefty fine on the latter. Pity we can't do the same with foreign carriers. Ed ✈*

## Important Notice on Subscription Payments

**For All Members. Subscriptions for membership of the FAAAA are now due. If you haven't paid please can you help us by doing so promptly as this is our main source of income to keep the Association going.**

**For NSW "Softcopy Slipstream" members. The Editor has been advised that reminder notices were sent directly to you but the bank account details in it were incorrect. Please use the information on the back page of this newsletter to pay your subscription.**

## Subject: It Snowed Last Night

8:00 am: I made a snowman.

8:10 - A feminist passed by and asked me why I didn't make a snow woman.

8:15 - So, I made a snow woman.

8:17 - My feminist neighbour complained about the snow woman's voluptuous chest saying it objectified snow women everywhere.

8:20 - The gay couple living nearby threw a hissy fit and moaned it could have been two snow men instead.

8:22 - The transgender man...woman...person asked why I didn't just make one snow person with detachable parts.

8:25 - The vegans at the end of the lane complained about the carrot nose, as veggies are lifeblood and not to decorate snow figures.

8:28 - I was being called a racist because the snow couple is white.

8:31 - The Muslim gent across the road demanded the snow woman wear a burqa.

8:40 - The Police arrived saying someone had been offended.

8:42 - The feminist neighbour complained again that the broomstick of the snow woman needed to be removed because it depicted women in a domestic role.

8:43 - The council equality officer arrived and threatened me with eviction.

8:45 - TV news crew from the ABC showed up. I was asked if I know the difference between snowmen and snow-women? I replied "Snowballs" and am now called a sexist.

9:00 - I was on the News as a suspected terrorist, racist, homophobe sensibility offender, bent on stirring up trouble during difficult weather.

9:10 - I was asked if I have any accomplices. My children were taken by social services.

9:29 - Far left protesters offended by everything marched down the street demanding for me to be beheaded.

### Moral:

There is no moral to this story. It is what we have become. ✈

# monte bello

# BURNING

**On the forenoon of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1952 the crews of selected Australian and British warships were mustered on their decks. They were about to witness something that very few men had ever seen, and although they did not know it, for some of them the effect in later life would be devastating.**

Most of the ships had been there for a week or two, patrolling a specially designated area. Aboard HMAS *Sydney* the lookouts had been doubled and regular flights had been conducted, using her Firefly and Sea Fury aircraft. The crew did not know why they were there, so rumours were rife – that they were searching for a Russian submarine, or perhaps engaged in a major exercise.

But apart from the intrigue of their task, life went on as normal. Routines were run, meals were served, watches were kept. The damage control state remained as normal, and the working rig was for the most part shorts and sandals as the weather was hot.

Around Sydney were other ships of the Australian fleet: *Culgoa*, *Tobruk*, *Hawkesbury*, *Macquarie*, *Murchison*, *Shoalhaven* and *Mildura*, as well as a host of smaller vessels. And on the nearby islands elements of the Army and RAAF – principally engineers and communication specialists – had been working for weeks.

Around 26 September the commanding officer of Sydney briefed his crew, advising that Britain was to test an atom bomb and that the ship was there to enforce the exclusion zone. He advised them that there would be an opportunity to witness the blast.

But what was the background to this?

The mid 40s had brought with the nuclear age. Two 20 kiloton weapons had been dropped on Japan and for a while it seemed America and the USA were the only nuclear-armed countries – but the Soviet Union had been aggressively conducting its own program, boosted by captured German scientists and intelligence from the UK/USA Manhattan project. In August 1949 the Soviet Union conducted its first successful weapon test in Kazakhstan, and the nuclear arms race was on. Between

1945 and 1990 the world was to see over 70,000 warheads developed, from the tiny (0.01 kiloton) 'Davy Crockett' shell, to the huge 25 kiloton B41 bombs.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had vividly demonstrated the effect of air-burst weapons on a city, but little was known about the likely effect of a more covert strike, such as a device smuggled aboard a ship. What would the effective radius of destruction be? What structures were best able to withstand the blast, and at what distance from ground zero? They were questions that were best answered by actually testing a weapon in that configuration – an idea that the British found particularly appealing as by then it was the only nuclear nation not to have tested an atomic weapon. The Brits were keen to do so.

Australia, under Prime Minister Menzies, also keen to help. Concerned about communist expansion, particularly in Asia, Menzies felt that Australia needed to cultivate great and powerful friends. Mindful that Britain could not readily find suitable sites for testing at home he offered to host the tests in the interests of national security. His decision was made public in February 1942. There is no evidence he consulted Cabinet beforehand.

Public sentiment at the time was quite different to today. Understanding of the human and environmental impact of nuclear tests was limited, and there was a strong sense of patriotism for Britain, which was still regarded by many as 'the home country'. The February announcement was greeted with a sense of excitement.

And so it was that elements of the Australian fleet found themselves deployed just off Montebello Islands in October of 1952, together with many other ships of both nations – including the River Class frigate HMS *Plym*, that was to play a special part in the Operation.



HMS Plym in which the Operation HURRICANE nuclear device was detonated. She departed the UK in June and was moored in the lagoon off Main Beach Tri-mouille Island on 8 August with the bomb fixed below the waterline. (Wikipedia)

Aboard Sydney, about 1100 men were mustered on the flight deck by 0925K. They were facing west, the general direction of the blast, but shortly before 0933 were ordered to turn around and remain there until told otherwise. They did not know the specifics of the test – that the weapon yield was about 20% greater than that dropped on Hiroshima some seven years earlier. They were simply told to wait until ordered, and then to turn back to the west to see the explosion once the initial detonation had occurred.

A full 'general rehearsal' was conducted on 20 September which confirmed that all was in readiness. Meteorological conditions were deemed to be satisfactory on 2 October and 'D-Day' was set for the following day.

At 0933K on 3 October the device aboard Plym was remotely detonated. LCDR Robert Scrivenor, the Commanding Officer of HMAS Hawkesbury, described the event as '...a brilliant orange flash, followed by a boiling cloud of smoke, dust and water, shooting up into the sky with dramatic speed. The typical 'mushroom' was soon distorted by the high winds in the upper levels. The blast of the explosion was felt 2 minutes 16 seconds later.'

**Rob Frearson**, who was aboard HMAS Sydney gave the following account to 'Flyby':

*'...we knew something big was on the horizon as most of the seagoing fleet was in the area. We seemed to be cruising up and down the West Australian coast. Lookouts on the bridge were doubled and were told to keep an eye out for aircraft and unknown vessels. There was supposed to be Russian ships in the area, and also the Submarine that we were originally sent to find.*

*Next day the Skipper had all Ship's company muster on the Flight Deck as he had a special announcement to make. It turned out that we were on security patrol as Britain was about to explode its first Atomic bomb in a ship anchored off a small Island out from Onslow Western Australia, namely in the Monte Bello Islands. Now we knew why most of the Aussie fleet was present and why security was so intense. We were also told that a Russian submarine was in the area witnessing the blast.*

*We cruised the area for another week or so, then one morning at 7.30am it was announced that we were to muster on the Flight Deck and face West. There we were about 1100 sailors,*

*dressed only in shorts and sandals about to witness the largest unknown, untried atomic bomb in the British service to be tested on Australian territory (99% are now dead with cancer related diseases)*

*When the bomb was about to be detonated, we were told to turn our backs on the actual blast and as soon as the button was pushed, we were told to turn around and witness the blast, followed by the mushroom cloud and you could see the shock waves heading towards our ship. When these waves hit the side of the **Sydney**, it actually made this large Carrier rock.*

*The cloud drifted towards the mainland which was not supposed to happen, a wind change caused this. I read many years later that it reached areas like Rockhampton and Warwick, where many deformities in cattle and humans eventuated.*

*After the explosion, we cruised the blast area for 3 or 4 days in contaminated waters, and we were convinced that most of the ship was contaminated. The scientists were dressed in anti-radioactive clothing while the crew still strolled around in our shorts, no shirts.*

*The Sydney then sailed for Shark Bay (near Onslow WA). Here we anchored and were told that the ship was to be hosed down and completely painted from bow to stern. This was very unusual as usually the civilian dockside workers carried out these duties when the ship was in port. The story we were told was that, we were going to Melbourne and a member of the royal family was to visit the ship, (this was complete bullshit) However the large hoses came out and the **Sydney** was completely washed down, then most of the crew was issued with a paint brush and paint pot. It was painted from bow to stern and it took 3 full days. The dockyard workers would have taken weeks.*

*Shark Bay lived up to its name. I have never seen so many sharks swimming around the ship, fighting over the offal that was dumped from the galley. There were hundreds of them, all sizes, from little ones to monsters. Large nets were strung all around the Sydney, just in case someone fell overboard, also there were sailors armed with sub machine guns patrolling the flight deck, in case someone went into the drink. Luckily no one did.*

*After the complete repaint we up anchor and set sail for Fremantle and a bit of shore leave. As the ships docked there was a band to greet us on the wharf. We were all given the royal treatment, I think half the population of Perth was there to clap and cheer us as we came ashore. Prior to setting foot on dry land the Captain announced to all that we were not to discuss the explosion with anyone while on leave.'*

Two further tests were conducted in the island group in 1956: a 20 kiloton and a whopping 60 kiloton. A further nine tests on lower yield weapons occurred at Emu Field and Maralinga, (both in South Australia) over 1956 and 1957.

Radioactive fallout from the devices was expected to disperse quickly, but in all cases was found to have drifted much further than expected. (Continued on page 18)



## How 'subtle changes' to flight paths will save Qantas millions a year

*Reproduced from SMH Article by Patrick Hatch 10 December 2018*

Qantas expects to cut its fuel bill by as much as \$40 million a year thanks to a radical overhaul to how it plots its flights across the globe.

The airline has spent five years and millions of dollars building a new flight planning program – until now kept tightly under wraps – which it says will materially cut its fuel bill and bring its ultra-long haul ambitions closer to reality.

Qantas' team of dispatchers have used the same computer program for 30 years to plan the route of each flight, assessing weather, airspace traffic, safety, and legal constraints on three or four possible routes.

The new system uses cloud computing to crunch data on thousands of possible flight paths, using millions of data points – including the latest wind patterns, and varying altitudes and flight speeds – to build a "cost map" that presents the most efficient route.



*Qantas is assessing the viability of launching non-stop flights from Australia's east coast to London and New York with the Airbus A350 possibly the jet to do the job. Kate Geraghty.*

Built in collaboration with the University of Sydney's Australian Centre for Field Robotics, the Constellation system has been rolled out to Qantas' A380s, 747s and Boeing Dreamliners since the start of October, and will be installed on the remainder of its fleet next year.

Allen Dickinson, Qantas' head of flight operations systems, said the entirely digital system (dispatchers on the old system churn through a full ream of paper every day) had already delivered impressive results.

On recent flight from Sydney to Santiago, the system diverted a Qantas Boeing 747 slightly south to take advantage of a tail-wind which saved Qantas one tonne of fuel.

"It's just a subtle shift here to pick up a bit of wind. And that's the beauty of this system – just being able to find those subtle changes where we couldn't do that in the old system," said Captain Dickinson, who is an A330 pilot.

In some instances, the system has plotted unusual flight paths that would never occur to a human dispatcher.

A flight to Johannesburg, for example, was directed to fly 160 nautical miles (300 kilometres) further than it would normally, but in doing so cut the headwinds it experienced by two-thirds. The 747 arrived only three minutes later than scheduled and saved more than a tonne of fuel.

The new system's rollout comes as Qantas' assesses the viability of launching ultra-long, non-stop flights from Melbourne and Sydney to London and New York, with fuel burn a key consideration.

The University of Sydney's Salah Sukkarieh, a professor of robotics and intelligent systems who worked on the project,

said the Constellation was the most advanced being used by any airline in the world.

"The older system was almost like planning in your car - you just go left and right, basically," he said.

The new system, which build on work the centre had done with unmanned drones, "added wings to your vehicle and it lets you fly in that dimensional space and go to different altitudes in real time".

In the project's business case said Constellation would cut Qantas' annual fuel bill by about 0.6 per cent, the airline now believes it will be closer to 1 per cent.

That would translate to \$40 million saving, based on this year's expected fuel bill of \$4 billion. Meanwhile other airlines were already interested in buying the system from Qantas.

Qantas would not reveal how much the new system cost to build, but expects it to pay for itself within a few years. ✈

### Gold Card Benefits for Widows

Did you know that if you have a Gold Card because you have the Special Rate (TPI) or you have the Extreme Disability Adjustment (EDA), your wife will be entitled to a Gold Card and with it a War Widows' pension when you die?

However, if you have a Gold Card because you are over the age of 70 and served in an eligible area, your widow will not be entitled to a Gold Card, or a War Widows' Pension, unless you have an accepted disability causing your death.

Further, if you have a Gold Card because you have a 100% Disability Pension, your widow will also not be entitled to a Gold Card and a War Widows' Pension unless an accepted disability causes your death.

So – those who are not TPIs or EDAs should look carefully at their accepted and rejected disabilities plus any disabilities that have not yet been claimed.

See your Pension Officer and review your past claims using the GARP and relevant SOPs to ensure your Disability and Lifestyle points have been correctly assessed. You should also claim, if necessary, for any new or worsened conditions.

DVA will almost certainly have under assessed in the past and will doubtless under-assess in the future. Your claim for another disability may be rejected.

You must for the benefit of your future widow try hard to get that EDA and make another appeal if rejected.

*This advice was provided by the Defence Force Welfare Association, which offers a range of services to members including advocacy in DVA claims, superannuation enquiries, career management matters and conditions of service queries. Membership is inexpensive and will help the Association survive into the future. See their website [here](#). Ed. ✈*

### Southern Cross II Update

Another major milestone in the HARS Southern Cross restoration was achieved in November with the installation of the first of its three Jacobs R-775 radial engines. The engine and propeller have been beautifully restored and they will soon be

followed by two more to complete the major structural elements of the restoration.



The particular aircraft that HARS is restoring was a replica of the famous Fokker that Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith piloted in the 1920s and 30s, including his record breaking flight across the Pacific. It was built in South Australia over the period 1980-87 as a tribute to Smithy. It toured Australia in 1988 as part of the Bicentenary, raising money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The original aircraft can be seen in a special glass hangar on Airport Drive, near the International Terminal at Brisbane airport.

The replica has been faithfully built using the traditional aircraft construction of steel tubing and timber with doped Irish Linen for the fuselage and an all wooden (spruce and plywood) wing. She is the largest "exact replica" aircraft in the world and has the largest one-piece wing ever made in Australia.

On the 25th May 2002 at Parafield South Australia she lost a main wheel on takeoff. Landing on the one good wheel and the tail, the pilot kept the aircraft level for as long as possible, but it eventually tilted, causing the wing to snap some three metres from the tip.

After considerable negotiation HARS acquired the aircraft from the SA Government in 2010. It is being restored to full airworthy status and carries the original registration of VH-USU.

Story courtesy of HARS. ✈

### Well Known Vic Member Honoured



Anyone who has read any of the 'Heritage' articles on the website, or spent time reading of the lives of the men and women

on our Roll of Honour, will be familiar with the work of **Kim Dunstan**.

Kim has spent years supporting the Fleet Air Arm Association with carefully researched articles about our people and our aircraft, and was honoured for his work at this year's Victorian Division Christmas function.

In the photo above, Kim is awarded a Certificate of Service by **Chris Fealy** (right), the President of VIC DIV, and **Mal Smith** (left), the Division's Secretary. The citation for the award read:

*"CERTIFICATE of SERVICE has been awarded to KIM DUNSTAN in recognition of services rendered as a member of the VICTORIA division dated this SECOND day of DECEMBER 2018."*

We add our thanks and congratulations – the website would be a far poorer place if it were not for his work. ✈

## Veteran's Draft Report Released



The draft report by the Productivity Commission entitled "A Better Way to Support Veterans"

was released on 14 December 2018. The purpose of the draft is to engender further public consultation and input, after which the Commission will finalise the Report.

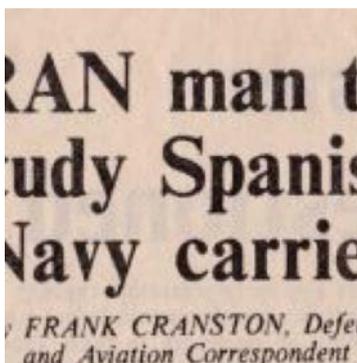
In broad terms, the Productivity Commission was tasked in March of 2018 to examine whether the system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans is fit for purpose now and into the future. In undertaking the inquiry, the Productivity Commission was required to review the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislative framework for compensation and rehabilitation of ex-service personnel and veterans, and assess opportunities for simplification.

The draft report runs to some 500 pages, but there's an 'Overview' which is much smaller.

The draft now seeks input from anybody who wishes to comment on it. You can submit your thoughts electronically, and Flyby encourages you to do so as it will assist in the preparation of the final submission.

See more background, access the report and learn how to make a submission on their website article [here](#). ✈

## Mystery Photos

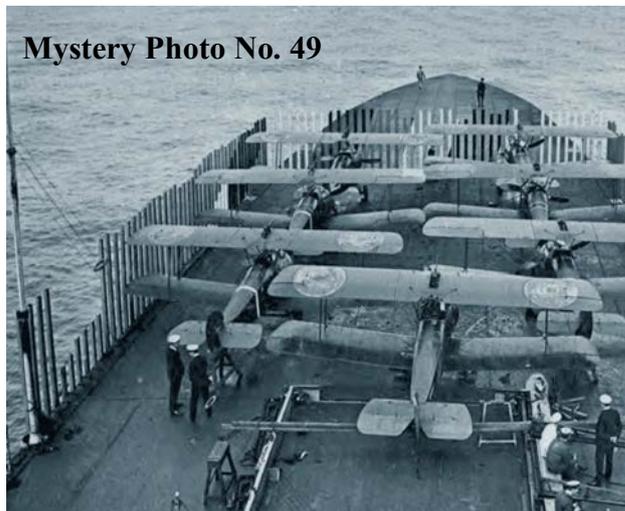


The last Mystery Photo was of a newspaper clipping reporting on the requirement for a senior officer to become 'invisible' when he travelled to Spain to study their new aircraft carrier.

We didn't get any responses to the photo so perhaps it was a bit esoteric – but it is a bit of our

history and worth recounting. You can see the story [here](#). ✈

## Mystery Photo No. 49



**Mystery Photo No.49** is of a group of biplanes on the fore-deck of a ship, taken just over 100 years ago:

The picture has special historical significance, so we would like to know:

- **What is the name of the ship,**
- **What type of aircraft they are, and**
- **What is the special significance of this image?**

You can see a larger image of the new Mystery Photo and submit your answer by clicking [here](#). ✈



Significant levels of radiation were found in Queensland and NSW.

The McClelland Royal Commission of 1985 found that significant radiation hazards still exist on the ground, but the report was mostly concerned with Maralinga and the botched clean-up operation. Just what the effects were on the health of personnel in the vicinity of the tests, however, remains a controversial topic.

A study by the British Nuclear Test Veterans Association in 1999 found that 30% of involved (British) veterans had died, mostly in their 50s, from cancers. At least ten separate studies resulted in different findings about the conduct of the tests and the circumstances of the test participants.

The most recent Australian study was published in June 2006, based on 10,983 test participants of which 7,116 were military. The report surmised that the level of radiation received by test participants was generally small, although some groups did receive significant exposures. For the Monte Bellow tests these included some RAAF aircrew who flew through contaminated clouds; crew members of HMAS *Hawkesbury* who assisted in records recovery, and the crew and divers from HMAS *Koala* who recovered a landing craft after the first test.

The study found that the death rate among the nuclear test participants was not significantly higher than the general population, but cancer as the cause of death was 18% higher, whilst cancer incidence was 23% higher. It went on to say, however, that the increases in cancer rates did not appear to have been caused by radiation. The report states:

*‘Neither all cancers combined nor any cancer known to have an association with radiation showed any increase in mortality or incidence with increasing radiation exposure in this cohort.’*

*The lack of association between cancer and radiation is not surprising, given the estimated low radiation exposure of most cohort members, and the relatively small proportion of subjects with any significant exposure.’*

It went on to surmise that the higher incidence of cancers in the test participant group probably resulted from other health factors, such as asbestos aboard RAN vessels and a higher incidence of smoking within the test group.

Nevertheless, a case was made that the atomic tests series was *‘...a unique, extraordinary event in Australia’s history...with Australian forces potentially exposed to levels of radiation beyond what would today be considered safe levels. By common sense and by any reasonable measure, service in the test operations must be regarded as involving hazards beyond those of normal peacetime.’*

The same year the Hon Bruce Billson, Minister for Veterans’ Affairs announced that *‘...despite the lack of association between cancer rates and radiation exposure, the Government has decided that it would be appropriate to provide health cover for nuclear test participants who have any form of cancer.’*

The statement came almost 54 years after the first test. ✈

### Contact Information

**We have had a request for the contact details of Max Smart regarding a class reunion next year. If anybody can tell us of his whereabouts please advise the webmaster [here](#).**

### HF Trackers On The Move

Readers would be aware that the Historic Flight Restoration Society (HARS) recently won the Tender for acquisition of what was once the RAN Historic Flight.

Some of the HF airframes have been withheld from release, pending examination for potentially radio-active material (such



**Above.** One of the Historic Flight Trackers, now in HARS ownership, being moved to alternative accommodation.

as depleted uranium in rotor blade tips), but others have been released and HARS volunteers visited Albatross on 10 December to view them, and move what could be moved.

Some of the items purchased are in a poor state of repair. FlyBy understands the engine of the Venom, for example, was heavily corroded as its storage container was not watertight. Similarly, the two Wessex helicopters, although they look rea-



**Above.** A part of the stores package included in the Tender. A mammoth job awaits!

sonable in photographs, are not in good shape.

In the short term, the plan is to fly Tracker 844 to HARS’ Albion Park facility as soon as practicable. Tracker 845 is to be cleaned up but will have to remain in the open for the moment, parked off-base.



A plan for moving and working on the other HF aircraft will be prepared in due course and we will post updates on the website as that information becomes available. We will also provide updates in future editions of ‘FlyBy’ for significant milestones. ✈

### Missing A Bit of Vital History

Dear Sir,

OMG! The fabulous A4G Skyhawk (the best aircraft that I ever flew, and arguably the most capable fighter aircraft ever operated by the RAN) has been deleted from RAN FAA history by the writer of the piece on page 13 of the December 2018 FLYBY newsletter regarding the 816 Squadron 70th Birthday. [QUOTE: *That's one of every generation of aircraft in the Fleet Air Arm.....*UNQUOTE]

(The Sea Venoms of 816 Squadron 'B' Flight quite rightly get a mention, and I am personally grateful for that!)

Regards, John da Costa

*Thanks John. The article was about 816 Squadron and reported that the Squadron had operated every generation of RAN aircraft. The S2GTracker was, in the context of RAN procurement, of the same generation as the Skyhawk but 816 was never equipped with the latter.*

*That's not to diminish the A4G which will never be erased from our history! It remains one of the best-loved aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm. When I have some time I'll redo our website "Heritage" article on it. Ed. ✈*

### Next of Kin Thanks

*By way of explanation, our resident Historian Kim Dunstan recently saw a notice in the Vet Affairs magazine seeking any information on **George Clarke**, who was killed when HMAS Australia's Seagull V aircraft was shot down by French Vichy fighters on 25 September 1940. Kim referred the enquirer to our Roll of Honour page on Clarke, which contains much information about him. He received the following letter in response. We also received a photograph of Clarke, which I append below. Ed.*



Dear Mr. Dunstan,

I received your most unexpected email today. I do appreciate your kindness in sending the comprehensive information regarding my relative **George Clarke**. We have been able to find some information about him but I'm sure your website will give us much more. A photograph of him was on my mother's dressing table throughout my childhood. I was

always asking questions about him, as he was such a handsome man, but little information was ever given. After George's father died at Gallipoli, his mother Elizabeth married my father's brother Albert Bradford who survived Gallipoli and the western front and received the Military Cross.

Following the publication of my advertisement in the Vet Affairs magazine I received a very informative email from Peter Taylor from WA, whose father was a crew member on Australia II during the bombardment off the coast of Dakar. He had kept an illegal diary and had written a fully detailed entry of the

events of the day George Clarke died. Peter sent me a copy of the page from his father's diary.

*"George had been catapulted into the air but was only airborne for twenty minutes before he was shot down. The two men who bailed out of the plane, LtCdr W. Fogarty and PO/Tel C Burnett were last seen making very strongly for shore but the water was almost alive with sharks. We know they died but it would be kinder to believe, hopefully, that it was a bombardment that killed them. A destroyer had been sent to pick them up but was ordered back in line as the forts opened fire on them."*

His diary records that the ship *Resolution* opened fire with AA guns and shot down the French fighter 'plane which destroyed the L2247 Walrus 11 piloted by George Clarke. His diary vividly recalls how it feels to be under constant attack, the damage to the ships, noise, engagement with the French ship *Richelieu*.

I will forward your email to my brother-in Law in Canberra who is our family historian and has completed some amazing research into our families.

I thank you again for your interest in sending me this information.

Yours sincerely, Kay-Christine Rankin.

*By Editor. Whenever we get a bit of information about our Roll of Honour names we add to their page on the website. FLTLT George Clarke's entry has recently been updated. You can see it [here](#). ✈*

## Subscription payment details for members:

### NSW:

Renewal \$35.00 pa. (Note the bank account is different to last year. It is now with Greater Bank)

**Account Name:** FAAAA

**BSB:** 637 000

**Account:** 7168 19 388

**Reference:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA NSW Division, PO Box 28, NOWRA 2541.

### ACT:

New Subscription Rates: \$30.00 for those who have hardcopy Slipstream. \$20.00 for softcopy recipients.

(Joining fee for eligible new members has been reduced from \$15.00 to \$10.00)

**Account Name:** FAAAA

**BSB:** 032 719

**Account:** 374 093.

**Reference:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The President FAAAA Act Division, 41 Noarlunga Crescent, BONYTHON 2905.

### VIC:

Renewal \$45.00 pa.

**Account Name:** Fleet Air Arm Association of Australia Inc

**BSB:** 083 961

**Account:** 3108 23774.

**Reference:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA VIC Division, PO Box 2179 RMH Post Office, PARKVILLE 3050.

### TAS:

Renewal \$30.00 pa.

**Account Name:** FAAAA

**BSB:** 037 013

**Account:** 13 3119.

**Reference:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA TAS Division, 7 Danbury Drive, LEGANA 7277.

### SA:

Renewal \$45.00 pa.

Banking Details: **BSB:** 065 118 **Account:** 009 05 668. **Refer-**

**ence:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAAA SA Division, 460/1075 Grand Junction, HOPE VALLEY 5090.

### QLD:

Renewal \$30.00 pa.

**Account Name:** FAA QLD Div.

**BSB:** 034 611

**Account:** 171 277.

**Reference:** Membership Number or your surname+initial

Cheques: The Treasurer FAAA QLD Divn, 37 Miles Street, CABOOLTURE 4510. Ensure you put your name on the back!

### WA:

WA Division has declined to publish its payment details. If you have any queries please contact the Secretary (see box above).

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SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE  
NOW DUE, BY THOSE  
WHO HAVE NOT YET  
PAID.**

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PRIMARY SOURCE OF  
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PAYMENT, USING THE  
DETAILS TO THE LEFT.**

### Contact Your Secretary

You can make a payment as per the instructions on the left, but if you need to contact your Secretary you can do so using the links below.

[NSW – Terry Hetherington](#)

[ACT – George Sydney](#)

[VIC – Mal Smith](#)

[SA – Jan Akeroyd](#)

[TAS – Graham Nicholas](#)

[WA – Keith Taylor](#)

[QLD – John Stewart](#)