



New Look Slipstream Hits the Streets

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Pilotless Auster Terrifies Sydney

By Paul Shiels

On 30 August 1955, a pilotless Auster aircraft flew for nearly three hours over Sydney watched by thousands before two Navy Sea Furies shot it down over the sea.

The aircraft dived, circled and swung on an erratic course over the city from Bankstown aerodrome, south of the city, in a generally north-east direction until it was shot down off Broken Bay, north of the city terrorising citizens below as it passed overhead. Sydney authorities declared the entire city in a state of emergency as the plane swept over crowded suburbs and the main central city area. Police, fire brigades and ambulances were alerted as aviation officials pinpointed the plane's crazy course.

The drama started at 8.56 a.m. at Bankstown aerodrome when private pilot Anthony Thrower, 31, of Sydney, rented the Auster to brush up on his circuits. After only one circuit the engine began to splutter and he landed. He got out and with the hand brake on, casually swung the aircraft's propeller to restart the engine. To his amazement the engine suddenly revved and the plane started moving slowly forward. The handbrake had somehow released. Gradually the Auster gained speed and eventually took off.

It circled the aerodrome climbing steadily to 10,000 ft and as it headed for the city.

An RAN Auster aircraft was making its way from Nowra to Schofields and the pilot, Commander J. Groves offered to trail the runaway Auster then heading across town to the Sydney CBD. After watching the straying Auster for sometime, the RAN Auster had to break off from the chase as it had been airborne for more than three hours.

In a bold stroke, the authorities called the RAAF who scrambled a Wirraway from Richmond airbase to shoot down the Auster behaving abnormally.

By now the pilotless Auster had managed to fly across the city to Manly where it turned north towards Palm Beach. Flying into a steady breeze the Auster gained altitude - to around 9,000 ft. Here the air tends to be cold and as the gunner in the rear

Sea Fury on HMAS Sydney

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Slipstream is the FAA Association's premier publication and the June edition hit the streets a few days ago, produced by a new Editor and with a brand-new look.

Featuring some 48 pages of close text and photographs, the magazine contains a wide range of material, from runaway aircraft to thought-provoking letters.

Like earlier versions, Slipstream will be offered in two versions: the Hard Copy, which will be mailed to those who have requested this format, and the Soft Copy for those who prefer to read it on line.

The new softcopy format changes the ballpark, as follows:

- 'Turnable' pages to give a realistic and crystal-clear reading experience on your computer or other portable device;
- Full colour pages throughout (the hardcopy version will only have a few, for economic reasons);

- Embedded links that will take you directly to other sites where you can read more about the particular subject.
- A 'Bookmark' feature, which will let you save your place in the magazine for later reading.
- Quicker delivery – softcopy readers will typically receive their magazine whilst the Post Office is still trying to start their pick-up van.
- Potentially, some savings in your pocket (see below).

The new on-line presentation does not allow the magazine to be downloaded for printing and storage. If you want to do that, however, you'll be able to do so from our website: simply go to 'Recent Slipstreams' (on the members' only menu), choose the edition you want to read and then click 'Download'.

Those members who had previously elected to get the Hard Copy will continue to do so (although they will also have been sent the electronic link). If they are happy with the hardcopy format they need do nothing and future editions will also be sent to them in the post – assuming they remain current financial members.

If you like the look of the electronic (softcopy) format you can easily change your preference so you will have it delivered to you in your mail INBOX. Simply click [here](#), and advise the database manager you'd like to change to softcopy Slipstream from now on. You can always change back to snail-mail if you change your mind.

Aside from the obvious advantages, some Divisions have in place a reduced subscription offer for members who elect to go softcopy – for example, both WA and ACT Divisions give a \$10.00 per annum discount off the annual membership subscription – a very significant saving! NSW Division will also offer this incentive from the end of this year (for 2020 membership subscriptions and beyond).

You'll also be helping the environment by going soft, so to speak! Aside from the obvious paper saving, there's the carbon savings harvested from not having to manufacture, print and deliver hard copy editions. It all adds up.

Finally, don't forget that any flagship publication is only as good as the people who contribute to it – there's a million photos, stories, anecdotes and opinions out there – so tap out a few words to the new Editor, **Paul Shiels**, or simply email him [here](#) to see what sort of material he's after. It is your magazine and it is unique to who we are. Help keep it that way by chipping in from time to time. ✈



Mystery Photo Number 53 Answer

Mystery Photo 53 (above) showed a Skyhawk about to launch from the deck of a carrier. We asked:

- what the historic significance of the image was,
- the date it was taken, and for the gratuitous offer of a gold star,
- the name of the pilot.

Before we answer the questions, we need to go back a bit.

Faced with an enormous bill to replace obsolete Navy FAA infrastructure, the Australian Government decided in 1959 to disband the Fleet Air Arm's fixed-wing capability, and to pay off HMAS Melbourne.



Above: HMAS Melbourne during her 68/69 refit.

But Indonesia's ties with Moscow and her vast purchase of Soviet military hardware, together with the 1960-62 tensions over Dutch West Papua (Irian Jaya) and 1963-66 Malayan Confrontation, were the cause of serious disquiet.

Likewise the reach of Indonesian and Chinese strike bombers, and the spread of communist insurgencies dictated a re-think. By 1964 the life of the ageing Gannets and Sea Venoms had been extended for another four years, and the search for replacement aircraft had begun.

The list was quickly narrowed to types that would not require a larger aircraft carrier, and, after deck trials, orders were placed for 14 Grumman Trackers and 10 A4G Skyhawks.

Melbourne travelled to San Diego in October of 1967 to collect the new aircraft, delivering the first of them (by barge in Jervis Bay) on 21 November.

But although she could ferry the new types, Melbourne could not operate them. To do that she needed exten-

sive modification, including an upgraded catapult, new radars and EW equipment and AVGAS storage. The refit also provided an opportunity to update living accommodation, provide better water distillation, and the overhaul of essential machinery.

Melbourne entered refit at the end of November 1967. She was not to go to sea for another 15 months.

In the meantime, the Fleet Air Arm had a bunch of new aircraft but no ship on which to hone their skills. Fortunately, HMS Hermes visited Australian waters a year later for Exercise 'Coral Sands' – in early November 1968 – and both Trackers and A4s had the opportunity to use her deck.

Which brings us to the Mystery Photo – an A4G aboard HMS Hermes. It's historic insofar as it was the first launch of an RAN Skyhawk from a Brit carrier, and in fact was the first launch of the session. The pilot was the Commanding Officer of VF805 Squadron, LCDR John Da Costa RAN.

You can see a video of the Hermes' deck operations [here](#). You can read (and see) a bunch more about this Mystery Photo, and many others like it, [here](#). ✈

What is the Bliss Arrestor?

In March 68, an incident occurred where the cockpit of an A4 Skyhawk filled with smoke during the take-off run. According to records the pilot aborted the take-off by engaging the **Bliss Arrestor gear**, thereby "...becoming the foundation member of the Tape Draggin' Club".

There's an assumption (perhaps incorrectly?) that this is different to the 'normal' arrestor wires deployed for landing. Can anyone give the webmaster advice about what the Bliss Arrestor was, and how it worked please? Email him [here](#).

New Mystery Photo (No 54)

Regrettably the quality of the image for MP54 is dodgy, but we think good enough to ask the question.



Old and bold FAA members will recognise the late LCDR (later CMDR) **Barry Bromfield**, on the left. But what is he doing, and why?

You can see a larger copy of this image [here](#), where you can also click a link to give us the answer you think is correct. ✈

Wall of Service Update

Order No 42 is back from the Foundry and the plaques have been affixed to the Wall. You can track where you are on the Wall by clicking [here](#). The names in this order were:

LCDR GLEX(P) K.J. MacKenzie	L/WRMTD M.A. Cocks
CMDR GLEX(AvWI) A.R. Milsom	CPO ATWO D. Bain
CPOA G. Jesser	POWTR T. Atkins
LCDR G.S. Wall	SQNLDR B. Kelly
ABATA B.J. Harries	LCDR P. Williams
LCDR GLEX(AvWO) G. M. Ryan	CPO T. Raftery BEM
LEUT (O) R.J. Henderson	

Order No. 43 remains open for applications, with the following name(s) so far.

LEUT N.G. Forbes	
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You can find information on what the Wall of Service is, and how to order a plaque, [here](#). ✈

Can I Switch My Division?

The FAAAA is arranged into seven Divisions – one for each State or Territory in Oz (except for NT, which is administered by QLD). Each Division has its own President and office bearers and, to a large extent, conducts its own affairs under the guidance of a National Constitution.

We occasionally get asked by Members if they can switch to another Division and, if so, how much it will cost.

Typically, members join the Division in the State or Territory in which they live. And if they move to another State they usually ask to be transferred to the Division in their new locality, which is easily done and at no cost.

There is no compelling reason for you to belong to your Home Division, however. If you wish, you can stay with your 'old' mob even if you move interstate. Similarly, you can join or transfer to any other Division anywhere in the country, simply by asking the Database Manager to arrange it (email him [here](#)). There is no cost and it can be done quickly and easily. ✈

WANTED

A New National Secretary and National Treasurer for the FAAAA (old ones retiring). Here is your chance to give something back by helping your Association.

If you are interested, contact the National Secretary (Dick Martin) [here](#).

Nominations for National Executive Members

Once every three years the entire membership of the National Executive is 'spilled', and new nominations are taken and voted upon at the Federal Council Meeting – and guess what – 2019 is one of those years!

Accordingly, the following positions will be declared vacant on 26 October 2019, and nominations considered for each of the following positions:

President (currently held by RADM Mark Campbell)
V/President (currently held by Mr, Phil Carey)
Secretary (currently held by Mr, Dick Martin)
Treasurer (currently held by Mr, Denis Mulvihill)
Webmaster (currently held by Mr, Marcus Peake)
Database Manager (currently held by Mr, Paul Norris)
Welfare Officer (currently vacant)

Holders of the positions of Secretary and Treasurer have indicated they will not be re-nominating for their positions. New nominees are therefore invited for these positions in particular, but for any other position as well.

If you wish to be considered for one of the positions (you must be a member of the Association), then let your Division know as soon as possible. A list of Divisional secretaries is attached at the end of this "FlyBy". Please note that Divisions must submit all nominations by **COB 26 July**, so time is short.

Of course, no one wants to volunteer for something unless they understand what it's about, so here's a brief outline of what the National Executive is, and what it does.

Broadly speaking, the National Executive Committee's job is to provide 'umbrella oversight' into the running of the Association in both a financial and administrative sense, noting that each Division has its own organisation to manage its local members and finances. The National Executive endeavours to implement and execute the decisions of the Federal Council, mediate in disputes between Divisions, should they arise; and to generally provide policy and advice across the organisation.

Being on the National Executive is not particularly onerous, but provides a vital governance and overview role. Please consider being part of this. ✈

† REST IN PEACE †

Since the last edition of 'FlyBy' we have become aware of the loss of Ian "Taff" Strathie, Mike Heneghan, Bruce Williams and Alan Wayne Parish. Where details are available you can read a little more of these sad events on our Obituary pages [here](#), and, if you are a member of the Association, you can leave a comment there if you wish. ✈

Attention Former RANGA Members!

Laurie Simpkins in Queensland has acquired one of the former RANGA gliders, Bocian VH-GHC in a damaged state. He plans to restore it with the help of a group of dedicated vintage pilots.

Unfortunately it has no documentation so he is asking anyone who has knowledge of this glider to assist with piecing together the history of this aircraft so an airworthiness certificate can be issued. He previously restored one of the old RANGA T31b gliders which is still flying (see picture), so it would be wonderful to have another ex-RANGA glider restored after all this time.



So, former RANGA members (or anyone else) – if you have any knowledge of this aircraft please can you contact Laurie [here](#).

LIST OF NATIONAL SECRETARIES

ACT Division. [Mr. George Sydney](#).
NSW Division. [Mr. Terry Hetherington](#).
QLD Division. [Mr. John Stewart](#).
SA Division. [Mrs. Jan Akeroyd](#).
TAS Division. [Mr. Graham Nicholas](#).
VIC Division. [Mr. Mal Smith](#).
WA Division. [Mr. Keith Taylor](#).



A reminder of the reunions coming up:

Vietnam Veterans' Day Old Bar: 16-18 August 2019. A range of activities over the 3 days including a "Meet and Greet", Breakfast, Reunion Dinner and of course the Veterans' Day Parade and Service. Events can be booked (and paid for) separately. See our website [here](#) for details and an application/expression of interest form. Note that some of the arrangements have recently changed to make sure you read the website page!

Tracker Reunion 23-24 October 2019. Venue: HARS at Albion Park, over two days. This event is being organised by Bruce Saville, who runs the "Friends of the RAN Grumman Tracker" Facebook page. You can register interest in attending the reunion by going [to that page](#) and clicking on the poll.

Navy Photographers' Reunion 24-26 Oct 2019

This reunion will be held in the picturesque location of Port Stephens in NSW, with headquarters being the Middle Rock Beach Resort located just up from Nelson Bay. A comprehensive itinerary (which always includes partners) has been organized incorporating coach tours to the Hunter Valley Wine Region.

Photographers of yesteryear and Imagery Specialists of today are ALL invited and encouraged to attend in what will turn out to be time well spent with friends and past work mates, leaving you with memories to keep forever.

For further information please contact [George Anderson](#).

All Navy Reunion Maroochydore 25-27 October.

Events are expected to include Registration/Meet and Greet; Navy on Display (Guard and Band); Reunion Dinner and/or Brunch in the Park. Details from Mark or Bill on 0438 800 799 or 0411 024 985 respectively. ✈

HARS Navy Historic Flight Update



The following update on the status of the Naval Historic Flight was kindly provided by HARS in mid June, who acquired the seven airframes at the end of last year. (All photos courtesy HARS).

The NHF project continues with work focused on selected airframes - with a particular burst of activity this last week on rebuilding the fuselage of the Sea Venom, provision of an updated sign for the Wessex at HARS ALBION PARK, and continued active dialogue on our proposed long term home for the NHF next to the FAA Museum.

It is my pleasure to update you on the progress we are making, thanks to a lot of every enthusiastic people.

Sea Venom

Some seriously impressive progress has been made on re-assembling the Sea Venom this last week, with Bob De La Hunty and friends re-assembling the cockpit and fuselage, and adding back the landing gear attachments including on the wings. I have attached a series of photos taken in the last few days which record the impressive work happening, and our sincere thanks to everyone involved!

Trackers 844 and 845

These are both still located in secure but open storage at our major sponsor Air Affairs at the Albatross Aviation Technology Park (AATP), where:

- 844 is receiving its regular weekly run-up and engineering checks by HARS volunteers. It ran very successfully last week, and our engineering team is preparing to give it a final check before releasing it for flight

- 845 is in open storage and Ken Jackson our painting team leader is still actively scoping the costs associated with giving 845 an external paint job with a view to it becoming a 'gate guard' on our proposed new home adjacent to the FAA Museum

A Reminder: HARS also has Tracker 851 in long term preservation and upgrade in HARS Hangar 3, and I attach a photograph to remind all that 851 was one of the replacement Tracker fleet, that flew with both US Navy and RAN FAA Squadrons!



Tracker 851 History

Dakota C47

No new work this last week, and I repeat previous news that we had planned to move the C47 WINGS from HMAS Albatross to HARS Albion Park on Thursday 7 June by road

- again with the generous sponsorship and support of Air Affairs, but unfortunately the Air Affairs vehicle suitable for that task (a very low loader) had to be tasked elsewhere - so we have put it off for a few weeks until that vehicle becomes available again. I again want to acknowledge the generosity and support of Chris Sievers the CEO at Air Affairs, in providing this vehicle when available.

Wessex

- Wessex 832 is on display at HARS Albion Park in HARS Hangar 3 and this week one of our HARS Volunteers- John Groom - made a handsome display sign and the accompanying photos show it on display - so THANKS VERY MUCH John!



New Wessex Display Board

- Wessex 813 is at HARS Parkes - no update received this week

We are really short of qualified/ knowledgeable Wessex support team members so if anyone out there can assist us, we would really welcome your enquiry about joining HARS OR coming to assist with a particular project. We had one interested person contact us in the last few weeks and it was great to see a previously serving ex RANFAA sailor keen to work on the Wessex with us again.

Hueys

Iroquois UH-1B Numbers 893 and 898 are at Air Affairs at AATP in secure storage and there has been no change in their status this week

Sea Fury

Sea Fury WG 630 airframe is still on display in HARS Hangar 1 and is already a very popular display item, and this will be a BIG CHALLENGING Project and we invite your involvement and assistance please

We have commenced our major **Sea Fury appeal** - help us to develop the engineering analysis which is the start the rebuild of this magnificent Sea Fury historic airframe back to flying status!

Our Future Home

We are continuing active negotiations with Navy Heritage and EIG (The Estate and Infrastructure Group) of Defence,



Sea Fury in static display mode. This airframe is earmarked for flying status.

for confirmation that the block of land next to the FAA Museum is allocated as the future home of the HARS Navy Heritage Flight.

Access to FAA Museum Historic Photos for the NHF Update Reports

I am pleased to report that both the Director of Naval Heritage and the Director of the Fleet Air Arm Museum have approved the use of photographs from the FAA Museum archives in the HARS NHF Update reports, and as of next week I will add, when appropriate, selected historic photos of the relevant airframes in the NHF, drawn from the photographic records of when they were in active service with the FAA. On behalf of all our NHF volunteers and supporters, I would like to thank both Damien Allen (Director of Naval Heritage) and Stu Harwood (Director FAA Museum) for obtaining and granting these permission(s).

We Request Your Support

IF YOU CAN ASSIST THE NAVY HERITAGE FLIGHT IN ANY WAY - PLEASE EMAIL ME AT: harsnhf@hars.org.au. or contact me through our HARS NHF Facebook page

We especially need your help on the following:-

Raising Funds to Upgrade The Insurance To Support Tracker 844 Flying Again,

Raising Funds to Bring The C47 Dakota From Nowra To Albion Park So We Can Commence Restoration (Approx. \$5000)

Joining Our Sea Fury Restoration Team (Led by Mark Thurstan) as we begin the Engineering Evaluation Project and develop the Restoration Plan. We need skilled assistance please.

In the meantime, enjoy the accompanying photos of NHF related activities at HARS Albion Park (Sea Fury/ Sea Venom/ Wessex 832).

Michael Hough
Navy Heritage Flight Project Leader
16 Jun19